

## The Spirit of the Cross.

By the Late Henry George, Jr.

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It occurred at Zima. This is a lonely little station on the Trans-Siberian line. Most of the men passengers had got off as usual to get the change and exercise, when the three taps of the station bell sounded, the train-master blew his shrill whistle and the passengers climbed on as our train began to move.

As we gathered way, the headlights of a locomotive were seen on the righthand tracks coming toward us. They were coming rapidly and belonged to a heavy passenger train which was to stop at this station.

Just when the engine had come very close, a man stepped from the platform to the tracks in front of it. Was he mad? The train was almost upon him! Was he blind, deaf? Was he drunk? He carried a small parcel close to his head? Was he hiding sight of the moving monster? Did he intend—ha! he reeled! Did he catch his foot or throw himself? He was down in a flash—down across the rails! A gasp of horror—and then the engine hit him and tossed him like a bundle of rags a dozen feet along the shining lines of steel and then again rushed toward him!

There was a grinding of brakes on our train. A tall, young German, who was standing on the lowest step of our car, jumped to the ground, and shouting something in his excitement that nobody could understand, dashed down the passage between the trains toward the spot where the man had fallen.

At the head of the other train was a passenger car with heavy iron-grated windows. Soldiers with rifles stood at the doorways. "Condemned, being transported," someone said. I looked up. Behind the bars were many faces. They were exiles coming to a living death in Siberia.

As our German passenger ran crying ahead, he was mistaken for an exile trying to escape. A shout was raised. A soldier with a drawn sword sprang from somewhere and rushed in pursuit. German, soldier, and all, came to a sudden stop at the place of the tragedy.

The man who had stepped down on the tracks a moment before was in a heap under the tender; arm and leg gone and a terrible gash on the head. White-faced men lifted him out and placed him upon our train, to be carried to the nearest point for surgical treatment. But it was against hope. The spark of life soon fled.

Who was he? Nobody seemed to know. His clothes showed him to be of the peasant class—that class that has to work so hard and gets so little in life. His face was lean and gaunt, in spite of his obvious early manhood. A reddish young beard covered his chin.

Was there no writing, nothing to identify him? Nothing. The parcel he had carried proved to be only a few old garments—perhaps all he had in the world. This unknown being, whom some woman, with fear and pain and joy, had brought into the world, had given suck, reared through childhood and youth to manhood, and perhaps his twenty-fifth year, had now closed his account with the Most High—perhaps tired to death of living the hard life on the Siberian frontier. "Finished," was entered upon the Great Ledger—finished, when life should have only begun.

I turned away physically and spiritually sickened and walked back toward my car. As I did so I was accosted by voices from a prison window of the other train. Looking up, I saw the faces of three young women peering through the bars in excited questioning. A light came from the interior, throwing their heads into silhouette. All three were less than twenty-five; not refined, but in the early flower of life, with firmness and strength in mouth and eye. One had beautiful hair, which the light behind lit up like a halo—a halo in this Siberian prison car; a halo going to the horrors of the convict life!

I understood not their tongue, but I knew from their manner and strained expressions that they asked what had happened. I said a few words and made signs toward the wheels. They caught the meaning and drew in their breath in pained sympathy.

These poor young creatures, going in a barred and guarded car to the Dread Realm of Despair, could yet pour out their hearts' feeling for one whose life had been ground out under the wheels!

Or was it that they envied him? He had now done with the pains and terrors of it all!

What could I do? What could a thousand such as I do? What can any do until the people of Russia themselves arouse from their dull submission to the military despotism that sucks the blood of their labor while it beats them with rods of iron?

I had gone further along toward my car when I was stopped by voices from another

window. This, also, was barred; but men's not women's faces, were here. One face fascinated me—that of a young student-like man, with wavy hair and gold-rimmed spectacles. I had seen his type often in New York—spoken with his kind often from the same platforms for Free Russia.

He was going—where? Perhaps to the mines! For what? Maybe for the expression of political opinions that we in this country hold as cheap as the encompassing air.

He questioned me—doubtless asked what had happened. I answered as well as I could. He, too, showed in his face his heart's pity—this better nurtured man who was going to serve the bloom of his life in the terrible wilderness! Yet he could forget self in such a plight and give his pity to another!

Is not this the spirit of the Cross? And shall it not yet overthrow the Crowned Tyranny on the banks of the Neva?