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THE GUNMAKER OF MOSCOW.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

CHAPTER XVI.

THWARTED, BUT NOT SUBDUED.

It was long after midnight, and yet the Widow Nevel had not sought her bed. She was now pacing to and fro across her kitchen, and the boy Paul sat nodding in his chair. Suddenly the woman stopped, and Paul started up.

"Do you think that message was a false one?" she asked, looking the boy in the face.

"I don't know," he returned. "If he came from the black monk, as he said he did, then I think he spoke the truth."

"Oh, they would not have deceived me."

"No, my mistress; I am sure they would not."

"But it is very late."

"Hark! There are bells."

The widow heard them, and, with a wildly fluttering heart, she sank into a chair.

"They have stopped in front of the house," uttered Paul, whose ears were bent.

"Go—go—open!"

Paul started. The widow heard the door opened, and she heard voices in the hall. In a moment more the inner door was opened, and she looked up. She saw a manly form; she heard the magic word "Mother!" trembling upon the air. With one low cry of joy she started to her feet, and in the next moment she was clasped to the bosom of her son.

"Did I not tell you I'd bring him back to you?" cried Vladimir, rubbing his hands with joy.

"Oh, God bless you, sir!" the widow murmured, gazing through her tears into the monk's face.

"So, so," returned the strange man. "The blessing of an honest soul is reward enough for one night, so I'll take myself off for the present."

"No, no," cried Ruric. "You'll remain here till morning."

But the monk could not be prevailed upon so to do. He had business to attend to, and he could not stop, and he hurried away as quickly as possible to avoid the thanks that were showered upon him.

After Vladimir was gone Ruric sat down and related to his mother all that had occurred since that day on which he left her to go and see the count. She trembled fearfully as he related the diabolical attempts that had been made upon him, and when he had concluded she sat for a few moments like one in a painful trance.

"And do you think," she said at length, while a cold shudder ran through her frame, "that the Duke of Tula was the cause of all this?"

"I am sure of it, my mother."

"Then you are not safe yet."

"But I shall see the emperor."

"I have seen him, my son."

"Ah! And what said he?"

"Why, he said if we could find out who had done you harm he would punish them. Then I asked him, 'Suppose it was a duke?' and he said in that case he should have to look into the matter. Oh, I fear he would not dare to punish the powerful Olga."

"Perhaps not, but yet, my mother, I will give him credit for better things. Yet," the youth continued in a sad tone, "there is one for whom I care more than self and who is now within the wicked duke's power. Oh, she is his beyond any power of the emperor!"

"Not absolutely beyond his power, is she?" the mother asked.

"Why, of course, Peter has the power to set aside any wardship, but would not be policy for him to interfere in the domestic affairs of his powerful nobles. I feel sure that his heart would bid him interfere, but his judgment would oppose it. You have seen Rosalind?"

"Yes."

"And was she unhappy when she knew that I was missing?"

"Ah, Ruric," returned the mother, with a kindling eye, "you do not know how that noble girl loves you! Oh, her heart was almost broken when she knew that evil had befallen you!"

The widow had it in her mind to tell of the scene which had transpired upon the duke's coming into the maiden's presence when she was there, but she thought a second time ere she spoke, and she then concluded not to speak of it at present, for

she knew it would only serve to give her son additional pain without bestowing any benefit.

"By heavens," uttered Ruric at the end of a troubled reverie and at the same time clasping his hands vehemently together, "was ever man so surrounded by impenetrable mystery before! This monk is surely a good man. He has served me well, and I am sure he would serve me more if opportunity offered. But who is he? Have you found out anything concerning him?"

"I have not, my son."

"But is it not strange?"

"It is."

And so they conversed until their drooping lids would no longer remain apart, and then, having first rendered up their thanks to God and asked his help for the future, they retired to their respective places of rest. Ruric had strange dreams, and for the life of him he could not tell whether they were good or bad. Once he dreamed that he was a duke himself and that he had a wife whose face he had never seen. She would not raise her veil until the ceremony was performed. Then she removed the obstruction, and Ruric started on beholding the face of Vladimir, the monk! And then Vladimir seemed to say, "All this I have done for thee. Do you like it?" And Ruric dared not object, because Vladimir had done so much for him.

And now while Ruric awakes from his dreams and wonders what they mean let us look in and see what is going on in the ducal palace.

