



BY HERBERT HAVENS,

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"A Fighter in Green," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

An Opening in Life.

THE story of my life contains but one real adventure, and that occurred many years ago, when I was a mere boy almost fresh from school.

It came about mainly through Uncle Tom Sedgwick, my mother's brother, a very skilful engineer, equally able to make with his own hands wonderful pieces of machinery, or to superintend their construction by others.

He was much younger than my father, a short, slight man but possessed of great strength and hard as iron. It was rather embarrassing when Uncle Tom shook hands with you thoughtlessly; his grip generally having the effect of numbing your fingers for an hour.

"What are you going to do with this boy?" said he to my father one day.

"I really don't know. There's my own profession"—my father was a country doctor with a large practice and a small income—"or the law, or I might get him a berth in Cuddle's Bank, but he doesn't seem to care for any of them."

"Quite right!" returned Uncle Tom stoutly. "Too many blanks; too few prizes. Stand up, Steph"—my name is Stephen Barton—"and let us look at you. Why, he tops me already, and has more bone than a young cart-horse. What do you say, Steph? Any desire to walk the London Hospitals?"

"Not the least, uncle!" I answered with a blush.

"Rather go to sea, eh?" at which I went very red, and Uncle Tom burst out laughing.

"The young dog's been having a course of Marryat!" he chuckled. "Splendid life, eh?"

No end of larks, adventures galore, and jolly

times all round. See the world, too, without reckoning the chance of exploring the bottom of the ocean. Shall you let him go, Harry?"

"If his heart's set on it," said my father, "but I'd rather not. If I had a friend in the service who could keep an eye on him 'twould be different."

"Just so," replied Uncle Tom. Then all of a sudden he added, "Look here, Harry, why not hand him over to me? I'll put my trade at his finger tips and while his health lasts he'll be independent. What do you think of it, Steph? A first-class engineer is not to be sneezed at, I can tell you. There's more than one man who started with me making his five hundred a year now."

"It's a splendid chance," exclaimed my father, "and I'm much obliged for the offer. Steph ought to jump at it."

"No, no," said Uncle Tom, "give him time. Let him think it over. I'm not so fond of jumping at short notice. I like to measure the distance first. There's no particular hurry. I shall be down again in a week or so, meantime you can talk it over with him."

Accordingly the next ten days were devoted to the *pros* and *cons* of the question, with the result that on Uncle Tom's next visit it was decided he should take me in hand at once.

Six months passed very pleasantly in a busy northern workshop, and I was gradually being initiated into the mysteries of wheels and cranks, of cogs and bolts, when an event happened which led to the one adventure of my life and gave me a chance of seeing more of the world than I had bargained for.

This was Uncle Tom's appointment as superintendent of machinery in the Oural

mines, which he obtained through the friendship of a Scotch engineer who had lived several years in St. Petersburg.

"Well, Steph, my boy," said he, "this somewhat knocks our plans on the head. I can't refuse this berth; it means nearly a thousand a year. Of course I can teach you almost as well out there as here; but the question is, will you care to come?"

Fancy putting that question to me! I was nearly wild with delight; the only drawback to my joy being that my father might not consent to my going. However, my uncle talked him over—my mother had been dead nearly three years—and, after a brief visit home to get the necessary outfit, we started on what in those days was a decidedly novel and not altogether safe voyage.

We reached St. Petersburg without adventure, and here my uncle had to interview some high officials and obtain the necessary papers. Neither of us understood Russian, but both being passable French scholars we found no difficulty in getting on.

As my uncle had to spend a lot of time in the government offices, I was glad to meet with a friend of his, a Mr. Maston, who took me over the town. It was a grand sight, and I shall not readily forget the long wide streets, the immense squares, the numerous bridges crossing the rivers, the magnificent buildings, the splendid palaces, and the costly churches with their marble columns and their gilded domes. The people, too, with their strange dress and customs interested me greatly, so that I was really sorry when the time came for us to move on.

From St. Petersburg we went straight to Moscow, and then, stopping only for the night, proceeded to the district of the Oural.

Being in the government, or rather Imperial service, Uncle Tom had no difficulty whatever in getting forward. On seeing the orders which he had brought from St. Petersburg everyone hastened to do his bidding. The post-masters brought out their finest vehicles and swiftest horses, the police officials saw us comfortably housed in the village inns, and I believe if any robbers had attacked us on the way the production of that paper with its official seal would have put them to flight.

