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# CHARTER SMITH,

# THE COURIER OF THE CZAR

By Jules Verne

[CONTI (UED.]

An imperceptible movement of the knife of the blind man turned the blow. Michael Strogoff had not been touched and coolly seemed to wait another attack without, however, challenging it. A cold sweat ran from the face of

Ivan Ogareff. He recoiled a pace, then made another thrust. But the second blow, like the first, feli harmless. A simple parrying with the large knife had sufficed to turn aside the sword of the traitor. The latter, mad with rage and terror before that living statue, fixed his terrified look on the large open eyes of the blind man. Those eyes that seemed to read the very bottom of his heart and which could not see-those eyes seemed to have for him an awful fascination.

Suddenly Ivan Ogareff gave a cry. An unexpected light had entered his

"He can see!" cried be. "He can

And, like a deer trying to re-enter its cave, step by step, terrified, he retreated to the lower end of the room. Then the statue took life. The blind man walked straight to Ivan Ogareff, and, placing himself in front of him, said:

"Yes, I see-I see the blow of the knout with which I have marked you, traitor and coward! I see the place where I am going to strike you. Defend your life! It is a duel which I condescend to offer you. My knife will suffice me against your sword!"

"He sees!" said Nadia. "God of mercy, is it possible?" Ivan Ogareff felt himself to be lost.

But suddenly, taking courage, sword in front, he rushed upon his impassible adversary. The two blades crossed, but at the first clash of the knife of Michael Strogoff, grasped firmly in the hand of the Siberian hunter, the sword flew in pieces, and the wretch, pierced to the heart, fell dead to the ground.

At that moment the door of the room, pushed from the outside, opened. The grand duke, accompanied by some officers, showed himself on the threshold. The grand duke advanced. He recognized on the ground the dead body of him whom he thought to be the courier of the czar, and then in a threatening voice he asked:

"Who has slain this man?"

"I," replied Michael Strogoff. One of the officers placed a revolver to his head, ready to fire.

"Your name?" asked the grand duke before giving the order to shoot him

"Your highness," answered Michael Strogoff, "ask me rather the name of the man stretched at your feet."

"That man I have recognized. He is a servant of my brother. He is the ezar's courier."

"That man, your highness, is not a courier from the czar. He is Ivan Oga-

"Ivan Ogareff!" cried the grand duke. "Yes; Ivan the traitor." "But you-who are you?" "Michael Strogoff."

CHAPTER XX.



ICHAEL STROGOFF was not, had never been, blind. A purely human phenomenon, at once moral and physical, had neutralized the action of the redhot

blade which the executioner of Feofar had passed over his eyes. One remembers that at the moment of that terrible punishment Marfa Strogoff was there, stretching out her hands toward her son.

Michael Strogoff looked at her, as a son can look at his mother when it is for the last time. Streams of tears welled up from his heart to his eyes, which his high spirit tried in vain to restrain and, filling the sockets of his eyes, had thus saved his sight. The action of the heat had been destroyed just in the same manner as when a smelter, after having plunged his hand into water, thrusts it with impunity

Michael Strogoff had at once understood the danger he would have run in making known his secret to any one. He realized the advantages which he might gain from this situation for the accomplishment of his projects. It is because they would believe him to be blind that they would leave him his

It was necessary, then, that should be blind, that he should be so for all, even for Nadia-in short, that he should be so everywhere and that not a gesture at any moment could cause any doubt of the sincerity of his role. His resolution was taken. Even his very life must be risked in order to give to all the proof of his blindness, and one knows how he risked it.

His mother alone knew the truth, rators, Mowers and Reapers. Also and it was on the square of Tomsk that irculars and X-Cut-Saws gumed, he had whispered it in her ear when, bending over her in the shade, he had covered her with his kisses.

We can now understand how when Ivan Ogareff had placed the emperor's letter before his eyes, which he believed to be blind, Michael Strogoff had been able to read, had read that letter Foundryman, Durham, Ont. which disclosed the hateful designs of

the traitor; hence that energy which he displayed during the second part of the journey; hence that unchanging will to reach Irkutsk and on arriving there to fulfill with his own voice his mission. He knew that the town was to be given up by the traitor. He knew that the life of the grand duke was threatened. The safety of the brother of the czar and of Siberia was still in

In a few words all this history was riageable," laughingly answered Aleide recounted to the grand duke, and Michael Strogoff told also, and with what emotion, the part which Nadia had taken in these events.

