

"It was impossible for me to do otherwise."

"Da! Impossible? What hold has he on you?"

Pavlof hesitated. He did not know where he stood, and least said soonest mended.

"Who is he?" asked Sokolof again. "And why had you to go with him?"

And still Pavlof made no reply.

"See, Mr. Palma, I have been your friend. I would still be so. But, as I see things at present, it is an ill return you have made me in this matter."

Pavlof made a gesture of dissent.

"Yes," said Sokolof, "an ill return, and calculated to damage me sorely at headquarters. An escape is nothing. But to be gulled in this fashion, and to call their attention to it myself by that cursed telegram, which was intended entirely for your benefit——"

"He tried hard to dissuade you from it."

"For his own ends. The result has been disastrous, and the matter, and your share in it, must be investigated. But, in the fact of your going, you are not incriminated. His papers were all in order, so far as we could possibly make out. In going with him you only obeyed orders supposed to have come from St. Petersburg. But that is not enough for me. There is that behind