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THE GUNMAKER OF MOSCOW.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE PROCEEDING.

When Ruric came down in the morning, he found the monk already there and breakfast nearly ready. But little was said during the mealtime, for the monk seemed busy with thoughts of his own, and Ruric was too much engaged in studying the strange man's features and pondering upon the various doubts and surmises that had entered his mind. After the meal was over the monk accompanied the gunmaker to his shop, and there he spent some time in examining the quaint articles of machinery that were used in the manufacture of arms.

Ruric was engaged in finishing a pair of pistols, and for some minutes the monk had stood silently by his side watching his movements. At length the youth stopped in his work and laid the pistol down.

"Excuse me, good father," he said rather nervously, at the same time gazing his visitor in the face, "but I must ask you a question. Where have I seen you before?"

"How should I know?" the monk returned, with a smile.

"Why," resumed Ruric, with some hesitancy, "I knew not but that you might enlighten me. I have surely seen you somewhere."

"And are there not hundreds whom you have seen in this great city, aye, thousands, whom you might recognize as you recognize me?"

"Ah, it may be so, but not like this. There may be a thousand faces I would recollect to have seen, but not one of them would excite even a passing emotion in my soul. But your face calls up some powerful emotion, some startling memory of the past, which bothers me. Who are you, good father? What are you? Where have we met before? Was it in Spain?"

"No," said Vladimir, with a shake of the head. And then, with a more serious shade upon his face, he added: "Let this pass now. I will not deny to you that there may be some grounds for your strange fancies, but I assure you most sacredly that until last night I never came in direct companionship with you before—at any rate, not to my knowledge. You have acted the good Samaritan toward me, and I hope I may at some time return the favor."

"No, no!" quickly responded the youth. "If you return it, then it will be a favor no more. I have only done for you what every man should do to his neighbor, and so far from needing thanks for my services I would rather give them for the occasion, for I know of no source of joy so pure and pleasurable as that feeling in the soul which tells us we have done a good act."

The dark monk reached forth and took the youthful artisan's hand, and, with more than ordinary emotion, he said:

"You touch the harp strings of the soul with a noble hand, my son, and if any deed of kindness can give me joy it will be a deed for you. We may meet again, and until then I can only say, God bless and prosper thee."

With these words the monk turned away, and ere Ruric could command presence of mind enough to follow him he had gone from the house. The youth wished to say something, but amid the varied emotions that went leaping through his mind he could gather no connected thoughts.

After the monk was gone Ruric returned to his bench and resumed his work. He asked his boy if he had ever seen the strange man before, but Paul only shook his head and answered dubiously.

"What do you mean?" the gunmaker asked, gazing the boy in the face. "Do you think you have seen him before?"

"I cannot tell, my master. I may have seen him before and I may not. But surely you would not suppose that my memory would serve you better than your own."

Ruric was not fully assured by this answer. He gazed into Paul's face, and he fancied he detected some show of intelligence there which had not been spoken. But he resolved to ask no more questions at present. He had asked enough,

he thought, upon such a subject, and he made up his mind to bother himself no more about it, feeling sure that if his boy knew anything which would be for his master's interest to know it would be communicated in due season. So he applied himself anew to his work, and at noon the pistols were finished.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, just as Ruric had finished tempering some parts of a gun lock, the back door of his shop was opened, and two men entered. They were young men, dressed in costly furs and both of them stout and good looking. The gunmaker recognized them as the Count Conrad Damonoff and his friend Stephen Urzen.

"I think I speak with Ruric Nevel?" said the count, moving forward.

"You do," returned Ruric, not at all surprised by the visit, since people of all classes were in the habit of calling at his place to order arms.

The count turned a shade paler than before, and his nether lip trembled. But Ruric thought that might be the result of coming from the cold into a warm place. However, he was soon undeceived, for the count's next remark was significant: "You are acquainted with the Lady Rosalind Valda?" he said.

"I am," returned Ruric, now beginning to wonder.

"Well, sir," returned Damonoff, with much haughtiness, "perhaps my business can be quickly and satisfactorily settled. It is my desire to make the Lady Rosalind my wife."

Ruric Nevel started at these words, and he clasped his hands to hide their tremulousness. But he was not long debating upon an answer.

"And why have you come to me with this information, sir?" he asked.

"You should know that already. Do you not love the lady?"

