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March 25 1910 6 3 HARRY GOSNELL.

THE SHARPSHOOTER

By IVAN VRONSKY

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When the Japanese were besieging Port Arthur there were a number of women and children shut up in the fortress. Singularly enough, they were there, the women by their own consent and the children by the consent of their parents. Discipline was very lax among the Russians, and a number of the officers preferred to have their families with them to being separated from them. General Stoessel, the Russian commander, set the example by having his own wife in Port Arthur, so it was not remarkable that others followed suit. It is said that a number of children during the siege were playing about in the fortress and sometimes among the guns on the ram parts, exposed to shot and shell. But the enlisted men were not allowed to have wives or children with them.

Sergeant Boris Tomsky was a gunner of renown. He was in charge of one of the big guns on Two Hundred and Three Meter hill and did more damage to the Japanese with his piece than any gunner in the Russian army.

With Tomsky was a young sharpshooter named Alexis Petroff, a dead shot, who did most of the rifle work, picking off Japanese who were working guns that were doing especial damage.

While the sergeant was firing immense balls from his pet cannon in an effort to silence some Japanese gun that if left alone would surely make an important breach, Petroff would be picking off one by one the gunners that were directing the firing.

Petroff was a mere boy. Not a hair had shown itself on his face, not even a bit of down. That on his head was of the lightest of the light northern hue, while his eyes were a corresponding azure. He seemed very much attached to the big man who directed the big gun, with his shocky hair and beard and fierce mustachios. Indeed, each seemed fitted for his especial work, Tomsky to send forth the great cannon balls, weighing a couple of hundred pounds, Petroff to dispatch the thin leaden bullets.

Tomsky kept on dismounting guns and doing other damage to the Japanese until he became famed among his comrades for the most useful single man in the Russian army. They used to say, "If all our generals could be turned into Tomsky gunners the Japanese would never take Port Arthur."

But at last the Japs got on to the fact that this wholesale destruction of life and ordnance was due to one man, and they were not long in locating the big gunner on Two Hundred and Three Meter hill. Then they called for one of the best sharpshooters in the army and, pointing out Tomsky to him, ordered the Jap to eliminate the big Russian. Once the gunner was located and a sharpshooter especially detailed to kill him he had not long to live. It happened that after he was pointed out he did not show himself for some time, but as soon as he did he received a bullet in his forehead that finished his career.

The grief of his assistant at his loss was touching to see. Petroff was affected to tears. The Russian peasant soldiers, who were more like cattle than men, could not understand how a man could weep. But presently Petroff's feelings changed from grief to revenge. His comrades could understand that, and as they saw Petroff take up his rifle and hug it as if it were a dear child they looked at one another as if to say:

"Now Petroff is a man again; he will make the little monkeys pay for killing the big sergeant."

From that time Petroff was always behind the ramparts watching through a porthole for some Japanese to show himself. When one did so but an instant would elapse before he would pitch forward or backward, and it would be discovered by his companions that he had either been killed or mortally wounded.

Every time Petroff killed a Japanese he would punch a hole in his cap. As the siege went on the holes became so numerous that there was scarcely room enough for them all. In time they passed the hundred mark. But this did not satisfy the young marksman, and he went on relentlessly making one Jap after another bite the dust till the surrender came, when he had 117 holes punched in his cap.

There were 42,000 prisoners taken by the Japs in the surrender of Port Arthur. One day when a lot of Russians were lined up to be marched to a transport a woman passed. She was dressed in feminine apparel, except the big military Russian cap. The soldiers laughed and jeered at her. Taking off her cap, she held it up to the light, showing punctures like a cluster of stars.

"Do you see that?" she said. "Each hole stands for a Japanese killed because they killed my husband."

"Who was your husband?"

"Sergeant Tomsky."

"And you?"

"Alexis Petroff, his sharpshooter."

"What! You Alexis Petroff, the sharpshooter who has killed so many of the little devils?"

"Look at the holes. I have had one of the devils for each hole."

