



ESCAPE

A STORY

By Nahum Sabsay

LIKE a fragment of smooth azurite filling the bottom of a deep rock cavity, so lay the miniature bay of Balaklava surrounded by steep stony hills with their patches of green and the remnants of ancient fortifications.

The Greeks once possessed the place, then the Genoese, then the Tartars, and now the Russians have it. Races, ages, centuries, generations, have come and gone, each leaving behind something which has persisted.

As I sometimes stood or lay on the top of a hill and gazed at the sunlit masses of rocks; at the drowsing town, a score of centuries old, climbing up the slope on the eastern side of the bay; at the sparkling water; at the sluggish life upon and about it—I had a sensation of looking backwards into an eternity of imperceptibly slow changes. And against my convictions, I saw ahead another eternity with just as slow transformations. Much as I longed for improvement, I could visualize no sudden disintegration of the old and no rapid building up of the new in its place.

This was in 1906, the year when, after a spell of comparative freedom, a new outburst of imprisonment, exiles, executions, and pogroms was sweeping the country from one end to the other. I was sixteen, a sixth-form student in the *gymnasia* in a large city in

the south, and like many boys of my age and older, up to the neck in the struggle for liberties.

The leader of our group was Ivan Subbotin, one of those "perennial students" who stay forever in the universities, and do all kinds of things except study. He was a man in the late twenties, short, sturdy, with a freckled, good-natured face, and a chestnut beard and mustache. His uniform was always old, usually lacked a button or two; his boots were patched and seldom shined. It was whispered among us that he belonged to a terrorist squad and that he had helped to "remove" a governor-general who was too ruthless in persecution of the uprisen peasants. So strong was Subbotin's influence on us that we continued to gather in spite of the increased danger. When, however, early in the spring, the secret service came after him and he took to the "underground" existence, we ceased to meet, and I saw him no more till the middle of the next summer.

That summer my grandmother, my brother, and I were spending our vacation again in Balaklava. This was a small fishing town on the south coast of Crimea, some seven miles east of Sebastopol, the fortress and the base of the fleet on the Black Sea. Here I was my own master even more than at home, for my grandmother had long since given up hope of controlling my behavior, although not her habit of scolding me, and my brother was too busy with his own friends and affairs to bother much with me.

There were many things which attracted me to Balaklava: the sea, the mountains, of which we at home had none; the young people who, like us, came here yearly from the near north; but above all, the native fishermen, Greeks and a few Tartars, among whom I had many friends and with whom I frequently went out to the sea for a day or two at a time.

One late morning, as two fishermen, the brothers Kustandi, and I worked at the upper part of the quay fitting out a boat for the afternoon trip, my brother approached me and whispered that Subbotin was waiting for me in our room.

Looking up to question my brother, I noticed a stranger not far off, watching us. Watching and listening strangers were dangerous in those days. So I replied with the first thing which came to mind, "I don't care. I'll go whether grandmother wants it or not."

"As you wish," my brother remarked, shrugging his shoulders. He, too, had noticed the man.

Filled with all kinds of forebodings, and watching the stranger out of the corner of my eye, I kept on working. The moment he was gone, however, I left the boat and went up the narrow, steep street walking with purposeful slowness till I reached the rocky yard of the fisherman's family from whom we rented two small rooms, the whole "neat" part of the house.

A glance around convinced me there was no one in

sight. Yet, not wishing to take chances, I retained my casual manner, looked over the fishing nets which hang over the stone walls, drying, and as if bored, opened the low door which led to my room. Here, in my bed, I found Subbotin. He lay on his back, his hands crossed under his head.

I closed the door behind me and came up to him, greeting him in a low voice.

Seeing me, he slowly let down his reet, sat up and said apologetically, "I almost fell asleep waiting—was chasing around since last evening—tired as a dog."

