

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SILENCE

By FREDERICK VAN RENSSLAER DEY
A story of Russia and the Nihilists—The mighty power wielded by an American in the dominions of the Czar and the forces that were combined for his overthrow—Withstanding an Emperor to his face.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.
Daniel Derrington, an American, passing under the name of Dubravnik, organizes a secret service force for the Czar of Russia, falls in love with Princess Olga de Echeverria, and proposes to her while her brother and other Nihilists are waiting outside the house to assassinate him. She accepts his love, promises to trust implicitly in him, and submits to arrest by secret agents. She is taken prisoner to the house of Prince Michael, who loves her, and Dubravnik, or Derrington, goes to meet his fiancée and their prisoner, Ivan, brother to the Princess Olga.

CHAPTER XII—(Continued).

"Did you not say so?"
He hung his face in shame and answered:
"Yes."
"Is that not the thought among your friends at this moment, and would the life of your sister be safe from them if she were in her own house tonight?"
"It would not."

"And yet, you call such people your friends—those who would without question put her to death on mere suspicion—to a death to which you have helped to condemn her by your foul suspicions, and the more foul utterance of them. Shame on you, Ivan d'Echeverria! Shame on you!"
Ivan contorted his face, and he was silent.

"Did you fire the bullet that so nearly killed me?" I asked.
"No, I did not do that, but I directed that it be done. You would not have escaped if I had held the pistol."
"Perhaps not. It would not matter, anyway. Have you not wondered why I brought you to this house?"
"To torture me; that, at least, is what you are doing."
"I brought you here to save you."

"To save me?"
"Yes; from the folly of your youth. You are a man in years, but a boy in every act you commit. Have you manhood enough left in you to want to save your sister, who now, thanks to you, has two enemies to face? Russia would send her to Siberia, and the Nihilists would murder her. She would have sacrificed herself for you, and offered to do so. Are you willing to sacrifice yourself for her?"
"God knows that I am."
"Will you prove it?"
"Oh, that I might!"
"You have the chance. I cannot quite trust you, Ivan, or for her sake, I would leave you to go, but you would hasten to your friends and warn them of their danger, and by that you would destroy your sister forever—by that act you would kill her. She is safe and will be safe, if they are not warned of what is to happen tonight. Shall I set you free, and trust to your honor not to go to them?"

"No—no—no! For God's sake, no! Leave me bound! Kill me more tightly! Do not let me go! Tie me if you will, but do nothing to injure her. Oh, are you telling the truth?"
"The whole truth, Ivan. I will leave you as you are until I return. I do not think you will escape; I do not think that you will try to do so. But you must understand one thing: This night forever ends your connection with Nihilism. This is the sacrifice you must make to save your sister. Will you make it?"
"If it will save her I will make it. But will it?"
"If I find you here when I return, and if you are still in the same mood, I will take you to her, and she shall reply to that question for herself."

I left him then, and having altered my appearance and generosity of Prince Michael, I also knew that he had an ungovernable temper, and I began to fear that my delay in following him might have led him to say something to the Emperor which would encompass me with puzzling conditions.

As soon as I arrived at the palace I was told that the princess was waiting in his apartments, and I hurried to him.
He rose as I entered the room, and, bowing stiffly, without extending his hand, as was his invariable habit, said calmly:
"You are late, Mr. Derrington. I expected you an hour earlier, at least."
"I am very sorry, prince," I replied, "more sorry than I can say, to have kept you waiting, but I have been unavoidably detained."
"May I ask if it was at my house?"
"Ah!"

It was evident that he did not believe me, and that he meant me to understand that he did not, but I resolved that I would not quarrel with him. Therefore, I remained silent.

"May I venture to give you an explanation of the extraordinary proceedings of the evening?" he asked icily.
"Yes, I think I owe you that much. But would it not be better if I first offer my respects to the Czar? Then I can return here, and we can enjoy a long chat together."
"His majesty knows that you were to come to me first. After I have heard you, we will go to him together."
"Am I to understand, prince, that you have told his majesty anything of the occurrences of tonight?"
"You are to understand exactly that. I have told him all; at least all that I could tell."
"Indeed! In that case, we will go to him together. Such explanation as I have to make will be made in his presence. Whatever explanations there are to be made, they will be made in the presence of his majesty, and I would not wish to be absent from the proceedings of the evening?" he asked icily.