It was early morning, and the Duke of Tula was once more in his own private apartment. He had not slept well, for he, too, had had dreams, and they were troublesome ones. They hung about him even now, and they filled his mind with dark and gloomy forebodings. He paced to and fro across the apartment, sometimes stopping and bowing his head and then starting on again with new clouds upon his brow. Thus he walked and pondered until he was aroused by a stealthy footfall close by the door. He stopped and listened. He knew the step. 'Twas the one he had been waiting for. He moved to the door and opened it, and the humpbacked priest, Savotano, entered the apartment.

"By St. Paul, Savotano, I feared you would never come," the duke uttered as his workman closed the door behind him.

"I would have come sooner if I could, my lord, but even now it is early morning. The sun is hardly above the city walls."

"Well, it is early, I know, but I have not slept well."

"I have not slept at all, my lord."

"No, Savotano. You look worn and weary. But you have been at work."

"Aye, I have."

"And you have come to tell me the result of that work. Does it move you so to do such work? I thought you were used to it?"

The priest gazed into his master's face, but he did not speak.

"Bah!" uttered Olga contemptuously. "What is the killing of a man? But tell me, did you conceal the body so that no one will find it?"

It was some moments before Savotano spoke. His frame trembled, and his hands worked nervously together. But at length he said in a hesitating tone:

"He is not dead, my lord."

"Not dead yet? But you promised me he should be."

"I know, but we could not do it."

"Bah! I gave you credit for more firmness. Not kill a man? What is there so terrible in that?"

"You misunderstood me, my lord. We did all we could toward killing him, but he escaped us."

"Hold!" cried the duke, starting forward and grasping the priest by the shoulder. "You do not mean that Ruric Nevel has escaped you?"

"He has, my lord."

"But not entirely. You do not mean that he has fairly gone from out your hands?"

"He has, my lord. But listen!"

"Listen, thou bungler! By the saints, what story can you tell to make that smooth and reasonable? You had him in your power, and you should have kept him."

"But, my lord, the devil himself

is working for that man. We went last night to kill the fellow, and I waited all of two hours for Totma and Viska, but the rascals did not come, and I engaged others."

"And did they prove treacherous?" cried Olga in sudden passion.

"No, my lord; they did their best, but they were interrupted by that accursed monk, who came backed by some dozen men."

"What! Do you mean that Vladimir came there?"

"Yes."

"And with a band of armed men?"

"Yes."

"Then, by the gods, there's treachery somewhere."

"I know not what to think, my lord," returned Savotano in an uneasy, perplexed tone. "The only men who are absent are Lesko Totma and Frederic Viska, and they are surely our best men."

"But you see plainly that there must have been treachery," exclaimed the duke passionately. "Oh, how I would like to know the man! And did this monk carry off the gunmaker?"

"He did. And he captured four of our men. I escaped without being seen."

"That is fortunate!"

"I mean that the monk did not see me, nor did any of his followers. But the gunmaker saw me."

"And do you think he mistrusted you had any hand in the matter of his imprisonment?"

"I should judge so," returned the priest, with a peculiar twinge of vengeance about the lips. "The villain knocked me down."

"Ha!"

"Aye; the moment he saw me."

"But do you think he knows anything about it?"

"No. I do not think he does. He can only suspect."

"Then we'll be prepared for him if your own men are to be depended upon. But leave that to me. I'll fix that matter with the emperor. I'll see him this very day, and be sure he shall have a story that can destroy all evidence which these fellows can hatch up."

"But I must flee, my lord."

"Not yet, Savotano. I must have your help within a very short time. By the true God, I swear that the Countess Rosalind Valdai shall be my wife within the present week. I'll place the seal of fact upon that matter at once. Fear not, for I know my influence over the emperor will shield you from all harm. Why, Peter would sooner lose his right hand than lose me."

"Then most surely I will remain, my lord, for I much wish to perform that ceremony for you. But who is this black monk—this Vladimir?"

The duke started across the floor, and for some moments he continued pacing to and fro. When he stopped, he brought his hands together with an energetic movement, and, looking the priest sternly in the face, he said:

"Let that monk be who he may, whether man or devil, God or saint, I'll destroy him! I have the power, and I'll use it. As warden of the city I have the power to arrest him upon suspicion of conspiracy. I'll do it! Where is he now?"

"I know not."

