The Master's Volce. BY FATHER RYAN.

The waves were weary, and they went to sleep. The winds were hushed,
The starlight flushed
The furrowed face of all the mighty deep. The billows yester eve so dark and wild,

Wave strangely now— A calm upon their brow, Like that which resis upon a cradled child. The sky was bright, and every single star, With gleaming face, Was in its place, And looked upon the sea—so fair and far.

And all was still—still as a temple dim— Whom low and faint, As mourner's plaint. Died the last note of the Vesper hymn.

A bark slept on the sea, and in the bark, Slept Mary's Son— The only One Whese Face is light! where all, all else is dark. His brow was heavenward turned, His face was

He dramed of me (fa On that still sea— The stars He made gleamed through His hair.

And, lo! a moan moved o'er the mighty deep, The sky grew dark!
The little bark
Felt all the waves awaking from their sleep.

The winds wailed wild, and wilder billows beat;

But Mary's Son slept on, serene and sweet. The tempest raged in all its mighty wrath,

The winds howied on,
All hope scemed gone,
And darker waves surged round the bark's lone

The seeper woke! He gazed upon the deep-He whispared: "Pence!
Winds-wild waves cease! [asleep.
Be still!" The tempest ited—the occun fell

And, sh! when human hearts by storms are
When life's long bark [tossed;
Drifts through the dark; mid the wildest waves where all seems lost

He new, and then, with words of power and Murmurs; "Stormy deep. [peace, Be still-still-and sleep!"

And. lo! a great calm comes—the tempest's perils

Michael Strogoff,

THE COURIER OF THE CZAR.

By Jules Verne.

PART II.

CHAPTER N .- CONTINUED. It is on this raft that Michael Strogoff and Nadia were carried. The young girl was once more herself. They gave to her some nourishment, as also to her companion.

Then, lying down on a bed of leaves, she im-mediately fell into a sound sleep. To those who interrogated him, Michael Strogoff said nothing concerning the events which had occurred at Tomsk. He gave himself out as au inhabitant of Krasnoiarsk, who had not been able to reach Irkutsk before the troops of the emir had arrived on the left bank of the Dinka, and ne added that very likely the main body of the Tartars had taken up their position before the capital of Siberia. Kven among friends it was almost as important to preserve secrecy as to his mission as if among enemies.

And the difficulty of keeping one's own secrets in Russia, is illustrated by the following extract from that popular book, "A Ride to Khiva," by Captain Fred Burnaby:

"Of all the countries in which it has been my fate to travel, the land where curiosity is most rampant is decidedly Russia. Whether this comes from a dearth of public news and subjects for conversation, or from something innate and specially characterizing the Slavonic race, it is difficult to say. The curiosity of the fair sex, which in other countries is supposed to be the ne plus ultra of inquisitiveness, is in the land of the czar, far outstripped by the same peculiarity in the male inhabitants. Of course I am alluding the numerous large pieces of ice floating westmore particularly to the lower orders, and not ward under the strong wind. These were to the upper classes, though even with the not to be feared, as they could not choke up latter it is a feature that cannot help striking the Angara, having now passed its outlet. But the foreigner.

"The inspector was a thorough old conservative, and greatly mourned the new order of things, and that he could no longer demand the traveler's podorojnaya, or pass. Why,'he said, 'I do not know who I am addressing. I may be talking to a shopkeeper. and call bim your Excellency, or address a grand duke as simply one of noble birth. 'Yes,' chimed in some travelers who were benighted like myself, and rogues can travel now, for they are not obliged to go to the police.' I was rather amused at this. There was decidedly a wish on the part of the other | face of the water wayfarers to know who I was, so, pulling my English passport out of my pocket, I said to the inspector, There, you can look at my podorojnaya. He turned it upside down; and then said, 'Ah, yes! you are a Greek; but what a beautiful crown that is on it! Tashkent' 'Perhaps so,' I replied, assuming an air of importance. There is a royal highness coming through soon, said the inspector; 'I heard it from a peddler who went by yesterday; and one of his officers is traveling on tonishment and admiration a tourist who in front to make preparations. Perhaps his should travel through this Siberian sea in the excellency, turning to me, is that gentle-man." 'No,' was my answer, when one of the o'clock in the afternoon the mouth of the my evident unwillingness to undergo this process of pumping remarked that there had been several robberies in the neighborhood. 'Yes. there have,' said another, and the assemblage all looked at me, as much as to say, 'You are the man; now, do not deny it; we shall not

One never knows what ears are listening when the tongue speaks. The friend of today may be the foe of to-morrow, and even the firm friend, if indiscreet, is more to be dreaded than the known enemy.