"Well, well! And you, being a woman, have only to put on skirts and you will not have to go to the detestable island."

"No; I am going back to Russia to look after our children."

A DISGRUNTLED DETECTIVE

By TOM BROWNELL

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Being ambitious after reading sundry detective stories to enter the profession, I went to an office and asked for employment. It happened that a man was wanted to go among a gang of footpads and burglars disguised as one of their kind with a view to learning certain facts concerning them. It was so dangerous a job that no regular detective would undertake it. These men know their own sort and would easily recognize a spy. I, being filled with the romance of detective work without having had any experience, tumbled to an offer of the job at once.

About 11 o'clock at night, disguised as a tough, I reeled into a saloon where my men were supposed to be. I found them there and invited them to drink. I treated several times and thought I was getting in with them when suddenly there was a hammering at the door, and the barkeeper cried: "Police! Git!" The lights went out, and we were all left in the dark, scattering like so many rats. The doors were broken down, and the police rushed in. When the lights were turned on it was found that the barkeeper and I were the only captives. How the rest got away I don't know.

I was taken to a station, and on the way I made myself known to the cop who walked beside me. He gave a broad grin and said that was the most beautiful device of all that were practiced in the criminal profession. I told him he would learn more about that in time. I slept in a filthy cell for the rest of the night and the next day sent word to the detective agency that I would like to have them come and get me out. They sent one of the employees, who had never seen me. Of course the police officers were not going to discharge me on any such evidence, or, rather, want of it, and I told the man to go back and tell the one who had hired me to come and vouch for me.

He didn't come till late in the afternoon, and when he did he didn't recognize me. I told him I was the man he had sent to the saloon for information, but he looked at me contemptuously and said that the man he had sent had likely met with foul play and I was trying to get out of a bad scrape by personating him. He hadn't seen me made up, and my disguise was so perfect that he believed me to be a veritable villain. He went away without being convinced as to my identity, and I was obliged to spend another night in a cell.

A week passed, and I was still a prisoner. Then one day I was indicted as one of the men in the saloon when the police made the raid, who had made away with the detective that the agency had sent out. In other words, I was charged with being my own murderer. Upon inquiry I learned that the man who had thus been sent out on a mission had disappeared, and it was supposed he had been dispatched by the gang.

Here was a pretty how-de-do. I called again for the man who had sent me out, but he refused to come to see me, and I couldn't go to see him. I doubted if it would do any good if he came. He had never seen me but once, and then but for a moment. How could he be expected to recognize me in my rough garb, especially as in the saloon scuffle I had been very badly mauled?

I sent for a lawyer and told him my story. He appeared to believe me, but said there would be no use in putting such a story before a jury. It was so palpably false that it would prejudice my case. He said he would try to get up a defense that would seem more probable. I asked him if there was anything more probable than that a man could not have murdered himself and be alive. He replied that I would have to prove my identity, which was impossible. He would try to think of some method of defense that would be easier to prove than the truth. "We lawyers don't care anything," he said, "for the truth. What we want is something we can prove. An alibi affords the best chance."

When I came to be tried for being implicated in my own murder there was no proof against me except that I was known to have gone to the saloon from which I had disappeared and was one of the gang of rascals which was raided. This was considered prima facie evidence that I, probably with others, had killed myself. It was evident that I would get a long term on general principles.

My lawyer's method was very ingenious. Having entered my claim to be another person than myself, John Borland, he brought John Borland's mother into court to swear that her son on the night of the supposed murder was at home and in bed. Another witness, who lived in the same house, swore to the same thing. Then my lawyer called upon the policeman who had arrested me to swear that I had been found in and taken from the saloon. The lawyer so badgered the policeman that he was not sure of me. Thus an alibi was established.

I was acquitted. But I didn't continue the detective business. I had had all of that romantic occupation I wanted. Detectives are all right in novels and in plays, but when it comes to the real thing they don't lead an easy life. Joe Petrosino, for instance, was one of the cleverest and most daring, but they got him.

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