"Who is this young girl?" asked the Peking." grand duke. "The daughter of the exiled Wassill

Feodor," answered Michael Strogoff. "The daughter of Commander Feodor," said the grand duke, "has ceased to be the daughter of an exile. There

are no more exiles at Irkutsk." Nadia, less strong in joy than she had been in sorrow, fell at the feet of the grand duke, who raised her with one hand, while he held out the other to Michael Strogoff. An hour afterward Nadia was in the arms of her father.

Michael Strogoff, Nadia, Wassili Feodor, were reunited. It was on all sides complete happiness.

The Tartars had been repulsed in their double attack upon the town. Wassili Feodor, with his little troop, had crushed the first assailants who had presented themselves at the Bolchain gate with the expectation of find-

At the same time that the Tartars were driven back the besieged had rendered themselves masters of the fire. Before daybreak the troops of Feofar-Khan had returned to their encampments, leaving a good number of dead under the ramparts.

garre, who had tried in vain to rejoin

For two days the besiegers attempted no new assault. They were discouraged by the death of Ivan Ogareff. That man was the soul of the invasion. and he alone, by his long continued plots, had sufficient influence over the khans and their hordes to be able to lead them to the conquest of Asiatic

Meanwhile the defenders of Irkutsk had held themselves on their guard. and the investment continued, but on the 7th of October from the first streaks of day the boom of cannon resounded on the heights around Irkutsk. It was the relieving army which had arrived under the orders of General Kissely, who thus signaled his presence to the grand duke.

The Tartars did not stay any longer. They did not wish to risk a battle under the walls of Irkutsk. The camp of the Angara was immediately raised. Irkutsk was at last delivered.

With the first Russian soldiers two friends of Michael Strogoff had entered the town. They were the inseparable Blount and Jolivet. By gaining the right bank of the Angara along the barrier of ice they and the other fugitives had been able to escape before the flames of the Angara had reached this manner, "Was near ending like a lemon in a bowl of punch!"

Their joy was great to once more find Nadia and Michael Strogoff safe and sound, especially when they learned that their brave companion was not blind, a statement which led Harry Blount to jot down this observation: "A redhot iron is perhaps insufficient to destroy the sensibility of the optic nerve. To be modified."

well installed in Irkutsk, occupied themselves in putting in order the impressions of their journey. From thence two interesting chronicles of the Tartar invasion were sent to London and Paris, which, strange to say, only contradicted each other on points of less mo-

For the rest the campaign was bad for the emir and his allies. That invasion, useless, as are all those that attack colossal Russia, was most fatal to them. They soon found themselves cut off by the troops of the czar, who retook successively all the conquered towns. Besides, the winter was terrible, and of those hordes, decimated by the cold, only a small number returned to the steppes of Tartary. The route from Irkutsk to the Ural mountains

The grand duke was in haste to return to Moscow, but he delayed his journey in order to assist at a touching ceremony which took place some days after the entry of the Russian troops.

Michael Strogoff had sought out Nadia and in the presence of her father had said to her, "Nadia, my sister still, when you left Riga to come to Irkutsk had you no other regret but that of leaving behind you your mother?" "No," replied Nadia; "none what-

"So that no part of your heart has remained down there?"

"None, brother." "Then, Nadia," said Michael Strogoff, "I do not believe but that God in bring-

ing us together, in allowing us to pass through these great trials together, has wished us to be united forever."

"Ah!" said Nadia as she fell into the arms of Michael Strogoff, and, turning toward Wassili Feeder, "My father," she said, blushing deeply.

"Nadia," said Wassili Feeder, "my joy will be to call you both my chil-

The marriage ceremony took place in the cathedral of Irkutsk. It was very simple in its preparations, but very beautiful in the concourse of the military and civil population, which thus wished to show its gratitude to the young couple, whose strange journey had now become legendary.

Alcide Jolivet and Harry Blount of course assisted at the marriage, of which they wished to give an account to their readers.