There was not, therefore, an instant to lose. Besides, the frust became more and more keen. The temperature, during the night, fell far below zero. Some pieces of ice had already formed on the surface of the Baikal. If the raft could easily make its way on the lake it would not be the same between the banks of the Angara, in case those pieces of ice should

come to impede its course. cessary that the fugitives should start without delay.

At eight o'clock at night the moorings were unfestened, and under the action of the current, the raft followed the lake shore.

Long poles, handled by robust moujiks sufficed to guide it ..

An old sailor of the Baikal had taken command of the raft. He was a man of sixty, all tanned with the breezes of the lake. A white and very thick beard descended on his breast. He had on his head a fur hat. Of a grave and anstere appearance, his wide and long riding coat, drawn tight at the belt, hanging down to his heels, this silent old man, sitting at the stern, commanded by gesture, and did

not speak ten words in ten hours. Besides, the whole management consisted

along the shore, without allowing it to go far out into the deep water. Although the journey was not without danger, the voyagers might reasonably hope to safely accomplish it.

At any rate they had become accustomed to both hardship and danger. No iste could be worse than the one that awaited them if they remained.

So, despite the past and present, there were many hopeful, almost happy, hearts on board that rude craft that floated along so lazily.

It was a strange scene, the huge undefined outlines of the raft, the clustering forms of half distinguishable people crowded on it, all gliding down the river in the gloom, silently as if it were Charon's boat, and its passengers the dead who crossed from the one world to

It was said that Russians of different grades had taken their place on the raft. And, indeed, to the indigenous moujiks, men, women, old men and children, two or three pilgrims had joined themselves, surprised by the invasion during their journey. Moreover, some monks and a pope were on the raft. The pilgrims carried the pilgrim's staff, a gourd was suspended from their cincture, and they sang psalms in a plaintive voice. One came of him, and his true position as courier of the from the Ukrain, the other from the Yellow Sea, a third from the province of Finland. This last one, already very old, carried fastened to his best a little box, secured by a padlock, as though it had been taken from

the pillar of a church. Of the alms collected by him during his long and fatiguing journey, none were for him; he did not even possess the key of his padlock, which would not be opened until his return.

The monks came from the north of the empire. Three months before, they had left the town of Archangel, which some travelers have justly found much like a city of the east. They had visited the Holy Islands, traveler had been put to death, and they were near the coast of Carelia, the convent of Solavetsk, the convent of Troitsa, those of Saint Anthony and Saint Theodosia, at Kiev, that old favorite of the Jagellons, the monastery of Simeonof at Moscow, that of Kazan, as also its Church of Old Believers, and they were on their way to Irkutsk, carrying with them their robe, their cowl, and their vestments of serge.

As for the pope, he was a simple priest of a village, one of those six hundred thousand popular pastors to be found in the Russian Empire. He was as miserably clad as the moujiks being in fact, nothing more than they, having neither rank nor power in the church tilling like a peasant his piece of ground, baptizing, marrying, burying. He had been able to withdraw his wite and children from the brutalities of the Tartars by sending them up into the provinces of the North. He had remained in his parish up to the last moment. At length he was compelled to flee. and the route to Irkutsk being closed, he had to gain Lake Baikal.

The representatives of different religions. standing in a group at the fore part of the raft cated to them. There was certainly some prayed at regular interva's, raising aloud their | chance of their being able to pass during the | pose an insurmountable obstacle to the voices in the middle of the silent night, and at the end of each verse in the prayer the Salva Rogu,"—Glory to God—escaped from their lips.

No special incident marked this journey on the lake.