But in spite of our talisman the journey was awfully dreary. It was in the fall of the year and we drove mile after mile, now through a thick wood, now over a sandy barren waste, seeing scarcely a human being from morning to night.

"Enough to give one a taste of nightmare, eh?" said my uncle. "But this is the worst of it. Macpherson tells me that Ekaterineburg is a fine town, and makes

quite a charming residence. It's the capital of the Oural and the head-quarters of the mining industry. All the gold found in the district is sent there to be smelted, and diamond workers cut all sorts of precious stones."

"Does it belong to the government?"

"To the Crown, I believe. The precious stones, I know, are the Emperor's private property; though he is lucky if he gets them all."

After the monotony of the barren wastes it was a relief to drive into Ekaterineburg, and I will say at once that it quite bore out Macpherson's description.

It was pleasantly situated on a beautiful lake, with a long stretch of pine-clad hills in the near distance. There were six or seven dome-topped churches besides other public buildings, and a number of well-built private houses.

In the centre of the town stood the government works, containing a Mint, and various apparatus for smelting gold and casting it into bars.

The machinery had been erected by an English engineer, and it was part of Uncle Tom's work to keep it in order, and to devise and make fresh appliances.

Near by was a second building, the Granlnoč Fabric, where all kinds of beautiful stone, such as jasper, porphyry, and malachite, were made into vases, tables, pedestals, and other articles. It was really a marvellous sight, and for a week after my arrival I wandered through the building feasting my eyes on the gorgeously-coloured stones—violet and purple, deep green, pink with yellow and black veins, in fact, almost all the hues of the rainbow.

Here was an exquisite table inlaid with pictures of birds, fruits, flowers and foliage, fashioned by the peasant workmen from the beautiful jasper; there a semi-transparent vase of a deep pink colour, with black and yellow veined foliage marvellously carved; farther along a group of men were cutting emeralds, amethysts, garnets, and other precious stones.

I had not come to Ekaterineburg, however, merely as a sight-seer, and after the first week I settled down to work. There was a house provided for Uncle Tom just outside the government buildings, and there, with a female attendant to wait on us, we soon became very much at home.

For a few months all went well. During the day we worked hard, and our evenings were usually spent at the house of some well-to-do resident. My French had considerably improved, and I was gradually picking up a little Russian, just enough to pass the time

of day for to ask for some simple thing in the workshop.

In my profession, too, much to my uncle's gratification, I made rapid strides, not only learning the why and wherefore of things, but obtaining the mastery over my tools, so that I could take a machine to pieces or put it together with very little outside help.

"If you go on like this," said my uncle one evening as we left the shop. "I shall have to appoint you as my assistant and draw on the government for your salary."

As it happened, our prosperity received a decided check.

Our first trouble arose through one of the minor officials named Ivan Pappaloff.

He was a short, stout, beetle-browed man with deep-set eyes,

crafty as the fox, and savage as the grey wolf in winter. On occasion he drank too much of the filthy rye spirit, which did not tend to make his company more pleasant.

I think, in the first place, he grew envious of my uncle's influence over the workmen, but, whatever the reason, it soon became apparent that he detested us both.

"Better have a care of Master Pappaloff, Steph" said my uncle, half in jest, half in earnest, "he's a vicious little beggar, and would like to do us mischief."

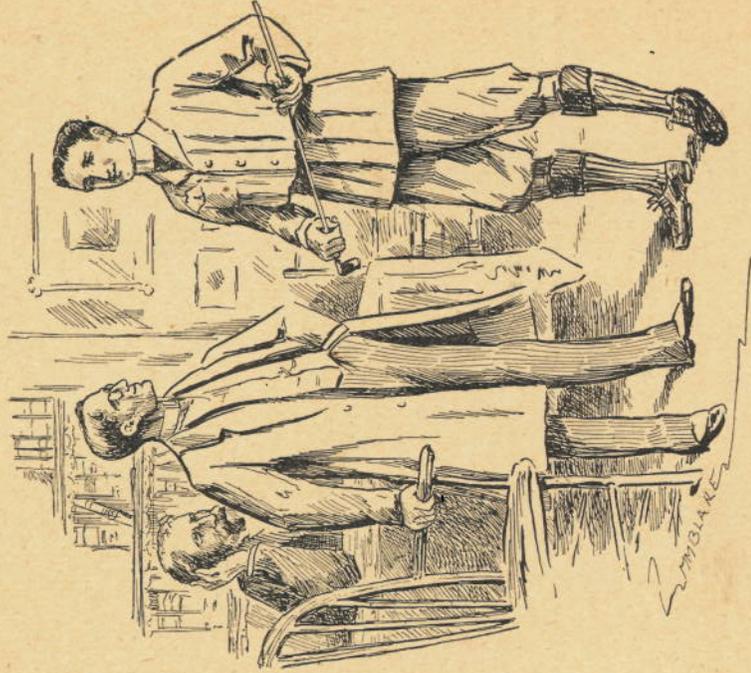
"But how can he?"

