

THE COURIER OF THE CZAR

By Jules Verne

(Continued.)

CHAPTER XIII.

MICHAEL STROGOFF, with his hands bound, was held in front of the czar's throne at the foot of the terrace.

His mother, overcome at last by so many physical and moral tortures, had sunk down, not daring to look or listen any longer.

"Look with all your eyes! Look!" Feodor-Khan had said, stretching out his threatening hand toward Michael Strogoff.

Without doubt Ivan Ogareff, knowing well the czar's custom, had understood the bearing of that word, for his lips parted for an instant in a cruel smile. Then he went to take his place near Feodor-Khan.

A call of trumpets was heard immediately. It was the signal for the audience.

"How we have the ballet," said Alcide Jolivet to Harry Blount; "but, contrary to all custom, these barbarians give it before the drama."

Michael Strogoff had been ordered to look. He did look. A swarm of female dancers came upon the space reserved for them. Various Tartar instruments, united with the gurgling voices of the singers, formed a strange harmony.

There was a mandolin with a long neck made of the wood of the mulberry tree, with two strings of twisted silk, a kind of yodeling, open at the back, furnished with horsehair and made to vibrate with a bow, a long flute made of a reed, trumpets, tambourines and cymbals. At once the dances began.

These dances performed very gracefully various dances, sometimes singly and sometimes in groups. They had their faces uncovered, but from time to time they drew a light veil over their figures, and one would have said that a cloud of gauze was passing over their sparkling eyes like a vapor over the sunny heaven.

When this first entertainment was over, a grave voice was heard, which said: "Look with all your eyes! Look!" The man who repeated these words of the czar, a Tartar of high stature, was the chief executioner of Feodor-Khan. He had taken his position behind Michael Strogoff, and he held in his hand a sword with a broad and curved blade, one of those Damascus blades which had been tempered by the famous armorers of Karschi or of Elisar.

Near him some guards had brought a tripod on which was placed a small dish, where some red-hot coals were burning without emitting any smoke. The light crust which crowned them was due only to the incandescence of the red-hot coals and aromatic substance, a mixture of frankincense and benzoin, which had been thrown on their surface.

Meanwhile another group of dancers had succeeded the first, but of a race different, which Michael Strogoff at once recognized.

And we must believe that the two journalists also recognized them, for Harry Blount said to Alcide Jolivet: "These are the Zingari of Nihil Norvord."

"The very ones!" cried Alcide Jolivet. "I imagine their eyes bring more money to these spies than their legs!"

And in making them out to be agents in the service of the czar Alcide Jolivet, it is well known, did not deceive himself.

In the first rank of the gypsies figured Sangarre, in her superb costume, strange and picturesque as it was, which set off still more her beauty.

Sangarre did not dance, but stood in the middle of the cymbals which the fantastic stomp of all the countries which their race had traversed in Europe, of Bohemia, of Egypt, of Italy and of Spain. They became animated at the noise of the cymbals and of the clashing of their arms and at the swelling of the "daires," a kind of drum sounded by the fingers.

Sangarre, holding one of these daire, which trembled between her hands, elicited this troop of veritable corymbes. Then came forward a youthful gypsy, some fifteen years old at most. He held in his hand a dautre, the two cords of which he made to vibrate by a simple gliding of the nails. He sang. During the couplet of his song of fantastic rhythm a danseuse came and placed herself near him and remained immovable, listening to him, but each time the burden came to the line of the young singer she again took up her interrupted dance, shaking her dautre near him and deafening him with the sound of her drum.

Then, after the last verse, the dancers enlaced the gypsy in a thousand turns of their dances.

At this moment a shower of gold fell from the hands of the czar and his allies, from the hands of the officers of all grades, and to the noise of the places which struck the cymbals of the dancers were blended the loud murmurs of the dautres and tambourines.

"Prodigious as freebooters!" said Alcide Jolivet in the ear of his companion.

And, indeed, it was stolen money which fell in showers, for with the Tartar tomans and sequins rained also Muscovite ducats and rubles.