"Never mind; I'll to the emperor first. I'll study my plan, and ere the sun sets it shall be carried out. By heavens, I'll be baffled thus no more. I could have wished that this gunmaker had been quietly out of the way, for then all would have been clear and plain, and I should not have feared the trouble of his clamoring about my ears. But let him go. I would not give much for the life he has left. I'll dispose of him soon. But that monk! By heavens, he dies at once and without consultation with the emperor, for I can swear he is a conspirator."

"Good!" ejaculated the priest.

And thus the business was arranged for the present. Passion helped the duke wondrously in his conclusions, and the wish was made into the power. But even before the priest left the stout nobleman began to wish that he had a very little more power. In fact, as he came to reason he began to doubt, but he gave up not one idea of the plan he had formed for the vengeance his soul so madly craved.

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Miscellaneous Reading.

STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

What Some Editors Think of Its Attitude Toward Senator McLaurin.

Winnsboro News and Herald: It is not difficult to see that the action of the State Democratic executive committee in asking for the resignation of the junior senator was engineered by the senior senator, who has felt most keenly the support given McLaurin in many quarters.

Charleston Post: Tillman rails against McLaurin as a traitor to the Democratic party because he voted for the ratification of the treaty of Paris. This course was urged earnestly and diligently by Mr. W. J. Bryan, who was the recognized leader of the Democratic party, and who was subsequently nominated for the presidency. The Kansas City convention, in nominating Mr. Bryan, therefore, approved the votes on the treaty of Senator McLaurin and the three other Democratic senators who followed Mr. Bryan's advice, and repudiated the opposition of Senator Tillman and the others who voted to reject the treaty. Senator Tillman would put the Kansas City convention's measure to Senator McLaurin; he might try it on himself.

Birmingham, Ala., News: Tillman and the South Carolina State Democratic committee have ruled McLaurin out of the party. When Tillman finds he cannot conquer by fair means, he has no hesitancy in adopting the other kind.

Columbia Record: If the executive committee had been polled in 1897, when McLaurin was elected senator, it would have found then that about the same proportion of its members were opposed to him. The committee did not elect him and he is not responsible to it for his actions; but to the people who gave him his commission. He will not resign to please the committee; but will serve out his term and then give the Democratic voters of the state a chance to say whether they approve of his course and wish to continue him in their service in the United States senate.

Columbia Record: Ben Tillman may boss the Democratic executive committee; but he cannot boss the Democratic voters of South Carolina. The politicians may be scared of Tillman; but the people are not.

Augusta Herald: Real Democracy means fair play and an equal chance before the people. The South Carolina State committee has usurped, or attempted to usurp, the power of the people. They have said practically that there is no use of the party primary; there is no use of the people; the state committee can and will decide all these questions, though they properly belong to the people. The action of the South Carolina committee is repugnant to the basic principles of Democracy.

Gaffney Ledger: Senator Tillman and his executive committee have made a big political mistake in calling on Senator McLaurin to resign. Their action will accomplish the very purpose they were anxious to avoid, and instead of getting rid of McLaurin by such means they will strengthen his position before the people. He has the right to appeal to the people, and no set of men are authorized to stop his mouth. We believe that the people are tired of bossism, though they may still admire the boss, and that they will rebuke this action of the committee on the first opportunity.

Memphis Commercial Appeal: The State Democratic executive committee of South Carolina has demanded the resignation of Senator McLaurin, and has fired him from the Democratic party. The executive committee is doing a large business these days.

Macon Telegraph: The Telegraph has not approved Senator McLaurin's course in some important particulars; but it does not hesitate to say that this drastic remedy for the stamping out of McLaurinism in South Carolina is a cowardly and brutal mistake. To say that no man is a Democrat who does not indorse the Kansas City platform is to say that Tillman was not a Democrat until the adoption of the Chicago platform in 1896. He foamed at the mouth from every stump in South Carolina in opposition to Hampton, Butler and others who stood on the Democratic platform in those days. He held aloft the platform of Ocala and trampled the Democratic creed under his feet. Tillman is a flannel-mouthed demagogue of the most pronounced type, and the pitchfork with which he would now impale McLaurin would have destroyed his own existence six years ago.

Abbeville Press and Banner: There can be no doubt that the senior senator realizes the danger of his losing absolute control of Tillman's Land. To change the situation: If Senator McLaurin should call together a committee of his friends from the different counties and one-fourth the number should endorse Tillman instead of himself, the full force of the action of the executive committee can be seen at a glance. There can be but little doubt that the public will realize the severe blow which Tillman received in the recent action of the committee. His threats and charges of treachery were unavailing as to one-fourth of his men, while it is perfectly clear that at least one man who voted with him did so against his convictions.

