



"You must come with me. You are my prisoner."

The Silver Clock

by Thomas F. Hart

DICK HARSHAW had spent eighteen years of his life trying to learn to attend to his own business.

When he was a baby he used to spoil his mother's gowns by trying to feed her with his own bread and milk at unexpected moments, and when he was a boy at school, he was always helping some other boy out of a scrape, and himself into one.

It was the exasperation of his father's life, to see Dick putting out his hand indiscriminately. Mr. Harshaw was a shrewd, hard headed gentleman, whose friendship was very much valued by his acquaintances, and whose sparely given advice was always

listened to.

He used to smile grimly sometimes when Dick came out more of a victim than usual.

"Let him alone," he would say to Dick's mother when she lamented. "He will get a lesson one of these days which will teach him to let other people's chestnuts burn, if they can't rake them out of the fire for themselves. Lending a hand is one thing, but lending a cat's paw is another, and Master Dick is going to find it out."

But Dick had a budding mustache before he did.

We hear very little about Nihilists and

their sort nowadays, because people in England and America have grown tired of them. They were written about so frequently, and talked about so much, that they grew to be an old story which nobody believed. It was only the Nihilists who went on just as usual, plotting and being arrested in a way which delighted their hearts.

People who become political insurgents could not be happy unless they were being persecuted. Excitement is their daily food, and the thrill of escape from a danger, real or imaginary, contains for them the charm of life. They are professional martyrs, and belong to a class all their own.

They undoubtedly do much good sometimes, but they are one sided people who only see from their own point of view. Their cause is the only one in their eyes, and they justify themselves in sacrificing anything or anybody to their ends.

When Mr. Harshaw took Dick to Russia he tried to impress something of this upon his mind.

"They are dangerous people to have to do with," Mr. Harshaw said. "They are not personally selfish, but they are selfish for their cause, and unless you are one of them you must let them alone. They will sacrifice their own lives, and you cannot expect them to be more squeamish about yours."

Dick may be said to have laid this advice away in lavender. He put it down in his mental note book that he was not to play with Nihilistic gunpowder, although he had pictured to himself that he would make friends among the students, and hear of their adventures.

He gave up the idea entirely and even passed by the little restaurants where the students from the university went for their luncheon, and sat down at a table in another much farther up the street, where only grave old professors drank their tea, and read books at the same time.

One day in this restaurant a long haired gentleman, with a mild expression and glasses through which he peered at his pamphlet in a dreamy fashion, sat down near Dick. He let his tea get quite cold, drank it in a gulp, and went out.

The next day it was almost the same thing. He was such a sweet faced, innocent old man that Dick took a great interest in him.

One day the professor looked at him and gravely bowed, and after that they always spoke to each other.

This had been going on a month, perhaps, when one afternoon the old professor felt about in the pockets of his loose coat and waistcoat for the usual coin for the waiter and found nothing. The expression on his face was one of perfect bewilderment.

The stolid Russian servant stood by, his palm extended. It never seemed to enter his mind, as it would that of an American waiter, that so regular a customer might be trusted until tomorrow.

This was Dick's opportunity. He sprang forward with the few kopecks which the professor needed, and in very bad Russian begged him to accept the loan.

The old man took them gratefully, then stopped and peered near sightedly into Dick's face.

"You are not a Russ," he said.

"No; I am an American."

"Ah! Ah! That country of bad boys who wish to play without a ruler to guide their work. Ah yes! I wish to hear of that country. Yes! Yes!" And he sat down and poured out a flood of questions about America to Dick.

If there was one thing above another which Dick loved to do, it was to talk about America, particularly when he could talk in English. He found that nearly all educated Russians could speak English.

He told the professor all sorts of things, and gave him what he considered an expert opinion upon our institutions and

political parties. Some of them would have made Dick's father laugh, but he wasn't telling them to his father, and Professor Makart (he told Dick his name was Makart) listened attentively.

"I must go to my class now," he said finally. "But come this evening, or any evening, and ask for the professor, at the house of Paul Dabbovitch in the Street of the Good Shepherd. Let me hear more of your republicanism. It is new teaching to me. As for me, I am lost in the Latin and the Greek."

When Dick went home that evening to his rooms in the hotel he found a handsome old Russian officer in uniform talking to his father.

Mr. Harshaw had gone to Russia with some electrical apparatus to be used on warships and in fortresses. The Russian government had about accepted his plans, and Dick found when he had been introduced to General Lobelev that his father was preparing to make a journey to the various fortresses through the empire.

"I cannot take you with me," he said to Dick, "because you would not be allowed to go, and General Lobelev has been good enough to ask you to be his guest while I am away."

"I am afraid you will find it rather dull," the general said. "There are only myself and my little girl and her governesses in the house, but it will be much pleasanter than a hotel."

"I am very glad to accept the invitation for him," Mr. Harshaw said. "If it were not for that I should send him over to Germany. I know he will get into no mischief if he has your house for a home, my old friend," and Mr. Harshaw, who had been in Russia a great many times, and who had served as war correspondent with the Russian army through the Russo-Turkish war, grasped the general's hand.

