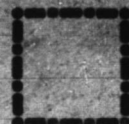


The Enterprise



THE MYSTERY OF GRASLOV

By Ashley Towse

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Prince Neslerov waits to marry Frances Gordon, the charming daughter of an American, who is building the Trans-Siberian railroad. Frances is interested in the fortunes of Vladimir Paulpoff, a stalwart Russian blacksmith. She asks Neslerov to use his influence for Vladimir. Neslerov goes to Vladimir's hut. The blacksmith has talent and shows Neslerov a picture he has painted. It is the portrait of a woman of rank copied from a miniature. The Prince is excited and asks for the original. Vladimir's father says it has been lost. To Vladimir, old Paulpoff confesses that he lied to Neslerov and still has the miniature.

"As I said before, it is a possibility," said Neslerov and relapsed into silence. "I suppose it is always a possibility to one so powerful as your excellency," said Jansky, who had a fine talent for flattery.

"At this particular moment it is more easily accomplished than at any other time." "If your excellency will explain—if anything is expected of me, I would—"

"Duty, only duty," broke in the prince. "But I will explain. You are already aware that when you were made inspector of police in Perm the field of police activity extended but little farther east. The Cossack guards and the Tartar cavalry composed the police over the border. But this new railway is revolutionizing all that. In each government through which this line of travel passes or is to pass a department of police is to be established. There will be new cities developed. There will be railway stations. The population of Siberia will increase and, though complex enough at all times, will now present a far greater variety than ever before. The entrance of foreigners, of conspirators, will have to be made less difficult. The escape of a convict will now be almost a mere act of stepping upon a train and saying farewell to his guards.

"It will be, therefore, quite necessary to establish a system of police with officers of more ability and shrewdness than the Cossacks who now command the rude guards who stand sentinel over the czar's great domain in Asia. Such a department of police has already been established in Tobolsk, through which the railway is now completed. It is time now for us to think of such a department in Tomsk."

"As the prince and governor paused the inspector's breath came short and fast. "And, your excellency, in the goodness of your heart you have thought of me?" "I have been thinking of several. I have befriended you. I desire to do so again. But there are difficulties which we must consider. Your present position, while not a low one, still is so low that the leap from it to the position of superintendent of police of the government of Tomsk would excite the imaginations of certain people at St. Petersburg."

"Superintendent of police of Tomsk?" Jansky cried. "Certainly. That is the position for which I intend you. I have watched your career. You are eager, ambitious and resourceful. What better man could I have in such a position? It is upon you whom I must rely to prevent the encroachments of our enemies. It will be to the superintendent of my police who will be my closest confidant. Who could be more acceptable to me than you?"

"I thank you, your excellency. I thank—" "Wait. Thank me with deeds when we succeed. As I said before, there are difficulties. One cannot leap too great a distance at once without a cause. We must find a cause."

"A cause, your excellency?" "What I mean is some potent reason for this great promotion. The chief of the Tomsk police will have a palace, a large income and will be second only to myself in power. To obtain that one must do something worthy."

"Oh, if I could but win that distinction!" "I think it even now within your power."

"You have discovered something?" "Yes—a very nesting place for nobilitates."

"Good! Give me an idea where this place is, your excellency. There will be no more nesting."

"Do you know a forge on the forest road leading out of Perm to the south?" "A forge? A horseshoeing place?" "Well, that and all ironworking. It is kept by a man named Paulpoff."

"Paulpoff, the giant who breaks horseshoes with his thumb and fingers? The simple minded son of old Michael? What has he to do with nobilitates?" "He is their leader," Neslerov said quietly.

there in the shops. I chanced to pass there yesterday and overheard a bit of conversation between the son and the old man. It seems there is to be a meeting in a few nights.

"A meeting of nobilitates in the shops of Paulpoff?" "Yes. Now, it has long been suspected that there were many nobilitates at Perm, but the police have not been able to uncover them. Let me advise you. Keep this to yourself—a secret between you and me. We will go to the forge and arrest these Paulpoffs. If we find proof that they are nobilitates, they will go across the border and you will be mentioned for promotion. Then the opportunity will come to me to speak to the minister of justice for you, and undoubtedly you will be given to me as the chief of the Tomsk police."

Jansky nodded. It was not for him to ask questions now. "I am ready," he said. "Then tomorrow, I will make still further investigations in my own way, and we shall be ready to act. We must both go to Perm from here."

Jansky, not being asked to remain longer, took his departure. And then suddenly from his repose the prince became a man of quick action. He called from his estate four men in whom he knew he could place the most implicit confidence. He spent some time at his desk writing. To each of the four he gave a letter, unsealed, unstamped, but addressed to each and apparently having been delivered by the hand of a private messenger.