"And does it not make you envious to mitate them?" asked Alcide Jolivet to companion.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Harry Blount "If, like you, I had a cousin." "My cousin is not any longer mar-

"All the better," added Harry Blount "for they speak of difficulties which

are about to arise between London and "Would you not like to see what is passing there?"

Jolivet, "I was about to propose it to you.

out for China.

chael and Nadia Strogoff, accompanied that was the temper of the children. by Wassill Feodor, started on their what would not the men do? journey to Europe. That road of sorrows was only one of happiness on their return. They traveled very rapidly with one of those trains which glide like an express over the frozen steppes of Siberia.

Meanwhile, arrived at the banks of the Dinka, just opposite Briskoe, they stopped there one day. Michael Strogoff sought out the place where he had interred poor Nicholas. A cross planted there, and Nadia prayed for the last time on the tomb of the humble and heroic soul which neither the one nor the other would ever forget.

At Omsk old Marfa was awaiting them in the little house of the Strogoffs. She pressed in her arms that noble girl whom in her heart she had already a hundred times called her Among the dead was the gypsy San- daughter. The brave Siberian on that day had the right to own her son and to say that she was proud of him.

After some days passed at Omsk, Michael and Nadia Strogoff returned to Europe, and, Wassili Feodor being well fixed in St. Petersburg, neither his son nor his daughter had any occasion ever to leave him, only when they went to see their old mother. The young courier had been received

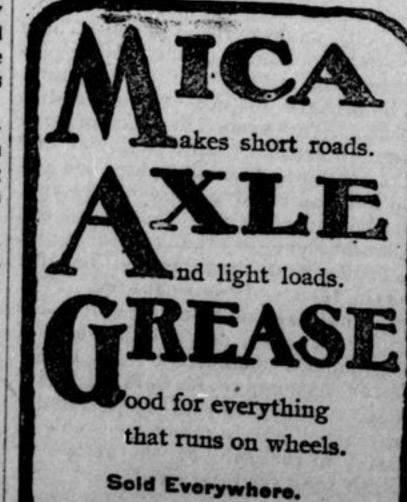
by the czar, who attached him specially to his person and decorated him with the cross of St. George. Michael Strogoff afterward attained

to a high post in the empire. But it is not the history of his success, but the history of his trials, which has deserved to be chronicled.

Swedish Titles.

One of the old customs is for people to indicate their business upon their visiting cards. You will receive the card of Lawyer Jones or Banker Smith or Notary Johnson or Music Professor Brown or Grosserer (which means wholesale merchant) Furgeson or Geologist Thompson, and if a man ever held an office it is customary to indicate that fact upon his card. A burgomaster is always a burgomaster, a conthe raft. This had been put down by sul is always a consul and an alderman Alcide Jolivet in his notebook and in always an alderman. The prefixes "Hon." and "Mr." are seldom used, and the title, whether commercial or professional, is observed in conversation in the same way. It would sound rather queer for any one in the United States to ask, "Wholesale Merchant MacVeagh, will you kindly pass the butter?" or "Banker Hutchinson, will you escort Frau Board of Trade Operator Jones to the table?" or "Director of Music Ziegfeld, I wish you good Afterward the two correspondents, day?" but that is the custom in Sweden, and it is observed by children as well as grown people. A lisping child will approach a guest, make a pretty little bob courtesy and say, "Good morning, Chief Justice of Supreme Court Smith," or "Good night, Repre- me now." sentative In Congress Brown."

It is customary also for ladies to print their maiden names upon their visiting cards in smaller type under their married names, particularly if they have a pride of family and want people to know their ancestry.-Chica-



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# THE DRUMS OF THE FORE AND AFT.

By RUDYARD KIPLING.

"Very how much?" "Very close veins, sir That's why they swells after long p'rade, sir If 'e can go, we can go, sir.

Again the colonel looked at them long and intently.

"Yes, the band is going," he said as gravely as though he had been addressing a brother officer. "Have you any parents, either of you two?"

"No, sir," rejoicingly from Lew and Jakin. "We're both orphans, sir There's no one to be considered of on

our account, sir. "You poor little sprats. And you want to go up to the front with the regiment. do you? Why?"

"I've wore the queen's uniform for two years," said Jakin. "It's very ard, sir, that a man don't get no recompense for doin 'is dooty, sir.'