"Then it is settled that he will come?"

"Tomorrow."

Dick had grown so accustomed to his father's journeyings that he gave no particular thought to this one, and after dinner that evening he called into his room, "I am going out for a little while to see one of the professors."

"All right," his father said from the bottom of a box he was packing.

The Street of the Good Shepherd was narrow and illy lighted, and Dick thought to himself that the great university paid small enough salaries certainly.

The room where the professor lived opened off a corridor, narrow and draughty, which seemed to run through the house, and his room was bare of furniture, except for a great porcelain stove, his narrow bed, and piles of books. Indeed, the apartment looked more like a second hand bookshop than anything else.

As Dick glanced over them he saw that they were mostly Greek and Latin classics. There was nothing Nihilistic here. The old professor appeared to be a garrulous person. He told Dick all about his family in the provinces, of how his daughter was governess to a gentleman's daughter, and then he asked him about his own home in America.

Dick told all about himself, winding up with the information that he was to go to General Lobelev's for a visit.

"Lobelev is a great man in Russia, very near the Czar," Professor Makart said solemnly. "He does much to keep discipline and to keep down the insurgents. He is a great man. Will he be in the house while you are there?"

"Yes."

"Good! Good!" The professor's eyes gleamed under his white brows. "He can teach you much about this country. Perhaps he can soon teach you that Russia is better ruled than America."

"He will have to be a magician if he

does that. There is no government like a government by the people.”

Professor Makart looked at Dick for a moment with a keener glance than he had let come into his gentle eyes before.

“Would you like to see that son of a government in Russia?”

“Why, certainly.”

“Then why do you not find out the people who believe as you do, and help them? I am only asking out of curiosity—merely to learn your habit of thought,” the professor added hastily, as he saw a look of surprise in Dick’s eyes. “I imagined perhaps you would want to help the little body of Russians struggling toward liberty, as Lafayette went from France to help the Americans. I wondered how far you Americans carried your principles.”

“Lafayette helped to fight in the open field, not to murder and assassinate,” Dick said contemptuously. “There’s a difference.”

“Your teachers have been noble ones,” Professor Makart replied. “Let us talk of other things.”

Dick thought, as he went back to the hotel, that he had never spent a more delightful evening. The professor did not seem like an old man, but a young one. Dick had talked while thought he was listening, and had turned his young mind inside out, promising to come again within a few days, and bring one of the models of his father’s electrical apparatus for the innocent old professor of Greek and Latin to see.

“You will have to explain it to me. I know nothing of these new wonder toys,” he said meekly.

Altogether Dick went away highly delighted with himself.

He found his new life at the general’s exceedingly novel; but, as the general had said, a little quiet. There was much gaiety in Petersburg, and the general could have taken him anywhere, but Dick was hardly eighteen,

and striplings had no business with late dinners and state balls, in Mr. Harshaw’s opinion.

So, much of Dick’s time, when he was not studying, was spent with his new friend, the professor.

Oddly enough, a great many other young men gathered there. The professor’s daughter came home after a while, and they made it a delightful home for Dick.

They were much interested in his father’s discoveries, and one night Dick took the model of the apparatus in a bag and started to the professor’s house with it.

It had stood on the general’s library table, securely locked in the box, but Dick had a key. He had been in the habit of showing it, and thought nothing of carrying it off now.

Walking briskly down the Street of the Good Shepherd, he suddenly felt a pair of arms clasp him in a vise-like grip, and a moment later there was a darkness bespangled with stars, and he found himself sprawling on the ground minus his bag.

He started up with a cry of “Stop thief!” but there was not a police officer to be found, although he ran for blocks in search of one. Then he went on to the professor’s and told him his story.

It was received in dead silence, but now and then there were furtive glances cast at each other, and slight shaking of heads.

“I hate to tell the general, but I will,” said Dick. “He can probably recover the bag.”

Miss Makart followed him to the door, and out into the draughty corridor.

“I must tell you a secret,” she said. “You must not speak of us to the general. He is my father’s only brother.”

Dick looked at her in amazement.

“It is true. They were separated by my father’s marrying the governess, and being disinherited. But my father still loves him. Ah! If I could only bring them together!” clasping her hands.

“Can I help?” Dick asked.

“If you only would!”

“*I will!*”

“And keep silent until the proper moment?”

“I hope I can do that.”

“Then I have a plan. Tomorrow is my father’s birthday. I think the attempt should be made then.”

“I think that would be a good time,” Dick said.

“Ah, it is pitiful, to see my dear old father working so hard for a miserable pittance while his brother lives in luxury! My father was the eldest son, who was disinherited for my uncle Alexis. And father still loves him, and stands at his gates to see him pass.”

There were tears in her eyes.

“I think that on my father’s birthday,” she went on, “he will send my uncle a gift. You shall take it and place it where his eye will see it when he awakes in the morning. Or—no! I have it! Ah! I have it! The old clock!”