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and that he was jealous, for I had done an unprecedented thing in taking her to his house under the circumstances. For a woman to commit herself to the care of a man in the way that the princess had trusted herself to me meant much more in Russia than it does in New York. The princess could find no excuse for the act; still less for my delay in following him when he left his own house in our possession.

Presently he spoke. His words came slowly and with careful deliberation.
"What I say now, Mr. Derrington, you may accept in whatsoever spirit you please, but, upon my soul, I do not believe you."
I bowed, and we entered the cabinet together.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Czar Defied.

In all the interviews that I had had with the Czar during the many months of my association with him, he had maintained the condition that he had himself made at the beginning, which was that he would see me in the presence of his majesty. Whenever we were alone together he commanded me to forget that we were other than two friends who were enjoying an opportunity to chat with each other, and as at such times we invariably conversed in French, he always insisted that I should address him by the simple term "monsieur."

When the prince was with us, as was nearly always the case, the degree of familiarity was slightly, though hardly perceptibly, modified, and I must say that I had learned to enjoy such chats exceedingly.

For Alexander I had begun to feel a sincere affection. I doubt if there was any other man in Russia who understood him as thoroughly as I did. During the many long hours that we had passed together he had told me many things concerning his life, his ideas, and his feelings, which had revealed the real man—that is, the man behind the Czar—to me, and I knew that of the thousands of crimes attributed to him only a few had ever come to his knowledge until it was too late for him to interfere, or implicate for him to do so.

Indeed, he was not preponderant; indeed, rather deficient, but he was naturally a kindly disposed man, and at the beginning of his reign, and indeed, through more than half of it, he proved that fact to the people. It was just before the time of my arrival in St. Petersburg that he allowed himself to fall more and more into the power of the nobles, who in reality ruled the empire, and who do so still.

Easily influenced by those in whom he trusted, thousands of crimes were committed, and of which he never heard. At all events I loved him, and moreover, I had thorough faith in my own influence over him.

In like proportion to my familiarity at court, and to his fondness for my society, I was cordially hated by the nobility, and as they feared me quite as much as they hated me, and as my real standing there remained a mystery, I was constantly fawned upon to a degree that was nauseating.

Even the story that I had so lately heard of the assassination of the princess did not materially lessen the liking I felt for Alexander, for I could understand much better than she could all the influence that had been brought to bear upon the Emperor not to pardon the woman in whose possession had been found cyanide of potassium, and who had intended that she should go to the island of Saghalien; I did not believe that he could be held accountable for the evils that befell poor Yvonne in the isolated garrisons of Siberia. He believed that she intended to poison him, and he held it in his hand when the Emperor tore it from his grasp and struck him on the head with it. Who would not do the same?

I repeat all this as my excuse for still feeling that affection for him which my intercourse had taught me. The real criminal in the case of the story of Yvonne was Durnief. Him I hated, and his name was on one of the lists that had been read off to me before going to the palace that night. There were special orders concerning him, too—but that will be dealt with later.

Now, as I entered the cabinet with the prince, I found that he had some doubts concerning my reception, for I had no idea what the prince had said to his majesty, and I knew only too well his disposition to listen to anything that had a suspicious side to it, particularly if that suspicion concerned one of his closest and most intimate associates.

As at any time, within five minutes, have poisoned the mind of the Czar against the prince; I did not doubt that he could accomplish the same delicate attention for me.

The prince preceded me, and the Czar rose as we entered.
He was alone, and I advanced at once, with extended hand, as he had often requested me to do it when I discovered him thus; but he bowed coldly, feigning not to see it.

I halted, drew myself up, and returned his bow in the same manner that he had given it. Then I waited for him to speak.
"You are late, sir," he said. "You have kept me waiting."
"I was not aware that your majesty expected me," I replied. "Otherwise I should have been here sooner."
"The prince expected you, and led me to do the same."
"Had the prince done me the honor to tell me that he intended to receive me in your cabinet, I should have understood. The prince—perhaps unintentionally—deceived me."

Prince Michael flushed hotly, but said nothing. The Czar smiled grimly.
"What detained you?" he demanded.
"The business which detains me in Russia, your majesty."
"Ah; you are concerned in the work of the Brotherhood?"
"I was."

"I understood that you were much more usefully employed than in signing an order for my arrest—rather, detention in the palace. It had been done when they were alone in the cabinet together, and how I could have learned of it was a puzzle which he could not fathom.