Then silence was made for an instant, and the voice of the executioner, placing his hand on the shoulder of Michael Strogoff, again spoke those words whose repetition rendered them still more sinister.

"Look with all your eyes! Look!" But this time Alcide Jolivet observed that the executioner did not hold his naked sword in his hand.

Then suddenly, as if at a given signal, all the fire of the fantasia were extinguished, the dances ceased, the

dancers disappeared. The ceremony was terminated, and the torches alone lit up the plateau which some instants before was so full of lights.

At a sign from the czar Michael Strogoff was led into the middle of the square.

Little desirous of assisting at the torture reserved for this unfortunate man, Harry Blount and Alcide Jolivet then re-entered the city.

An hour later they were hastening along the road to Irkutsk, and it was among the Russians they would attempt to follow what Alcide Jolivet called by anticipation "the campaign of revenge."

The czar made a gesture. Michael Strogoff, pushed by the guards, approached the terrace, and then in that Tartar language which he understood Feodor said to him:

"Russian spy, you come to see. You have seen for the last time. In an instant these eyes shall be forever shut to the light!"

It was not with death, but with blindness that Michael Strogoff was about to be stricken. Loss of sight, more terrible perhaps than loss of life! The unhappy man was condemned to lose his eyesight.

Nevertheless on hearing the penalty pronounced by the czar Michael Strogoff did not become weak. He remained impassible, his large eyes open, as if he were wishing to concentrate all his life in this one last look.

To ask for pity from these fierce men was useless and, besides, unworthy of him. He did not even think of it. All his thought was concentrated on his mission that had irretrievably failed, on his mother, on Nadia, whom he should never see again! But he did not allow to be seen any of the emotion which he felt.

Besides, the feeling of vengeance, to be accomplished at some future time, carried away his whole being.

"Ivan," said he, with a menacing voice, "Ivan, the traitor, the last threat of my eyes shall be for you!" Ivan Ogareff shrugged his shoulders. But Michael Strogoff deceived himself. It was not in looking at Ivan Ogareff that his eyes were to be fixed never more to open.

Martha Strogoff came and stood before him.

"My mother!" cried he. "Yes, yes, on these must be turned my last look and not on this miserable man!" He said to himself, "that I may still see thy beloved figure, that my eyes may close while looking at thee!"

The old Siberian, without uttering a word, came forward.

"Drive away this woman!" said Ivan Ogareff.

Two soldiers pushed back Martha Strogoff. She drew back, but remained standing some paces distant from her son.

The executioner appeared. This time he held his sword in his hand. That sword, heated to a white heat, he had just drawn from the iron pan where the perfumed coals were burning.

Michael Strogoff was about to be made blind according to the Tartar custom, with a heated blade passed over his eyes!

Michael Strogoff did not seek to resist. Nothing else existed in his eyes than his mother, whom he devoured then with his look. All his life was in this last vision.

Martha Strogoff, with her eyes wide open, and her arms stretched toward him, was looking at him.

The white heated blade passed over the eyes of Michael Strogoff.

A loud cry of despair was heard. Old Martha felt useless to the czar. Michael Strogoff was blind.

His orders having been executed, the czar retired with all his household. Soon there only remained on the plateau Ivan Ogareff and the torchbearers.

Did the miserable wretch wish to insult him still more and after the executioner give him the last blow? Ivan Ogareff slowly approached Michael Strogoff, who heard him coming and at once straightened himself.

Ivan Ogareff drew from his pocket the emperor's ring. He opened it and as the last insult placed it before the eyes of the czar of the czar, before those eyes whose light had been brutally extinguished forever, saying at the same time:

to the end of the plateau. Suddenly Nadia appeared. She went straight to her companion. A dagger which she held served to cut the cords that bound the arms of Michael Strogoff.

He, blind as he was, did not know who it was who was releasing him, for Nadia had not spoken a word.

But, that done, said she: "Brother!"

"Nadia," murmured Michael Strogoff.