She went into the room and came back with a quaint old silver clock. She pressed a point and a silvery chime broke out, ringing a melody.

“This is a clock that my uncle gave to my father when he became of age, and it stood on a shelf in their study. I will set this so that the chime will ring at a certain hour; then I will give it to you in a bag. You will place it out of sight in my uncle Alexis’ room. He will awaken in the morning and hear the chime. It will remind him of his boyhood. He will seek for it, and surely he will be touched.”

She went away again and came back with a little black bag.

“It is here. You will surely place it under my uncle’s bed?”

“Surely!” Dick said.

“Be very careful of it. Do not open it. Let him find it. It is all set to waken him by the chime at seven o’clock tomorrow morning.

Listen. You can hear it tick.”

And Dick could. It ticked rather more heavily, he thought, than when he had heard it before, notwithstanding the muffling bag.

“Be careful not to drop it,” was the last injunction.

Dick took the bag carefully and walked home and up stairs. The general’s suite of rooms were very near his own. so he slipped in and put the bag under the general’s bed hangings.

He felt a little like a sneak, creeping in like this, although his object was so good. Some bit of his father’s advice about meddling in other people’s affairs came to his mind, but it was too late now. Already he heard the general coming.

After two o’clock Dick was awakened by a telegraphic message. It came from across the frontier in Germany, and summoned Dick at once to his father, who was ill. With a heart like lead he threw some things into a bag and started.

The general had ordered out the sleigh for him, and said good by in a fatherly fashion, asking if he should go to the train with him.

“No, no,” Dick responded.

Even in his grief he remembered the chime that was to sound a reconciliation.

He hurried into the station, and found that he must wait half an hour for his train. Near by there was a little stand where tea and cheese and caviare were sold, and Dick walked in for a cup of tea.

He had just given his order, when he felt a hand touch him on the shoulder. He turned. It was a police officer, and three others stood behind him.

To any one who has ever lived in Russia there must always come some sort of a chill at the touch of a police officer. They are the escorts to so many disagreeable places.

“What is it?” Dick asked.

“You must come with me,” the first

officer said. "You are my prisoner."

"I cannot, and I will not. My father is ill in Germany, and I must go to him."

"Not tonight."

"What am I arrested for?"

"Suppose you get into the carriage we have waiting."

There was nothing for Dick to do but go, although he was boiling with rage. In the carriage he could get no satisfaction. He was told to wait until he reached the office of the chief of police.

It was beginning to show traces of dawn now, and Dick was wild with impatience.

Marshaled into the police headquarters, he was confronted by a group which made him fall back in amazement. Here were the young men he had left at Markart's the evening before.

Here was Makart's daughter, and who was this shrewd faced young man looking at him with a half smile of contempt? It might be Makart's son from the resemblance.

The chief of police, a formal little man, looked up as Dick entered.

"You are sent for, Mr. Harshaw," he said. "to identify these prisoners as those who have met at the rooms of Makart, the infernal machine maker."

Dick gasped.

"I know Professor Makart——"

"Who stands before you. Step out, Makart. Sometimes his expression changes so that even an old friend would have difficulty in recognizing him. As we do not believe you have had anything to do with him beyond visiting at his rooms, we only hold you for a few hours that you may identify his friends. He has probably never shown you any of his clocks, and induced you to place them. Otherwise, Mr. Harshaw, I fear Siberia would obtain you for a guest."

A cold sweat broke out all over Dick. The silver clock!

He looked up at the timepiece over the head of the chief. It was four minutes to seven.

Nothing could save the general now. Dick saw the whole miserable plot. What a tool he had been! Should he tell?

There was a telephone receiver hanging there. He must decide. The minutes were flying.

There was one chance in a million that the general might be saved, but if he saved him it might mean Siberia. If not, death! His poor father! Now they did not suspect him.

Dick seemed to live over every moment of his life in those seconds.

Then he sprang to the telephone and called up Central. It seemed ages before there was an answer. He asked for the connection at General Lobelevs and when he secured it he said clearly to the man who answered,

"There is an infernal machine under the general's bed. Put it in water at once, or it will blow up the house. Hurry!" And he spoke the name of the chief of police as the authority. Then he turned around.

"I did place one of the clocks under the general's bed. I did not know what it was."

There was dead silence in the room except for a sneering hiss from Makart.

"Mr. Harshaw," said the chief evenly. "will you walk into the next room."

Dick reeled rather than walked past the door that was held open for him.

The other room was brilliantly lighted, and sitting in an armchair was General Lobelevs!

Dick's nerves gave way, and he burst into tears.

The general took him kindly by the shoulders.

"It was the only thing to do, Dick," he said. "We had watched these people for months, but could get no convincing evidence against them. Then you came, and they tried their hand on you. They wanted to get the

model of your father's work. We had to steal that from you. We couldn't let them have that; and then they thought of making you kill me. We had a spy among them all the time. I am sorry, but maybe you will think before you

make new acquaintances next time. I shall not forget either, that you would have risked Siberia or death on the chance of saving me. That was like your father's son."