"Upon my soul, sir count, you ask me a strange question. What right have you to question me upon such a theme?"

"The right that every man has to pave the way for his own rights," replied Damonoff sharply. "But if you choose not to answer let it pass. I know you do love the lady, and now I ask you to renounce all claims to her hand."

"By St. Paul, sir count, your tongue runs into strange moods of speech! I renounce all claims to Rosalind Valda's hand! Was't so you meant?"

"Aye, sir, precisely so."

"Perhaps you will inform me what claims I may have upon the lady," Ruric returned, with some tremulousness in his tone, for the very subject was one that moved him deeply.

"Ruric Nevel, you shall not say that I did not make myself fully understood, and hence I will explain." The count spoke this as speaks a man who feels that he is doing a very condescending thing, and in the same tone he proceeded: "The Lady Rosalind is of noble parentage and very wealthy. My own station and wealth are equal with hers—my station, at all events. She may possess the undivided right to more property than I do; but that matters not. I love her and must have her for my wife. I have been to see the noble duke, her guardian, and he objects not to my suit, but he informed me that there was one impediment, and that was her love for you. He knows full well, as I know, and as all must know, that she could never become your wife; but yet he is anxious not to interfere too much against her inclinations. So a simple denial from you to the effect that you can never claim her hand is all that is necessary. You understand me, I trust. We seek this only for the fair lady's own good. Of course you must be aware that the duke would never consent to her union with you, and yet he would wish to have your denial to show to Rosalind when he announces his decision. I have a paper here all drawn up, and all that will be necessary is simply your signature. Here. It is only a plain, simple avowal on your part that you have no hopes nor thoughts of seeking the hand of the lady in marriage."

As the count spoke he drew a paper from the bosom of his marten doublet, and, having opened it, he handed it toward the gunmaker. But Ruric took it not. He drew back and gazed the visitor sternly in the face.

"Sir count," he uttered in a tone full of noble indignation, "what do you suppose I am? Do you mean to tell me that Olga, duke of Tula, has commissioned you to obtain such a renunciation of me?"

"Stephen," spoke the count, turning to his companion, "you heard the instructions the duke gave me this morning?"

"Aye," returned Urzen, directing his speech to Ruric; "I did hear, and you have stated the case plainly."

"I may be as much surprised as yourself," resumed the count haughtily, "at this strange taste of the duke. Why he should seek this signal from you I can only imagine upon his desire to call up no regrets in the bosom of his fair ward. He knows that she was once intimate with you and that she now feels a warm friendship for you. For her sake he would have this signal from you."

"But how for her sake?" asked Ruric.

"Why," returned Damonoff, "do you not see? Rosalind in the simplicity of her heart may think that you—a—that you might claim her love and out of pure principle grant it to you simply because you were the first claimant."

"But I never claimed her love," said Ruric warmly. "If she loves me, she loves me from her heart. With the noble duke I never spoke but once, and then he came here for me to temper his sword. If you would marry with the lady, do so, and if you seek help in the work seek it from those who have some power in the matter."

"You mistake, sir," uttered the count hotly. "I seek not power now. I only seek a simple word from one who may have some influence, even as a beggar, having saved the life of a king, may, through royal gratitude, wield an influence. Will you sign the paper?"

Now, all this seemed strange to Ruric, and he knew that there was something behind the curtain which he was not permitted to know. He knew the proud and stubborn duke well enough to know that he never would have sent such a message as this but for some design more than had yet appeared. In short, he could not understand the matter at all. It looked dark and complex, and its face was in direct conflict with the nature of the man from whom it now appeared to have emanated. Ruric pondered upon this a few moments, and he made up his mind that he would on no account yield an atom to the strange demand thus made upon him.

"Sir count," he said calmly and surely, "you have plainly stated your proposition, and I will as plainly answer. I cannot sign the paper."

"Ha!" gasped Damonoff in quick passion. "Do you refuse?"

"Most flatly."

For a few moments the count gazed into Ruric's face as though he doubted the evidence of his own senses.

"It is the duke's command," he said at length.

"The Duke of Tula holds no power of command over me," was the gunmaker's calm reply.

"Beware! Once more, I say, sign this paper!"

"You but waste your breath, sir count, in speaking thus. You have my answer."

"By heavens, Ruric Nevel, you'll sign this!" the count cried madly.

"Never, sir!"

