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## THE COURIER OF THE CZAR

By Jules Verne

### CHAPTER I.

"SIRE, a fresh dispatch." "Whence?" "From Tomsk."

"Is the wire cut beyond that city?" "Yes, sire, since yesterday."

"Telegraph hourly to Tomsk, general, and let me be kept informed of all that occurs."

"Sire, it shall be done," answered General Kissoff.

These words were exchanged about two hours after midnight, at the moment when the fête given at the New palace was at the height of its splendor.

An hour later General Kissoff, who had just re-entered, quickly approached his majesty.

"Well?" asked the latter abruptly, as he had done the former time.

"Telegrams reach Tomsk no longer, sire."

"A courier, this moment?" And, leaving the hall, his majesty entered a large antechamber adjoining.

The czar had not so suddenly left the ballroom of the New palace when the fête he was giving to the civil and military authorities and principal people of Moscow was at the height of its brilliancy without ample cause, for he had just received information that serious events were taking place beyond the frontiers of the Ural. It had become evident that a formidable rebellion threatened to wrest the Siberian provinces from the Russian crown.

Asiatic Russia, or Siberia, covers a superficial area of 1,790,208 square miles and contains nearly 2,000,000 of inhabitants. Extending from the Ural mountains, which separate it from Russia in Europe, to the shores of the Pacific ocean, it is bounded on the south by Turkistan and the Chinese empire, on the north by the Arctic ocean, from the sea of Kara to Bering strait. It is divided into several governments or provinces, those of Tobolsk, Yeniseisk, Irkutsk, Omsk and Yakutsk; contains two districts, Okhotsk and Kamchatka, and possesses two countries, now under the Muscovite dominion—that of the Kirghiz and that of the Tshouktsches.

Two governor generals represent the supreme authority of the czar over this vast country. One resided at Irkutsk, the capital of western Siberia. The river Tchouba, a tributary of the Yenisei, separates the two Siberias.

No rail yet furrows these wide plains, some of which are in reality extremely fertile. No iron ways lead from these precious ruins which make the Siberian soil far richer below than above its surface. The traveler journeys in summer in a kибик or teiga; in winter, in a sleigh.

An electric telegraph, with a single wire more than 8,000 versts in length, alone affords communication between the western and eastern frontiers of Siberia. On issuing from the Ural it passes through Ekaterinburg, Kasi-mov, Tiumen, Ishim, Omsk, Elamsk, Kalyvan, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Nijni Udinsk, Irkutsk, Verkhne-Nertschinsk, Strelitz, Albazine, Blagowestensk, Radde, Orlonskaya, Alexandrowskoe and Nikolayevsk, and 6 rubles and 19 copecks are paid for every word sent from one end to the other. From Irkutsk there is a branch to Kiatka, on the Mongolian frontier, and from thence, for 30 copecks a word, the post conveys the dispatches to Peking in a fortnight.

It was this wire, extending from Ekaterinburg to Nikolayevsk, which had been cut, first beyond Tomsk and then between Tomsk and Kalyvan.

This was the reason why the czar, to the communication made to him for the second time by General Kissoff, had only answered by the words, "A courier this moment!"

The czar had remained motionless at the window for a few moments when the door was again opened. The chief of police appeared on the threshold.

"Enter, general," said the czar briefly, "and tell me all you know of Ivan Ogareff."

"He is an extremely dangerous man, sire," replied the chief of police.

"He ranked as colonel, did he not?" "Yes, sire."

"Was he an intelligent officer?" "Very intelligent, but a man whose spirit it was impossible to subdue and possessing an ambition which stopped at nothing. He soon became involved in secret intrigues, and it was then that he was degraded from his rank by his highness the grand duke and exiled to Siberia."

"How long ago was that?" "Two years since. Pardon me after six months of exile by your majesty's favor, he returned to Russia."

"And since that time has he not revisited Siberia?" "Yes, sire, but he voluntarily returned there," replied the chief of police, adding and slightly lowering his voice, "There was a time, sire, when none returned from Siberia."

"Well, while I live Siberia is and shall be a country whence men can return."

The czar had the right to utter these words with some pride, for often by his

clemency he had shown that Russian justice knew how to pardon.

