

# THE EDGE OF HAZARD

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BY GEORGE HORTON



He Suddenly Whipped the Pistol from His Pocket.

hind him flew open, and a half a dozen nihilists were vomited forth. Several of them were armed, and, pointing pistols at Hardy, they shrieked:

"Drop that revolver, or we shoot! you cannot escape!"

At this moment the hall door was thrown open and a man rushed to Hardy's side. It was Mordecai, the Jew, with his red eyes, his bushy red whiskers his big hook-nose.

"Mr. Hardy!" he cried, "my dear pupil!" and he sprang between the American and the pistols that were pointed at the latter's body. "Stop, brothers, stop!" he shrieked. "What madness is this? What is this man accused of? I know him. He is a friend, I will vouch for him on my life. I will defend him. If you kill him you must kill me, too."

"He is a friend of aristocrats," explained Bielinski, stepping forward; "he entered here by mistake, he says, but it is possible that he is a spy. At any rate, he knows our secret; he has overheard our plans and he will betray us. He must die."

And at this moment a loud hammering was heard on the outer or street door.

"Silence!" gasped Bielinski, in a whisper—a whisper, nevertheless, that could be heard more distinctly in the sudden silence than a shout. "What is that?"

As if in answer to his question, the door opening into the hall flew wide, and the old woman looked in, disheveled and pale, moaning as she crossed herself rapidly:

"The police! The police!"

Again that thundering on the door sounded through the house, and a stern voice could be heard commanding:

"Open, in the name of the czar!"

Hardy was forgotten. The czar, their arch-enemy, was at the gates of their fortress and his name was a word of terror. The nihilists flew past the American on tip toe, into the hall, several of them jostling and almost knocking him over in their eagerness to escape.

"Come with me!" whispered Baruch, who had regained his feet, "You must not be found here!"—and seizing Hardy by the arm, he also jumped for the open door. Hardy made no resistance, and was soon running down the long hall with the others, led by the Jew. They came to a narrow flight of stairs, leading to the cellar, and down this they crowded, scrambling and fighting, some of them losing their footing and rolling to the bottom. A loud crash arrested Hardy's attention. He was standing in the darkness, but at the farther end of the hall was a hanging lamp, turned low, and by the light of this he could see the door fly in splinters and the officers of the law pour in.

"Throw your bomb, brother, throw your bomb!" said Bielinski; and Hulin, leaping like a cat into the middle of the passage, hurled the sphere down the hall with an oath. There was a muffled report, not loud, and much jangling of glass. The light went out, but, by the momentary flash of the explosive, Hardy could see several policemen pitch forward on their faces.

"Come, come away!" said Mordecai, and Hardy scurried down the dark cellar steps with the Jew.

### CHAPTER XXXII

#### Hardy Buys an Overcoat.

They were in utter darkness now. Above could be heard a hoarse uproar, faint and confused, shouts and sounds of heavy boots on the flooring; here in the cellar, the shuffling feet of the escaping nihilists, the bump or rattle of an occasional obstruction kicked or run against, muttered oaths. Mordecai, still holding Hardy by the arm, pulled him rapidly across the cellar until they stumbled against the feet of men crawling on their hands and knees. The American pitched forward on the back of one of these, who kicked him savagely and swore a foul oath under his breath.

"Get down," whispered Mordecai, "and crawl, crawl with me!"

They passed through an opening in the wall, so low that it brought the American flat on his stomach, and still scratched his back. That it was barely wide enough for two at a time was evident from the fact that, though he had crowded close to Mordecai, the wall scraped his right side. They were through in a trice and still in utter darkness. The sound of scuffling feet again could be heard—the sound of nihilists fleeing.

"The fools!" muttered Mordecai, "they forgot to put back the stone."

It was evident from his grunts and a scratching sound that he was struggling with some heavy object.

"There," he muttered at last, "it is flush now, and just in time! Listen, my dear pupil, do you not hear them? They are in the cellar. Put your ear against the wall."