"I don't know, but he isn't likely to miss an opportunity should one turn up!"

A week or two after this I was alone in a room of the workshop when Pappaloff came in. His eyes showed he had been drinking, he lurched in his walk, while his voice was husky and thick.

He jabbered out something in Russian which of course I could not understand, so, giving him a pleasant smile, I went on with my work.

Apparently this threw him into a violent rage, and, snatching up an iron bar, he rushed at me open-mouthed. Fortunately I held a stout wheel in my left hand and with it



"WHY, HE TOPS ME ALREADY, AND HAS MORE BONE THAN A YOUNG CART-HORSE."
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parried the blow; then before he had recovered, I struck him full between the eyes with my fist and he fell over senseless.

At the sound of his falling body a couple of workmen ran in from the adjoining room, and when I had explained the circumstances—mostly in dumb show—they carried the fellow out.

This little episode did not make us any better friends, though Pappaloff never alluded to it in any way. Still, it did not improve his temper, especially when, the story becoming known, he was chaffed for being knocked down by a boy. However the noise of the affair gradually died out and to all appearance things returned to their former footing.

As far as we could tell Pappaloff did nothing against us, yet our position began to change for the worse. We were invited as usual to the principal houses, but, though our various hosts were extremely courteous, their welcome lacked that heartiness to which we had grown accustomed.

Uncle Tom, who quickly noted the change, ascribed it to the influence of Ivan Pappaloff.

"How he's managed it I can't tell," said he, "but I fully believe he has set afloat

some lying statement concerning us. We go to the *Zotoffs'* to-night, don't we? I'll tackle Nicholas and find out if he has heard anything!"

Nicholas *Zotoff* was the wealthiest private citizen in *Ekaterineburg*, and he had always shown us special kindness owing to the fact that an Englishman had once saved his life.

On this particular evening he was giving a grand entertainment at which all the chief government officials, including the director himself were present. Our host was naturally fully occupied, so that my uncle had no chance of speaking with him in private. The party was quite a smart affair, and the uniforms of the officers of the garrison, the orders of the high officials, the beautiful dresses of the ladies and their flashing jewels made a very striking and picturesque scene.

I daresay you know how sometimes without apparent rhyme or reason a dread of harm seizes one, and one feels that something evil is about to happen. So it was with me on the night of that grand party, though I could not tell why.

The mirth and gaiety were in full swing, when suddenly a strange officer, entering the room walked quietly up to the director, who turned white as death. What passed between them I know not, but they went out together. Very soon the stranger came in again and, as it seemed to me, fetched another of the guests also belonging to the government works. In this way without noise or fuss the room was stripped of all the mining or Mint officials and of those in charge of the *Granilnoï Fabric*.

At last the officer approached Uncle Tom and me.

"Thomas *Sedgwick*, engineer in charge of machinery," said he in French, reading from a paper, "and Stephen *Barton*, learner, nephew to Thomas *Sedgwick*! Please do not make a scene, but for the present you are under arrest. Come quickly with me and I will explain outside."

My uncle shrugged his shoulders, and, taking my arm, followed the officer into the hall which was filled with soldiers. In another room, guarded by two ferocious-looking *Cossacks*, we found those who had gone out before us.

Speaking in Russian, which for our benefit was afterwards translated into French, the strange officer said, "Gentlemen, many strange tales having come to the ears of our father, the *Czar*, he has sent me to search your houses, from that of His Excellency the Director, to the residence of the humblest official. My soldiers surround the town and are posted at every avenue; the man who attempts to escape is dead. I have spoken."

Almost before he had finished a loud report rang out, and one of our number fell to the ground with a bullet through his head.

"Poor chap!" said Uncle Tom. "He has killed himself. A case of guilty conscience I suppose."