His appearance had changed since I had seen him. He had shaved off his beard and dyed his mustache and hair black. He was much thinner and his face looked worn. His eyes roved about. Instead of his usual student's uniform, he wore a wrinkled light gray suit, and instead of boots, summer sandals. He sat on the edge of the bed with his hands resting on the caps of his knees and his head lowered.

"What is it, Subbotin?" I asked in a whisper. "What has happened?" Receiving no immediate reply, I sat down by his side and waited. In my imagination one dark assumption replaced another.

Subbotin turned his face to me and began to talk in a dull voice which also seemed to have changed.

"This is the best break I have had in months, seeing you with the fishermen around the boat. That's exactly what I have been looking for since daybreak—a boat and one or two trustworthy men—had no luck at all. This is a devil of a place. Then just as I was ready to give up, I saw you and then your brother. Say," he interrupted himself, "can we talk here?" And he looked around suspiciously.

"Wait," I said. "I'll see." I rose, surveyed the yard through the small window, peeped into my grandmother's room to see if she was in and if no one else was there. "It's all right," I told him, retaking my seat at his side.

"I am sure nobody saw me coming in," he asserted. "I've become good at sneaking in and out of the houses—expert," he finished with a wry smile. After a pause, he added, "Your brother told me you have many friends among the fishermen."

I nodded my head. My alarm was gone already but I was still worried, puzzled, and intrigued.

"Are there any trustworthy men among them?"

"Plenty," I answered.

"It's a question of jail and Siberia for one of our most valuable comrades, Voronov!"

"There are the brothers Kustandis," I ventured less assured. "I have no doubts whatsoever about them."



He sat thinking. "Would they be willing to smuggle out of town a certain person?"

Now I was thinking. The Kustandis were born smugglers. They hated the police and everything connected with them. Besides, the few roubles which they would make would surely be a great inducement. But there were the coast guards in the bay and a coast-guard cutter, and just that morning two destroyers had come in and two more were expected that evening. Yet the two men were bold.

"They might," I replied hesitatingly. Then, seeing myself already in a boat with a foremost revolutionist—because I had made up my mind to go with the fishermen, should they be willing—I made my reply more definite. "As a matter of fact, I think they would."

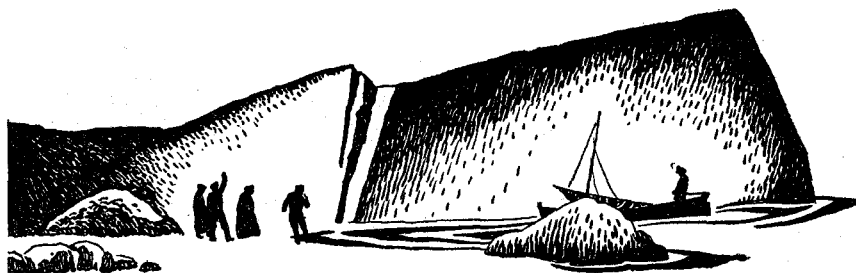
"Now that's fine! That's great!" Subbotin cried. He jumped to his feet, crossed the room a few times, and stopped before me.

"You must have heard of Varvara Dubravina?" he began. His voice wavered as if he still doubted that he ought to talk freely to me.

But I was not annoyed, for the name had keyed me up and made me forget everything else.

Although known to us, the youngsters, only by hearsay, Varvara Dubravina had been for some time our ideal and a legend. During the last winter not a meeting of our group had taken place without the Moscow students at least mentioning her name. They talked of her with warmth and admiration, seldom referring to her by her last name, and not often by her patronymic, but usually by her Christian name and even by its diminutive form, Varia. They all said that she affected deeply her listeners and that she did it by a singular use of her own plain words, by her sorrow and motherly concern for the "downtrodden and insulted" to whom or of whom she spoke. She was comely and dainty, they claimed, had a love for life, curiosity, and a feeling for music and color. Varvara Dubravina was not, of course, her real name. Her father was a petty nobleman, a landowner. Although himself a liberal, he opposed his daughter's activity. But they met frequently.