Hardy did as was requested, and he could indeed hear faint sounds on the other side of the wall.

"Where are we now?" he asked.

"We are in the cellar of the adjoining house, belonging to a member of the Order. The brothers have es-

caped by an underground passage—by an old forgotten sewer. But it will not be safe for you to follow them. They will have recovered their wits by this time and some of them will lie in wait for you and kill you, feeling sure that you will tell what you have seen and heard."

Hardy's eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness, and in the distance he could see a slit of dim gray light. He felt his way to it, striking a barrel and hitting his head against a hanging shelf on the way. By the sense of touch he assured himself that he had arrived at the cellar window, boarded up, and that the slit of gray light came through an imperfect joining. The door must be somewhere near. With his fingers against the wall, he took several steps to the left without finding it; then he returned to the right, made the same experiment, and his efforts were rewarded with success.

Mordecai was at his side.

"What are you going to do?" asked the Jew.

"I am going to walk boldly out of this door," replied Hardy. "The explosion will have drawn the whole neighborhood to the front of the house, on the other street, and I shall not be noticed. If I am, I can explain how I came here, and how I escaped. I am going to chance it, and the quicker I go the better"—and he pushed back the heavy bolt which he had found by this time. "Good-by, my friend, and thank you. I suppose you will rejoin your brethren. You have saved my life and I shall never forget it. For your sake, I will say nothing about what I have seen and heard this night. The nest is broken up for the present and the police do not seem to need my aid."

The American walked a couple of squares, then turned sharply to the right and gained the main street. He was safe now, and he hailed a passing cab, ordered the ivooschik to take him to the Slaviansky Bazar. As he stood on the walk, waiting for the vehicle to draw up, he felt chilly and, his excitement having subsided somewhat, he made a discovery that gave him a shock and filled him with a feeling of uneasiness that was destined to possess him for many days to come.

He had left his overcoat behind somewhere in that den of nihilists. He got into the cab, and, as it tore through the streets, the wheels squeaking in the snow, he sat there shivering, his chin in his hand, racking his brain to remember, if possible, whether there was anything in the pockets, a letter, cards, a cigar-case, that might betray the identity of the owner. To save his life he could not settle this point in his mind.

It was late when he reached the hotel, and just as the gray light of dawn began to sift in through the curtains, he fell into a sound slumber. It was fully ten o'clock when he went out into his office and sent for his coffee. As he was drinking it, Wang entered in great excitement, with a newspaper.

"Look at this!" cried the boy. "The police raided a den of nihilists last night, and the latter threw a bomb, killing four of the officers and wounding six others. It was the society known as 'The Enemies of Russia,' made up of disaffected Russians, Poles, Finns, even Jews—all who hate this accursed government."

Hardy glanced at the boy, marveling much at the revelation of hate in that ingenuous word, "accursed."

"Why are you an enemy of Russia?" he asked.

"Oh, for no particular reason," faltered the boy, turning pale. "I—perhaps I am not. And the nihilists all disappeared, as though the earth had swallowed them up. Not a thing was left to prove the identity of a member, except one costly, fur-lined overcoat, which proves that this society numbers among its members some of the wealthier classes, perhaps of the nobility. I tell you"—and Wang struck the paper with his right hand in his excitement—"that this country is a house divided against itself. Leave it alone, and it will work out its own destruction and salvation!"

The boy's eyes were flashing now and his cheeks were so aflame with excitement that the scar nearly disappeared.

Hardy gulped down his coffee and started for the door.