His comrades looked on stolidly. The faces of a few had paled, but for the most part they seemed to regard the incident as all in the day's work.

My heart beat fast when Uncle Tom and I were handed over to the officer who spoke French, and marched into the street with an armed soldier on either side of us.

"Keep up your spirits" said my uncle cheerfully, "it's just a matter of form. As soon as they have searched the house we shall be set at liberty."

Our woman servant, half dead with fright at the appearance of the soldiers, opened the door, and was instantly seized.

Then in the most orderly and methodical manner the search began, the officer taking us with him from room to room.

The last apartment to be entered was our bed-chamber, a large room containing two beds. Here my uncle kept an iron box, the key of which he generally carried in his pocket.

"Monsieur will oblige me with the key?" said the officer affably.

"Certainly" replied my uncle, taking it from his pocket.

The officer inserted it in the lock, raised the lid, and, by the light of a candle, placed the contents, mostly technical drawings, compasses, and valuable instruments, in a pile on the floor.

"Pray take care how you handle them" said my uncle, "the mechanism is very delicate."

At last from the very bottom of the box he drew out a paper packet, and as he undid the covering a startled cry broke from our lips. There, flashing and sparkling before our eyes, lay an emerald of exquisite beauty, which we knew to have been cut not long since in the *Granilnoï Fabric*!

"I am sorry," remarked the officer coldly, refolding the paper, "you are my prisoners," and, without more ado, we were separated and marched away.

I pass lightly over the horrors of that night, when, alone in a dark cell, I lay half dazed by this sudden and unexpected calamity. The idea of Uncle Tom having stolen the gem was of course ridiculous, yet what defence could he set up?

Early in the morning a soldier brought me a pitcher of water and a lump of sour black rye bread. Later in the day he opened the door again, and by signs ordered me to follow him.

In a large room with stone floor and almost bare of furniture I found my uncle with several of the government officials guarded by soldiers, and was at once placed amongst them.

At the further end, and on a platform, sat a general whose breast blazed with decorations. A table before him was covered with papers, and several men, soldiers and civilians, stood grouped around him.

I concluded we were to be placed on our trial, and listened eagerly to the translation of the veteran's remarks. Stripped of unnecessary language the story was this. For some time it had been suspected at St. Petersburg that the Czar was being plundered by dishonest officials. Recently definite information had arrived from Ekaterinburg, and a search was secretly organised and swiftly carried out.

Against the large majority of the officials no charge was made; but several were found with gold or precious stones hidden away, for which they were now called to account.

One by one we were led up for examination, after which a few were dismissed and the others sent back to their cells.

The case against Uncle Tom and me looked very black. We were often in the Granilnoi Fabric and had access to the gems.

It was a fact, too, as a workman stated, that I was in the room when he finished the cutting of this particular emerald. An examination in court of the iron box showed it had not been tampered with, and though, perhaps, an English judge would have dismissed us for want of evidence I was not surprised when the general remanded us to our cells with an intimation that he considered us guilty.

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CHAPTER II.

Treats of my Adventure.

I know not how things are managed in Russia now, but in those days punishment was swift to follow crime. At the end of

three miserable weeks a soldier brought me a dress of sheep-skins, and in the dead of the night I was brought out, chained, and thrust into a two-horsed sledge with a Cossack to sit at my side.

The tinkling of bells in front and rear proclaimed that my vehicle was not alone, and the morning light showed me a string of sledges guarded by an escort of savage Cossacks. Of my uncle I saw nothing, though, in my mind, I had no doubt that he formed one of the dismal procession.

My desire for travelling on an extensive scale was gratified at last, yet already I wished myself back in my comfortable English home. You would not wish me to describe in detail the hardships of that awful journey, and, indeed, I could not. The whole picture is blurred in my memory.

At first we spent the nights in village hovels, but shortly there were no more villages on our route, till long afterwards, when occasionally, by a fortunate chance, we found ourselves near some filthy Tartar encampment.

Hour by hour, day by day we kept on, now travelling over some apparently limitless

expanse of snow, now toiling painfully through an immense forest, again dragging our sledges over some icy moun-



“PLEASE DO NOT MAKE A SCENE, BUT FOR THE PRESENT YOU ARE UNDER ARREST.”

tain tops where the cruel wind almost froze the marrow in our bones. At last we left our horses behind, replacing them by teams of dogs and reindeer, which drew the sledges over otherwise impracticable passes.