"She's now here, in Balaklava," Subbotin continued, "with all the *shpiks* of Sebastopol after her. Two weeks ago she was forced to leave Moscow. We got her to come south where things seemed a little safer. We thought she could work among the sailors of the Black



"Yes, we have to hurry," he agreed. "Go, but for God's sake be careful; watch what you say."

"Why do we need to drag in strangers at all?" I asked. "I am good at handling a sailboat and I think I can get one for a day or two."

His face brightened. He looked me over from the feet to the head and asked swallowing, "Are you sure you can do it, Mitia? You must realize it's not a joke."

I burst out in assurances of my skill.

"How far is it to Aia?" he inquired.

"Fifteen miles or so. But much of it is along the coast."

"I don't see what else we can do," he remarked broodingly. He was silent for some time. "Voronov," he asked, "could you get me something to eat? I could not risk it to enter a restaurant."

"Of course!" I cried and rushed out of the room, my heart singing.

Sea fleet and the soldiers of the Sebastopol Garrison. Last night the meeting at which she was talking was raided. Luckily the signal was given in time and all escaped. But the *shpiks* somehow found out who the speaker was and are now combing the city."

He retook his seat on the bed and told me of the difficulties he and the comrades had had in getting Varvara out and bringing her here. This was the only way they could go, but here she was cornered and the only way for her to escape was by the sea. Her only chance was to be carried, for instance, to the Cape Aia, where a group of seeming excursionists could pick her up and whisk her away through the mountains.

He talked and I listened to him, my heart beating fast. One has to be a boy with his head full of romantic ideas, devoted to the movement, yearning for risky adventures, to share in the cult for Varvara Dubravina, to appreciate the stir which arose in my mind and my soul. In my thoughts I already had dismissed the brothers Kustandi from participation in the affair. I had decided to swing the whole thing myself and alone. There would be obstacles, of course. One would be the problem of getting a small sailboat. In the whole town there were only two suitable boats but both belonged to surly and unobliging people.

And deep in my mind I realized that my plan was not sensible, that it was presumptuous, that I might subject Dubravina to a still greater danger than the one from which I proposed to help her flee. But the idea took so great a hold upon me that I could not and cared not to consider anything.

I knew that should I offhand offer Subbotin my services instead of professional sailors, he would refuse. So I took to cunning and to building up a reason.

I told him that when I expressed my opinion that the fishermen might be willing to smuggle out of town a certain person, I did not know that the whole pack of the *shpiks* was so close. It would not be right for me to conceal that from the fishermen and they, once informed, would most surely refuse.

"But what else can we do, Voronov?" Subbotin asked in a fallen voice.

"I think I had better go and talk to the fellows," I said. "Maybe I am wrong." I rose, making ready to go. "I must hurry if I am to catch them before they leave."

Had I been a better seaman, I would have observed in the evening signs of something brewing along the coast. Had the fisherman from whom I hired the small clumsy boat smelling of fish, seen me take it late in the afternoon, he would have stopped me. Had any other fisherman noticed me putting out, he would have surely shouted a warning. But weather signs meant little to me. The dark night played into my hand and so I pulled out of the bay and came into the inlet unseen and unaware.

There I approached the mouth of a steep gully that comes down to the water, and lay on the oars waiting for Dubravina. The night was warm and starry. The Milky Way, appearing from beyond the top of one hill and disappearing beyond that of another, passed overhead in sharp outline. Water lapped softly against the stony shore. The boat rocked gently. Far behind and to my right two dim lights showed in the upper windows of a count's summer mansion. Three more lights, kerosene lanterns on posts, stood far apart on the opposite side of the inlet. And the rest was darkness—darkness and stars.

Keeping just off the shore and listening to all the little noises and sounds about me, I waited for the rap of two pebbles against each other followed by a second rap five counts later.