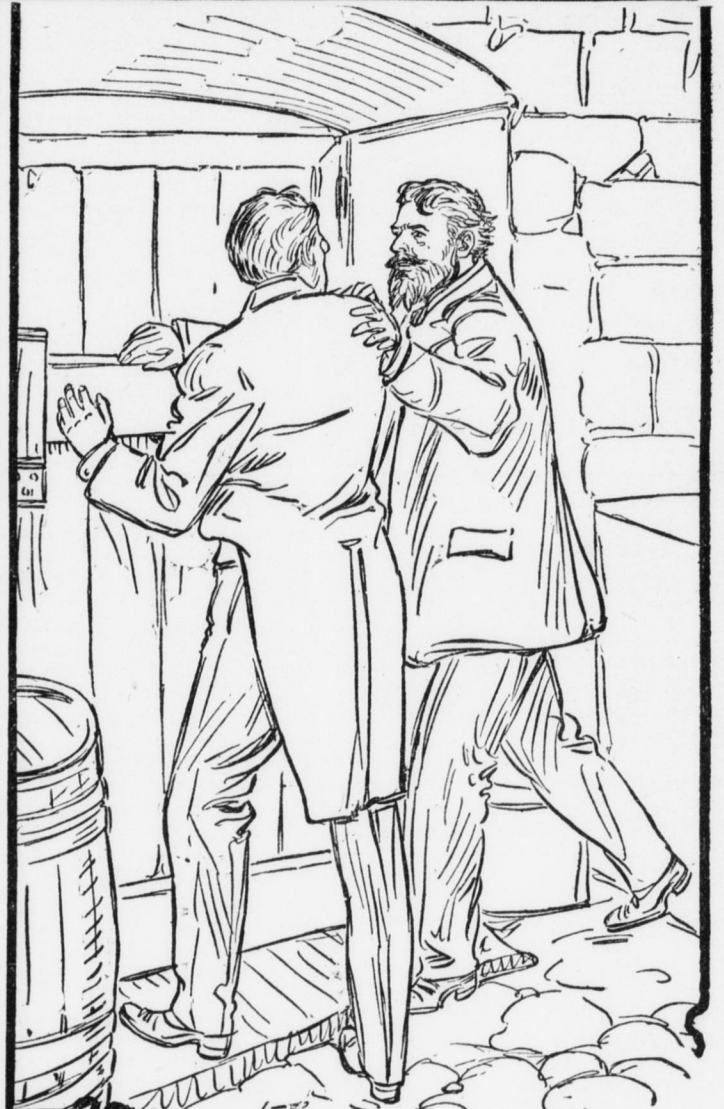
"If anybody calls for me, Wang," he said, "tell them that I will be back in an hour."

He did return in that time, wearing an exact duplicate of the overcoat that he had lost the night before. And still there was no sign of the police. He felt reassured. Had there been any telltale letters, cards or documents in the pockets of the missing garment, the officers of the law, he reasoned, would have lost no time in laying hands on him.

### CHAPTER XXXIII

#### Hardy Makes a Call.

The Princess Romanova was sitting in a gown of pale blue silk, décolleté, trimmed with dainty cream lace. Her neck was encircled by a string of pearls, of priceless purity, evenness of size and perfection of



"What Are You Going to Do?" Asked the Jew.

form. There was something in the creamy softness and whiteness of her skin, faintly, almost imperceptibly glowing with the warm, red hue of health and youth, that suggested the delicate tinting of the interior of a sea-shell, or foam shot through with the first rays of the morning sun, and the pearls seemed at home with such a background.

Her shoulders were so exquisitely modeled that revelation became a duty and a matter of course. Immodesty is the child of ugliness. Her arms were round and firm and beautiful; when she bent them, there was no angle at the elbow, or unsightly projection, but a perfect, graceful curve, and when she straightened them out, the skin did not wrinkle there and corrugate, but dimpled ravishingly.

As he arose from the chair in which he sat awaiting her entrance, Hardy, accustomed to fashionable and high-bred women, noticed, as she advanced toward him with welcoming hand extended, that her soft, light hair was parted in the middle and combed low over her broad forehead, and that the thick, glossy knot, confined in an invisible net, was set low down at the nape of her neck.

