

# THE EDGE OF HAZARD

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BY GEORGE HORTON

## CHAPTER I.

## An Adventure in Photography.

Frederick Courtland Hardy, ex-member of Mrs. Johnny Folkstone's smart set of Boston, ex-cotillion leader, yachtsman and clubman, was on his way to Russia to take charge of one of the American Trading Company's stores at Stryetensk. He had lost his money and his fair-weather friends, and had been jilted by a girl who, as it proved, was not the ideal of nobility and womanly grace he had supposed her to be. Though plucky, he was, to use an expression more forceful than elegant, "sore." Had he but known it, the escape from the girl was a bit of good luck sufficient to compensate him for the loss of his wealth; for no woman who deserts a man at the first blast of misfortune is good to tie to for a lifetime. He did not realize this, for it is hard to be philosophical when a man has just lost his girl, his friends and his money.

He received his appointment to Siberia through a friend of his father's, old Frederick Emery, who had gone out to that country some years before and came back to Boston on a visit, rich and eloquent of the resources and possibilities of that great empire so little known and understood by Americans.

The series of adventures that caused the ex-cotillion leader to forget his troubles began at Yokohama, and dated with his first meeting with Stapleton Neville in the dining room of the Grand hotel. The two men were seated together at a small table, and the American was gazing dreamily over the room, most probably thinking of the girl who dropped him when he lost his money.

"It's a jolly gay scene, isn't it?" remarked his vis-a-vis, smiling pleasantly. He was a florid blonde man, with the peachy complexion of a Swede, rather thick lips and nostrils, a square chin, the bluest of blue eyes and white even teeth like those of a young dog. His expansive shirtbosom, for he was in evening dress, displayed to the best advantage his depth of chest.

"These people seem to be all Americans," remarked Hardy. They looked like Americans, and the accent of those passing by, or sitting near enough to be heard, was unmistakable.

"Yes," replied the other, "I suppose they are, nearly all of them. The show places of Japan are thronged with your countrymen at this season, and they make fashionable resorts of them. I have been staying here for several months, and I do believe I'm about the only Englishman here. Permit me to introduce myself"—and he produced a card, bearing the name "Stapleton Neville, Travelers' club, London."

"My countrymen," replied Hardy, offering his own card, "have a way of taking America with them wherever they go. They travel to the ends of the earth to get out of their own land and then they so thoroughly Americanize their favorite foreign resorts that they might quite as well have stayed at home."

"When do you leave?" asked Neville.

"The day after to-morrow," replied Hardy. "I am on my way to Russia on business, and I am supposed to get there with a little delay as possible."

"But there is no boat starting for a week. You can't very well leave for Vladivostok day after to-morrow."

Hardy smiled. "You forget our American enterprise," he replied. "I have learned that a small boat leaves Hakodate in three days, crossing the Japan sea, and that by taking the train northward through the island, I shall arrive at Aomori, near the northern end of Nippon, in time to connect with this boat. I have already had the agent here telegraph for passage for me. I shall thus save a week's time, and shall be able to see, from the car window, the interior of Japan—that portion of the country which our friends in the dining room there get little idea of."

"By Jove! Do you know that would jolly well fit in with my plans, if you wouldn't object to a traveling companion and there should be room for me, also?"

"I'd be delighted," replied Hardy; "charmed, I assure you, to have you come along. Traveling alone is a bore. Shall you be going through to Aomori?"

"Farther than that. I, too, am going to Russia, through to Moscow, and from there back to England."

"Why, then," exclaimed Hardy, "I shall have you as far as my destination, Stryetensk!"

"Exactly so. And, as we are leaving the town so soon, what do you say to our prowling about to-morrow, to give you an idea of the bally place, and to taking it in in the evening in a jinrikisha? It's very picturesque, both by night and by day, and you'll not find me a poor guide, as I have knocked around considerably since I have been here."

The American fell in with this plan gratefully, and thought himself in good luck that he was about to have

for a guide an Anglo-Saxon who knew the principal places of interest, and possessed a slight command of the language. Neville, he learned, had been in the country over three months.

They were out early the next morning and spent the entire day tramping about the fascinating streets of the Japanese city.

"Did you bring your camera with you?" Neville asked Hardy, as the latter appeared on the veranda of the hotel, where he found his new-made friend waiting. "There's a deal to photograph and these people are certainly picturesque, even if they aren't much else."

"Will they allow one to take photographs?" asked Hardy.

"Oh, certainly. There are no restrictions, whatever. Their civilization is imitative, you know—copied mostly after the English and American. They

today if you resist. I beg that you will not compel me to have the camera taken from you forcibly." Hardy rarely allowed himself to exhibit excitement.