I was jumpy and agitated. My head was filled with a wild mixture of thoughts, romantic, apprehensive, daring, fantastic; so much so, indeed, that I was unaware of the passing time. But my ear was on the job and it caught the two raps, faint as they were.

My heart began to beat as if my life were at stake. With a few noiseless strokes I pulled up. There stood

four figures before me—two men in students' uniforms and two girls.

"All right?" one of the men asked in a whisper.

"Yes," I whispered back.

"Good-bye, comrades," one of the girls said in a low clear voice. "You won't forget about Subbotin. Please see that he gets a good rest."

"Be assured! We'll see to it! Good-bye and good luck, Varia, dear!" the others answered in whispers.

She stepped into the boat and I pushed off. All was done smoothly and quickly as if it had been rehearsed.

I pulled swiftly and silently till we reached the end of the inlet. There I raised the mast, made fast the shrouds, and hoisted our lateen sail. The breeze filled it. A few minutes later we were in the waters bounded by a great crescent of cliffs which opened southward.

Our destination was the eastern horn of that crescent, the high and wooded Cape Aia, which I expected to make before daybreak, if all went well.

There were no lighthouses on that part of the coast; nor were there any lights along the crescent; nor on the water, except one, apparently on a small boat far away in the direction of Aia. I wished even this were not there. Not that it disturbed me much. I was sure I could sneak by. Yet who could tell?

Sitting in the stern of the boat, the tiller in one hand and the rope of the sail in the other, I was in that state of elation which comes after a well-done dangerous job. Mixed with this was a feeling of almost reverential curiosity toward my passenger, and a sensation of having something precious in my keeping which had been entrusted to me and my skill.

Much as I wished to talk to her, I, for some reason, had so far said little, although she herself was talking readily, addressing me in a tone of easy comradeship. She, too, was in the stern, sitting athwart from me on the up side of the boat. I could clearly see her outline against the sky and her movements, which I thought graceful, but of her face I could see no details.

The clear tone of her voice and its cadence thrilled me strangely. And the voice, together with the atmosphere which her presence created, was making me think of a gentle and friendly older sister.

Now I understood why our common friends so seldom referred to her by her last name or the patronymic. Even I, stranger that I was, could think of her only as Varvara or Varia, so little forbidding or formal there was about her. In a way, I was disappointed. I had expected her to be formidable and exalted.

This was her first time on the sea, she told me. She had never even seen one till a few days ago and that was only a bay. And I felt, little as she betrayed it, that the combined immensities of the starry sky, the

dark night, and the black slowly undulating water, filled her with palpitating fascination.

"I have never known till now what I have missed," she said musingly.

"Yes," I replied as if the sky, sea, and night were mine and I were graciously offering her the use of them. "Nothing like a wide sea, by day or night, and a sailboat. Hold the tiller please!" I added quickly. "No, this way. That's it."

She moved over swiftly and I, leaping to my feet, shifted the sail for the third time since we had had it on. The breeze was changing and in order to make the best of it, I had to tack.

"How easily you do it!" she remarked when I returned to the stern. "I confess, I was a little apprehensive when Subbotin told me that I would have to go out with an amateur sailor."

"And what was it that made you decide to take the chance?" I asked. I might have said something more appropriate had not my attention become attracted by the light ahead of us. I thought I detected the sweep of a small searchlight. There had been rumors of the Csar's coming to Livadia, his summer residence near Yalta. Could this be one of the guard vessels? No, I concluded, such a vessel would have had more than one light. I said nothing about it to Varvara.

"What made me decide to take the chance?" she repeated my question. "Well, I thought that by taking the chance I might escape, while where I was—" she did not finish what she had in mind. Instead she said: "But now I see that in accepting your offer I was taking no chances at all." She leaned back over the gunwale, dipped her hand in water and, letting it pass around her wrist and between fingers, produced phosphorescent streaks. "What does it?" she asked.

"Microscopic animals," I answered authoritatively. "There are myriads of them at the surface." I was about to tell all I knew about those, and more, when she changed the subject again.

