

AN AGED CONVICT AND HIS SOLDIER SON.

NEAR the city of Vladivostock, where the construction of the new Siberian railway was lately commenced in honour of the Tsarevitch's visit, there are among the workmen or helots, whose guerdon is many stripes and no pay, some thousands of the least criminal convicts in the country. Among those who are being punished for acts which have absolutely nothing in common with moral crime was one hoary old man of venerable aspect, a native of Koorok, who had deliberately trodden on the chain of the Governmental surveyor as he was measuring the ground because he was suspected of an intention to transfer some of the peasants land to the Crown. This imprudent act was labelled 'violent resistance to the lawfully constituted authorities,' the old man was found guilty, and as the rigour of Siberia were deemed inadequate to give this daring spirit his due he was deported to the more terrible island of Sakhalien. When the scarcity of free workmen began to be felt, he was taken from there, conveyed to Siberia, and sent to work along with one of the convict gangs. One day he was struck by the familiar look of the soldier who, with loaded rifle, guarded his gang; and he made bold to ask him whence he came. To this question the soldier, forbidden by the military rules to enter into conversation with the convicts, gave no reply. The old man, however, grew more fidgety, soon ceased work altogether, and fixed his dark, piercing eyes on the soldier. At last, unable to control himself any longer, he pronounced a Christian name softly, calling out, 'My dear, dear son.' The soldier quivered, grew pale, with an effort compressed his lips, convulsively clutched his gun and pulled himself together for a moment—but it was only one moment: the next his emotions had completely mastered him, his hands dropped helplessly to his sides, his rifle slipped with a dull thud to the ground, and he himself fell heavily without a word or a moan, as if cut down by a scythe. The old father threw himself on his body, called him tenderly by his pet name, and covered him with tears and kisses. The other guards and taskmasters, seeing, without understanding, what had happened, rushed to the spot, surrounded the convict, who, it was evident to them, had felled his guard, and raising the butt-ends of their guns, prepared to dash out his brains. Some of them next tried to remove him by force, but he held the unconscious guard so tightly locked in his embrace, kissing him and muttering to himself, 'He knows me: yes, he knows me now, my dear boy,' that they were powerless to separate them. At last they were both removed on a dray

to the hospital, and the true significance of the scene dawned on the infuriated soldiers, who were now deeply touched by what they had witnessed. 'It was,' writes my correspondent, 'a most harrowing scene—one that I shall remember with a shudder to my dying day.' The next morning the doctor declared that the soldier had lost his reason, and must be removed to a mad house. The convict, on being informed of this, and ordered to begin work as usual, refused quietly at first, then roared and raved like a maniac, and was at last put into a straight waistcoat and confined along with the other madmen.

SHE WATCHED THEM FIGHT FOR HER.

WILLIAM BRITTON and James Bell, two young farmers in Kansas, U.S.A., were in love with a young lady of the neighbourhood, and while both were afraid to put their chances to the test by asking the girl each thought that, were the other out of the way, there would be no trouble in obtaining the girl's consent to marriage. With this feeling fostered by friends the young men concluded to leave the decision to an arbitration at arms, or in other words to fight for the girl. They drew up articles of agreement to fight at a certain date, and the one who was defeated was to give up all hopes of winning the girl and was to stop going to see her. The young men then went into active training and as both had been to the State University they had some knowledge of the use of gloves. They trained hard for two weeks and then came together in an old house on a farm. The girl had got wind of the affair and with her brother went to the house before the young men got there and secreted herself where she could see the whole affair. The men came together and fought viciously for about half an hour, when it became evident that Bell was getting the worst of the battle. Up to this time the girl had apparently enjoyed the fight, but when she saw the young man giving way before his opponent she allowed her pity to interfere and she rushed from her place of concealment and stopped the fight, telling Britton that she never wanted to see him again, as she did not want to have anything to do with such a big brute. She did not tell Bell anything, but hurried out of the place and left it to be inferred that she would not look unkindly upon him should he call. The fight came to an abrupt termination, and Britton has the satisfaction that if he can't get the girl he whipped her lover.

A BAD QUARTER OF AN HOUR.

'I LEFT the drug business because something happened that nearly turned my hair gray,' said a man, whose acquaintance I made in a railway carriage, to me the other day. 'Tell me about it,' said I. 'I used to sleep over my shop, and often had to answer night calls. One night I was awakened from a deep sleep by somebody's persistency at the door-bell. I found a small boy at the door, and he handed me a prescription. I was so sleepy that I could hardly see; but I made it up, the boy paid me, and hastened away. When I went to replace the bottles I had taken from the shelves my eyes were open a little wider than in the earlier stages of my wakefulness, and I was horrified to find that instead of taking down the bottle of tincture of orange, I had used the next bottle, tincture of aconite, a deadly poison. 'I flew out of the door; I looked up and down the street. The boy had disappeared. I had never seen him before, and did not know who the medicine was for. 'I re-entered the shop, and paced up and down the floor. My hair stood on end. 'I should be notified of the horrible death of the patient, and placed under arrest. 'I saw my victim in all the agonies of aconite poisoning. 'I saw the pale face of death. I saw the family vowing vengeance. 'My heart began to thump furiously as I heard hastening footsteps. 'I peered through the window, and saw the boy who had brought the prescription. 'The bottle was gone! My only hope was shattered! With trembling hand I opened the door. The lad stood hesitating. 'Tears were in his eyes. I dared not speak. "'P—please, mister, I ran so fast that I fell down and broke the bottle, and I ain't got no more money.'" 'My heart leaped up into my throat. I felt like giving a scream of joy as I sprang forward and pulled that boy into the shop. 'I wanted to hug him. When I had overcome my emotions I gave him another bottle of medicine, didn't charge him a penny, and sent him off with the biggest handful of peppermint drops a boy ever had. 'The New High Arm Davis Vertical Feed is acknowledged by experts to be the most perfect Sewing Machine the World has yet seen.—ADVT.

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