"Better hand it to him," advised Neville. "He is evidently laboring under some mistake, which the authorities will be jolly well anxious to rectify when they find it out."

Hardy handed over his camera. "I'll go with you to the police station," he said to the officer.

"Do not put yourself to the trouble," said the Japanese, "the police will know where to find you when they want you. The instrument will be returned to you, when we are through with it, at the Grand hotel."

"Well, I call that cool!" said Hardy, as he stood watching the three men, who were walking off with his camera. "I'll have that instrument back if I have to stay here a month and make an international affair of it. I

which it was necessary to get out and walk; and of steep declivities where the man-horse leaned back at an angle of 45 degrees and the muscles on his legs stood out in knots.

"I say," cried Hardy to Neville, "if this thing ever gets away from him I'll be in a pretty pickle."

"You'd travel to the bottom jolly fast!" laughed Neville, who did not seem to be the least bit nervous.

There were innumerable paper lanterns, of course, and one quarter of the town was lighted as if for a lawn party.

They were sitting on the floor in the back room of a tea-house, listening to the music furnished by three geishas, when they were arrested. Hardy had felt it a privilege to go into this place, because his companion assured him that it was the real thing, and not one of those resorts that are run for foreigners. This statement was borne out by the fact that the dozen or more patrons whom they found there were natives, with the exception of one, a little foreigner who spoke bad English, and who, as Hardy remembered afterward, sat offensively close to him. This man had a profuse, shapeless beard and bad teeth and persisted in drawing Hardy and Neville into conversation. The American took a dislike to him from the first.

"Don't resist, don't resist," whispered Neville, as four policemen stepped up to them. "It won't do you the least good in the world, don't you know. They've made some blooming mistake, and when they find out what it is they'll do everything in their power to make amends."

"I haven't the least idea in the world of resisting," replied Hardy good-naturedly; "this is really interesting. Whom do they take us for, I wonder?"

They were escorted to a cab and whirled off to a large modern-looking building of stone, whose front was lighted by an electric globe. They

plished; "if you wish to talk with me, you will have to find some one who can speak English."

"I was not talking Japanese to you, as I think you know," replied his inquisitor, in absolutely perfect English. "You are too modest as to your really remarkable linguistic acquirements. But if it suits you to speak English at the present moment, I shall be most happy to oblige you. I am sorry to inform you that you must submit to being searched."

"Now, really, wouldn't that be carrying matters too far?" asked Hardy. "I had intended to take this thing good naturedly, as it interests me; but searching me—I really think I shall enter a protest against that. I am an American citizen, you know, and if any indignities are offered me, I shall not fail to demand redress."

"Unfortunately, we have nothing to do with that feature of the case," replied the Japanese. "We are under orders, and we trust you will not put us to the disagreeable necessity of using force."

"Well, go ahead," said Hardy cheerily, "and if you find anything out of the ordinary, I'll eat it."

They stepped briskly up to him and began to run their hands rapidly and deftly over his clothing and through his pockets. As they worked, he talked.

"If this had happened in Russia, now, where every man is suspected of being an anarchist or a spy, I shouldn't have wondered at it. But we Americans have begun to look on you Japanese as civilized people. We call you the Yank,—hello, what's that?"

They had taken from his overcoat pocket a bundle of papers, which they opened under the electric bulb hanging from a wire in the middle of the room and began to examine. Hardy stepped forward briskly, out of curiosity, but one of them threw out an arm as rigid as a bar of steel and pushed him back as easily as if he

nature of your mission in this country."

"I should like to see those papers," said Hardy. "I can not imagine what they are, that you should be interested in them. I didn't know that I had any papers in my overcoat pocket."

The general smiled. "We shall be under the necessity of detaining you," he said, "and of examining you more at our leisure." He pushed a button in the wall. Two soldiers entered. "You will go with these men."

"But you are making some great mistake, that will get you all into trouble. I am a well-known American citizen, now on my way to Russia. I arrived only this morning, direct from my country. I demand to be taken before the American consul—or, better, I will send for him."

"You say you arrived this morning?" asked the general. Hardy's earnestness was so great that it was almost convincing. Besides, the Japanese had no desire to alienate American sympathy.

"Come out into my office and wait a while," he said; "I will telephone to your consul."

Hardy found Neville still waiting in the office, smoking a cigar and appearing quite cheerful, under the circumstances.

"Oh, this is good of you to wait for me," said the American, sitting down. "Couldn't help it, my dear fellow," replied Neville. "They haven't let me go yet."

"But what do they suspect me of? What have I—what have we done? Have you any idea what those papers were that they found in my overcoat pocket?"

"Not the least in the world, but I suspect. You see, these people are simply spoiling for a fight with Russia. They talk and think of nothing else. Japan is a volcano of war, ready to erupt at any moment. Consequently, they are suspicious of foreigners. They probably take you for a Frenchman or a Russian—a spy, in fact."