"Go with me, do what I bid you, and you will have gold rubles for a year's pleasure," he said. Inspector Jansky, happy and yet agitated at the result of the conference with the prince, sat in his office in Perm on the following afternoon. It was growing late, and he had looked hours for Prince Neslerov.

"He was mistaken or he has failed," he said. "He would have come if there was a possibility of success." As he spoke the prince's horse galloped to the door. "Good! Then success is possible!" said Jansky, grasping the hand of his noble benefactor.

"Possible! It is certain. Come with me." Jansky's horse was soon by the side of the steed ridden by the prince. "I made it my business to ride past the shops of Paulpoff," said the prince. "I met there, just leaving, a man who was, to say the least, discreditable in appearance. I spoke to him, and he was frightened. I saw him crumple a paper in his hand. I snatched it from him. It was a message addressed to 'Number Five' of some mysterious circle, calling upon the person bearing that name to come to the shops at a certain hour tonight. We shall be in time. Let us ride."

It had so chanced that a number of accidents to horses had taken place that day on the forest road. When the inspector of police and Neslerov arrived, four men were within the shop, their horses standing outside, and all were apparently in the greatest eagerness to have their horses shod. Papa Paulpoff was visibly disturbed by this sudden influx of the horseshoeing business, but the giant Vladimir, who never refused a request if he could help a human being, was beginning to make the shoes. The men did not apparently know one another, and each gazed continually at the others for being there.

Neslerov, upon arriving at the shop, whispered to the inspector, and both leaped from their horses. "Seize the old man and the son!" said Neslerov. "I will search these fellows."

Poor old Papa Paulpoff turned white and sank in horror to the ground, senseless with fear. He was coming, but Vladimir, in whose innocent mind there was no suspicion, stood gazing at the newcomers.

"It is the prince!" he exclaimed. "What have these poor men done, your excellency?" Neslerov did not answer him. He turned to the nearest of the four, wrestled with him a short time, while the others showed evidences of terror, and then pulled from his pocket a letter.

"See!" he cried, waving it in the air and then showing it to the inspector. "It is a message to 'Number Three'! We have here the five constituting the circle."

"Let me read," said the inspector, while Vladimir still looked on unconscious of the tragedy that was being played with himself as its center. The letter simply commanded "Number Three" to attend a meeting of the circle at the shops at that hour. The name of Vladimir Paulpoff was signed.

"It is enough!" cried Jansky. Paulpoff, I make you my prisoner in the name of the czar!" The young ironworker could, had he exerted his strength, have thrust the entire shameless crew from the place and crashed their skulls together. But even now he did not realize the enormity of the thing with which he was charged.

"Attend, Paulpoffs!" commanded Jansky, while the prince went through the pockets of the other three of the circle. "Oh, have mercy!" cried Papa Paulpoff, falling upon his knees and clasping the legs of the prince. "We are innocent. I swear it! Some enemy has done this thing! The name is not in the writing of my son, I am certain! Oh, let me see the letters!" Neslerov made a movement as if to hand the letters to the old man when

Paulpoffs? "No; it wasn't that," answered the driver. "But the rain yesterday broke up the road. I did not think you would wish to come."

"Nonsense! There must be a safe way to get there." In truth the way was as safe and comfortable as it had ever been, but the warning look of the inspector had prevented the driver from imparting the knowledge he had of the Paulpoffs.

"Let the police tell their own tales—they are always true then—according to police standards," answered the driver.

It was a long drive to the forge, and when the drosky drew near, having passed through the wild and almost unsettled region between it and Perm, Frances was struck with an air of mystery that seemed to have suddenly enveloped the place.

There was no sound of the tremendous blows of Vladimir that went the ring of steel far into the forest. No smoke came from the chimneys. Old Mamma Paulpoff had been wont to run to her door to see every arrival, but she was not to be seen.

The wolfhound that had been Vladimir's pet sat whining upon the porch and was evidently weak with hunger. "Old Boris!" cried Frances, leaping from the drosky. "Where is your handsome master?"

The hound, who remembered her, placed his cold nose in her hand lovingly. He seemed to feel that he had found a friend. Frances stepped to the door and pushed it open.

"Oh!" she cried. She had opened the door on Prince Nicholas Neslerov, who stood there, about to depart, evidently, with a painting under his arm. "Mile, Gordon," he said, with a bow and smile. "Where are the Paulpoffs?" she asked.

"Why, you have not, then, been informed of their misfortune?" "Misfortune! I knew nothing of any misfortune. What has happened?" "They are dead."