"Look at the stars in the water!" she exclaimed. "How they throb! Is that what you steer by, the stars?" she inquired. "I did not notice you using a compass and it is so dark that you can't see the land."

"I make use of the North Star, of course," I replied professionally. "But tonight I mainly depend on the Milky Way. You see, this part of the year and night it stretches almost dead southwest and since our course lies southeast, all I have to do is to steer at right angles to the Milky Way. The cape sticks out so far across our course that we can't possibly pass it."

"I see," she said with what I thought was a smile.

Fearing that I might not have impressed her with my information, I went on, telling her about the Great and the Small Dipper and turned my face astern to point out the two constellations. I knew where they

ought to be but, to my astonishment, they were not there. There were no stars at all in the northwest.

That was how I got the first inkling of the changing weather. Storms were not frequent here in the summer months but they were bad when they did break out. The discovery alarmed me. But of this, also, I told Varvara nothing.

"Do you know the names of other stars, too?" she asked, breaking the silence.

"No. That's about all I know," I admitted.

"I do," she said. "Not of many, of course, but of some. Do you want me to name them to you?"

"Yes, please," I answered, my tone changing from a teacher's to that of a pupil.

Slowly surveying the sky all over, but passing quickly by the northwestern quadrant, and then stretching her hand northeast, she said: "Look at the Milky Way. There, behind you, just above the horizon. Do you see those five bright and big stars which form a sort of distorted English letter W? This is Cassiopeia. Do you make it out?"

"Oh, yes," I said, wondering whether she had noticed the clouds.

"Now look a little to the right. Do you see those two bright stars and two smaller ones, each by the side of a bright one?"

"Yes," I said not quite certain, however, that I was looking at the right thing.

"This is Andromeda, the Chained Lady. Now look again at the Milky Way. Below Cassiopeia. Do you see the five stars one under the other and all forming a smooth curve and a broken line of stars to the right of it? This is Perseus."

"I see," I answered absently. My mind was not with the stars. Again and again I stole glances at the sky astern. Now I knew why the wind kept changing. Then the boat ahead came to my mind. I speculated whether that something which was coming on from behind would help us to steal by it or would throw us too near. The boat seemed to be cruising across our way. I could not judge its distance. It might have been a mile, or two miles, or five miles, and even more.

Varvara did not go on with the lesson. She sat silent for a while, then began to talk of other things.

"Here we are sailing the very same sea which some of those ancient people sailed who invented all those myths and legends! There were Greek colonies along this coast, weren't there?"

"Several," I replied. "They say Balaklava was one of them. Please take the tiller!" Once more I jumped to my feet and threw the sheet on the other side.

"That makes me think of those turrets and fortification walls which we saw on the cliff against the sky, as we were coming out. You said they were Genoese."

"Yes," I affirmed, wondering at the same time

whether I had not better make for the shore before it was too late.

"How long ago was it?"

"Seven or eight hundred years."

"That makes it twelfth or thirteenth century?"

"Yes."

"What has happened to you? You have become so silent all of a sudden. Don't you feel well?" she asked with warm concern.

"Oh, I'm perfectly all right," I answered quickly. "The wind is freshening and changing frequently and that demands all my attention," I explained evasively. A little later I added, "We may yet get a rough sea."

My mood passed on to her. She, too, became silent. I wished she hadn't. There had been something reassuring in her voice. I wished to draw her into another conversation but could think of nothing to say. More and more of the sky became covered with clouds, the wind was now coming in sharp puffs, and the waves were larger. I saw clearly what we were up against. There was more than one danger in that brewing storm. And I felt like a little boy who had done mischief and was facing the reckoning.

The sea roughened still more. The puffs of the wind grew stronger and lasted longer. White caps came out on the crests of the waves. Our boat pitched and rolled and, as the bow hit the water, jerked and quaked. I reefed, then double-reefed, our sail, Varvara helping me both times. She worked laughingly with what seemed to me a thrilled excitement.