Nadia had remained in a profound stupor. Michael Strogoff had watched near her. Sleep had only overpowered him at long intervals, and still his thoughts were ever watching

over her. At daybreak, the raft, retarded by a somewhat strong breeze which was blowing against the action of the current, was still forty versts from the mouth of the Angara. Most likely they would not beable to reach it before three

or four o'clock in the afternoon. This was not an inconvenience, rather the contrary, for the fugitives would then descend the river during the night and darkness would | that of the circumstances. favor their arrival at Irkutsk.

The only fear that the old mariner several times manitested was regarding the formation of ice on the surface of the waters. The night had been extremely cold. One could see one could fear lest those that came from the eastern portion of the lake might be drawn by the current and massed between the two banks of the river. Here, then, would be the difficulty, and perhaps delay, nay, even some insurmountable obstacle might block the passage for the raft.

Michael Strogoff had then an immense interest in knowing the state of the lake, and whether the floating ice appeared in great quantities. Nadis being now awake, he frequently interrogated her, and she gave him a full account of all that was passing on the sur-

While the 10e was thus forming, some curious phenomena were appearing on the surface of the Baikal. There were magnificent jets of boiling water, issuing from these artesian wells which nature had bored in the bed of the lake. These jets rose to a great You must be some great personage going to height and, spread out in vapors shining with the colors of the rainbow as the sun's rays fell upon them, and which were almost immediately condensed by the cold. This curious spectacle would certainly have filled with ascompany, who appeared a little annoyed at Ang ra was signaled by the old mariner, between the high grapite rocks of the coast. One could perceive on the right bank the little port of Livenitchnaia, its church, its few houses built on the steep.

But there was a grave circpmstance. The first floating ice that had come from the east was already forming between the banks of the Angara, and hence descending towards Irkutsk

However, their number could not as yet be great enough to obstruct the river, nor the cold severe enough to unite them into one

The raft arrived at the little port, and stopped there for a short time. The old mariner had decided to put into port for an hour in order to make some indispensable repairs. The tranks, having become loose, threatened to separate from one another, and it was of great importance to rebind them more firmly together, that they Therefore, for all these reasons, it was ne- might resist the current of the Angara, which is very rapid.

During the fine season the port of Livenitchnais is a station for embarkation and lauding for the voyagers of Lake Baikal, whether they are going to Kiahata, the last town of the Russo-Chinese frontier, or whether they are returning from it

But at this time Livenitchnaia was abandoned. Its inhabitants could not remain exposed to the depredations of the Tartars. who now overran the two banks of the Augara. They had sent down to Irkutsk the it his duty to say to Michael Strogoff: flotilla of boats and barks which usually wintered in their port, and laden with everything that they could carry, they had taken refuge in time in the capital of East Siberia.

The old sailor did not, therefore, expect any more fugitives at the port of Livenitohnaia.

bank. Nadia, sitting at the back part of the raft,

looked at them in a listless manner. A-cry was about to escape her. She seized the hand of Michael Strogoff, who at that moment raised his head.

"What is the matter with you, Nadia?" he asked.

"Our two fellow-travellers, Michael. That Frenchman and that Englishman whom we met in the defiles of the Ural Mountains?" "Yes."

Michael Strogoff shuddered, for the strict incognito from which he did not wish to depart was in danger of being unveiled.

And in reality, it was not any longer Ni-cholas Korpanoff whom Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount were about to see in him now, but the true Michael Strogoff, the courier of the czar. The journalists had already met him twice since their separation at the posthouse of Ichim, the first time at the camp of Zabideiro, when he cut with the blow of the knout the face of Ivan Ogareff, the second time at Tomsk, when he was condemned by the emir. They knew therefore what to think CZar.

Michael Strogoff quickly took up his part. "Nadia," said he, "when that Frenchman and Englishman shall come on board, beg th-m to come up to me!"

They were, indeed, Harry Blount and Alcide Julivet, whom, not chance, but the force of events had conducted to the port of Livenitchnaia, just as they had led Michael Strogoff.

The reader knows that, after having been present at the triumphal entry of the Tartars into Tomsk, they had gone away before the ravage execution which terminated the feast. They had no doubt but their old fellowquite unaware that he had been only made blind by order of the emir.