"An-an if I don't go, sir," inter rupted Lew. "the bandmaster 'e says e'll catch an make a bloo-a blessed musician o' me, sir Before I've seen any service, sir

The colonel made no answer for a long time. Then he said quietly: "If you're passed by the doctor, I dare say "Why, my dear Blount," cried Alcide you can go. I shouldn't smoke if I were

The boys saluted and disappeared. This is how the two inseparables set The colonel walked home and told the story to his wife, who nearly cried over Some days after the ceremony Mi- it. The colonel was well pleased.

> Jakin and Lew entered the boys' barrack room with great stateliness and refused to hold any conversation with their comrades for at least ten minutes. Then, bursting with pride, Jakin drawled: "I've bin intervooin the colonel. Good old beggar is the colonel. Says l to 'im, 'Colonel,' says I, 'let me go to the front along o' the regiment.' the front you shall go, 'says 'e, 'an I only wish there was more like you among the dirty little devils that bang the bloomin drums.' Kidd, if you throw your 'conterments at me for tellin you the truth to your own advantage your legs'll swell.

None the less, there was a battle royal in the barrack room, for the boys were consumed with envy and hate. and neither Jakin nor Lew behaved in conciliatory wise.

"I'm goin out to say adoo to my girl," said Lew to cap the climax "Don't none o' you touch my kit, because it's wanted for active service, me bein specially invited to go by the colo-

He strolled forth and whistled in the

clump of trees at the back of the married quarters till Cris came to him. and, the preliminary kisses being given and taken. Lew began to explain the

"I'm goin to the front with the regiment," he said valiantly. "Piggy, you're a little liar," said Cris, but her heart misgave her, for

Lew was not in the habit of lying. "Liar yourself. Cris," said Lew slipping an arm round her. "I'm goin. When the reg'ment marches out, you'll see me with 'em, all gallant an gay Give us another kiss. Cris. on the

strength of it. "If you'd on'y a-staid at the depot. where you ought to ha' bin, you could get as many of 'em as-as you dam please," whimpered Cris, putting but there's more o' his likes up above.

"It's 'ard, Cris. I grant you it's 'ard. But what's a man to do? If I'd a-staid at the depot, you wouldn't think anything o' me. "Like as not, but I'd 'ave you with

me. Piggy. An all the thinkin in the world isn't like kissin." like 'avin a medal to wear on the front

o' your coat. "You won't get no medal." "Oh. yus, I shall, though. Me an

Jakin are the only acting drummers that'll be took along. All the rest is full men, an we'll get our medals with "They might ha' taken anybody but

you, Piggy You'll get killed-you're so venturesome. Stay with me, Piggy, darlin, down at the depot, an I'll love you true forever. "Ain't you goin to do that now. Cris?

You said you was. "O' course I am, but the other's more

comfortable. Wait till you've growed a bit, Piggy You aren't no taller than your innards. Goodby, ole man Take "I've bin in the army for two years, an I'm not goin to get out of a chanst

when I take on as a man I'll marry you -marry you when I'm a lance." "Promise, Piggy?" Lew reflected on the future as arranged by Jakin a short time previously.

"I promise, s'elp me Gawd!' said

but Cris' mouth was very near to his

Cris slid an arm round his neck. "I won't 'old you back no more. Piggy. Go away an get your medal, an I'll

make you a new button bag as nice as I know how," she whispered "Put some o' your 'air into it, Cris, an I'll keep it in my pocket so long's I'm alive.

Then Cris wept anew, and the interview ended. Public feeling among the were disagreeably surprised by the ardrummer boys rose to fever pitch. and rival in their camp of a hammered iron the lives of Jakin and Lew became un- slug which, fired from a steady rest at enviable Not only had they been permitted to enlist two years before the private seated by the fire. This robbed regulation boy's age-14-but, by virtue, it seemed, of their extreme was the beginning of a long range fire youth, they were allowed to go to the carefully calculated to that end. In the front—which thing had not happened daytime they saw nothing except an to acting drummers within the knowl- occasional puff of smoke from a crag edge of boy. The band which was to above the line of march. At night accompany the regiment had been cut down to the regulation 20 men, the

surplus returning to the ranks. Jakis and Lew were attached to the band as supernumeraries, though they would much have preferred being company

"Don't matter much, said Jakin after the medical inspection thankful that we're 'lowed to go at all The doctor 'e said that if we could stand what we took from the bazaar ser. geant's son we'd stand pretty nigh anything.

