THE EDGE OF A RAZOR

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

SYNOPSIS.

Frederick Hardy, a fashionable Boston society man, loses his wealth. He goes to Russia as the guest of Count Ivan Ivanoff, a Russian Prince Charming, who lives in Russia. On his journey through Japan he meets Tokio Tojo, a Jap, who speaks an Englishman. Because of war-threatening Japanese, Hardy and his friend Ivanoff escape from Japan disguised as Russian peasants. Hardy learns that Ivanoff's daughter, his betrothed, has been given guardian by a Jew. Hardy was given guardian by a Jew. Hardy and Ivanoff are arrested by Japanese officers. Tojo, a Jap, saves them from execution of forty, pretending that he is a Russian. Tojo, who is a Jap, is a Russian. Tojo was educated abroad. He was recalled by his father, Ito Tojo, a Jap, to Japan after a couple of months, promoted from errand boy to the office of Ito, to writing letters.

In the meantime Hardy meets 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 very glad to hear from him from time to time and signed her, "Your friend, Elizabetha Romanova."

In January, Hardy 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, standing—dignified, as, feelings, hurt, recollected, "there is a—ah—matter of which I wish to speak to you. You know this country as 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 looked 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—the—the one whom I came up the Amur with," replied Hardy, moodily.

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

"Yes, but I feel some little hesitation. She is a princess, and I am a merchant, and we are in Russia. I don't want her to feel that I am trying to make use of her what I have done. That is to say, I do not—I am taking advantage of it. She seems all right, but taking me up might cause her some embarrassment. Her relations are proud and haughty. They don't belong to her social set."

"Social set be blasted!" roared Emery. "Haven't you got that Boston nonsense out of your system yet? You're an American gentleman, and an American gentleman is good company for any princess that walks the surface of the globe. Tojo offered to stay with me and this war goes right. I'll make a merchant prince out of you, my boy, and those are the only partners I want."

One week later, in the middle of January, Frederick Courtland Hardy crossed Lake Baikal to Irkutsk and then took a sledge through "Siberia," a nine-days railway journey to Moscow. Through the snow-clad forests, the frozen rivers, the villages of Russian peasants, yet he felt strangely aloof over the fact that he was soon to see the princess again. With the agitation, too, was mingled a sense of wrongness and foreboding. He was not sure that his second visit was the right one. Perhaps he was accompanied by his secretary, Wang, the Korean boy, who had rendered himself indispensable through his genius for details.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Off to Moscow.

Hardy never forgot that journey to Moscow. For days the heavy train rolled along along Siberian plains, now covered with illuminate stretches of snow, or through the dark, silent forests, shivering in the cold blasts of winter. All the time, the train was were crowded with emigrants, bound for the Amur region, and the cold drove down through with the fresh, innocent faces of children. To many of the train prison cars were attached, bearing their sorrowful freight to the dreary island of Sakhalin, to which the place of Siberia as a land of 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—as the distinct blur of houses, out of which loomed large and clear the towers and domes of numerous churches, all gilded then overlaid with gold—and gilding surprisingly in the light of the setting sun.

At eight the train drew in to the modern and commodious station at Moscow, and the Americans, 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 them from the Iberiansky Bazar, the best caravansary in Moscow, to the very sumptuous and comfortable inn, as it proved.

For several days he devoted his entire attention to business, dealing with merchants and going over lists, prices and accounts with Wang. Meanwhile, whenever he went into the streets, the interesting character of sledges was there, and he watched them constantly, always on the lookout for the princess. Snow had piled so high, with its crowns of silver and gold, that the sledges were like spider threads. Many ladies of position, he saw, their faces partly covered from collars and hoods of costly fur, which often he would catch and his heart would throb more violently than at the sight of the princess. He would generously offer his sledge, however, to the lady who would dash by with the jingling bells.

He might have gone without calling on her had he not kept his business as quickly as possible, plan contemplated, but he knew that he was under a debt of gratitude to her, kept writing to him, sending new commissions. Emery was becoming jubilant over the relations between Russia and Japan, and the demands of the latter country were making more and more difficult to evade. The Japanese, too, according to Emery, affairs were rushing preparations for a death-struggle with the bear on a large scale.

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

So Hardy worked, sleighing his acquaintance with the merchants, while his relations with the princess grew more and more intimate, and the greatness of the city's industries steadily grew.

And one evening he he walks home to his hotel, he saw the Princess Romanova. There was no mistake about it this time and he knew that, when it was indeed she, there could be no mistake. She was in a sledge with a dark-skin lady, rather dark, luxuriously piled with furs. She was alone and in the sledge, her coachman and footman, the former driving, the latter sitting on the back of the white steeds, whose tails were tied in knots, and whose manes streamed wildly in the wind. Two of these horses were coming from, and thus untramelled, to the gay and grace of the sledge, which was a sight to be remembered for a life-time. The princess was leaning back, and cap of fur and cloak, delicately protected her face from the cold. Hardy saw the wind, were outlined in the soft cloak. Hardy saw the cloak, Hardy noticed, with a thrill of distinct pleasure, that the lady was alone, unaccompanied her.

And the princess saw Hardy. As he stepped back to the edge of the curb and gravely lifted his hat, she leaned forward and half touched the coachman and called to him. The sledge stopped, the footman jumped upon their heavy boots and planting and hopping out of the sledge. Presently they stopped and stood trembling. The princess was speaking.

"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."

"Why, I wrote to you. I have not been to call on you. This is Mr. Hardy, the American who I told you saved me from the Chinese brigands, and performed such feats of valor on the Amur. I do not know why he ever took me out of it, if he knew how it would end."

"The princess has been good enough to call me a hero," shrugged Hardy, with a shrug of four well doubtful shift, they have all taken to calling me a hero, and I am the prisoner of the soldiers are getting tired of my company, they stop sight on account of the constant popping."

"Why, Mr. Hardy, I thought you were positively interesting. Mr. Hardy, Anna," she turned to her companion, "you tell you have been to see me? What excuse have you to offer, sir?"

"I should have called before I left, but I—I—I—