Then, having procured horses, they had abandoned Tomsk that very night, with the fixed intention of dating henceforth their articles from the Russsian camps of Eastern

Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount set out for ltkutsk by forced marches. They had great hopes of outstripping Feofar-Khan, and most certainly they would have done so, had not a third column unexpectedly made its appearance, having come from the southern provinces by the Yenisei. Like Michael Strogoff, they were cut off before having even reached the Dink. Hence they were again

compelled to go down as far as lake Baikal. When they arrived at Livenitchnaia, the port was already deserted. On any other side. it was impossible for them to enter Irkutsk, which was invested by the Tartar armies.

They had been there for three days, and very much embarrassed, when the raft ar-

The design of the fugitives was communinight and penetrate into Irkutsk. They therefore resolved to make the attempt.

Alcide Jolivet at once placed himself in communication with the old mariner, and asked passage for his companion and himself, offering to pay the fare he fixed, whatever it might be.

"Here, one does not pay anything," gravely answered the old mariner, "one risks his life,

The two journalists embarked, and Nadia saw them take their place in the fore part of the raft.

Harry Blount was always the cold Englishman, who had scarcely addressed a word to her during the whole journey across the Ural mountains. Alcide Jolivet seemed a little more grave than usual, and one would acknowledge that his gravity was justified by

Alcide Jolivet was then, installed on the forepart of the raft, when he felt a hand rest on his arm. He turned round and recognized Nadia, the sister of him who was no longer Nicholas Korpanoff, but Michael Strogoff, courier of the Czar. A cry of surprise was about to escape him, when he saw the young girl placed her finger on her lips.

"Come," said Nadia to him. And, assuming an air of indifference, Alcide Jolivet making a sign to Harry Blount to accompany him, followed her.

But, if the surprise of the journalists was great at meeting Nadia on that raft, it was without limits when they perceived Michael Strogoff, whom they could not believe to be still alive. Michael Strogoff had not moved at their ap-

proach. Alcide Jolivet had turned himself towards

the young girl. " Gentlemen, he does not see you," said the young girl. "The Tartars have burnt out his eyes! My poor brother is blind!"

A deep feeling of pity was pictured on the

face of Alcide Jolivet and his companion. An instant afterwards, both of them, seated

near Michael Strogoff, warmly shook his hands and waited for him to speak. " Gentleman," said Michael Strogoff, in a low voice, " you must not know who I am, nor what I came to do in Siberia. I beg you

to respect my secret. Do you promise me?" "On my honor," answered Alcide Jolivet. "Ou my faith as a gentleman,"added Henry

Blouut. " Very well, gentleman."

"Can we be of any use to you?" asked Harry Blount. " Would you wish us to help you to accom-

plish your task?" "I prefer to act alone," said Michael Strogoff.

"But those scoundrels have burnt out your

sight," satd Alcide Jolivet. 'I have Nadia, and her eyes will suffice." Half an hour later, the raft, after having left the little port of Livenitchnais, was fairly in the river. It was five o'clock in the evening. Night was fast coming on. It would be very dark and very cold also, for

the temperature was already below zero. Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount, although they had promised Michael Strogoff to keep his secret, yet did not leave his side. They spoke in a low voice, and the blind man, putting what he already knew to what they now told him, was enabled to form an exact idea of

the state of aflairs. He was certain that the Tartars were actually investing Irkutsk, and that the three columns had already formed a junction. One could not therefore doubt that the emir and Ivan Ogareff were before the capital.

But why that haste to arrive there of the couries of the czar, now that the emperor's letter could no longer be remitted by him to the grand duke, and he did not even know its contents? Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount could no more understand than could Nadia. Besides, they had not spoken of the past up to the moment when Alcide Jolivet thought