At night we encamped in the snow or with a tribe of wandering Tartars when we were lucky enough to find one. For food we had fish, horse-flesh, and black bread hard as stone, while occasionally we revelled in the luxury of a draught of mare's milk.

Gradually our long train diminished. At the various stopping-places parties of the exiles were left behind to make their way under escort to some dismal village in the dreary waste, while the rest were dragged further and further into the frozen wilderness.

It would have seemed less dreary had Uncle Tom been with me, but I had not once seen him. My companions were all Russians and perfect strangers; there was not even one of the Ekaterineburg prisoners amongst them!

When they spoke they talked in Russian, but there was very little conversation beyond the growl of a Cossack when, on foot, we were straining at our sledges through some rugged pass. Here and there some poor fellow, happier perhaps after all than his comrades, sank to the ground never to move in this life again.

So we went on for months, a dwindling band of gaunt emaciated figures, hollow-eyed, cadaverous, grimed with dirt, footsore and bleeding; pitiable objects, more akin to starved grey wolves than to human beings.

At last we came to our last halt but one. An officer read from a paper a list of names, and each man as his name was called, dragged himself forward.

There were but three of us to do the final stage, myself and two hang-dog looking fellows, own brothers to the wolf and tiger, whose very appearance made me shudder. So desperate and famished they looked I really thought that, but for the Cossacks, they would kill me for food.

Another week passed and then one night we came to a cluster of huts and the end of our journey. The Cossack in charge gave us over to a handsome white-haired man who quartered us among the old exiles of the village.

I shared the tent of a man named Paul Henski, who, for three days and nights, fed and nursed me as a mother would her child. When I spoke to him in French he shook his head despondingly, but it did not need words to show the kindness of his heart.

It was with some surprise I found there were no guards stationed round the village to prevent our escape, though the command-

ant had a fort and a handful of Cossacks to keep order among the exiles, whose occupation consisted of salt mining. I did not then know that the only means of escape considered possible was by the door of death.

Perhaps the knowledge would have prevented me from embarking on a wild enterprise, but I cannot tell. The horror of my life appalled me; the blank dreary monotony began to affect my brain; I burned to do something, anything, if only it would rid me for ever of that ghastly village. I do not set myself up as a hero; I formed no daring plan of escape to be carried through at all hazard, after the fashion of the indomitable young gentlemen in story books; only I was heart-sick and home-sick, longing for the sound of my father's voice and a sight of his kindly face.

And thus it came about that I started on a journey of which the end, in all human probability, was a lonely death in a dreary wilderness. To go back was impossible; my one idea was to seek the sea-coast.

It was night when I slipped away from the village with the stars for my guide and a crust of black bread for my food. All night and far into the day I walked, resting only when the sun stood high overhead. Then I ate a scanty portion of my black crust and went on again.

For miles around stretched a boundless plain, on which I could see no sign of any living creature, nor hear a sound save the whistling of the wind. The silence and solitude awed me, making me feel very near to death. Every muscle of my body ached, my eyes smarted with agony, my head grew dizzy, I dragged my limbs along with painful effort.

Yet there was no returning! I could not find the village now even if I wished, so there was nothing for it but to go on, on till—I hardly dared complete the thought.

How they would mourn at home and wonder what had been the end of Poor Steph! It was easy to picture my father's sorrowful looks, and even to hear the saddened voices of my brothers and sisters. It was, I suppose, love of life that kept me struggling onward, though twenty times an hour I longed to lie down and have done with it.

Three times the sun rose and set, and, by the fourth morning, I had shot my bolt. My lump of black bread was devoured to the last crumb, my legs tottered under me, my head felt like a mass of molten metal, I could do no more.

With almost a sigh of relief I lay down in the shelter of a circular mound, closed my aching eyes and fell peacefully asleep.

It was dark when I awakened, the air was



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stuffy, I could scarcely breathe, but there was a delightful feeling of warmth about me which counts for much in Siberia.

I lay for several hours in this half-conscious condition when at length daylight revealed that I was in a Tartar camp.

Presently a group of uncouth men women and children gathered round me, jabbering incessantly. Of course I did not understand a word, but I tried to explain by signs how grateful I was for their kindness.

Then I endeavoured to tell them of my wish to reach the sea where I might go on board a ship, but of this they seemed to have no knowledge. However, they treated me kindly, and when, two days later, they moved their camp, I was wrapped up comfortably and placed in a sledge.