Abbeville Press and Banner: One evidence that the executive committee was dominated by Senator Tillman is

furnished in the vote of Colonel Willie Jones. Our readers may remember his recent explicit statement, which he gave out to the papers. But it seems that the colonel had to vote against his convictions, when the senator gave the word.

Greenville News: Senator Tillman demonstrated on Thursday night that, after all, his eagerness to crush McLaurin is not sufficient to make him stand and fight the junior senator. In getting his machine, the State Democratic executive committee, to try to pull off McLaurin, Senator Tillman fell upon his own pitchfork, and the escape of gas is veritably frightful. The magnificent front he put up in the beginning of the fight collapsed, his valiant declarations of what he would do with the junior senator, and has repeatedly and almost tearfully expressed his desire for a chance to get at him are now laughed at. He made the committee hold him back from the fray when he suddenly realized that McLaurin was not only in the ring for a fight; but that his friends had rallied to him and were going to back him to the last blow.

Spartanburg Spartan: The action of the 21 members of the State Executive Democratic committee shows that Senator Tillman dominates that body. It is evident that he is still boss. Those who desire office in this State are afraid to oppose him. But the people are not as unanimous as the committee. Many of them are tired of being led around by the boss. They desire to think and vote for themselves. As to the personal quarrel between Tillman and McLaurin they are taking little interest. Tillman says that McLaurin is no Democrat because he does not vote as he, Tillman, does. McLaurin claims that Tillman favors a protective tariff and subsidies and treasury grabs. That is all a personal matter between two men whose public services the state could dispense with and not be the loser. The votes of McLaurin, which are so bitterly and maliciously censured by Tillman, are endorsed by many people. The Cuban and Philippines occupation is an accomplished fact. That cannot be undone. As to incidental protection the two senators agree and the people believe in the policy. So when honest, thinking people fairly consider the votes and the opinions of the two senators, they may be divided as to their estimate of their loyalty to the country. The saddest consideration is that Senator Tillman, through the committee, should attempt to bind the free, independent voters down by rules, regulations and oaths that bring politics down to the lowest level. It is evident that Senator Tillman is making a determined effort to boss the machine. We heartily wish the state was rid of the whole lot of pot politicians that are scheming and worming their way into office, and that the honest, able, fair, non-purchasable men in the rear, could become our public servants.

That is what we want and not bosses. Charleston Post: "I have remained quietly in my seat and seen him (McLaurin) confer time and again with Republicans," says Senator Tillman. We cannot understand Ben Tillman remaining quiet in any circumstances, otherwise we see nothing startling in this declaration. Why should not McLaurin confer with Republican senators on matters of public concern or of special interest to his constituents? Tillman does. The senior senator has often boasted of his friendship with "Bill" Chandler, and the advantage it has brought him in the way of special favors from the controlling party. He could be seen almost any day conferring with Republicans in the senate lobby or at the departments. Yet this is a crime against Democracy in McLaurin. How utterly ridiculous is such stuff.

Anderson Intelligencer: But, thank Heaven, the day of the ringster is past, and no one realizes this more than the ringster himself. Senator McLaurin is not ruled out of the Democratic primary, nor will he be. At next spring's conventions a very different type of Democracy will be in the saddle from that now dominated by Senator Tillman, and those issues of progress will be discussed before the people in the Democratic primary just as freely as honest men are called liars, thieves and cowards there now. All this rot about McLaurin heading a new Republican party emanates from the passing element of a hard dying faction, the falsity of which time only will prove. Until he does go into the Republican party he is entitled to fair play at the hands of his people, and true Democracy will see that he gets it.

TILLMAN IN A TANGLE.

Condemns Ohio Democrats For Doing What He Afterward Did Himself.

In speaking of the recent action of the South Carolina Democratic state committee, in virtually reading Senator McLaurin, his colleague, out of the party, Mr. Tillman said: "The action of the committee in this matter should not be construed as one expelling Mr. McLaurin from the party. In the first place, the Democrats of the state do not regard Mr. McLaurin as one of them. There was, therefore, no expulsion from the organization in this act of the committee, but rather notice that Mr. McLaurin should stand before the people in his true light. There is no mistaking the meaning of that committee's action. It has told Mr. McLaurin that common political hon-

esty and decency demands that he go before the people in order that the principles propounded by him in his heretical attitude may be either sustained or disapproved.