"Did not Ivan Ogareff," asked the czar, "return to Russia a second time after that journey through the Siberian provinces, the object of which remains unknown?"

"He did."

"And have the police lost trace of him since?" "No, sire."

"Where was Ivan Ogareff last heard of?" "In the province of Perm."

"In what town?" "At Perm itself."

"What was he doing?" "He appeared unoccupied, and there was nothing suspicious in his conduct."

"Then he was not under the surveillance of the secret police?" "No, sire."

"When did he leave Perm?" "About the month of March."

"To go?" "Yes, sire."

"And since that time it is not known what has become of him?" "No, sire, it is not known."

"Well, then, I myself know," answered the czar. "I have received anonymous communications which did not pass through the police department, and in the face of events now taking place beyond the frontier I have every reason to believe that they are correct."

"Do you mean, sire," cried the chief of police, "that Ivan Ogareff has a hand in this Tartar rebellion?"

"Indeed I do, and I will now tell you something which you are ignorant of. After leaving Perm Ivan Ogareff crossed the Ural mountains, entered Siberia and penetrated the Kirghiz steppes and there endeavored, not without success, to foment rebellion among the nomadic population. He then went so far south as free Turkistan. There in the provinces of Bokhara, Khokhand and Koudoud he found chiefs willing to pour their Tartar hordes into Siberia and execute a general rising in Asiatic Russia. The storm has been silently gathering, but it has at last burst like a thunderclap, and now all means of communication between eastern and western Siberia have been stopped. Moreover, Ivan Ogareff, thirsting for vengeance, aims at the life of my brother!"

The czar had become excited while speaking and now paced up and down with hurried steps. The chief of police said nothing, but he thought to himself that during the time when the emperor of Russia never pardoned an exile-schemes such as those of Ivan Ogareff could never have been realized.

A few moments passed, during which he was silent, then, approaching the czar, who had thrown himself into an armchair, he said:

"Your majesty has of course given orders that this rebellion may be suppressed as soon as possible?"

"Yes," answered the czar. "The last telegram which was able to reach Nijni Udinsk would set in motion the troops in the governments of Yenisei, Irkutsk, Yakutsk, as well as those in the provinces of the Amur and Lake Baikal. At the same time the regiments from Perm and Nijni Novgorod, and the Cossacks from the frontier are advancing by forced marches toward the Ural mountains. But unfortunately some weeks must pass before they can attack the Tartars."

"And your majesty's brother, his highness the grand duke, is now isolated in the government of Irkutsk and is no longer in direct communication with Moscow?"

"That is so."

"But by the last dispatches he must know what measures have been taken by your majesty and what help he may expect from the governments nearest to that of Irkutsk?"

"He knows that," answered the czar, "but what he does not know is that Ivan Ogareff, as well as being a rebel, is also playing the part of a traitor and that in him he has a personal and bitter enemy. It is to the grand duke that Ivan Ogareff owes his first disgrace, and what is more serious is that this man is not known to him. Ivan Ogareff's plan, therefore, is to go to Irkutsk and under an assumed name offer his services to the grand duke. Then, after gaining his confidence, when the Tartars have invaded Irkutsk, he will betray the town and with it my brother, whose life is directly threatened. This is what I have learned from my secret intelligence, this is what the grand duke does not know and this is what he must know!"

"Well, sire, an intelligent, courageous courier!"

"I momentarily expect one."

"And it is to be hoped he will be expeditious," added the chief of police, "for allow me to add, sire, that Siberia is a favorable land for rebellions."

All communication was interrupted. Had the wires between Kalyvan and Tomsk been cut by Tartar scouts, or had the czar himself arrived in the Yeniseisk provinces? Was all the lower part of western Siberia in a ferment? Had the rebellion already spread to the eastern regions? No one could say. The only agent which fears neither cold nor heat, which can neither be stopped by the rigors of winter

nor the heat of summer and which flies with the rapidity of lightning—the electric current—was prevented from traversing the steppes, and it was no longer possible to warn the grand duke, shut up in Irkutsk, of the danger threatening him from the treason of Ivan Ogareff.