In this way I lived several weeks, always journeying eastward, to my unbounded delight, till one day we encountered a fresh tribe. A great conference was now held and I was brought forward for inspection. The chief men of the different tribes jabbered to each other at a great rate, and I hope they found the meeting satisfactory; to me it certainly seemed very ludicrous.

After a long palaver I was handed over to

the strangers, who appeared to be a superior tribe to that I had received so much kindness from. They had much finer flocks and herds and more elaborate tents; but, judging by their skins, no greater practical experience of water!

One of their young men displayed the greatest interest in me, sharing his tent and food with me, and trying hard, but with little success to carry on a conversation.

I fancy he was a polished young Tartar, perhaps a prince of the blood, who had travelled a bit and seen the world. One day while we were bobbing our heads and grunting in lieu of speech I had an idea.

Getting a piece of wood I fashioned a rough boat, and, setting it in a pan of water, looked earnestly at my companion.

An expression of understanding came into his eyes, he nodded his head vigorously and clapped his hands. Naturally I felt proud of my inventive genius, and should scarcely have looked at Robinson Crusoe had he happened to pass that way with his man Friday.

First pointing to the boat, I took the royal Tartar—who ought to have been a prince if he wasn't—outside the tent and turned my

face to the different points of the compass in succession, and when I faced the east he clapped his hands in approval. The next thing was to make him understand my desire to reach the coast, which he soon did as I could tell by the sorrowful look in his eyes. At first he endeavoured to induce me, by signs, to stay with the tribe; but, at length, finding his efforts unavailing, he brought a couple of shaggy-haired ponies to the tent, filled a bag with provisions, and led me away eastward.

At the end of three days' steady travelling we reached a fair-sized river, and next morning my desert friend explained by pointing to the sun, holding up his fingers, and other signs, that in about two days I should find myself at the sea. He would have pressed his pony upon me; but as my purpose was to find a ship I declined the offer, and, after thanking him as well as I could for his kindness, I set out on foot for the coast.

The danger was by no means over, since I knew nothing of the country and was as likely as not to fall into the hands of the Russians. However, I had recovered my strength and was well supplied with food, so I walked on with a fairly light heart.

Reaching the mouth of the river on the second evening I came upon a few scattered huts near the sea-shore, and, stealing forward cautiously, to my delight saw a small vessel fastened by a rope to a primitive quay.

Several boxes and large bales lay about, and, hiding behind one of these, I waited patiently for the closing in of night.

I dared not show myself lest the ship might be a Russian, though it was quite unlike anything I had ever seen before.

Several men were hard at work close by, but presently they stopped and came down the quay as if they intended to visit the wretched settlement. Now or never was my chance. With beating heart I crawled to the edge of the quay and swung myself noiselessly on board the strange-looking craft. The hold was half full of bales, and, grasping the edge firmly, I let myself down into it. Then, crawling into a corner, I crouched behind some bales.

It was very dark, and I liked not the sound of the waters swishing mournfully against the vessel's sides, while the rats scampering over my legs were not the most pleasant of company. I stuck to my post all through the night, however, and also the next day, when the men completed the loading of the ship.

Another morning came and I knew by the vessel's movements that we were at sea. I had accomplished something toward my escape, and, unless the ship was bound for a

Russian port, I was hardly likely to be sent back.

One great danger, which in my folly I had overlooked, stared me in the face. Hunger I might have dealt with, but not thirst, and shortly after the vessel put to sea I was in agony for want of something to drink. Water I must have or go raving mad, and at last in desperation, I crawled to the centre of the hold and beat feebly on the hatches.

Presently the covering was withdrawn, and, looking up, I saw a short swallow-faced man with black eyes and hair, who stared at me both in astonishment and fright. "Water!" I gasped, "Water!" and pointed to my mouth.

At this other men, evidently of the same nationality, came running up, and, having raised me from the hold, one of them brought a pannikin of water which I swallowed at a draught.

Then the captain came, and, I suppose, asked questions, but, being ignorant of his language, I could only shake my head till at last I caught the word "Russ."

"No, no!" I exclaimed, "English! English!" which I think he understood.

These strange-looking men who proved to be Japanese were very good to me. They provided me with everything necessary, and once more I began to feel quite comfortable.

But my old dread revived when, after an uneventful voyage, the vessel neared her destination. Where we were I knew not, nor what would be done with me, and I was in a fever of anxiety.