"We almost owe you some excuses for not having shaken hands with you before our separation at the post-house of Ichim." "No, you had a right to believe me a

coward!' In half an hour after the departure from

the shore, two passengers, coming out of a de- Bleunt had heard all the details of the cruer worse, two passengers, coming out of a de- Bleunt had heard all the details of the cruer worse, the conflagration serted house, ran with great haste to the trials through which Michael Strogoff and his chance pointed it out to Alcide Jolivet, and once. With, the roar of the conflagration serted house, ran with great haste to the details of the details of the cruer worse, and once were mingled the howls of the Tartars. companion had successively passed. They could not but openly admire an energy which the devotedness of the young girl alone had been able to equal. And of Michael Strogoff they had formed the very same opinion which had been so well expressed by the Czar of Moscow, " In truth, he

s a man l" The raft quickly made its way, surrounded by the pieces of floating ice that were being drawn along by the current of the Angara. A moving panorama was displayed on the two banks of the river, and, by an optical illusion, the floating apparatus seemed to remain fixed before that succession of picture-que views. Here, there were high granite cliffs, strangely outlined; there, savage mountain-passes from which escaped impetuously some limpid stream; sometimes a sloping hill with a still smoking village, then thick forests of pine which threw up high into the sky immense sheets of flame. But if the Tartars had left traces everywhere of their passage, they did not as yet see them, for they were more particularly massed at the approaches to Irkut»k.

During this time, the pilgrims continued in loud voice their prayers, and the old sailor thrusting back the pieces of ice that were pressing him too much, steadily held the raft in the middle of the rapid current of the Angura.

CHAHTER XI.

Ar eight o'clock at night, as the aspect of the sky had forewarned them, an excessive darkness enveloped all the country. The moon being new, would not rise above the horizon. From the middle of the river the banks were not visible. The cliffs at no great height were blended with those heavy clouds which they displaced with difficulty. At intervals, a breeze would come from the east, and seem to expire in that narrow valley of the

Angura. The darkness would not greatly favor the projects of the fugitives. And indeed, although the outposts of the Tartars would be stationed on both banks, the raft had a very good chance of passing unperceived. was it likely that the besiegers would have barred the river up from Irkutsk, since they knew that the Russians could not expect any help from the southern portion of the province. Besides, in a short time, nature herself would have placed that bar by blocking up the river with thick ice.

On board the raft absolute silence now reigned. Since they began to descend the course of the river, the voice of the pilgrims had not made itself heard. They were still praying, but their prayer was only a whisper that could not reach the banks. The old mariner, lying down in the fore part of the raft near his men occupied himself altogether in turning aside from the ice-blocks a manaruvre which he executed without making any poise.

This drifting of the ice, after all was a favorable circumstance, as long as it did not oppa-sage of the raft. For, indeed, this apparatus, alone on the free waters of the river, would have run the risk of being perceived, even through the thick shade, whereas it was now confounded with those moving masses of all sizes and all shapes, and the din produced by the grating of the blocks drowned

all other suspicious noise. There was a very keen frost. The fuziany other shelter but some branches of the birch tree. They pressed close to each other, in order to better support the low temperature, which during that night had reached ten degrees below zero. The little wind that came, having blown over the snow-clad mountains

of the east, was very cutting.

Michael Strogoff and Nadia, lying down at the back part of the raft, supported without clous movement. complaint this additional suffering. Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount, placed near them, | are only welves," said he. "I like those betresisted as well as they were able these first assaults of the Siberian winter. Neither party spoke now, not even in a low voice. Besides, they were quite absorbed in the situation. At any instant, some incident might take place, some danger, nay, some catastrophe, from which they would not escape un-

injured. For a man who was reckoning soon to attain his end, Michael Strogoff seemed singubarly calm. Besides, in the most grave situations, his energy had never abandoned him. Already he looked forward to the moment when at last it would be permitted him to think of his mother, of Nadia, of himself! He only feared one last and evil chance; it was lest the raft should be absolutely stopped by a barrier of thick ice before having reached Irkutsk. He did not think of anything but that, being moreover decided, if it were necessary, to attempt some supreme act

Nadia, refreshed by some hours of repose had recovered that physical energy, which misery had sometimes been able to subdue. without ever having shaken her moral energy. She was thinking also that in case Michael Strogoff should make a new effort to attain his end, she must be there to guide him. But at the time that she was approaching Irkutsk, the image of her father was pictured more vividly in her mind. She saw him in the invested town, far from those he cherished, but -for she did not doubt it-struggling against the invaders with all the dash of his patriotism. Before many hours, if heaven should at length favor them, she would be in his arms, reciting to him the last words of her mother, and nothing should again separate them. If the exile of Wassili Feodor had never to have an end, his daughter would remain an exile with him. Then, by a natural feeling, she reverted to him to whom she would be indebted for having seen her father, to that generous companion, to that "brother" who, when the Tartars should have been driven back, would return to Moscow, and whom she would perhaps never see again!