Try as I would, I could not make out whether she realized fully the danger or not. Nor could I decide to tell her of it.

Twinkling and winking reflections showed up far astern. Those soon changed into bright flashes.

"Why, it's not only a wind! It's a thunder storm!" she cried out. There was no alarm in her voice and this, in one respect at any rate, relieved my anxiety.

"Yes, it looks like a rain," I replied, striving to appear nonchalant. "I think we'd better lower the sail. We never can tell what one of those squalls will do to a boat with sail on."

We lowered the yard, furled the sail, fastened them down, and then I shipped the bow oars and started to pull slowly, steadying the boat.

I was now sorry I had not made for the shore when we still had time. There was something queer in the atmosphere which I had never experienced before. The light on the other boat was still ahead of us although appearing much dimmer.

"I don't see why I am not helping you with the rowing," Varvara said. "I know how. I have rowed many times on the river at home. Shall I take the other pair of oars?"

"I think you had better not," I said slowly, because it was difficult to pull the great oars and to talk at the same time. "You see, I am not rowing. I am just keeping the boat steady. This is exacting work. Perhaps later."

"You'll tell me when. Won't you?"

"Yes, I will."

I could hardly see her now, although she was not more than four feet away. Only from time to time, as the lightnings flashed up, she would leap out of the darkness as a black, motionless figure near the mast, projected against the fluttering white light.

"The lightnings are quivering and twitching like the wings of a dying bird," she recited with a soft cadence. "Do you remember that?"

"Yes. It's Turgenev's," I answered gloomily, although my chance remembrance of the little-known line gave me gratification. "No, she doesn't realize it," I thought.

A rumbling growl sprang up afar and died away.

"Our food and our spare clothes!" she exclaimed. "We've forgotten all about them! Where are they? Oh, here they are! Is there any place we can stow them away so they won't get wet?"

"There's a hole in the bow under the seat. Do you mind bringing the things here? I would rather not leave the oars."

Indeed, the boat careened about in spite of my heaving to. Sometimes it would plunge so far that for a few seconds I would see no light from the other boat.

Holding to the gunwale and the seats, Varvara came forward with the two bundles of food and an armful of clothes. She placed them in the enclosure, secured the hatch, and sat down on the nearest seat, facing me.

The growl and mutter in the distance changed into rolling peals and crashes, and the fluttering flashes into forking and branching blazes which darted over half of the sky.

Isolated in the darkness we sat without speech.

The more I thought of all the possible outcomes of our predicament the more I became convinced that all of them, save one, would lead either to our capture or to our end, and that our only chance of escaping with our lives and our freedom was so slight as to be negligible. Remorse was eating into me.

I ceased to pull for a moment to wipe the perspiration off my forehead.

"You are not losing heart, Mitia? Are you?" Varvara asked.

Her use of my diminutive name and the tone of her voice—a tone at once caressing and emboldening—



stopped my indignant denials. I decided to myself, "Yes, she realizes," and aloud I added,

"No, I am not losing heart." And seeing that there was no more use concealing it, I explained, "But I am worried over our being set off too far into the open sea."

"And what if we do?" she asked.

I changed my mind again and thought, "No, she can't be realizing."

"We have food enough to last two or three days," she continued. "We can't be carried too far and, having the sail, we can always come back."

"Yes, if we don't capsize!" I blurted out. But remembering whose fault it was that we found ourselves among those dangers, I said meekly, "The trouble is we might meet a destroyer or get into the lane of the Yalta-Sebastopol steamers. They would be sure to stop us and bring us to one of these cities."

"No, that won't do!" she exclaimed. "I think we better try to keep closer to the land."

"But that will be just as bad," I remonstrated. "In blackness like this we should be thrown against the rocks before we knew it, if we came too close."

"You can swim? Can't you?" she asked.

"And what about you?"

"I swim a little. With your help I, perhaps, could make it." Her last words were clipped off by thunder.