"Dead! All the Paulpoffs dead! Impossible! Papa Paulpoff and Mamma Paulpoff might die, they were so old, but Vladimir! Impossible! So young and powerful! Nothing but the weapon of an enemy could kill him in this healthy place."

"I spoke as we speak, mademoiselle. The Paulpoffs are not really dead. We speak of a man who is caught in crime and sent off—exiled—as dead. He is dead to his friends and to the world. You understand?"

Frances stood rigid and white, the package of books forgotten in the hands of the drosky driver. Her nails bit into the tender flesh of her clenched hands. Her eyes studied the face of the governor of Tomsk.

"Vladimir has not been caught in any crime," she said, with a sort of gasp. "Impossible! He was so simple and honest! What crime?" "Conspiracy against his imperial majesty the czar."

"And where is he now?" "On the way to Siberia." "Siberia! Vladimir Paulpoff sent to Siberia! And where are his parents?" "One in a family taken red handed condemns all. The old people are also on their way to Siberia."

Frances swayed a little. She had studied Russian customs and Russian justice and shuddered as she realized the horrible torture in store for these simple work people who had never, she felt convinced, harbored an evil thought against any man. To her they had always spoken in terms of loyalty and praise of the czar.

The face of Neslerov was inscrutable. He held the picture loosely and carelessly, and the girl caught a glimpse of the face. "That is Vladimir's picture!" she cried. "What are you doing with it?" "I am sending it to him," was the reply of Neslerov. "It so happened that I had occasion to visit my chateau near Graslov and rode by here at the time the inspector of police was making the arrest. I remembered what you said to me at Moscow and tried to do what I could for the poor fellow, at first doubting his guilt. But the inspector was certain, and so all that was left to me was to ask Vladimir what favor I could perform for him. He asked me to send him this picture, and I have arranged with the governor of Perm to permit it to be passed along to him."

"It is a beautiful face," said Frances. "Vladimir has the soul of a great artist in him. But in Siberia he—" She shuddered and ended her sentence abruptly.

"I have done more for him, for you," continued Neslerov. "There is another picture—he painted from memory. I have arranged to purchase it for a good price, and he shall not lose the money. I promised him. It was a beginning to certain steps I had thought of to assist him."

"My own face!" cried Frances in astonishment as Neslerov showed the second picture. "Yes, and the remarkable part of it is it took him but a short time. I described you, and he remembered you, and between the two he managed a very creditable work. I shall cherish this picture while I live."

"My picture!" murmured the girl again, looking at the sweet yet strong young face the blacksmith artist had placed upon the canvas. "And all from memory?" "Yes, from memory and my description," said Neslerov. "Your face is so indelibly imprinted upon my memory that I could describe each line, each feature, with the utmost accuracy."

She looked at him in astonishment. He had made frequent attempts to make love to her, but she had always skillfully repulsed him. That this could be true—that this man whose life was one round of pleasure should have her face so impressed upon his mind seemed to her incredible.

"But you will befriend him," she said, without answering his remark. "You are powerful in Russia. A large part of Siberia is under your control. You can make the life of the Paulpoffs pleasant there if you wish."

He bowed, and his eyes were hidden from her. "Believe me, I have already taken steps to befriend them. In Tomsk there is great need of such ironworkers now that the railroad has gone beyond the Ob, and I have sent my petition to the minister of justice to have them sent to Tomsk. They will not be treated as convicts, but as honorable workers."

"What was the crime?" asked Frances. She was very pale, but quite calm. "Why, it became known to Inspector Jansky of the police that a certain number of men congregated here and seemed to hold secret meetings. He investigated and discovered that this was the headquarters of a circle of nobilitates. He arrested them all, but many escaped."

"And the proof?" "Letters from Vladimir found on them." Frances sighed and turned sadly away.

"You are an American," continued Neslerov, "and cannot understand how a man who appeared to you to be simple and contented with his lot should prove to be an assassin. This same spirit permeates our best society. It comes to the surface even among the relatives of our highest nobles. My own cousin was sent to Siberia. I had no pity for him, because he was rich, educated and had no reason to complain. But the Paulpoffs—now that I know you are interested in them—I will protect them from further harm."

"I thank you," said Frances sadly. Neslerov slipped a coin into the hand of the drosky driver, and he immediately had cause to go to his horses, which were standing peacefully enough where he left them.

"I wish to speak one word before we leave here," said the prince, taking the hand of Frances, which she, in her surprise, permitted him to hold a moment. "I love you. I have loved you ever since the day I saw you first. We have beautiful women in Russia, but none like you. I am rich, powerful and am not offering you an empty name. Will you be my wife, my princess?"