The more the prince protested, the more certain the Czar became that I had spoken the truth, and while he glowered upon the unhappy man, who became paler and more uncertain in his speech, every effort, I stood calmly by with my arms folded, not enjoying the situation, but determined to win the fight.

"Michael," said his majesty, at last, "give me the order to which Mr. Derrington refers."
"I knew then that I had won, and while the prince tremblingly produced it, I waited.
The Czar passed it to me with the words, "You may destroy it, Mr. Derrington," and then added:
"Prince Michael, you will retire to your apartments and remain there until I send for you. I will spare you the indignity of an arrest until I know more. Go!"

I did not look at the prince as he left the room, and I have always regretted it, for if I had done so, and seen the agony that must have been written in his face, I might have saved him. I did not believe the charge against him when I made it, and there was no such thing as a direction to any of my men to arrest him.

I charged him with complicity with the Nihilists, solely to get rid of him and by that means save myself and Olga, knowing that later I could save him; and that I could bring the Emperor to regard it as a most excellent joke.

Indeed, I intended before I left the Emperor's presence partially to allay his fears concerning the prince, by saying nothing more than that I had determined the fact that in making the charge, I had bulldozed better than I knew. I loved the prince, and that epithet, one of the greatest regrets of my life, if he was a man who was guilty without crime, he was. But I anticipate.

"Derrington," said the Czar, as soon as we were alone, and addressing me in French, by which I knew that I was really in favor, "you have started me tonight in a way that I shall not soon forget. Is it true that I shall not, ah, no, I cannot believe it, for if he is unfaithful, whom can I trust?"
"You must not cease to trust him entirely, yet, monsieur," I replied. "The charge against him is based upon evasion, and that may be disproved, but my drag net is out tonight, and the dawn will see nearly every Nihilist in St. Petersburg in prison, or on the way out of Russia. If you had been present upon me to detain me, I tremble for what might have happened."
"Tell me."
"Do not, I beg of you, detain me now; the prisons are filling up. I must get to work, for this is a matter to which I must personally attend."

"And Michael?"
"Leave him where he is, in his apartments, until I return."
"When will that be?"
"Soon after daylight."
"Then come to me at once. Have me awakened if I am sleeping; but I shall not be."
"One word, the princess?"
"She would have been murdered tonight by the Nihilists had I not arrested her as one, conducted her through the prison, and thence on to the house of the prince."
"Why did you not bring her here, and place her in my care?"
"She did not like to come. She had a lover once who became crazed, and was killed here in the palace by one of the guards, I believe so."
"Yes—yes, I understand. You did right. Stop! One word more before you go. This conspiracy to which you refer, against the whole royal family; are you sure that you have got to the root of it?"
"As sure as I am that I am here in the presence of the Czar of Russia."
"You have never failed me yet, Derrington; and he grasped me by the hand."
"And I never will, monsieur."
"Well, go. I shall expect you soon after daylight."

In reality there was little for me to do that night, more than I had already done, and yet it was impossible that I should not go in the palace with so much taking place throughout the city, immediately under my direction, and ever which it was imperative that I must retain supervision. I knew that there would be frequent demands upon me for authority to do and perform certain things, and it was important that I should be in hand.

I was always provided with the necessary papers for anything in the official line that I might be called upon to perform. This had been arranged in the beginning, the better to preserve the secret of my business in St. Petersburg, and I had signed and sealed blank papers, and there was no outside authority, belonging to any official in the realm which I was not prepared to meet. In short, my power was in many respects greater than that of the Czar himself, for I was always prepared for whatever I might have to do in any or all of the departments of the empire.

I turned so that I half faced the prince, and saw that he made a motion as if to spring upon and strike me; but he did not dare to commit such an act in the Czar's presence, and long trains got the better of his temper.

"Why, sir, did you take the Princess Olga to the house of Prince Michael?" continued the Czar.
"Because I believed him to be an honorable man, who would stand ready to protect her good name, and conceal from all the world, even from your majesty, the fact that she was there. Because he had told me that he loved her, and his love was unselfish; and further, because I regarded him as my friend. There are three reasons, your majesty, any one of which seems to me to be sufficient."

