

THE EDGE OF HAZARD

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BY GEORGE HORTON



"If You Find a Jew Here, I Will Agree to Eat Him."

I fear you haven't acquired the commercial spirit yet, my boy. Big contracts, tremendous sales, high prices. An unparalleled demand for everything on earth. Business! business! business, till you can't rest—that's what war means! We'll have tremendous shipments of goods sent over to Vladivostok, and every steamer that comes up the river bringing them to our stores. It'll be a big war, a great big war, for little Japan is going to give Russia the fight of her life!

"Do you think so?" asked Hardy, wondering. "Do you think Japan will be able to stand up against Russia?"

"Stand up against her!" shouted Emery. "Why, she'll make her tremble to the very foundations. My friends out there will have something beside Jew-baiting to attend to when that war breaks out. I've been in Japan, looking the ground over, and I know what I'm talking about. Did you ever see a mother cat pounce on a big clumsy dog? Well, Japan is a whole nation of wildcats, 30,000,000 wildcats, and Russia is the clumsiest kind of a clumsy dog."

"By the way," said Hardy, "I wonder what became of Mordecai's mother? I forgot all about her in the excitement."

"The Christians killed her," said Wang, who was standing in the shadow.

"Hello!" exclaimed Emery, "that boy of yours speaks Russian. And blamed well, too!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

Hardy Hesitates.

Emery stayed on in Stryetensk, lengthening his visit into months, and Hardy became greatly attached to him, finding the companionship of this cheerful, bold, resourceful, self-made man an inspiration which the fellowship of his former society friends had never afforded him. The old merchant received frequent advices from his agent in Japan which confirmed him in the belief that war was imminent, and Stryetensk, at the head of river navigation in Siberia, seemed to him the most important of the company's posts in Russia.

Vasili, who was suspected of having been active in exciting popular hatred against Hardy, whom he regarded as having supplanted him, was transferred to Blagovestchensk. And during all this time the Korean boy, whose intelligence and adaptability were truly marvelous, steadily grew in favor with his employers. His progress in Russian was phenomenal, and as it transpired that he also knew Japanese and some Chinese, he was, after a couple of months, promoted from errand boy to the office, and set to writing letters.

In the meanwhile Hardy received another letter from the Princess Romanova, a chatty, delightful letter, in Russian this time, complimenting him on his progress in the language, and telling him much of her own life and of affairs in Moscow. Among other things, she mentioned the fact that she had spoken of his heroism on the Amur to the emperor and of the debt of gratitude that she owed him. She assured him that she would be glad to hear from him from time to time and signed her, "Your friend, Elizabetha Romanova."

In January, Emery announced to Hardy one day that he wished the young man to take a trip to Moscow and perhaps to St. Petersburg on business.

"By the way," said Hardy, stammering slightly and feeling a trifle confused, "there is a—ah—matter of which I wish to speak to you. You know this country so much better than I, and its customs. I have received an invitation from the Princess Romanova to call on her while in Moscow."

It was a little difficult to speak to Emery on this subject, he was so practical and his gray eyes were so shrewd, and at times twinkled so humorously. Yet he was thoroughly kind-hearted, he loved Hardy, both for his own and for his father's sake, and he took a paternal interest in the young man.

"Is she the one whom you saved from the Chinese brigands?"

"She is the—ah—the one whom I came up the Amur with," replied Hardy, modestly.

"Well, go and call on her!" decided Emery, without a moment's thought.

"Yes, but I feel some little hesitation. She is a princess, and I am now a merchant, and we are in Russia. I don't want her to feel under the least obligation to me for what I have done. That is to say, I do not want her to feel that I am taking advantage of it. She means all right, but taking me up might cause her some little inconvenience or embarrassment. Her relatives are proud and haughty, and I don't belong to her social set."

"Social set be blanked!" roared Emery. "Haven't you got that Boston tomy-rot out of your head yet? You're an American gentleman, and an American gentleman is good company for any princess that walks the surface of the globe. Besides, if you stay with me and this war goes right, I'll make a merchant-prince out of

you, my boy, and those are the only prices these days."

One week later, in the middle of January, Frederick Courtland Hardy crossed Lake Baikal to Irkutsk and there took the magnificent "train luxus," a nine-days' railway journey to Moscow. Though he was going on important business, yet he felt strangely agitated over the fact that he was soon to see the princess again. With the agitation, too, was mingled a certain degree of misgiving and foreboding. He was not sure that his seeing her would conduce to his peace of mind.