"Prince Neslerov," said Frances gently, but still in a tone of reproof, "you cannot mean, I am sure, to take advantage of my situation, alone and at your mercy. You are a gentleman. Please leave such words for a more fitting occasion."

"All occasions are the same to a man who loves as I do," answered Neslerov. "I asked your father. He treated the matter as of no concern. To me it is my life. Make me happy, the world is yours. Refuse me, you plunge me into deep despair. I do not care to live without you."

"What nonsense!" said Frances. "Everybody has sooner or later to live without a loved one. My father—I my mother died many years ago. He loved her. He has been true to her memory, but he has lived."

"Ah, but that is not the same thing at all. Had I possessed you for a time and lost you at the command of death, then I could live, happy in the blessed memory. But to love you and lose you to another! Ah, I would kill him!"

"You are mad. Such words do not inspire love in the heart of an American girl. Fools kill their rivals, but it is a poor revenge. I do not love you, prince, and so cannot marry you. Let that end the matter. I must now return to Moscow."

"You shall not go till you are mine!" cried Neslerov, driven to madness by her coldness. He sprang forward and slammed the door, shutting them alone in the unoccupied house. He stepped toward her. His breath came hot upon her cheeks. His arms were outstretched to seize her. There was a look of mad passion in his eyes.

She knew no help was near or possible. The drosky driver was a Russian and would not fight the prince. She

Alaska Tin. Stream tin was discovered in Alaska last year, and now it is reported that great ledges of tin ore have been found at Cape York, on Bering sea. Numerous individual placer miners are reported to have made small fortunes during the past summer, two men, for example, having taken twenty-two tons of stream tin from claims along one of the creeks in the Cape York region, using the crudest hand methods. Hydraulic machinery will be taken into the district next season, when the extent and value of the tin deposits will be ascertained.—New York Engineering News.

Lost Article Album. The French railway companies have issued to all stations an album which contains pictures of every possible article that a traveler is likely to have about him. Owing to the great number of passengers who are unable to speak French it is often found difficult to trace lost articles from the description given. Now all that a passenger has to do is to point to the missing article in the album.

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REMITTING A FINE. Senator Dubois of Idaho during the days when he was practicing law in Boise City was on a certain occasion sternly reprimanded by the judge of a court in that city because of alleged contempt of court and in addition was fined in the sum of \$50. The next day, according to a custom followed in the Idaho courts, the judge called upon Mr. Dubois to occupy the bench for him during the transaction of some comparatively unimportant business. After the judge's departure from the court room Mr. Dubois exhibited an instance of that remarkable presence of mind for which he has ever been noted. The future senator said to the clerk of the court: "Turning to the record of this court for yesterday, Mr. Clerk, you will observe recorded a fine of \$50 against one Frederick T. Dubois. You will kindly make a note to the effect that such fine has been remitted by order of the court."—Kansas City Journal.

A Triple Beam Searchlight. For use in lighthouses a new form of combination searchlight has been designed and constructed in Berlin. This throws three beams of light at the same time from the top of the tower. This Siemens-Schuckert searchlight has three arc lights, reflecting mirrors and projector regulating devices 120 degrees apart, all operated automatically. The carbons of the arc lamps are fed automatically, and electric motors are used for turning the three searchlights, while a fourth searchlight is mounted upon the top, this working entirely independently of the other three and moving in any direction desired. This new form of electric flash light has been installed in the lighthouse tower at Helgoland.

The three searchlights mounted on the lower revolving platform 120 degrees apart have mirrors twenty-nine inches in diameter. The platform revolves at the rate of four revolutions per minute.—Casier's Magazine.

Closed Doors. Here is a conversation that Wall Street men insist took place between J. Pierpont Morgan and John W. Gates at the time when the latter was doing some remarkably heavy plunging both in the stock market and at the race tracks. Wall street is recalling it just now with much interest.

"Mr. Gates, I wish you wouldn't gamble so openly. It has a bad effect on the market," said Mr. Morgan.

"The doors are open when I do things," replied Mr. Gates in his usual bluff fashion.

"Doors were made to shut, Mr. Gates," was Mr. Morgan's quiet reply as they separated.—New York Times.

Not Surprised. Glen MacDonough, who wrote the libretto for the comic opera "Babes in Toyland," was sitting in a New York restaurant recently with Victor Herbert, the composer, when a waiter approached to take his order. The waiter smiled at Mr. MacDonough and said: "You don't remember me, do you? I used to sing in one of your companies."

"I remember you very well," said Mr. MacDonough.

"Are you surprised to see me here as a waiter?" asked the other.

"Not a bit," replied the librettist cheerfully. "You know, I have heard you sing."

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