"But why was it necessary to take her anywhere?"
"That, your majesty, is a question which I must answer to you alone."
"Do you mean that you will not tell the prince?"
"I mean that it was my intention to tell the prince as soon as I reached the palace, but that now I deem it unnecessary. He has taught me a lesson in hospitality that is as new as it is unique."

"Perhaps she will explain the strange affair herself."
"I have no doubt that she will, your majesty."
"I have sent for her. She will remain here in the palace as long as danger threatens her. She should be here by now."
"May I inquire of your majesty whom you sent?"
"The captain of the palace guard."
"Captain Durnief?"
"Yes."

I looked at my watch, replaced it in my pocket, and then said calmly:
"Captain Durnief will not return with the princess, your majesty."
Then I saw the heavy frown of rising anger. I knew my man, for kings and emperors are less than men of the world when it comes to studying them. Their own opportunities for observing others are so much more limited. The Czar angry was a much sadder man to influence than the Czar satirical.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.
"Why will Durnief fail to carry out my personal orders? Dare the princess refuse to accompany him?"
"She most certainly would not have the bad taste to refuse, and she did, for the main would do anything but be by force, only he has the misfortune to be now a prisoner."
"Durnief a prisoner? The captain of my personal guard arrested? By your order, sir?"
"By my order, your majesty."
"You have named the man who was one."

"I would dare to arrest the prince, or your own son, if I found him inimical to your interests, and I beg you to understand that I gave the order before I knew that you had sent him on the errand of the princess."
"It is a lie!"
"The prince who spoke; but before I could reply to the accusation, the Czar waved his hand and commanded silence."

"Was it the princess who informed you that Durnief was a Nihilist?" he asked calmly, the smile returning to his face.
"No," I replied, understanding the motive behind the question, for I could read the Czar like a book, and I already knew much concerning the villainy of Durnief, "but it was he who informed me of the matter."
"By heaven, Derrington, you know too much. I begin to think that the days of your usefulness are past in St. Petersburg. There seems to be no limit to the authority that you assume, and now you have begun to dictate to me. I will not have it. I command that you tell me why you thought it necessary to take the princess from her own house tonight."

I knew that the crucial moment had come. I knew that if I weakened now I was lost. The only escape for me was to see the Czar alone, and that I determined to do. The manner of the prince upon my arrival at the palace, his conduct in the cabinet, the greeting that the Czar had vouchsafed me, and his bearing toward me since then, led me to a new and grim determination to do, and to play my last card, so to speak, by making one bold statement.

"Your majesty," I said deliberately, "has never until now had less than perfect confidence in me. The prince, being jealous, and too impatient to await an explanation at my hands, has prevailed upon you to order me under arrest for a time, in order that I may not return to his house, where I left the princess. If I do not mistake, he now has such an order, signed by you in person, in one of his pockets. Permit me to tell you and him that there is another reason why he procured that order, for my men at this moment have instructions to place him under arrest. He only sought to anticipate my return, and to remain in them, unless I am free to act as I see fit this night. I would not give that—and I snapped my fingers—"for the life of a single member of the royal family."

Then I folded my arms and waited.

The wholesale arrests which I had ordered for that night, I had long had under consideration, and that I had decided to make them a little sooner than was my first intention was due, in part, to the danger surrounding the princess; in part to my own suddenly formed determination to complete my business there and return to the United States; and lastly, to the fact that the last few reports that I had received so nearly completed the knowledge that I had striven to gain, that came to me, and that it was time to draw the net.

My salary was enormous and already amounted to a competence, and I knew that if I remained in Russia, sooner or later somebody would take me out of my favor. Always ready to doubt those who were nearest to him the Czar remembered instantly that I could gain nothing by playing the traitor.

He recalled, also, many instances, small in themselves, but yet occasions when the prince had deceived him. That he knew I had never done. I had always possessed the courage to tell him the truth, even when it was unpleasant. The habit of truthfulness told them. He believed me, and he doubted the prince.

More than that, I seemed to him to know everything, for it proved to be true that the prince had persuaded him to sign an order for my temporary arrest—or, rather, detention in the palace. It had been done when they were alone in the cabinet together, and how I could

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I did not look at the prince as he left the room, and I have always regretted it, for if I had done so, and seen the agony that must have been written in his face, I might have saved him. I did not believe the charge against him when I made it, and there was no such thing as a direction to any of my men to arrest him.

I charged him with complicity with the Nihilists, solely to get rid of him and by that means save myself and Olga, knowing that later I could save him; and that I could bring the Emperor to regard it as a most excellent joke.