"Come, brother," replied Nadia. "Henceforth my eyes shall be for your eyes, and it is I who will conduct you to Irkutsk!"

In half an hour after Michael Strogoff and Nadia had left Tomsk.

A certain number of the prisoners on that night were able to escape from the Tartars, for officers and soldiers, all more or less besotted, had unconsciously relaxed the severe surveillance which they had maintained up to that time, both at the camp of Zabelod and during the march of the convoy.

Nadia, after having been led out with the other prisoners, had been able to escape and return to the plateau at the very moment Michael Strogoff was being conducted before the czar.

There in the midst of the crowd she had seen the old Siberian fall lifeless, but she thought soon restored all her energy.

"I will be the dog of the blind man," she said to herself.

After the capture of Ivan Ogareff Nadia had hidden in the shade. She waited until the crowds left the plateau. Michael Strogoff, abandoned as a miserable being to be feared by no one, was alone, and he drew himself down to the earth, his head buried in his hands, and he wept.

Some moments later Michael and Nadia, hand in hand, had descended the steep hillside, and, after having followed the banks of the Tom as far as the extremity of the town, they happily named the city of Irkutsk.

The route for Irkutsk was the only one that struck eastward. They could not make a mistake. Nadia rapidly pulled along Michael Strogoff. It was possible that the early morning, after some hours of orgies, the scouts of the czar, throwing themselves again on the steppe, would cut off all communication.

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SPORTING.

Baseball.

BASEBALL.

Major League Teams Sized Up.

Now that the time is near at hand when the great ball clubs must clear the decks for action, an off-hand listing of the chances of the different clubs of both major leagues might be interesting.

The prospects of any great results from new timber need not be considered seriously, for the youngsters seldom make good in their first year out. They generally show their best speed during the second season, if given the proper encouragement.

Counting the new talent even up all around, one may figure on the future by the past, or when the different clubs are playing their best ball. Thus it appears in the American league that both Cleveland and Chicago are in the race, while St. Louis and Detroit are bound to have a three-cornered contest with Washington for the last three places.

The other five clubs of the American league can be counted on to make a fight for the first place next season, and each of the five is more than likely to win it in the race for a while or until the real test comes, which begins in August.

On general form Cleveland is very strong and, yet no expert will name it as the club to win. This club has a lot of brilliant players who are inclined to take things easy at the bat, but they will not quit when the race is close and when every move counts. Cleveland will play its best game when training, and it's a question whether the boys would do under a hot fire from an aggressive rival.

Cleveland has a chance, but only a chance.

Chicago has a fine lot of ball players, and, with a pitching staff that could stand the gaff, this team will put up a marvelous fielding game and play the fine points, but to no does not appear to have a field leader vigorous enough to force the landing of a pennant.

In the east Connie Mack must be counted on to make trouble, but has little chance of winning from two such crack-jack clubs as New York and Boston. The Quakers have some grand, good players, but the young men being picked up by Mack outside the pitchers, is not of an extra quality.

New York is a dangerous club, for the "Yankees" team will be much stronger than it was last season. It will be in better shape to go on without worrying, a difficulty it has had in the past, when it has been too young to get on its feet. The only ingredient lacking was the full amount of nerve in a pinch, as a whole. This team has, however, and it's a question whether it will be in the position to win. It is, in fact, the finest ball team in the land when only the skill of the players is considered, for they have a lot of hitters, base runners and fielders, and have a good knowledge of the fine points of the game.

Next season they should play a more aggressive game, and the young men, as the crowds are sure to be double the size of those of last season, and there is considerable to be encouraged. This sort of business is a handicap for the club to carry, as championships are seldom won by clubs whose owners interfere with the umpires.

Champions are made of men who can win their games with an even break on the field. Let the New York Highlanders play ball clean, good naturedly next season, and they will be in a position to win. They must, however, fight a band of never-say-die players from Boston, under the leadership of Jimmie Collins, who never makes a move for more consecutive work than he would do himself.

