

seemed an interminable period, he halted before a heavy, iron-bound door, set in the solid piling of the wharf and gave three low yet perfectly distinct knocks. At this the door was thrown slightly ajar from within and a thin, bony hand reached forth and clasped his. There was a swift, silent pressure for an instant, and then the door swung back freely, disclosing an oblong patch of light against which the form of the sentinel was outlined for a moment. Then the door closed, the light vanished, and all was veiled in obscurity as before.

The room in which the newcomer now found himself was, as nearly as could be guessed by the light of a candle which sputtered on a broad table opposite the door, some twenty feet square by half as many high. Along the walls, excepting that in which the door was placed, were ranged several roughly fashioned benches and seated on these were a number of silent figures. Evidently the newcomer was their chief, for he advanced quickly and took position behind the table. During all this time not a single sound had been heard — not a word breathed. Now the chief, with another eagle glance about him, drew himself up and spoke.

“Grigori Orlanov!” he said.

The thin, wiry form of the doorkeeper advanced into the circle of light cast by the taper and stood expectantly, as though waiting for further commands.

“How many of us are present, Grigori?”

“Twenty, with yourself, Ivan Boscawitz.”

“It is well,” said Ivan. “A score of loyal hearts and minds assembled in the name of justice, liberty and equality. Let your hands and arms be but as steady and willing as your hearts and the rule of tyranny will be but a matter of time. Peter Nadavitch, whom have you to set before the council to-night?”

Another black-robed figure came forward and pressed a narrow ribbon of paper into the chief's hand. Ivan glanced at the name written thereon. It was that of Leopold Alexowitch. He started with a gesture of surprise which was not altogether unnoticed by his associates. And well might he be astonished. For Leopold Alexowitch stood next to the Chief of Police himself in power, and it had been through his cunning and courage that half a score of murderous plots, involving national disaster, had been thwarted and their makers brought to justice. For the past decade no name held so much of terror for the evil-doer as his. So that well