A courier only could supply the place of the interrupted electric current. It would take this man some time to traverse the 5,200 versts between Moscow and Irkutsk. To pass the ranks of the rebels and invaders he must display almost superhuman courage and intelligence. But with a clear head and a firm heart much can be done.

"Shall I be able to find this head and heart?" thought the czar.

### CHAPTER II.

THE door of the imperial cabinet was again opened, and General Kissoff was announced.

"The courier?" inquired the czar eagerly.

"He is here, sire," replied General Kissoff.

"Have you found a fitting man?" "I will answer for him to your majesty."

"Has he been in the service of the palace?" "Yes, sire."

"You know him?" "Personally, and at various times he has fulfilled difficult missions with success."

"Abroad?" "In Siberia itself."

"Where does he come from?" "From Omsk. He is a Siberian."

"Has he coolness, intelligence, courage?" "Yes, sire; he has all the qualities necessary to succeed even where others might possibly fail."

"What is his age?" "Thirty."

"Is he strong and vigorous?" "Sire, he can bear cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue, to the very last extremities."

"He must have a frame of iron."

"Sire, he has."

"And a heart?" "A heart of gold."

"His name?" "Michael Strogoff."

"Is he ready to set out?" "He awaits your majesty's orders in the guardroom."

"Let him come in," said the czar.

In a few minutes Michael Strogoff, the courier, entered the imperial library.

The czar fixed a penetrating look upon him without uttering a word, while Michael stood perfectly motionless.

Michael Strogoff was a tall, vigorous, broad shouldered, deep chested man. His powerful head possessed the fine features of the Caucasian race. His well knit frame seemed built for the performance of feats of strength. It would have been a difficult task to move such a man against his will, for when his feet were once planted on the ground it was as if they had taken root. As he doffed his Muscovite cap locks of thick curly hair fell over his broad, massive forehead. When his ordinary pale face became at last flushed, it arose solely from a more rapid action of the heart, under the influence of a quicker circulation. His eyes of a deep blue looked with a clear, frank, firm gaze.

The slightly contracted eyebrows indicated lofty heroism—"the hero's cool courage," according to the definition of the physiologist. He possessed a fine nose, with large nostrils, and a well shaped mouth, with the slightly projecting lips which denote a generous and noble heart.

Michael Strogoff had the temperament of a man of action, who does not bite his nails or scratch his head in doubt and indecision. Sparing of gestures as of words, he always stood motionless like a soldier before his superior, but when he moved his step showed a firmness, a freedom of movement, which proved the confidence and vivacity of his mind.

Michael Strogoff wore a handsome military uniform, something resembling that of a light cavalry officer in the field-boots, spurs, half tightly fitting trousers, brown pelisse, trimmed with fur and ornamented with yellow braid. On his breast glittered a cross and medals.

Michael Strogoff belonged to the special corps of the czar's couriers, ranking as an officer among those picked men. His most discernible characteristic—particularly in his walk, his face, in the whole man, and which the czar perceived at a glance—was that he was a "fulfiller of orders." He therefore possessed one of the most serviceable qualities in Russia—one which the celebrated novelist Turgeneff says "will lead to the highest positions in the Muscovite empire."

In short, if any one could accomplish this journey from Moscow to Irkutsk across the rebellious country, surmount obstacles and brave perils of all sorts, Michael Strogoff was the man.

A circumstance especially favorable to the success of his plans was that he was thoroughly acquainted with the country which he was about to traverse and understood its different dialects, not only from having traveled there before, but because he was of Siberian origin.

When he was fourteen, Michael Strogoff had killed his first bear quite alone. That was nothing. But after stripping it he dragged the gigantic animal's skin to his father's house, many versts distant, thus exhibiting remarkable strength in a boy so young.

Gifted with marvelous acuteness, when every object was hidden in mist or even in higher latitudes, where the polar night is prolonged for many days, he could find his way when others would have had no idea whither to direct their steps. He had learned to read almost imperceptible signs, the

forms of icebergs, the appearance of the small branches of trees, mists rising far away on the horizon, vague sounds in the air, distant reports, the flight of birds through the foggy atmosphere—a thousand circumstances which are so many words to those who can decipher them. Moreover, tempered by snow like a Damascus blade in the waters of Syria, he had a frame of iron, as General Kissoff had said, and what was no less true, a heart of gold.