"But look ye, sirrah, here is my whole future of life based upon my hopes of union with this fair girl. Her guardian bids me get this paper of you ere I can have her hand. And now do you think I'll give it up so easily? By the saints of heaven, I'll have your name to this or I'll have your life!"

"Now your tongue runs away with you, sir count. I have given you my answer. Be sure that only one man on earth can prevail upon me to place my name upon that paper."

"And who is he?"

"I mean the emperor."

"But you will sign it!" hissed Damonoff, turning pale with rage. "Here it is—sign! If you would live—sign!"

"Perhaps he cannot write," suggested Urzen contemptuously.

"Then he may make his mark," rejoined the count in the same contemptuous tone.

"It might not require much more urging to induce me to make my mark in a manner not at all agree-

able to you, sir," the youth returned, with his teeth now set and the dark veins upon his brow starting more plainly out. "You have come upon my premises, and you have sought your purpose. You now have your answer, and for your own sake, for my sake, I beg you to leave me."

"Not until your name is upon this paper!" cried Damonoff, shaking the missive furiously and crumpling it in his hand.

"Are you mad, sir count? Do you think me a fool?"

"Aye, a consummate one."

"Then," returned Ruric, with a curl of utter contempt upon his finely chiseled lip, "you need have no further dealings with me. There is my door, sir."

For some moments Conrad Damonoff seemed unable to speak from pure anger. He had surely some deep, anxious purpose in obtaining Ruric's name to that paper, and to be thus thwarted by a common artisan was maddening to one who based all his force of character upon his title.

"Sign!" he hissed.

"Fool!" uttered Ruric, unable longer to contain himself in view of such stupid persistence. "Do you seek a quarrel with me?"

"Seek? I seek what I will have. Will you sign?"

"Once more—no!"

"Then, by heavens, you shall know what it is to thwart such as me! How's that?"

As these words passed from the count's lips in a low, hissing whisper he aimed a blow with his fist at Ruric's head. The gunmaker had not dreamed of such a dastard act, and he was not prepared for it, yet he dodged it sufficiently to escape the mark upon his face, receiving the blow lightly upon the side of his head. But he stopped not to consider now. As the count drew back Ruric dealt him a blow upon the brow that felled him to the floor like a dead ox.

"Beware, Stephen Urzen!" he whispered to the count's companion as that individual made a movement as though he would come forward. "I am not myself now, and you are safest where you are."

The man thus addressed viewed the gunmaker a few moments, and he seemed to conclude that he had better avoid a personal encounter, for his fists relaxed and he moved to the side of his fallen friend and assisted him to his feet.

Conrad Damonoff gazed into his antagonist's face a few moments in silence. His face was ashen pale, and his whole frame quivered. Upon his forehead there was a livid spot where he had been struck, but the skin was not broken.

"Ruric Nevel," he said in a hissing, maddening tone, "you will hear from me! The mad spirit of a vengeance such as mine cannot be trifled with."

And with this he turned away.

"Paul," said the gunmaker, turning to his boy after the men had gone away, "not a word of this to my mother. Be sure."

TO BE CONTINUED.

OUR PHILIPPINE TRADE.

It is Growing, Claims to the Contrary Notwithstanding.

Importations of merchandise into the Philippine islands for the first three quarters of 1900 showed an increase of \$658,321, or 72 per cent. over the amount for the same period of 1899, according to a statement made public by the division of insular affairs of the war department last Thursday. During the period stated of 1900 merchandise to the value of \$1,571,732 came into the Philippines from the United States, while in 1899 the figures were \$913,651.

The total value of merchandise imported from all countries from January to October, 1900, were \$17,187,991, as against \$14,163,242 during the same period of the preceding year. This shows an increase of \$3,023,749, or 21 per cent. Europe and Asiatic countries combined sent over \$15,000,000 worth of the total importation in 1900. An import trade worth \$3,000,000 from Africa in 1900, as against an entire absence of this trade the preceding year. The above figures relative to the imports of the United States represent the shipments only and do not include the merchandise from the United States imported to Hong Kong and then reshipped to Manila.