He was accompanied by his secretary, Wang, the Korean boy, who had rendered himself indispensable through his genius for details.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Off to Moscow.

Hardy never forgot that journey to Moscow. For days the heavy train rolled slowly along through a vast park covered with illimitable stretches of snow, or through leafless, naked forests, shivering in the cold blasts of winter. All the trains that passed were crowded with emigrants, bound for the Amur region, and the car windows were thronged with the fresh, innocent faces of children. To many of the trains prison cars were attached, bearing their sorrowful freight to the dread island of Saghalin, which has taken the place of Siberia as a land for deportation. From the windows of these cars, also, many children looked out, pressing their little faces against the bars, for the condemned are allowed to take their families with them. Hardy had long since realized that he was in Russia, the Russia of the story-books and the magazine articles.

One evening a little before sunset they came in sight of Moscow—an indistinct blur of houses, out of which loomed large and clear the towers and domes of numerous churches, many of them overlaid with gold-leaf, and glittering gorgeously in the light of the setting sun.

At eight the train drew up in the modern and commodious station at Moscow, and the American, as he looked about him, felt that he was in the heart of European civilization once more.

Wang, who was invaluable through his ready wit and his knowledge of Russian, attended to the baggage and engaged a sledge to take his employer to the Slaviansky Bazar, or hotel, the best caravansary in the city, and a very sumptuous and comfortable inn, as it proved.

For several days he devoted his entire attention to business, conferring with merchants and going over lists, prices and accounts with Wang. Meanwhile, whenever he went into the streets, the interminable procession of sledges was there, and he watched them constantly, always with one face in his mind—that graceful head held so high, with its crown of hair the color of ripe wheat and fine as spider threads. Many ladies of pure Russian type he saw, their faces peeping saucily from collars and hoods of costly fur, and often he would start and his heart would throb more violently as he thought he recognized the princess. He would generally realize his mistake, however, before the sledge would dash by with its jingling bells.

He would have gone away without calling on her had he finished his business as quickly as the original plan contemplated, but old Emery, who had come up as far as Irkutsk, kept writing to him, sending new commissions. Emery, by the way, was becoming jubilant. The diplomatic relations between Russia and Japan were growing less cordial every day; the demands of the latter country were waxing more and more insistent and difficult to evade. The Japanese, too, according to Emery's advices, were rushing preparations for a death-grapple with the bear on a gigantic scale.

"This means war, my boy," wrote the old man, "and war means business!"

So Hardy worked away, enlarging his acquaintance with the Moscow merchants, while his respect for the magnitude of their operations and for the greatness of the city's industries steadily grew.

And one evening, as he walked home to his hotel, he saw the Princess Romanova. There was no mistake about it this time, and he realized that, when it was indeed she, there could be no mistake. She was leaning back in a sledge with high curving dash, luxuriously piled with skins. On an elevated seat in front sat her coachman and footman, the former directing the energies of four milk-white steeds, whose tails were tied in knots, but whose long manes streamed wildly in the wind. Two of these horses were running free, and, thus untrammelled, the beauty and grace of their movements was a sight to be remembered for a lifetime. The princess wore a white round cap of fur, and her cheeks, deliciously reddened by the excitement and the keen teeth of the wind, were snuggled in the soft collar of a white fur cloak. Hardy



"I Shall Be Most Happy," Said Hardy.

noticed, with a thrill of distinct pleasure, that no man, but an older woman, accompanied her.

And the princess saw Hardy. As he arrested his steps at the edge of the curb and gravely lifted his hat, she bowed and, leaning forward, touched the coachman and called to him. The horses came to a sudden stop, rearing upon their haunches and plunging and slipping in a wild jumble. Presently they stopped and stood trembling. The sledge drew up to the curb.

"Why, Mr. Hardy!" exclaimed the princess in Russian, "I had no idea that you were in Moscow. How long have you been here?"

"A little over two weeks."

"Over two weeks and have not been to call on me! I do not consider that kind. Mme. Prebloff, this is Mr. Hardy, the American whom I told you about, who rescued me from the Chinese brigands, and performed such feats of valor on the Shilka. I do not see why he ever rescued me at all, if he does not think me worth calling on."

"The princess has talked constantly of you," said Mme. Prebloff; "half the young men in Moscow are waiting to challenge you. Hearing of your wonderful skill, they have all taken to practicing with the pistol. The proprietors of the galleries are getting rich, and one can scarcely sleep nights on account of the constant popping."