Indeed, I intended before I left the Emperor's presence partially to allay his fears concerning the prince, by saying nothing more than that I had determined the fact that in making the charge, I had bulldozed better than I knew. I loved the prince, and that epithet, one of the greatest regrets of my life, if he was a man who was guilty without crime, he was. But I anticipate.

"Derrington," said the Czar, as soon as we were alone, and addressing me in French, by which I knew that I was really in favor, "you have started me tonight in a way that I shall not soon forget. Is it true that I shall not, ah, no, I cannot believe it, for if he is unfaithful, whom can I trust?"
"You must not cease to trust him entirely, yet, monsieur," I replied. "The charge against him is based upon evasion, and that may be disproved, but my drag net is out tonight, and the dawn will see nearly every Nihilist in St. Petersburg in prison, or on the way out of Russia. If you had been present upon me to detain me, I tremble for what might have happened."
"Tell me."
"Do not, I beg of you, detain me now; the prisons are filling up. I must get to work, for this is a matter to which I must personally attend."

"And Michael?"
"Leave him where he is, in his apartments, until I return."
"When will that be?"
"Soon after daylight."
"Then come to me at once. Have me awakened if I am sleeping; but I shall not be."
"One word, the princess?"
"She would have been murdered tonight by the Nihilists had I not arrested her as one, conducted her through the prison, and thence on to the house of the prince."
"Why did you not bring her here, and place her in my care?"
"She did not like to come. She had a lover once who became crazed, and was killed here in the palace by one of the guards, I believe so."
"Yes—yes, I understand. You did right. Stop! One word more before you go. This conspiracy to which you refer, against the whole royal family; are you sure that you have got to the root of it?"
"As sure as I am that I am here in the presence of the Czar of Russia."
"You have never failed me yet, Derrington; and he grasped me by the hand."
"And I never will, monsieur."
"Well, go. I shall expect you soon after daylight."

In reality there was little for me to do that night, more than I had already done, and yet it was impossible that I should not go in the palace with so much taking place throughout the city, immediately under my direction, and ever which it was imperative that I must retain supervision. I knew that there would be frequent demands upon me for authority to do and perform certain things, and it was important that I should be in hand.

I was always provided with the necessary papers for anything in the official line that I might be called upon to perform. This had been arranged in the beginning, the better to preserve the secret of my business in St. Petersburg, and I had signed and sealed blank papers, and there was no outside authority, belonging to any official in the realm which I was not prepared to meet. In short, my power was in many respects greater than that of the Czar himself, for I was always prepared for whatever I might have to do in any or all of the departments of the empire.

The wholesale arrests which I had ordered for that night, I had long had under consideration, and that I had decided to make them a little sooner than was my first intention was due, in part, to the danger surrounding the princess; in part to my own suddenly formed determination to complete my business there and return to the United States; and lastly, to the fact that the last few reports that I had received so nearly completed the knowledge that I had striven to gain, that came to me, and that it was time to draw the net.

My salary was enormous and already amounted to a competence, and I knew that if I remained in Russia, sooner or later somebody would take me out of my favor. Always ready to doubt those who were nearest to him the Czar remembered instantly that I could gain nothing by playing the traitor.

He recalled, also, many instances, small in themselves, but yet occasions when the prince had deceived him. That he knew I had never done. I had always possessed the courage to tell him the truth, even when it was unpleasant. The habit of truthfulness told them. He believed me, and he doubted the prince.

More than that, I seemed to him to know everything, for it proved to be true that the prince had persuaded him to sign an order for my temporary arrest—or, rather, detention in the palace. It had been done when they were alone in the cabinet together, and how I could

have learned of it was a puzzle which he could not fathom.

The more the prince protested, the more certain the Czar became that I had spoken the truth, and while he glowered upon the unhappy man, who became paler and more uncertain in his speech, every effort, I stood calmly by with my arms folded, not enjoying the situation, but determined to win the fight.

"Michael," said his majesty, at last, "give me the order to which Mr. Derrington refers."
"I knew then that I had won, and while the prince tremblingly produced it, I waited.
The Czar passed it to me with the words, "You may destroy it, Mr. Derrington," and then added:
"Prince Michael, you will retire to your apartments and remain there until I send for you. I will spare you the indignity of an arrest until I know more. Go!"

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