The comparative figures as to exports to the rest of the world show an increase double that noted in the import trade. The merchandise exported from the Philippines to other countries in 1900 was valued at \$17,883,260. From 1899 it was valued at \$11,992,011, thus showing an increase of \$5,891,249, or 49 per cent. The exports to the United States, however, showed a decrease of \$79,949 in 1900, as compared with the same period of 1899. On the other hand, the exportations to European, Asiatic, African and South American countries showed material increases in each case, the exports to Europe increasing from \$4,457,887 in 1899, to \$9,550,103 in 1900.

Merchandise to the value of \$1,467 was exported to South America in 1900, as against no trade of this sort in 1899. The exportation of hemp from the Philippines during the first three quarters of 1900 were valued at \$10,245,742, against \$8,403,980 during the same period of 1899.

Miscellaneous Reading.

DEMOCRACY AND BUSINESS.

Some Clear Cut Advice to People Who Would Think.

Most of the South Carolina opponents of the Hon. John Lowndes McLaurin belong to that liberal-minded class of Democrats that make a bugaboo of the word "Republican," and has no consistent policy except to make mouths at every Republican policy. The question with these persons is not "Is such a measure for the interests of the country?" but "Is it favored by the Republicans?" If it is, the Democrats must howl against it with all their lungs. The present prostrated condition of the Democracy is due in great part to this blind and narrow conception of the duty of a political party, and to the inability to take a national instead of a partisan view. Besides, the new Democratic gods are mostly frantic Populist spouters, ignorant of the history of the Democratic party or bent upon steering it in the direction of a weak foreign policy, and a domestic policy of crank radicalism and social smash. The rich Palmetto billingsgate rolls in floods over the dire wickedness of Mr. McLaurin in agreeing with the Republicans as to several matters, such as the Treaty of Paris and the Ship Subsidy bill. Away with him!

Politics in South Carolina in these days of Tillman is so largely a matter of vociferation that the advantage of any given policy to the State and the country is not made much of by the politicians. Business men and planters are not greatly frightened by the hubbalooboo of the Tillmanite politicians. What is best for cotton and rice, for trade and agriculture and the development of foreign commerce? In the end the Democratic party must come down to facts, do something for the State, and stop butting its noddle against progress. The Republican party represents some old essential Democratic doctrines. It is vain for the South Carolinians to kick against them simply because they are now Republican. Suppose they are. Shall the devil have all the good tunes? If it be Republicanism to build up business, enlarge the national domain, foster commerce, the Democrats had better borrow a little Republicanism.

In a letter written last week to Mr. W. F. Clayton, of Florence, S. C., Mr. McLaurin says that the Democratic party "cannot prosper if it is to oppose the extension of our foreign trade, the creation of new markets, the upbuilding of our commercial and industrial interests and the freedom of the individual." He recites the facts apparently forgotten by so many Populized Democrats that the Republican was not the party of annexation and that, with the exception of Alaska, every foot of new territory added to the United States up to 1896 was added by Democrats; that they wanted to subsidize a railroad to the Pacific and did subsidize the Collins line of steamships; that they concluded treaties with the principal nations of the world and built up foreign commerce; that Jackson and Pierce negotiated reciprocity treaties; that Clay, Calhoun, Cheves and Lowndes opposed Jefferson in the matter of decreasing the army; that the first proposition for a protective tariff came from Madison and was supported by Calhoun and Lowndes; that the Democratic party made the Monroe doctrine, opened the ports of Japan and so on.

"The trouble with the south," says Mr. McLaurin, "has always been its clinging to traditions and its lack of practical wisdom in preventing the other sections from imposing upon it by underhand means."

But now the South is not clinging to its traditions, and it imposed upon itself in allowing a Western Populist to impose himself upon the Democratic party.—New York Sun.

THE CATAWBA FRESHET.

A Government Expert Tells of the Nature and Extent of the Damage.

The U. S. Geological survey has for years been making measurements and studying the Catawba river.

Mr. Myers, the surveyor, says he has followed the Catawba from its source in the Swannanoa Gap to Rock Hill, S. C., and had talked with the residents who live along the river for this distance. He approximates the damage done by the flood at \$500,000. The damage along the river side has been general and in proportion to the acreage of bottom land. In practically all the wheat fields close to the river the land has been sanded over for two or three feet deep, and the cornfields have been completely washed away—down to an unproductive subsoil. The injury to farming land was greatest in Burke and McDowell counties, said Mr. Myers, because in these counties there is more bottom land. In McDowell the damage is about \$100,000, and in Burke it is between \$250,000 and \$300,000. The broad bottom lands in the latter county are simply ruined for a distance of two or three hundred yards on either side of the Catawba.