The champion Bostonians will try to make it three straight. No better road can ever be made by a team than by a team that is a diamond. It is an ideal ball club, with one man as great as the other, and all pulling like a well-trained pair of steers, and all the season they have been in it. The team has a big job before it this season, for every other club in the league will be out to beat it. It will be stronger than last season if the old players keep up to their best work.

An accident to any one of six players would put this great team out of the race, which shows the importance of having good extra players on hand.

I would, just the same, pick New York and Boston clubs to make the running at the finish next fall, as they did this season.

What chance has the Eastern National league club of winning the championship? And think what a long time it is since the west had the pleasure of pulling off a flag, unless Pittsburgh be considered in the west. St. Louis is booked to land with Brooklyn, Philadelphia and Boston in the second division, so Chicago, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh are left to fight it out with New York.

Frank Felsa has a fine bunch, but not pennant possibilities. Cincinnati will make the race, but it is a part of the season. Pittsburgh will be in an and out, but never in a position to beat out McGraw's New York team, who has the other teams buffeted from the start with Mathewson and McGinnity for box men.

Cincinnati must beat out Chicago, while Pittsburgh should come in second, with New York jogging home in a corner. Hugh Duffy and Fred Tenney say they are bound to beat out Charley Nichols, their old fellow player, while Ed Hanlon may or get his Baltimore club long enough to pay a little attention to the Brooklyn.

tion to the Brooklyn.

Hanlon is fast losing his grip as a successful baseball general. The league process, headed by Little McGraw, has passed on, and Hanlon is spreading his baseball knowledge too thinly over the surface. Foxy Ned has made money out of the game, and no one can blame him for that, but his friends would like to see what he would do with a team once more if he were not handicapped with outside business.

The loss of either McGinnity or Mathewson to the New York club would make a fine race in Pullman's league. McGinnity is worth several Mathewsons, and was the prime factor in last New York in first place.

Cincinnati will be a big disappointment to the fans who went to the front this season, and yet the team is not much better than half a dozen others, outside its pitchers and the clever generalship of Joe Kelley.

Duffy, Tenney and Nichols will work early and late to land their teams in the first division, while Barney Dreyfuss and Fred Clarke must win the championship or lay down the task of again picking off the pennant.

This great team began to show weakness the moment it crossed bats with the Boston Americans. They were touted as world beaters, and were all that when judged from their work on the kinetoscope. Like the great boxer who was worn down by the natural fighter, the Burgers lost their fill when the Bostonians got in a few crosscounters, yet Pittsburgh even now has a great ball team, and when playing with its old-time confidence is hard to beat.

T. H. MURNANE.

MAKE UP OF BASEBALL TEAMS IN BIG LEAGUES.

Now that the baseball season of 1906 is practically under way, make-up of the teams which will struggle for the pennant in their respective leagues this year is interesting. There are many new men on the teams, and the different clubs this year, showing that the manager of each team has been busy since the close of the season securing the best players that money could buy to strengthen the club. Here are the Nationals:

New York.
Catchers—Bowerman, Bresnahan and Marshall.
Pitchers—McGinnity, Mathewson, Taylor, Ames, Willie and Elliot.

infield—First base, Dan McGann; second base, Billy Gilbert; shortstop, Bill Dahlen; third base, Arthur Devlin.
Outfield—Left field, Sam Mertes; center field, Mike Donlon; right field, Geo. Brown.

Boston.
Catchers—Pohanny Dunn, Sammy Strang and Graham.
Pitchers—Bergen, Ritter, Jacklitch, Fitch, Cronin, Dosecher and Scanlon.

infield—First base, Dillon or McCann; second base, Jordan or Loudon; shortstop, John Doherty; third base, Babb; third base, Babb.
Outfield—Left field, Sheekard; center field, Gessler; right field, Lumley.

Philadelphia.
Catchers—John Kling and John O'Neill.
Pitchers—Bob Wicker, Jake Weimer, M. Brown, Burd Briggs, Carl Burdette and Gorb.

infield—First base, Frank Chance, captain, second base, John Evers; shortstop, Joe Tinker; third base, Babb.
Outfield—Left field, Jack Barry; center field, Jack McCarthy; left field, Jim Slagle.