As for Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount they had only one and the same thought; namely, that the situation was extremely dramatic, and that if it were well clothed, it would furnish a most interesting article. The Englishman was thinking of the readers of the Daily Telegraph, and the Frenchman of his cousin Magdalen. In their hearts, both were not without experiencing some emo-

"Eh! all the better!" thought Alcide Jolivet. "One must be moved to move! I believe also there is a celebrated verse on this subject, but I'll be hanged if I know."

And with his straining eyes he sought to pierce the thick shade which enveloped the

And yet at times great flashes of light broke through the darkness, and brought out distinctly the different solid masses on the banks in the most fantastic aspect. It was some forest on fire, some village still burning, and reproduction of the pictures of the day, with the contrast of the night in addition. The Angara became illuminated then from one steep bank to the other. But the raft still moved on, unperceived, amidst the mass of floating ice.

The danger was not as yet there. But peril

the shore, two passengers, coming out of a de- Bleunt had heard all the details of the cruel worse, they could not ward it off. It was

down to the stream. Suddenly, he was astonished at the impression which the contact of the waters' surface caused. It seemed to be a viscous consistency, as though it had been formed of a mineral oil.

Alcide Jolivet, then verifying the touch by the smell, could not be mistaken. It was, indeed, a coating of liquid naptha, which was floating upon the surface of the current of the Angara, and was flowing along with him!

Was the raft, then, floating on that substance which is so eminently inflammable? From whence did this naptha come? Was it a natural phenomenon that had cast it upon the surface of the Angara, or had it been placed there by the Tartars as a destructive engine? Did those people wish to carry fire even into Irkutsk by means which the rights of war do not justify among civilized nations?

Such were the two questions which Alcide Jolivet proposed to himself, but he believed he must inform only Harry Blount of this incident and both agreed not to alarm their companions by revealing to them that new danger.

It is known that the soil of Central Asia is like a sponge impregnated with liquid carburet of hydrogen. At the port of Bakou, on the Persian frontier, at the peninsula of Abehcron, on the Caspian Sea, in Asia Minor, in China, in Yong-Hyan, in Birman, springs of mineral oil rise in thousands to the surface of the earth. It is " the oil country, like that which bears this name in the United States of America.

During certain religious feasts, especially at the town of Bakou, the natives, worshippers, cast liquid naptha on the surface of the sea, which swims upon it, owing to its density being lower than that of water. Then, when night has come, when a coating of mineral oil is thus spread on the Caspian, they set it on fire, and thus give to themselves a grand spectacle of an ocean of fire, which undulates and sails along under the breeze.

But that which is only a joyful celebration at Bakon, would have been a disaster on the waters of the Angara. If fire had been applied either through male violence or impradence, in the twinkling of an eye a conflagration would have been propagated even beyond Irkutsk.

In any case, no imprudence need be feared on the raft; but there was every reason to dread those fires which had been kindled along the banks, a burning brand, or even a spark, falling in the river, would have sufficed to set on fire that current of naptha.

What must have been the fears of Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount, one can better understand than picture. Would it not be preferable, in the presence of this new danger to make for one of the banks, to land there and to wait? They asked themselves this question.

"In any case," said Alcide Jolivet, "whatever may be the danger, I know one who will

He was alluding to Michael Strogoff. Meanwhile, the raft rapidly made its way amidst the floating ice, which began to press

upon it more and more. Up to this time no Tartar detachment had been signaled on the high banks of the Angara, and this indicated that the raft had not tives suffered dreadfully from it, not having as yet come on a line with their out-posts. However, towards ten o'clock Harry Blount believed he saw a number of black bodies moving along the surface of the ice-blocks. These shadows, leaping from one to the other, quickly came near.

