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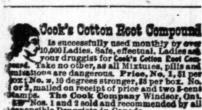
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THE COURIER OF THE CZAR

By Jules Verne

This pardon of the exiles of Irkutsk

was indeed an act of wise justice and

Night had now come on. Across the windows of the palace shone the fires of the Tartar camp and far beyond the Angara. The river was full of floating blocks of ice, some of which were stopped by the first piles of the ancient wooden bridges. Those which the current held in the channel floated down with great rapidity. Thus it was evident, as the chief of the merchants had observed, that the Angara could scarcely freeze along the whole of its surface. Thus the defenders of Irkutsk need not fear the danger of being assailed on

that side. Ten o'clock had just struck. The grand duke was about to dismiss his officers and retire to his apartments

when a kind of uproar was heard outside the palace. Almost immediately the door of the room opened, an aid-de-camp appeared and advanced toward the grand duke. "Your highness," said he, "a courier

from the czar!"



CHAPTER XVIII. SIMULTANEOUS movement brought all the members of the council toward the half open door. A courier from the czar arrived at Irkutsk!

If the officers had reflected for an instant on the improbability of that fact, they would have certainly considered it impossible.

The grand duke had quickly moved toward his aid-de-camp.

"That courier!" said he. A man entered. He had the air of one worn out by fatigue. He wore the costume of a Siberian peasant, much worn, even torn, and on which one could see bullet holes. A Russian bonnet covered his head. A scar, badly healed crossed his face. The man had evidently followed a long and trying route. His shoes and stockings, in a bad state, even proved that he had made part of his journey on foot.

"His highness the grand duke?" said he on entering. The grand duke went up to him.

"Are you a courier from the czar?" he asked him.

"Yes, your highness."

"Moscow." the bring law "You left Moscow"-Land State "The 15th of July." at the little "You are called"-"Michael Strogoff."

It was Ivan Ogareff. He had taken the name and position of the man whom he believed to be powerless. Neither the grand duke nor any other person in Irkutsk knew him. He had not even needed to disguise his features. As he had the means of proving his pretended identity, no one could doubt him. He came, then, sustained by a will of iron, to hasten by treason and assassination the conclusion of the

drama of the invasion. After the answer of Ivan Ogareff the grand duke made a sign, and all his officers retired.

The fictitious Michael Strogoff and he remained alone in the room. The grand duke looked at Ivan Ogareff for some seconds and with the

greatest attention. Then he asked him: "You were on the 15th of July at Moscow?"

"Yes, your highness, and on the night from the 14th to the 15th I saw his majesty the czar at the New palace." "You have a letter from the czar?" "Here it is." And Ivan Ogareff handed to the

grand duke the imperial letter, reduced to dimensions almost microscopic. "Was that letter given to you in that state?" asked the grand duke. "No, your highness, but I was com-

pelled to tear open the envelope in order to better conceal it from the Tartar soldiers."

"Have you, then, been a prisoner of "Yes, your highness, during a few days," answered Ivan Ogareff. "It is on that account that, having set out from Moscow on the 15th of July, I only arrived at Irkutsk on the 2d of

October after a journey of sixty-nine days." The grand duke took the letter. He unfolded it and recognized the signature of the czar, preceded by the sacramental formula, written with his own hand. Hence there was no possible loubt concerning the authenticity of that letter nor indeed concerning the identity of the courier. If his fierce look at first inspired mistrust, the grand duke did not allow it to be seen,

and soon the mistrust disappeared al-The grand duke remained some moments without speaking. He was reading slowly the letter in order to thor-

oughly gather the sense of it.

Taking up again the speech, he ask

"Michael Strogoff, do you know the contents of this letter? "Yes, your highness. I might have been compelled to destroy it to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Tartars, and if that should happen I wished to bring its contents to your

"Do you know that this letter enjoine

us to die at Irkutsk rather than sur

render the city?" "I know it." "Do you also know that it points out the movements of the troops who have

combined to check the invasion?" "Yes, your highness. But those movements have not succeeded."

"What do you mean?" "I wish to tell you that Ichim, Omsk, Tomsk, not to speak of other important towns of the two Siberias, have been one after another occupied by the soldiers of Feofar-Khan."

