

# **THE GUNMAKER OF MOSCOW**

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The Gunmaker of Moscow by Jr. Cobb

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**JR. COBB**

**THE GUNMAKER  
OF MOSCOW**



**AMERICAN SERIES  
OF  
FAMOUS FICTION**

Edited by  
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**The Gunmaker of  
Moscow**

BY  
**SYLVANUS COBB, JR.**

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CALIFORNIA

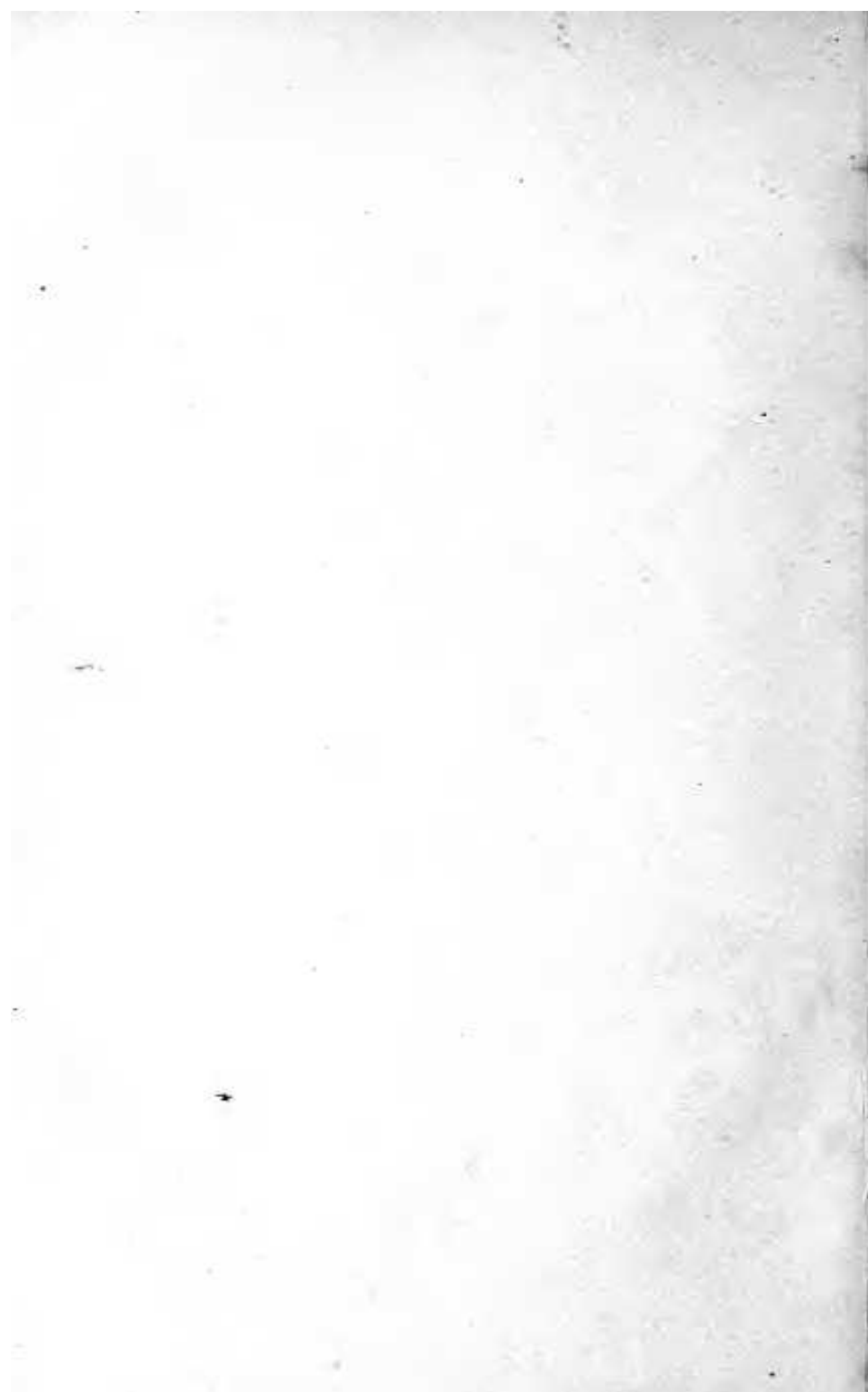


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## THE GUNMAKER OF MOSCOW.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE GUNMAKER AND THE MONK.