The princess laughed merrily. "You are positively incorrigible, Anna," she said. "But—turning to Hardy—tell me why you have not been to see me? What excuse have you to offer, sir?"

"I should have called before I left to pay my respects," said Hardy, gravely. "I have been very busy. I am here on business, you know, for the American Trading Company, buying up stock for their posts on the Amur. I—ah, had not expected to devote much attention to society."

"Mr. Hardy is a merchant, then?" inquired Mme. Prebloff, languidly. "How very interesting!"

The princess' eyes flashed dangerously, but she made no reply to Mme. Prebloff.

"But even if you are busy," she said, "you can spare a little time for your friends. Will you not call on me to-morrow evening? I shall be quite alone, and we can talk over our wonderful adventures together. Come at eight."

The horses, stung by the cold, were becoming unmanageable now and were plunging and rearing.

"I shall be most happy," said Hardy. "An revoir, then," said the princess, "I shall expect you."

She spoke to the ivoschik, and the sledge, with a sudden crash and a rhythmic jangle of bells, flew down the street. The American, with head uncovered, stood looking after it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Hardy Engages a Cabman.

"How do I look, Wang?" Hardy asked of his Korean boy, who was sitting in the room of their suite at

the hotel that did duty as an office. Wang glanced up from the pile of correspondence with which he was busy.

"You look like a gentleman," he replied, quietly.

"Thanks," said Hardy, who was in evening dress. "I am glad you think so, for the costume which I am now wearing was invented to convey the impression that a man is either a gentleman or a waiter, though it has, first and last, it must be confessed, covered the back of an occasional coward or clown. It is necessary for me to-night to look the gentleman, my boy," he added, whimsically, "for I am going to mingle with the haute noblesse. The merchant of Stryetensk, Wang, is on his way to the palace of the Romanoffs!"

Wang smiled. "Once a gentleman, always a gentleman," he replied. "There are many among the drunken, licentious and cowardly nobility of Russia who are less worthy to enter palaces than the merchant of Stryetensk!"

Hardy laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"You look pale, by boy," he said, kindly. "You are working too hard. Put these away now and go to bed, or here—take this and go to the theater"—and he laid a gold piece on the table. Wang flushed and handed the money back.

"If I go to the theater," he said, with considerable spirit, "I can buy my own ticket."

Hardy's finer feelings prevented him from smiling.

"Pardon me, Wang," he said, restoring the money to his pocket. "I did not mean to offer you charity; merely a reward for exceptional attention to duty. But I must be going. The princess said eight and it's nearly that now. Don't work any more to-night."

He was gone. "The princess!" muttered Wang, jabbing the pen, with which he had been writing, so spitefully into the table that she shattered its point. "The haughty, lemon-haired princess—and she wants nothing of him save to amuse herself! He has saved her life and now she will repay him by breaking his heart. I could kill her!"

Having given vent to this ebullition of seeming jealousy, Wang proceeded to illustrate still further the feminine nature of Korean boys, for he rested his head on his arms and sobbed for some moments violently. After which he twisted his neck about and kissed the spot upon his shoulder where his master's hand had rested.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Can Afford More.

"What makes you say that they are people of distinction?"

"Because," said the woman, "they're the only people on my route who aren't the four-chunk-a-week class."

A Long Way After.

"Why, with all the modern resources, can't they check the terrible odor of gasoline in automobiles?"

"Probably that odor was an after thought."

SYNOPSIS.