Neville spoke quite loud, so that it was possible for any of the officials standing near to hear him. Hardy admired his imperturbability. The consul soon arrived, a forceful man who understood his business. Hardy produced his passport, a card, and several letters.

"I am on my way to Russia," he said, "to take a place with the American Trading Company at Stryetensk. I have bought my ticket, and must get off in the morning."

The consul led him to one side. "Those papers found on you are plans and specifications of the fortifications here," he whispered. "The authorities were rendered suspicious of you to-day through finding you in the act of photographing the harbor defenses. They have developed your films and they find a very good picture of the forts and the approach to them by sea."

Hardy laughed. "I do seem to be a deep and dark villain, don't I? Yet, I assure you I was only taking an innocent view of the town."

"But how did you come by the plans and drawings?"

"I haven't the least idea in the world. I didn't even know there were any fortifications here."

"I believe you," said the consul. "Somebody, hard-pressed by the police, must have unloaded on you. What do you know about this—what's his name, who is with you? Where have you been?"

"This man with me? Why, he's Neville, an Englishman. Everybody knows him and all about him. He's a gentleman. We've been taking in the sights together in a jin-by Jove, I have it. In that place where we were arrested there was a most offensive chap who insisted on rubbing up against me. His face was covered with whiskers. He was a Russian, of course. He's the man!"

The consul held a long conference with the general and the latter held one with his subordinates. As a result, the two men were allowed to go, the Japanese so overwhelming them with courtesy on their departure that Hardy, on the whole, was rather pleased than otherwise at his strange adventure.

"The bewhiskered gentleman at the cafe chantant, or whatever you call it, was the man who put the papers in my pocket," laughed Hardy to Neville, as he bade him good night at the Grand. "But why doesn't he disguise himself? Anybody would know that he was a Russian with those whiskers. If there ever was a man who looked the part, he's the one."

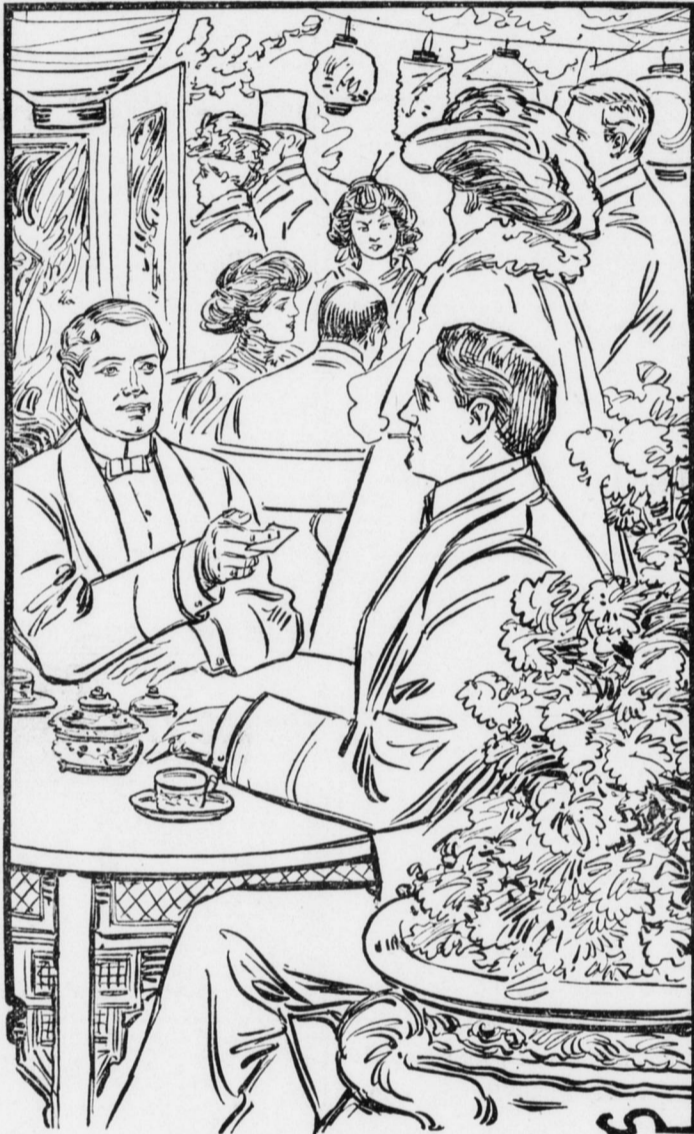
"Perhaps the whiskers were artificial," suggested Neville. "Perhaps they were," mused Hardy. And that, too, seemed probable. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

## The Difference.

"In novels, the father is always wanting the son to carry on the old family business."