"Tartars!" thought he: and gliding near to the old sailor, who still remained on the fore part, he pointed out to him that suspi-

The old sailor looked attentively. "Those ter than the Tartars, but you must defend yourselves, and without noise."

And, mideed, the fugitives had to fight against those ravenous and ferocious brutes, which hunger and cold had forced across the province. The wolves had scented the raft, and they at once attacked it: hence the necessity for the fugitives to engage in the struggle, but without making use of firearms, as they could not be far distant from the posts of the Tartars. The women and children formed a group in the middle of the raft and the men, some armed with poles, others with their knives, and the greater number with sticks, placed themselves in position to repel the assailants. They did not utter a cry, but the howls of the wolves rent the very

Michael Strogoff had not wished to remain inactive. He leaned over the side of the raft attacked by the ravenous wolves. He had drawn his knife, and each time that a wolf passed within his reach, his hand knew how to bury it without fail in the neck. Nor were Harry Blount and Alcide Jolivet idlethey did some rough work. Their companions seconded them courageously. All that massacre was accomplished in silence, although several of the fugitives had not been able to escape some severe bites.

And yet the combat did not seem soon about to terminate. The band of wolves was constantly renewed, and the right bank of the Augara must have been infested with them. "This will never end!" said Alcide Jolivet,

handling with effect his poniard, now red with blood. Aud, in fact, a half-hour after the com-

mencement of the attack, the wolves were still ruuning in hundreds across the ice. The fugitives, being worn out, then visibly began to grow weak. The fight was beginning to turn to their disadvantuge. At that moment, a troop of ten enormous wolves, rendered ferocious by hunger and anger, invaded the platform of the raft. Alcide Jolivet and his companion saw themselves in the midst of these formidable animals, and Michael Strogoff crept towards them, when a change of

front suddenly took place. In a few seconds, the wolves had abandoned not only the raft, but also the iceblocks scattered over the river. All those black bodies vanished, and it was soon evident that they had in all baste regained the

right bank of the river. For those wolves to act darkness was absolutely necessary, and at that time an intense brightness was lighting up the whole course of the Angara. It was the light of an immense fire. The little town of Poshkavsk, was all in flames. This time the Tarturs really were there, accomplishing their work. From that point, they occupied the two banks beyond Irkutsk. The fugitives were arriving, therefore, at the daugerous part of their voyage, and they were still thirty vestts from the

capital. It was half-past eight at night. The raft continued to glide in the shade amidst the ice-blocks, with which it was absolutely confounded, but at times great sheets of light were thrown upon it. Thus, the fugitives, stretched along the platform, did not permit themselves a movement which might betray them.

The burning of the little town was taking of another nature menaced the fugitives. place with an extraordinary violence. Its if keeping the raft in the current which ran and yet at the moment the raft was leaving Liveuitchnais, Alcide Julivet and Harry That they could not foresee, and, what was houses, constructed of pine, burnt like rosin.

A hundred and fifty were burning there at Alcide Jolivet, lying down on the right side The old sailor, by taking a position of support of the raft, had allowed his hand to hang on the ice-blocks nearest to the raft, had succeeded in pushing it towards the right bank, and a distance of from three to four hundred feet then separated it from the burning neights of Poshkavsk.

Nevertheless, the Angara being lit up at times, the fugitives would certainly have been perceived, had not the incendiaries been too nuch occupied in the destruction of the town, But one will understand what must have been the fears of Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount, as their minds turned to that combustible liquid on which the raft was floating.

And indeed, showers of sparks came from the houses were now forming so many furnaces. In the midst of volumes of smoke, there sparks rose up into the air to a height of from five to six hundred feet. Besides a single spark would suffice, falling on the surface of the Angara, for the fire to spread itself along the stream, and carry the disaster from bank to bank. This would have been, in a short time, the destruction of the raft and all those whom it was carrying.

But fortunately, the feeble breezes of the night did not blow from that side. They comtinued to come from the east, and drove back the flames towards the left bank. It was therefore, possible that the fugitives might escape this new danger. And indeed, the town all in flames was at

length passed. Little by little the brightness of the fire became more dim, the cracklings ceased, and the last glare disappeared beyond the high cliffs which rise up at a sharp bend of the Augara. It was about midnight. The darkness.

again become thick, once more protected the raft. The Tartars were everywhere, and went and came along the two banks. They did not see them, but they heard them. The fires at the outposts were wonderfully bright.