The time at which we open our story is mid-winter and towards the close of the seventeenth century. Russia had passed through the long and bitter ordeal of national Night. The Tartar yoke had been worn till the very bones of the nation were galled; and when this was thrown off civil dissensions and insurrections commenced. The Poles and Swedes plundered the country, and amid general tumult and confusion some half dozen men were clamoring for the throne. At length a few patriotic citizens, pledging everything they held dear on earth to the cause of freedom from this curse of anarchy, and headed by a noble prince and an humble, patriotic butcher, made a bold stand to save the country. Moscow was retaken, and Michael Romanoff was chosen Czar; and this illustrious family still occupies the imperial throne. And now the day of Russian greatness dawned; but the sun was not fairly up—the broad light opened not upon the empire—until Peter came to the throne.

In the department of the Sloboda—the suburbs of Moscow—and very near the river Moskwa, stood an humble cot, the exterior of which betrayed a neatness of arrangement and show of taste that more than made up for its smallness of size. Nor was it so very small in fact, but only in contrast; for near at hand about it stood many large, shabby, dirty-looking structures that overlooked the prim cot, as bleak mountains may look down upon a verdant hill. And within, this cot was as neat as without. The two apartments in front, one of which was only used in winter, were furnished not only with neatness, but with a fair show of ornament and luxury. Back of these were a large cooking and dining-room, and two small bed-rooms; and back still from these was an artisan's shop, and other out-buildings. This shop was devoted to the manufacture of firearms, mostly. Some swords, and other edged weapons, were made here upon special application.

The gunmaker now stood by his forge, watching the white smoke as it curled up towards the throat of the chimney. He was a young man, not over three-and-twenty, and possessed a frame of more than ordinary symmetry and muscular development. He was not large—not above medium size—but a single glance at the swelling chest, the broad shoulders, and the sinewy ridges of the bare arms, told at once that he was master of great physical power. His features were regular, yet strongly marked, and eminently handsome; his brow, which was full and high, was half covered by the light brown curls that waved over it; while his eyes, which were of a bright, brilliant, deep gray in color, lent a cast of genius to the intellect of the brow. His name

was Ruric Nevel. His father had been killed in the then late war with the Turks, and the son, leaving his mother with a sufficiency of sustenance, went to Spain soon after the bereavement. There he found work in the most noted armories; and now, well versed in the trade, he had returned to his native city to follow his calling, and support his mother.

Near by stood a boy—Paul Peepon—a bright intelligent lad, some fifteen years of age, who had bound himself to the gunmaker for the purpose of learning the art. His hair and his eyes were darker than his master's, and if he possessed not so much sound intellect, he did surely possess an unwonted degree of keen, quick wit, and a principle of unswerving integrity.

The sun had been some time below the horizon, and the only light of any consequence that made things partially visible within the shop came from the dull blaze of the coals on the forge, as Paul ever and anon bore down upon the brake that moved the bellows. Suddenly Ruric started back from the forge as his mind broke from the deep reverie into which he had fallen, and having bade his boy to see that matters were all properly disposed for the night, he turned towards the door, and was soon in the kitchen, where his mother had supper all prepared and set out.

Claudia Nevel was a noble-looking woman, and the light of her still handsome countenance was never brighter than when gazing upon her boy. She had seen the snows of fifty winters, and if they had left some silver upon her head, and some age-marks upon her face, the sunshine of full as many summers had left