"What of that?"

"In real life when a boy wants to learn his father's business, the old gentleman usually threatens to break his neck."



Produced a Card Bearing the Name.

allow perfect freedom in such matters, simply because the Anglo-Saxons do. They are a nation of monkeys."

Hardy went back after his kodak. The two men, as they walked away from the front steps of the Grand hotel, presented, in their physical appearance, as great a contrast as possible: Neville, tall, large-boned, florid, blue-eyed, thick-lipped; Hardy of medium size, dark, slender, well-knit, and so erect that he seemed to be slightly taller than he really was. His suit of dark gray fitted him with that unobtrusive elegance that proclaims the most expensive American tailors, while his gold-rimmed pince-nez added intellectual distinction to a high-bred, somewhat ascetic countenance.

In the afternoon they walked down toward the sea-shore, the Englishman still acting as guide. "That would make a fine view," suggested Neville, "those houses along the beach, that bit of sea, and the hills yonder."

"That is so," assented Hardy. "I believe I'll take it. If I'm not careful, I shall get all my films covered with babies." He opened his camera and rolled out the bellows. Then he strolled back and forth for several moments, gazing into the finder, as he tried to decide on the composition of the view that he would take. He pressed the bulb and was closing the instrument when a Japanese in European dress stepped up to him and laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"You must give me that camera, sir," said the Japanese quietly, in perfect English. Hardy looked about in amazement. Naturally his first thought was that he was being robbed.

"Don't try anything of that kind here, my man," he replied, "or I'll give you into the hands of the police." The threat was suggested by the presence of two police officers who were standing near, evidently watching the scene. The Japanese now called to them in his own tongue and they approached.

"I am an officer of the law," he said, "and you will be taken into cus-

wonder what they wanted of it. What do you think?"

"I haven't the least idea," replied Neville. "Probably they have heard that some other country prohibits taking photographs. As I told you, they are a nation of monkeys."

Mr. Hardy found his camera on his return to the hotel, with a note stating that the films would be returned to him in the morning, developed. The incident, which had been conducted in a masterful manner, threw a new light on Japan. It led him to believe that this was something more than a comic-opera country, and that the inhabitants were not all babies.

## CHAPTER II.

## Searched by the Police.

"The Anglo-Saxons are the only people who have any idea of personal liberty," remarked Hardy, as the two men stood on the steps of the hotel, waiting for their jinrikisha to arrive. "Fancy the authorities in New York or London taking away your camera and developing the films, just to see what pictures you have taken! Well, I got my camera back all right, and I'm going to consider myself in luck because I get my films developed free of charge. I wonder if there's anything else this obliging people would like to do for me before I go away?"

At this moment the jinrikisha came up and the newly-made friends started out for their night expedition about the streets of Yokohama—such an excursion as only Pierre Loti or Lafcadio Hearn could describe adequately. An American's chief sensation on first getting into a jinrikisha is loss of dignity. There you sit, perched in a narrow trim baby carriage, driving a bare-legged little man with an inverted fish-basket on his head.

They trotted from place to place till midnight or after, Hardy enjoying himself hugely. He took away with him a confused memory of dark, narrow streets swarming with Japanese, mostly babies; of occasional low buildings where something seemed to be going on inside; of steep activities at



"I Am an Officer of the Law."

walked up a broad flight of stairs and entered a room, in the center of which a middle-aged Japanese, in the uniform of a general in the army, sat at a table writing. He was a corpulent man, in whose shrewd eyes and stern features European training contended with Mongol cunning. He spoke for a very few moments in a low tone with a subordinate, and, evidently as a result of this conference, Neville was led from the room. He returned after about 20 minutes and Hardy glanced at him curiously. If anything unpleasant had been done to him, it did not show in his face—a fact which the American attributed to the other's British imperturbability.

Hardy himself was now led away. He was taken into a room about ten feet square, with bare floors and not an article of furniture. He found himself alone with two Japanese, one of whom addressed him immediately in a language that he did not understand.

"I can not speak Japanese," he re-

were a child. As nearly as he could tell from the distance maintained, the paper seemed to be covered with drawings and plans of some kind.

"I never saw that before!" he exclaimed, much wondering. They went out together and left him in the middle of the room. Having nothing better to do, he lighted a cigarette and attempted to study it all out, standing there with his hands in his pockets.

"I only hope they don't keep this face up till I miss my train," he mused; "I have bought my ticket."

He was not kept waiting long. The general himself came in to see him.

"Of what am I accused?" asked Hardy, "and why am I subjected to these indignities?"

The general also spoke English. He had shrewd, fearless, penetrating eyes, and an absolutely dispassionate, businesslike air.

"You can not brazen the matter," he replied. "The papers found on your person leave little doubt as to the