The only sentiment of love felt by Michael Strogoff was that which he entertained for his mother, the aged Marfa, who could never be induced to leave the house of the Strogoffs at Omsk, on the banks of the Irtysh, where the old huntsman and she had lived so long together. When her son left her, he went away with a full heart, but promising to come and see her whenever he could possibly do so, and this promise he had always religiously kept.

When Michael was twenty, it was decided that he should enter the personal service of the emperor of Russia, in the corps of the couriers of the czar. The hardy, intelligent, zealous, well conducted young Siberian first distinguished himself especially in a journey to the Caucasus, through the midst of a difficult country, ravaged by some restless successors of Schamyl; then, later, in an important mission to Petropavlovsk, in Kamchatka, the extreme limit of Asiatic Russia. During these long journeys he displayed such marvelous coolness, prudence and courage as to gain him the approbation and protection of his chief, who rapidly advanced him in his profession.

The furloughs which were his due after these distant missions, although he might be separated from her by thousands of versts and winter had rendered the roads almost impassable, he had never failed to devote to his old mother. Having been much employed in the south of the empire, he had not seen old Marfa for three years—three ages—the first time in his life he had been so long absent from her. Now, however, in a few days he would obtain his furlough, and he had accordingly already made preparations for departure for Omsk when the events which have been related occurred. Michael Strogoff was therefore introduced into the czar's presence in complete ignorance of what the emperor expected from him.

The czar, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, went to his bureau and, motioning to the chief of police to seat himself, dictated in a low voice a letter of not more than a few lines. The letter penned, the czar reread it attentively and then signed it, preceding his name with these words: "By command," which, signifying "so be it," constitutes the decisive formula of the Russian emperors.

The letter was placed in an envelope, which was sealed with the imperial arms.

"The czar, rising, told Michael Strogoff to draw near."

Michael advanced a few steps and then stood motionless, ready to answer.

The czar again looked him full in the face, and their eyes met. Then in an abrupt tone:

"Thy name?" he asked.

"Michael Strogoff, sire."

"Thy rank?"

"Captain in the corps of couriers of the czar."

"Thou dost know Siberia?"

"I am a Siberian."

"A native?"

"Omsk, sire."

"Hast thou relations there?"

"Yes, sire."

"What relations?"

"My old mother."

The czar suspended his questions for a moment, then, pointing to the letter which he held in his hand, he said:

"Here is a letter which I charge thee, Michael Strogoff, to deliver into the hands of the grand duke and to no other but him."

"I will deliver it, sire."

"The grand duke is at Irkutsk?"

"I will go to Irkutsk."

"Thou wilt have to traverse a rebellious country, invaded by Tartars, whose interest it will be to intercept this letter."

To be Continued.

### HAS PROMOTED EMIGRATION

The Glasgow Exposition From the Canadian Point of View.

From a Canadian point of view the late Glasgow Exhibition has been attended with great advantage in promoting emigration, extending the trade now existing and opening new markets for Canadian produce. No better teaching as to the natural products of Canada could be given than the sight of grain, the fruit, the timber and the minerals, so well displayed in the Canadian Pavilion than the sight of the grain, the fruit, and especially the apples, of which a constant supply from cold storage was displayed during the whole period of the exhibition, was a revelation to those who have always thought of Canada as a land of frost and snow. Nothing in the whole exhibition attracted as much attention as the Canadian apples, and their excellent condition, twelve months after they were gathered, was an object-lesson not only of the quality of the fruit, but of the advantages to be derived from the system of cold storage by which they had been preserved. The grains and grasses so beautifully arranged in Mr. Hay's Trophy, was of peculiar interest to the numerous farmers from England and Scotland by whom they were examined, and many expressions were heard of approval of a country in which such varieties of grain and fruit could be produced. The agricultural implements were examined with much interest, and as a result of the display the trade in them, already considerable, will be enormously increased in the future. —Glasgow Correspondent Toronto Globe.

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