"Not much chance," I replied. "The rocks here are slippery and the water would be boiling about them. Besides it would not do much good even if we succeeded in making the rocks. There still would be the wreckage of our boat. The coast guard or the fishermen would find it tomorrow morning and the whole thing would come out. We'd never get away by land."

"You said there are a few small beaches along the coast. Can't we make one of those?"

I had to wait for the thunder to subside before I could reply.

"Not in such darkness, unless by the utmost luck and the possible aid of the flashes." I did not know why I had said that, but something had entered me, some influx of determination. "Come to think of it," I went on after still another thunderclap, "that might be the best thing to do. The wind seems to be coming now from the shore and we might just as well pull against it. At least that will keep us from setting off too far."



She offered again to help me with the rowing and I told her it was all right now. While she was shipping the after oars, I brought the bow of the boat around, and then we started to pull together. At first she got entangled in the waves but soon she mastered the stroke. I kept time with her by listening during the spells of stillness to the creaks of the rope rings around the oars and the thole-pins.

Hard as we pulled, I knew we were still drifting into the sea. But something lent exaltation to our exhausting work, and we stuck to it earnestly.

The whole sky was already overcast. At each new dancing blaze we saw the swelling and surging mass of clouds everywhere, and then in the ensuing darkness, heard the fulminating, drum-like trills.

My renewed exaltation notwithstanding, I felt an immense loneliness. And just so as to hear Varvara's voice, I cried out to her between two crashes, "Aren't you getting tired, Varvara Stepanovna?"

"Not yet," she cried back. Her words were clipped off again. In the next silent spell she added, "For a while I feared that I might get seasick but now I feel all right. How are you getting on? I was just going to ask you," she finished in a tone of concern.

"Fine!" I answered and at the same time I became aware of a combination of mutter, hiss, and whirr which was racing against us. "It's coming!" flashed through my mind.

The next moment it was there.

It pounced upon us in a turmoil of flying water, wind, volleys, and tumultuous light, the whole lashing and scourging us and hitting us as with sheets set with nails. Our boat tossed and whirled treacherously.

The oars became useless. With the greatest effort I drew them in and doubled up under the defeating blows. Immediately, however, prompted by either the desire to be closer to another human being or the notion that I ought to be near Varvara to help her in case of need, I struggled to my feet and, holding to the gunwale, seats, and mast, crept toward the stern.

I found her bent low over the oars which she was holding above the water. "Take them in!" I shouted. I got hold of one and pushed it under the seat. She struggled with the other but was not able to free it. I drew

in this one also. And that was all I could do.

I did, though, get her to lower herself to the bottom of the boat where a little water had gathered already, and I lowered myself close to her. There we sat leaning against each other, holding tightly each other's hands, and both completely benumbed.

With every attempt to shout something, I swallowed mouthfuls of water. Even with my lips pressed together, water found its way into my throat. Nor could I open my eyes. I was shivering from cold and wet. And I felt Varvara shiver also.

Presently I became conscious that the water in the boat had risen dangerously high. "Must bail!" I cried in Varvara's ear.

I do not know how I ever found the tin pail and a large can. Bailing with the pail, I passed the can to Varvara. Spurred by the peril, we worked as fast as circumstances allowed. Yet we were not accomplishing much. The water poured in faster than we bailed. But, rolled up almost in balls and crouching side by side, we bailed for our lives.

A flash of bewildering intensity burst out, from what seemed to be only a few feet over our heads. Simultaneously came a blast which spread me flat on the bottom of the boat and made my ears ring long afterward. This was followed by a still greater deluge of tearing and flying water, by more blasts, by more sky-wide blazes of white and blue, by more water.

This clearly was our end. The boat could not stand it. It was a question of moments now. I waited, everything whirling in my mind.

And then, contrary to all expectation, the mad torrent of water and wind abated. The thunder was already crashing to leewards.

"It's over!" I cried for all I was worth.