"But has there been a battle? Have our Cossacks ever met the Tartars?" "Several times, your highness."

"And they were repulsed?" "They were not in sufficient strength." "Where have the encounters taken

lace of which you speak?" "At Kalyvan, at Tomsk." Up to this time Ivan Ogareff had only old the truth, but with the object of fighting the defenders of Irkutsk by exaggerating the advantages obtained

by the troops of the emir, he added: "And a third time before Krasnoi "And that last engagement?" asked the grand duke, whose firmly set lips scarcely allowed the words to pass.

"It was more than an engagement, your highness," answered Ivan Ogareff; "it was a battle." "A battle?" "Twenty thousand Russians, coming from the provinces of the frontier and from the government of Tobolsk, came

and fifty thousand Tartars, and in spite of their courage they have been annihilated." "You lie!" cried the grand duke, who endeavored, but in vain, to master his

into collision with a force of a hundred

"I tell the truth, your highness," coolly replied Ivan Ogareff. "I was present at that battle of Krasnolarsk, and it is there where I was made prisoner!" The grand duke became calm, and by a sign he gave Ivan Ogareff to understand that he did not doubt his verac-

"On what day did this battle of Krasnolarsk take place?" he asked. "On the 2d of September."

"And now all the Tartar forces are concentrated around Irkutsk?" "All."

"And you would number them at"-"Four hundred thousand men!" A new exaggeration of Ivan Ogareff in reckoning the numbers of the Tar tar army and tending always to the same end.

"And I must not expect any succor from the provinces of the west?" asked the grand duke. "None, your highness-at least before

the end of winter." "Very well. Listen to this, Michael Strogoff: Should no relief come to me. neither from the west nor the east, and were there 600,000 Tartars, I would

not give up Irkutsk!" The wicked eye of Ivan Ogareff lightly blinked. The traitor seemed to say that the brother of the czar was reckoning without treason.

The grand duke, of a nervous temperament, had great difficulty in preserving his calmness on learning this disastrous news. He walked up and down the room under the eyes of Ivan Ogareff. who covered him as a prey reserved for his vengeance. He stopped at the windows. He looked out upon the Tartar fires. He was trying to find out the noise, the greater part of which was caused by the grating of the

ice on the river. A quarter of an hour passed without his putting another question. Then, again taking up the letter, he read a passage of it and said:

"You know, Michael Strogoff, that there is question in this letter of a Ivan Ogareff.
traitor against whom I have to be on "Let it be so, my guard?"

"Yes, your highness." "He is to attempt to enter Irkutsk disguised to win my confidence; then, at the proper time, to deliver up the town to the Tartars."

"I know all that, your highness, and I also know that Ivan Ogareff has sworn personal vengeance on the brother of the czar."

"They say that that officer had been condemned by the grand duke to a most humiliating degradation." "Yes, I remember. But he deserved it, that wretch, who was afterward to

serve against his country and to lead there an invasion of barbarians!" "His majesty the czar," answered Ivan Ogareff, "relied especially on the fact that you were aware of the crim-

inal projects of Ivan Ogareff against your person." "Yes; the letter informed me of it." "And his majesty told it to me himself, while warning me to mistrust that traitor above all during my journey

across Siberia." "Have you ever met him?" "Yes, your highness, after the battle of Krasnolarsk. Could be have suspected that I was the bearer of a letter addressed to your highness and in which all his projects were divulged I should not now be standing before

"Yes, you would have been lost," answered the grand duke. "And how did Frugality is a fair fortune, and habits of industry, a good estate.

"By throwing myself into the Irtish."