Frederick Hardy, a fashionable Boston society man, lost his wealth, was jilted by a girl and sent by a friend to take charge of an American Trading Company store in Russia. On his journey through Japan he met Stapleton Neville, supposedly an Englishman. They agreed to go together to Russia. Because of suspicious circumstances they were several times molested by the Japanese. Hardy was arrested and found upon his person were papers showing maps of Jap forts. Hardy was proven guiltless. On a train he met Ailsome Sano, daughter of a Jap merchant. In Neville's shoes Jap found pictures of forts, proving him to be a Russian spy. Hardy departed for Russia on a steamer, which was wrecked shortly after he was rescued by a Russian steamer. On reaching Vladivostok he was well treated. He started for Siberia, meeting Princess Romanova on the train. Hardy boarded a vessel for Amur. Hardy showed the princess his expertness as a rifle shot. The steamer was stranded. The princess and her maid were attacked by Chinese. Hardy saved their lives. The princess thanked Hardy for his heroism. Manchurians fired upon the vessel. Hardy slew their chief. Burning arrows were hurled upon the Pushkin's decks. An attempt was made to board the vessel. The attacking Chinese were repulsed. Romanoff sneered at Hardy's solicitude for the princess. Stanka, a messenger sent for help, was killed. Hardy volunteered to put an end to the awful torture Hardy himself put Stanka out of his misery, taking his own life in his hands. Forest fires menaced the vessel. Hardy volunteered to go for help. Refused permission he jumped overboard and started to swim with the princess' distress message. Hardy had made love openly to a Japanese girl. Help came and the princess was rescued. Hardy journeyed on a raft. Arriving at his destination he took charge of the trading company's business. Hardy received a letter from a social leader in Boston and another from Ailsome. Hardy took lessons in Russian from a Jew, thus connecting himself in a way with that race. Hardy received a letter from the princess, thanking him for his bravery. Hardy's teacher was in danger of death.

CHAPTER XXV—Continued.

A corpulent man with white side whiskers sat in it. He wore an American fall overcoat, of the latest cut and a derby hat.

"What's the matter here, friends?" he asked, standing up in the carriage. He spoke perfect, fluent Russian. There was no fear in his face, his voice, or his attitude. A sudden hush fell on the throng.

"If you please, Mr. Emery," said the tall Russian, who had acted as ring leader, "we want the Jew who is being sheltered in the store. Another Christian child has been sacrificed, and we are punishing the Jews. We want Mordecai, and if this man in the window is a Jew, we want him, too."

"He a Jew?" laughed Emery. "He is as good a Christian as any man amongst you. Do you think that I would have sent a Jew here to take charge of my store? Do you not know me better than that?"

"We thought so because he associated with a Jew constantly, in preference to Christians," said the ring leader.

"How is that, Mr. Hardy?" asked Emery, "what explanation have you to make to these good people?"

"I hired the Jew to teach me Russian," said Hardy. "He was the only

man in town who spoke English sufficiently well."

"Ah, do you see? Do you see?" cried old Emery, unctuously, waving a conciliatory arm in the air. "He made use of the Jew that he might learn the beautiful language of Holy Russia and thus become able to converse with you, his friends and neighbors, my friends and neighbors. I see it all!" Here Mr. Emery opened both palms and extended them over the crowd. "He, no doubt, kept the Jew constantly with him, that he might learn the language as soon as possible and thus get rid of him at the earliest moment compatible with his laudable purpose. You see what astounding progress he has made. I could hardly believe my ears when I heard my friend speaking Russian so well. Mr. Hardy, is there a Jew concealed in the store?"

"Nyet," replied Hardy.

"He says 'No,' and that convinces me. Nevertheless, you shall come in and see for yourselves, and if you find a Jew here, I will agree to eat him, without pepper or salt. Mr. Hardy, come down and open the door."

Hardy complied with the request, and Emery jumping briskly from the carriage, entered, calling out cheerfully:

"Vladimir, Anatoli, Sergei, come in and look about, and then you shall take out a barrel of vodka and all the friends shall drink to my safe return to Holy Russia."

The three men entered shamefacedly, protesting that they would take Mr. Emery's word as to the Jew, but he slapped them one by one heartily on the back, shouting:

"Come in, brothers, come in!"

Twenty minutes later they went out with a barrel of vodka, announcing:

"Christians, there is no Jew here. Let us drink to the health of Frederick Emery!"

The mob dispersed.

"Well!" exclaimed old Emery, as he slammed down the iron shutter, "what in the devil does all this mean?"

"It means," explained Hardy, "that there has been a massacre of Jews, and that Mordecai, whom I employed to teach me Russian, fled here for shelter. Wang, here, my Korean errand boy, and I disguised him as a priest and sent him about his business."

"Good!" exclaimed Emery, "good! Blamed clever!" He sprang to his feet and paced the store. He was an excitable man. "But I got here just in time. I came up on the Ingoda. Those blood-thirsty devils might have set fire to the store and perhaps have killed you. I think I'll stay here for a month or so, and help you out. My boy, I have great news. Good news! Glorious news!" Here he jumped upon the counter, and, sitting there, looked triumphantly at Hardy, pulling fiercely meanwhile at his side whiskers.

"What is it?" asked Hardy.

"War, my boy; war between Russia and Japan!"

"And do you call that good news?"

"Yes, for merchants, for commerce,