"Yes, it's over!" came Varvara's voice as if from afar.

And it was over. The storm was making off. The wind fell. Rain was falling in an even downpour.

"Keep on bailing!" I shouted to Varvara. "I'll take the oars."

Wading, I passed forwards, reshipped the oars, and heaved to. Varvara bailed fast.

The downpour changed into a drizzle which soon gave out. But far away the storm continued.

"There's a star!" cried Varvara. "And there's another! Do you see them, Mitia?"

I saw them almost at the same time she did. The northwestern sky was clearing.

I looked around to find the light of the other boat but saw nothing. I wondered what had become of it. I wondered where we were.

With the first glimmer of day, we discovered that we were outside the crescent, some five miles south of Aia, that is, in the steamer lane and in the path of the destroyers. Of the boat there was not a trace.

Losing no time, I hoisted sail and started anew for the cape but from an opposite direction.

Again, as in the beginning of our trip, I sat in the stern, holding the tiller in one hand and the rope of the sail in the other, and, as then, Varvara sat athwart from me on the up side of the listing boat.

But now, in the swiftly strengthening light, I could see not only her outline and movements, but her face also. And as I looked at her, she seemed to me different from what the Moscow students had described her, and different from what she had appeared to me in the dark. Yet I was not disappointed. On the contrary, I would not have her any different from what she turned out to be. She had what we call a "good," a "typical Russian" face, light, fluffy hair, and large gray eyes which now laughed at me, now looked thoughtful. She appeared to be all gentleness and warmth, and, unless one knew her, he would not easily sus-

pect in her strong character and astounding courage.

When the sun rose and the sky and water turned blue and began to sparkle and everything around us far and wide took on an aspect of jubilant vigor, she spread her hair to dry and busied herself with preparation of breakfast. We ate it chattering happily and laughing over our last night's fright.

"You know, Mitia," she said, "if you were not so young or else if I were not so much older, I might have lost my heart to you."

"Now she is talking to me as to a *gymnast*," I thought, but I was not offended.

We landed on a small beach at about six in the morning. Here, keeping out of sight, we waited till noon, when her friends appeared. They, too, had been detained by the storm and they had worried endlessly. Varvara joined them furtively and soon was gone.

I stood on the beach, feeling lonesome and sorry for something, and watching the girl and her companions gradually disappear up the steep, wooded slope. Just before they all became concealed by the bushes, she turned around and waved her hand to me.



Man — the Unwilling Master

By Wells Wells



IF woman has ever been man's chattel, she has been an estate in expectancy of which he has never obtained peaceful possession. If she has been subject and subordinate, she has been neither servile nor submissive and her unquenchable genius of language has been a perpetual slander of man's title.

The Hebraic code surpassed all other ancient law in its apparent subjection of woman to man's authority. Yet Solomon, who knew the law, said that he found "more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands." In the midst of his wisdom it was "better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a contentious woman in a wide house." Though this were the only cloud upon the Jewish male's uncertain title, is it not enough?

There is ground for shrewd suspicion in the persistence of woman's vocal self-immolation. The art of her necessities is strange. She is the only human being who is unfeignedly proud of a previous condition of

servitude. She invokes high authority to declare that "the very word 'woman' (old English, *wifmann*, etymologically meaning a wife) sums up a long history of dependence and subordination. . . . The dependent position of women in early law is proved by the evidence of most ancient systems."* In a footnote, the writer admits that "in the earliest extant code, however, that of Khammurabi, the position of women was free and dignified."

Yet it is generally believed that the Sumerian code, prepared under Hammurabi (or Khammurabi), was a compilation of the then existing unwritten law, as generally recognized in most if not all ancient civilizations. It is difficult to believe that the status of woman could have been other than free and dignified among peoples who worshipped the Great Mother of the Gods in the persons of Isis, Cybele, Ishtar, Venus, and Ashtoreth or Astarte; who invested every woman with

*The Encyclopædia Britannica, 11th edition.