She held her head high and haughtily as head of a queen, yet her red, full lips, parted in a dazzling smile, and perfect friendliness shone from her blue eyes.

"I received your note at ten o'clock this morning," she said in French, in the most natural way in the world, as though she had seen him only yesterday, "and, fortunately, I had no unavoidable engagement until 11."

They stood in the center of a luxurious salon, flooded with a soft, rose-colored light from electric bulbs ingeniously disposed about the ceiling.

"I was very sorry," he replied, "to disappoint myself last evening, and also to put you to any possible annoyance in waiting for me. But, the fact is—"

"But," she exclaimed, in her own tongue, "you are positively speaking Russian! And so perfectly, too! I can hardly believe my ears. It is incredible! But don't let's remain standing here like two posts. Sit down, over here, and we will have a nice cozy talk. I can give you two full hours."

She crossed the room to a low divan and seated herself comfortably on one end of it, among a mass of luxurious pillows.

Hardy took his place beside her and said, easily:

"The hope of conversing with you some time in your own tongue, princess, has been a great incentive to me in my studies of Russian. Without that incentive, I should scarcely have made such progress as you are kind enough to credit me with."

He was at home now, more at home than in the store at Stryetensk, or in the wholesale houses of the Moscow merchants, and these words of delicate flattery came naturally to his lips. The princess flashed one quick,

searching look at him. The man was a gentleman, in the conventional sense, as well as a hero, and no more afraid of a princess than of a Chinese brigand.

"So you learned Russian that you might talk with me?" she laughed with a slight tinge of coquetry. "How perfectly charming! But," she pouted, "I fear that your desperate struggle with the terrible Russian tongue is but a poor compliment to my French. Did you then find that so unintelligible?"

"Not at all," he replied, "except as far as my own poor mastery of it rendered it so. But my desire to converse with you in Russian was quite natural. I used often to wish that I could understand you when you were talking on the Amur steamer. Besides, Russian, as spoken by you, seemed a very beautiful language, and one well worth acquiring."

She did not see fit to pursue this topic further.

"You shall always speak Russian with me, then. By the way, have you heard anything further from your heroic friend, Smulders? I hope you have not lost all trace of him. I should so like to know how his love affair with the fair but tantalizing 'Chulia' came out."

"Of that I am able to inform you, as I have recently heard from Smulders. He and 'Chulia' are married and living in Amsterdam. Smulders is in the seventh heaven of happiness."

The princess clasped her little hands with joy.

"Isn't it delightful," she exclaimed, "to hear of a love affair that ends happily? And I have no doubt that 'Chulia' will settle down into a sensible, affectionate wife, and repay him for all his sufferings. Was that not a terrible happening last night, the killing and wounding of those poor officers? The nihilists are becoming bolder and bolder every day. Only the severest measures will stamp out this evil of nihilism. There is no other way to deal with these misguided men, who, if they could only be made to see it, are their own worst enemies. Could they know how it grieves the Little Father to be severe with any of his children, they would not resort to violence. I am sorry for the families of the killed and wounded officers! I have started a subscription for them, which has already been generously responded to."

"May I put my name down for a small amount?" asked Hardy.

Hardy noticed that the list was headed "Elizabetha Romanovna, 1,500 roubles," and that several others had contributed equal sums. The last name thus far obtained, and next to which Hardy must sign, was that of Boris Romanoff, who was down for 2,500 roubles.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Cheering Crowd.  
The prudent statesman now must pause  
While thoughtfully he notes  
The men who get the most applause  
Don't always get the votes.

### 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 papers showing maps of Japan. Hardy was proven guilty. On a train he met Alonzo Sano, daughter of a Japanese merchant. An attempt was made 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 papers showing maps of Japan. Hardy was proven guilty. On a train he met Alonzo Sano, daughter of a Japanese merchant. An attempt was made to go together to Russia. Because of suspicious circumstances they were several times molested by the Japanese. 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