Extra outfielders—F. Schulte, A. Hoffman, Arthur Pennell.
Extra infielders—O'Neil Williams.

St. Louis.
Pitchers—Nichols, Taylor, McFarland, Kellum, O'Neill, Brown, Thielman, McGinnity, Egan and Campbell.
Catchers—Grady, Warner, Swidels, Zeasler and Butler.

infield—First base, Beckley; second base, Farrell; third base, Brain; shortstop, Shay.
Outfield—Left field, Clarke, center field, Beaumont; right field, the former, or Howard, most likely the former.

Cincinnati.
Pitchers—Hahn, Harper, Ewing, Walker, Overall, Minnehan, Cheek, Hochstetler, Feeney and Farrell.
Catchers—Phelps, Schiel, Blankenship.

infield—First base, Kelly; second base, Huggins; shortstop, Corcoran; third base, Steinfield; Extra infielders, Arden and Briddle.
Outfield—Left field, Oldwell, center field, Seymour; right field, Selbring; Extra outfielder, Dolan.

Philadelphia.
Pitchers—Pittenger, Duggieby, Corridon, Suthoff, Caldwell, Lush, Washburn, Sparks.
Catchers—Doolin, Kahoe, Abbott.

infield—First base, Bransfield; second base, Gleason; shortstop, Doolin; third base, Courtney; Krueger, utility.
Outfield—Mages, Thomas, McCormick, Titus.

Boston.
There will be a general shakeup of the Boston National, with many new faces seen. Up to date, Manager Rogers and Capt. Tenney have said but little as to the final makeup of the team, aside from the following: Moran and Needham, catchers; Williams, Wilhelm, Fraser, Yols and Young, pitchers; Tenney, first base; Lauterborn, second base; Wolverson, third base; Raymer, shortstop; Delahanty, left field; Abbatistia, center field; Cannell, right field.

Chicago.
Here is the American League roster: First base—Frank Isbell. Second base—Gus Dunson. Shortstop—George Davis. Third base—Lee T. Green. Right field—Dag Green. Centre field—Jones, manager-captain.

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Left field—J. Calahan and "Ducky" Holmes.

Catchers—W. Sullivan and Ed. McFarland. Pitchers—Roy Patterson, Harry White, F. Owens, Nick Altrock, Frank Smith.

Extra outfielder—Charles Jones.

Highlanders.

Catchers—McGuire and Kleinow. Pitchers—Chesbro, Putnam, Griffith, Howell, Orth, Clarkson.

First base—Clancy. Second base—Williams or Elberfeld. Shortstop—Elberfeld or Wallace. Third base—Wild. Conroy.

Left field—Dougherty. Centre field—Fultz or Anderson. Right field—Keeler.

Cleveland.
Pitchers—Bernhard, Jose Donahue, Moore, Hess and Rhoades.

Catchers—Bemis, Buelow and Clarke. First base—Stovall and Carr. Second base—Lajoie, manager and captain.

Shortstop—Turner. Third base—Bradley. Utility infielder—Kahl.

Right field—Flick. Centre field—May. Left field—Vinson.

Lush and Jackson will be extra outfielders. Lush is coaching Yale. He reports June 1.

Stovall will be regular first baseman. The first hour was spent in thawing out. They returned to civilization none the worse in health, but soon contracted severe colds upon reaching there. There is the remarkable instance of St. Kilda, that lonely, rocky island which was visited by Dr. Johnson when he and Boswell were making their famous tour of the Hebrides. There are about 100 inhabitants on the island. The coasters are so precipitous that for eight months of the year it is practically inaccessible. Several vessels from the mainland call there during the summer. And, strange to say, whenever a ship reaches the island, the natives, who are so numerous, are seized with a cold. This fact has been known for more than 200 years and was of course a great puzzle to the sailors who were skeptical concerning it.

The question of the St. Kilda cold long puzzled men, who never dreamed that