"Which we will," said Lew, looking tenderly at the ragged and ill made housewife that Cris had given him with a lock of her hair worked into a sprawling "L" upon the cover.

"It was the best I could," she sobbed "I wouldn't let mother nor the sergeant's tailor 'elp me. Keep it always Piggy, an remember I love you true."

They marched to the railway station 960 strong, and every soul in canton. ments turned out to see them go. The drummers gnashed their teeth at Jakin and Lew marching with the band, the married women wept upon the platform, and the regiment cheered its noble self black in the face.

"A nice level lot," said the colonel to the second in command as they watched the first four companies entraining "Fit to do anything," said the second

in command enthusiastically "But it seems to me they're a thought too young and tender for the work in hand It's bitter cold up at the front now." "They're sound enough," said the colonel "We must take our chance of

sick casualties." So they went northward, ever north. ward, past droves and droves of camels. armies of camp fellowers and legions of laden mules, the throng thickening day by day, till with a shriek the train pulled up at a hopelessly congested junction where six lines of temporary track accommodated six 40 wagon trains; where whistles blew, Baboos sweated and commissariat officers swore from dawn till far into the night amid the wind driven chaff of the fodder bales and the lowing of a thousand

"Hurry up! You're badly wanted at the front," was the message that greeted the Fore and Aft, and the occupants of the Red Cross carriages told the "Tisn't so much the bloomin fight-

in," gasped a head bound trooper of hussars to a knot of admiring Fore and Afts. "Tisn't so much the bloomin fightin, though there's enough o' that It's the bloomin food an the bloomin climate. Frost all night 'cept when it hails an b'ilin sun all day, an the water stinks fit to knock you down. I got my 'ead chipped like an egg. I've got pneumonia, too, an my guts is all out o' order. 'Tain't no bloomin picnic in those parts, I can tell you.

"Wot are the niggers like?" demanded a private. "There's some prisoners in that train

yonder. Go an look at 'em. They're the aristocracy o' the country. The common folk are a dashed sight uglier. If you want to know what they fight with, reach under my seat an pull out the long knife that's there

They dragged out and beheld for the first time the grim, bone handled, triangular Afghan knife. It was almost as long as Lew.

"That's the thing to j'int you," said the trooper feebly "It can take off a man's arm at the shoulder as easy as slicing butter. halved the beggar that used that un,

They don't understand thrustin, but

they're devils to slice." The men strolled across the tracks to inspect the Afghan prisoners. They were unlike any "niggers" that the Fore and Aft had ever met-these huge, black haired, scowling sons of the Bnei-Israel. As the men stared the Afghans "An all the kissin in the world isn't spat freely and muttered one to another. with lowered eyes.

"My eyes! Wot awful swine!" said Jakin, who was in the rear of the procession. "Say, old man, how you got puckrowed, eh? Kiswasti, you wasn't hanged for your ugly face, hey?" The tallest of the company turned,

his leg irons clanking at the movement,

and stared at the boy. "See!" he cried to his fellows in Pushto. "They send children against us. What a people and what fools!" "Hya!" said Jakin, nodding his head cheerily. "You go down country. Khana get. peenikapanee get-live like a bloomin raja ke marfik. That's a bet-

ter bandobust than baynit get it in

care o' your beautiful figure'ed an try

to look kushy." The men laughed and fell in for their o' seein service, an don't you try to first march, when they began to realize make me do so. I'll come back. Cris. an that a soldier's life was not all beer and skittles. They were much impressed with the size and bestial ferocity of the niggers whom they had now learned to call "Paythans," and more with the exceeding discomfort of their own surroundings. Twenty old soldiers in the corps would have taught them how to make themselves moderately snug at night, but they had no old soldiers, and, as the troops on the line of march said. "they lived like pigs." They learned the heartbreaking cussedness of camp kitchens and camels and the depravity of an E. P. tent and a wither wrung mule. They studied animalculæ in water and developed a few cases of dysen-

tery in their study. At the end of their third march they 700 yards, flicked out the brains of a them of their peace for a night and

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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