Meanwhile it was necessary to manauvre with more care in the midst of the ice which

was fast closing. The old mariner rose up, and the moujiks took up again their boat-hooks. And all had as much as they could do, and the management of the raft became more and more difficult, for the bed of the river was evidently be-

coming obstructed. Michael Strogoff had moved softly to the fore part of the raft. Alcide Jolivet had followed him.

Both listened to what the old sailor and his men were saying. " Guard there, on the right!"

"Look! the blocks of ice are thickening on

the left l" "Keep it off! keep it off with your boathook !"

" Before an hour we shall be stopped!" "If God wills it!" replied the old sailor

Against His will nothing can be done." "You hear them?" said Alcide Jolivet. "Yes," replied Michael Strogoff, "but God is with us"

Meantime, the situation became more and more serious. If the raft once ceased to make headway, the fugitives would not only not reach Irkutsk, but they would be obliged to ahandon their floating apparatus, which, crushed by the ice-blocks, would not be long in sinking under the waters. The willow-bindings were already breaking, the fir trunks, violently separated, were becoming entangled under the hard crust, and soon the unfortunate neople would have no other refuge than the ice itself. Then, when daylight should come, they would he perceived by the Tartars and massacred without pity.

Michael Strogoff returned to the back part of the raft where Naida was waiting for him. He approached the young girl, he took her hand. and put to her that invariable question " Nadia, are you ready?" to which he answered as usual:

" I am ready!"

For some versts more the raft continued to make its way through the floating icc. If the Apgara should be choked up with ice, it would form a barrier, and consequently, it would be impossible to follow the current. Already the passage down the river was slower. At every instant there were collisions, or time was lost by having to make long turnings. Here, they must escape landing on the ice; there, they must take a narrow pass between in. In fine,

many anxious drawbacks. And now, only a few hours of the night remained. If the fugitives did not reach Irkutsk before five o'clock in the morning, they must give up all hope of ever entering there.

At length at half-past one, in spite of all their united efforts, the raft struck against a thick barrier and stopped altogether. The ice which was floating down the river cast itself upon it, and forced is against the obstacle and held it motionless, as if it had been driven

upon a reef. At this place, the Angara becomes narrowed to not more than half its normal breadth. Hence, the accumulation of iceblocks, which were by little and little piled one upon another under the action of the double pressure, which was considerable, and of the cold, whose intensity was redoubling. At five hundred paces down, the river again became wide, and ice-blocks detaching themselves by little and little from the lower edge of that field, continued to float down to Irkutsk. Hence it is probable, that without that narrowing of the banks, the barrier could not have been formed, and the raft could have continued to descend the current. But the evil was irreparable, and the fugitives had to give up all hope of reaching the end of their journey. If they had had at their disposal the tools which the whalers usually employ to open out canals across the ice-fields, if they had been able to cut this field as far as the place where the river became wider, perhaps the time would not have been wanting. But not a single saw, not a pick-ax, nothing with which to cut the crust, which the extreme cold had rendered as hard as granite.

What should they do? At that moment rifle-shots were heard on the right bank of the Angara. A shower of bullets was directed upon the raft. Had the unhappy men been perceived? Evidently, for other detonations resounded on the left bank. The fugitives, caught between two fires, became a target for the Tartar marksmen. Some were wounded by these balls, although, in the midst of the great darkness,

they only fell by chance.
"Come, Nadia," whispered Michael Strogoff in the ear of the young girl.
Without making any observation—ready

for everything-Nadia took the hand of Michael Strogoff. "I am thinking of crossing the barrier," he said to her in a low voice. "Guide me, but

let no one see us leave the raft." Nadia obeyed. Michael Strogoff and she glided quickly over the surface of the icefield in a silence that was broken here and

there by the firing. Nadia crept on in front of Michael Strogoff, the balls fell around them like a shower of hail-stones, and crashed upon the ice The surface of the field rugged and with sharp edges, made their hands bleed, but still they kept advancing.

20 be continued.