One morning we glided into a large port. It seemed a busy place; numerous vessels lay at anchor, busily loading or unloading their cargoes, and, to my unbounded joy, I saw the English flag flying on the one nearest us.

Making my way to the captain I pointed this out, exclaiming, "English! English!" and tapping my breast.

As we anchored, half a dozen men came to the stern of the English boat to watch our proceedings, and I waved my hand to them frantically.

"All right, old boy!" shouted one, grinning. "Go it! What's the matter. You seem desperately glad to have reached harbour!"

"Who is he, at all?" said another. "He's no Jap, I'll take my davy! He looks as much like an English youngster as anything else!"

At this I laughed aloud, calling out, "I am an English boy, and would like to come aboard you."

"What are you doing there?" asked they. "I will explain presently!"

All this time the Japanese captain was superintending the mooring of his vessel, but

as soon as this was done he stepped ashore bidding me follow.

Then a grave middle-aged man with a kind face came to us from the English ship, and I told him in a few words who I was and what had happened.

"Poor boy," said he, "you have had more than your share of misfortune, but I hope your trouble is over now. You are at Nagasaki, and in a day or two I sail for Hong-Kong where I will get you a passage for England. Now we had better see the British Consul. Ah, here is an interpreter! Now we can thank this gentleman for his kindness, but perhaps it will be as well not to touch on your Russian adventure."

Having, by the aid of the interpreter, thanked the Japanese captain, we proceeded to the residence of the consul, where I related my story and an arrangement was made to send me home.

The captain had truly prophesied that my troubles had come to an end. The English sailors, officers and men alike, vied with each other in showing me the greatest kindness, and never seemed tired of listening to the story of my adventures.

The first mate provided me with a suit of good clothes which a sailor, skilful with his needle, altered to fit me; and at Hong-Kong, where I had to wait nearly three weeks, the captain insisted on supplying me with money. This I expended in buying presents for the loved ones at home.

From Hong-Kong I proceeded in a clipper-ship to London, whence I made the best of my way home, having previously advised my father by letter of my coming.

How they greeted me you may easily imagine! My father said few words, but the grip of his hand and the look on his face spoke volumes.

"Dear old Steph!" whispered my brother Jack. "Thank God you've come back!"

As for the girls, I don't know if they laughed or cried most, but they smothered me with kisses and were riotously happy.

What a night it was! Everyone, even Hester, who was usually nodding in her chair soon after tea-time, scouted the idea of going to bed, so we sat in the dear old room, where, after unpacking my treasures, I

related all that had occurred since my leaving home.

But I was not the only one with a story to tell. When I had made an end and was lamenting Uncle Tom's sad fate, my father interrupted me, smiling pleasantly.

"Ah, my boy!" said he, "that is a surprise we have kept till the last. Where do you think Uncle Tom is?"

"Dead!" I answered, "or as good as dead somewhere in the Siberian Desert."

Hester laughed and clapped her hands, saying, "Guess again!" but my father seeing my intense anxiety, said "You're wrong, Steph! He is in Ekaterineburg mending his machines at a double salary, and his only grief is that he imagines you are dead. What do you think of that? Here, read his letter and see for yourself."

I shall not relate all that my uncle wrote, but this is the gist of it.

He had never left Ekaterineburg nor been sentenced to any punishment whatever, and my own trip to Siberia had been the result of an official mistake. The general had directed that we should be kept in prison till special orders came from St. Petersburg. Before that time arrived, however, our servant, stricken with remorse, had made a clean breast of the conspiracy. The real culprit was Ivan Pappaloff with whom she was on friendly terms. Having made a false key he had stolen the emerald and induced the woman to place it in my uncle's box, having first sent a message to the government at St. Petersburg accusing the officers generally of dishonesty. As the result of the servant's confession Pappaloff was sent to end his days in Kamchatka, my uncle was set at liberty, and a Cossack guard despatched to bring me back from Siberia.

Learning of my escape the soldiers naturally concluded I was dead, and everyone who knew anything of the district shared their opinion.

"We must write to Uncle Tom and tell him the exact state of affairs!" I exclaimed.

"Do you think of going back?" asked my father, a gentle smile lurking around the corner of his mouth.

"No!" said I with such emphasis that the girls looked up in astonishment. "I have had my fill of travelling for a time, and will finish my apprenticeship nearer home, thank you!"