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How many of them? Over 300,000. It will take them involvement, Stuart's Catarrh Tablets will cure you. a year to get inside the domain from which no traveler The Rev. L. E. Palmer, Baptist clergy man of Ceresco returns. When they have all passed others will take Mich., makes a statement of interest to all catarrh

doom, will continue.

graves, in the United States alone. There are three varieties of consumption, but the freely and conscientiously recommend them." greater part of this large army, going down to death, are victims of what is known as "catarrhal consump-

ranks of the victims of chronic catarrh. ly fatal people are prone to overlook its destructive tendencies and neglect catarrh. It is hard for one whose constitution holds him up for years against the progressive encroachments of catarrh to realize his danger and think of the time when, sooner or later, vital organs will be reached, or some acute cold will fan the smouldering fires of enterthints and not immediate package of Stuart's Catarrh Tablets at my druggists, carried them in my pocket and used them faithfully, and the way in which they cleared my head and throat was certainly remarkable. I had no catarrh last winter and spring and consider myself entirely free from any catarrhal trouble."

Mrs. Jerome Ellison of Wheeling W. fan the smouldering fires of catarrh into a devastating conflagration of consumption.

"At first a little hacking cough, 'Tis nothing but a cold; They say, 'Twill very soon wear off.' Alas, the story's old! The hectic cheek, the failing strength.

The grief that cannot save,

And life's wan flame goes out, at length, mucous membrane and gradually get from nose to no longer a household affliction with us."

Prevent Catarrhal Consumption. Tramp, tramp, tramp, the throng is marching, There is a remedy that will cure all curable stages of marching to the realms of shade, where the withering catarrh. It is economical, convenient, reliable, and "White Plague" holds high carnival and perpetual can be procured at every drug store for 50 cents a box. If you have catarrh in any form, short of actual lung

their places and the perpetual tramp, tramp, tramp, to and grip sufferers. He says: "Stuart's Catarrh Tablets have certainly been a blessing to me. I have used them Reliable statistics show that over 300,000 annually freely this fall and winter and have found them a march through the realms of consumption, to open safeguard against LaGrippe and catarrhal troubles from which I had suffered for years. I feel that I can

Dr. J. J. Reitiger, of Covington, Ky., says: "I suffered from catarrh in my head and throat every fall, their places in this fatal march will be filled from the affecting my voice and often extending to the stomach, causing catarrh of the stomach. I bought a fifty cent

Mrs. Jerome Ellison, of Wheeling, W. Va., writes: "I suffered from catarrh nearly my whole life and last winter my two children also suffered from catarrhal colds and sore throat so much they were out of school a large portion of the winter. My brother who was cured of catarrhal deafness by using Stuart's Catarrh Tablets urged me to try them so much that I did so and am truly thankful for what they have done for myself and my children. I always keep a box of the Be timely wise. Cure your catarrh while yet it may tablots in the house and at the first appearance of a be cured. Do not leave it to extend along the delicate cold or sore throat we mp it in the bud and catarrh is

throat, then into the bronchial tubes causing cough and Send a postal card to F. A. Stuart Co., Marshall, expectoration; from thence onward, or downward, Mich., requesting their free book about catarrh and its until the lungs are reached and you join ranks in the cure. Write for it to-day, Delay only allows the disease to become more firmly seated.

"During a sortle that was made this very night to repel a Tartar detachment I joined in with the defenders of

the town. I was able to make myself known, and they at once conducted me before your highness." "Well done, Michael Strogoff," answered the grand duke, "You have shown courage and zeal during this difficult mission. I shall not forget you. Have you any favor to ask of

"None if it be not that of fighting by the side of your highness," answered

death march of consumption.

"Let it be so, Michael Strogoff. From this day I attach you to my person, and you shall be lodged in this palace." "And if in conformity with the intention which is attributed to him Ivan Ogareff should present himself before your highness under a false name"-"We would unmask him, thanks to you who know him, and by my order

he should die under the knout. Go." Ivan Ogareff gave the military salute to the grand duke, not forgetting that he was captain in the corps of the couriers of the czar, and he withdrew. Ivan Ogareff had just now played with success his base role. The grand duke's confidence had been accorded him full and entire. He could abuse it when and where he thought proper. He would even live in that palace. He would know all the secrets of the defense. He held, therefore, the situation in his hand. No one in Irkutsk knew him. No one could tear off his mask. He resolved, therefore, to begin the

work without more delay.

To be Continued. THE AMATEUR SPORTSMAN.

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uine alhiMr. Woodby Hunter-O bless me! I lon't expect to hunt alligators at all.

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