The velocity of the water, said Mr. Myers, was greater than ever before. At Rock Hill the current ran about ten miles an hour, which is a terrific and hurtful pace for the Catawba. And it is universally admitted that during the recent flood the river was much higher than ever before.

The hurtful effects of the velocity of the water was not due to the amount of rain that fell, for the weather bureau

reports indicate that much heavier rains have fallen in the past, and the volume of water was carried off without injurious consequence. The whole secret of the bad effect and extent of the flood lies in the deforestation in the western part of the state. Along the Linville river and in all parts of Western Carolina, the country is being stripped of trees, and this is followed by the forest fires which sweep away all vegetation or undergrowth. When the rains fall on such land there is nothing to retard the current of the water. With great force it strikes the river; the velocity of the Catawba is increased by the mad violence of the water, and the current develops a wonderful and dangerous power. Every man who lives by the river, said Mr. Myers, says, without hesitation, that the cutting away of the lumber is entirely responsible for the serious flood.

"In the future," said he "the land along the Catawba will be more at the mercy of the river. The last freshet tore off vegetation along the banks, made new channels or cutoffs, and broke through all the elbows of the river. So the farm land is much more unprotected than formerly, and it is in the power of a comparatively small freshet to do vast injury.—Gastonia N. C., News.

McLAURIN'S COURSE.

Patriotism As Distinguished From Partisanship—Non-Political Questions.

Should Senator McLaurin fall in his campaign for re-election, his failure will be one of the incomprehensible features of modern politics. South Carolina is a state in which the white man dominates. The intelligent white sentiment decides elections there, and Senator McLaurin's appeals are addressed to that class only. His arguments are unanswerable, and unless the political vision of South Carolina's white population is hopelessly perverted his course must be heartily approved.

Two classes of questions are to come before the United States senate. One is political, the other non-political. At the outset a question may belong to the former class, only to pass by regular processes into the latter. Such a one was the currency question, political at first, non-political when it was demonstrated that the gold standard was most promotive of our national interests.

The tariff question has for years been undergoing a somewhat similar transition. The expediency of a war with Spain was originally a political question, the grant of the emergency war fund, the appropriations for the increased army and navy expenses, the ratification of the Paris treaty have developed into non-political. Great hurt has been inflicted upon the country because these non-political matters were opposed on partisan grounds by the minority in congress, and the state which has a man in the senate with the courage to refuse to disguise duty in the mask of partisanship should honor him.

This is what Senator McLaurin did. He saw his duty as an American and he did it fearlessly. Contrasted with his record, that of his foremost antagonist, Senator Tillman, is the record of unparalleled demagoguery. While Senator McLaurin was voting to promote the development of the south, Senator Tillman was voting against everything which the Southerners should hold dear, simply because it was advocated by Republicans. There is no comparison between these men. McLaurin is the friend of South Carolina; Tillman is her enemy. If the state understands its interests, it will turn a deaf ear to Tillman's anti-McLaurin pleas and return McLaurin to the senate. By so doing it will start the new era of Southern development aright, and it is no disgrace to honor a man who has the courage to do right, even if occasionally he has to vote with the opposition party to do it.—Baltimore American.

WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT.—There is no reason why we people on this side of the line should get excited and lose our heads over the rumpus between McLaurin and Tillman and the governor of South Carolina.

Still, it is plain enough that the issues raised by these men will divide the Democratic camp in every Southern state. They will press us for a solution, and they will have to be settled.

Some of us are students of history. We have not forgotten that the Democratic party represents the people, and the people want just what their changing conditions demand. If a protective tariff, ship subsidies, an isthmian canal and the disfranchisement of blacks, illiterates and rappers will start this region on the high road to industrial and commercial prosperity, then many of us are ready for the change. In times past the Democratic party has favored all of these things, and why not now?

There will be no more trouble about the currency. Even the most ignorant and stupid wage-earner will not run the risk of industrial paralysis and a panic lasting for years in order to try the experiment of unsettling the financial policy of the civilized world.—Wolfe P. Reed, in Augusta Chronicle.

"She comes of a great family, I believe."

"Yes, very! An ancestor of hers was beheaded in the town during the reign of the Fourth Edward!"

"How perfectly lovely!"—Detroit Journal.