"In a word, the Democracy of the state does not deny him the right of membership, but it does deny that he is a representative of their tenets. The proper thing for him to do under the circumstances is for him to resign his office as senator and go before the state for vindication. That would settle the whole issue. Let him do that and there will then be no question of the propriety of his Democracy; that's what the people want him to do and that is what the state committee meant for him to do when they judged him and his policy. I do not think McLaurin is a Democrat."

In referring to the recent apostasy of the Ohio convention on the silver question, Mr. Tillman said: "The Ohio Democrats had no business dragging the silver issue into their convention as they did. This is a matter that could well have waited for a year or two. I think the convention's actions nonsense. The man who pulled Bryan and silver into that meeting was, in my candid opinion, a fool. There was no necessity for it, and it only raised trouble. It was bad politics and, furthermore demonstrated bad judgment in every respect. The Ohio convention, nor any other convention at this time, for that matter, has no authority or excuse for determining political issues that are to be settled three years hence. What is the use of any such action? It can readily be seen that it is all foolishness. The year 1904 is a long ways off and there is no way of predicting what the conditions may be then. Ohio has no right to say now what the issues shall be in 1904. It would have been far better had the subject been left alone entirely. In this instance it is better to await developments of the next three years. Then we can tell what is best for the party and the country."—Washington special to the Charlotte Observer.

AN OLD TIME ROMANCE.

How Miss Grisel Held Up the Postman and Saved Her Father.

The Earl of Aberdeen, speaking at a dinner of the United Kingdom Postal and Telegraph Service Benevolent society at Aberdeen, said they had to go back to the old mail coach days to get the picturesque aspect of the postal service, and to illustrate this he narrated a romantic incident which occurred in the reign of James II—more than 200 years ago. Sir John Cochrane, son of a fine old nobleman, Lord Dundonald, was one of those who thought the liberties and interests of the country were in danger, owing to the policy of the government of the day, and resisted it. Sir John was betrayed into the hands of the enemy and was lodged in Edinburgh jail. One night the door of the prison opened, and he heard the voice of his daughter Gabriel, who was allowed to have many talks with him.

Meantime the news came that his condemnation had been settled by the council, and that the mail would come next week with his death warrant. Miss Grisel Cochrane told her father that she had to go away for a few days. He said: "I hope you will do nothing rash," and she replied that she would do nothing very rash. She rode from Edinburgh to Berwick, where her old nurse lived, and there she changed her clothes for the clothes of a boy. Then she rode to a place between Berwick and Belford, where she made inquiries regarding the king's mail messengers and where they used to put up.

Arriving at a small inn about four miles south of Berwick, she asked for something to eat. The hostess told her not to make a noise, because in the box-bed the king's mail messenger was asleep. "Do be quiet," she said, "with your knife and fork." She began her meal. "Can you get me some water?" The hostess said, "Why, a braw lad like you should sup ale." "Have you no cold, fresh water? If you give me water I will pay you the same as for the ale." The hostess explained that she would have to go to the well, a long distance off, and it would take ten minutes, but the girl—rather the apparent boy—persuaded the woman to go for the water.

During her absence the girl went to the box-bed. There was the mail messenger asleep—a "swack" fellow—with his mailbag under his head, using it for a pillow. On the table were his pistols, and very nervously the girl withdrew the charges. No sooner was this done than the hostess returned with the water. The girl finished her meal, went on the road, made a circuit, and met the mail messenger, and they rode together for a bit. After a short chat she drew a little nearer and said: "My friend, I have a fancy for that mail bag." "If it is a joke," said the messenger, "it is a pretty poor one." She took out a little pistol and presented it. The messenger pulled out his pistols, and snap!—the first missed fire. He threw it away and drew the other—snap! He had to hand over the mail bag and she rode into an adjoining wood.

She opened the bag, drew out an official envelope, and rode with it to her nurse's house, where it was found to contain the death warrant of her father. She returned to Edinburgh, and rode quietly to her father's house. That caused so much delay that they managed to get a reprieve and her father was saved. He (the speaker) had a personal interest in that incident, as he understood that Grisel Cochrane was a direct ancestor of Lady Aberdeen.—London Telegraph.