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(Continued.)

"I will show you where we are," he said, abruptly. "You remember that we left the Amur some days ago, and turned up the bed of the Ussuri. Here, you see, is the Amur running to the north-east, while the Ussuri flows directly north. Consequently we are travelling south. We have reached this point," designating a spot on the map, "and now Vladivostok is but 200 miles away. I have brought you farther than I hoped to do. You see, it will be dangerous to continue the use of these passports, for the men whose names you bear are known to many of the officials between here and the Pacific. For your safety and mine, we must part. I will provide you with sufficient food, and if you are cautious you will reach the coast in safety."

"Yes, you are right," said Platoff, with emotion. "To-morrow we will leave you. Better that we should take the risks of recapture than—"

"Stop," said Poussin. "You forget, I wish to hear nothing. I don't know who you are, understand, or where you are going. You saved my life. That is all I choose to remember."

A commotion was suddenly heard outside, and he turned to the window. The interest depicted on his face drew his companions to the spot. Out in the station yard a Cossack, surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, was nailing a big white placard to one of the gate-posts. The distance was too great to distinguish its contents. Maurice and Platoff exchanged significant glances, but before they could speak the starosta flung open the door and entered.

"A courier has arrived with proclamations," he said, breathlessly. "It seems that the escaped convicts who were seen near Toluvar have eluded pursuit and cannot be found. Of course they have not reached this neighbourhood yet, but the Government wishes to be on the safe side, and so they are putting notices from station to station."

"Ah," said Poussin, coolly, "we have heard something of this on our way. And so they have slipped off from the soldiers, have they? Well, they will be caught sooner or later. Have you one of the placards with you? It would be wise for us to read the descriptions in case we run across the fellows."

The starosta rushed out of the room and into the yard.

"Keep cool," said Poussin. "There is not the slightest cause for fear. I saw these placards a month ago."

The fellow was back in an instant, paper in hand. "Here, you read it; my eyes are bad," said Poussin, and he handed it to Platoff.

Maurice, to conceal his emotion, turned to the samovar and drew a cup of tea, but Platoff coolly took the paper and read aloud in a firm, clear voice:

TWO THOUSAND ROUBLES REWARD.
The above sum will be paid for the arrest of three convicts who escaped in February from the mines at Kara; one tall and light-haired, his companions of medium height, and dark. At the time of their escape two of them wore the prison garb, the other was attired in a Cossack uniform.

They are journeying down the Amur valley, and all persons are hereby warned to extend no aid whatever under the severest penalties.

GENERAL MELIKOFF,
Governor of the Mines of Kara.

"Rather a meagre description," said Platoff, laying the paper aside. "Ah, but their clothes," exclaimed the starosta. "That is a sure identification. It is impossible that they could have procured others."

"Were the convicts still wearing the prison clothes when seen near Toluvar?" asked Poussin, suddenly.

"It was not the men who were seen," said the starosta. "Only traces of them, a trail in the snow—and hot ashes of fire."

Platoff darted a reassuring glance at Maurice.

"Well, my good man," broke in Poussin, "depend upon it the rascals will be captured, and serve them right, and now be sure to have a fresh relay of horses ready at early dawn. I must reach Vladivostok before a warm spell sets in."

The starosta promised obedience and left the room.

"A good sleep will be necessary," said Poussin. "We shall have a hard day's journey to-morrow." He spread his rugs on the floor and stretched himself flat. Platoff filled his pockets with bread and meat and hurried away to give Phil his supper. He was back in ten minutes.

"The boy is all right," he whispered to Maurice, "and the sledge is in a safe place. It won't be disturbed." They carried on a whispered conversation for a few moments, with Poussin snoring heavily at their side, and finally both fell asleep.

Maurice woke some hours later with a confused din ringing in his ears. He sat up, listening intently, and presently the vague sounds resolved themselves into a clatter of hoofs, the tread of hurrying feet and a babel of voices. A yellow glare was shining into the room, and, rushing to the window, he saw a dozen mounted Cossacks standing in the station yard.

Two or three peasants were holding blazing torches, and a fast increasing crowd was pouring in at the gates. At that instant Maurice felt a hand on his shoulder, and, turning, he saw Platoff. "Lost!" hissed the Russian.

"We are betrayed. The soldiers are seeking us. Look at that scoundrel!" And he pointed to the starosta, who was standing at one side conversing with the captain of the Cossacks.

"They shall not take me alive! I swear it!" he added, fiercely, and, springing across the room, he tore his pistol from his coat.

Maurice, pale and trembling, turned from the window.

"Quick!" exclaimed Platoff. "Follow me. We may escape through the

rear." He moved toward the door as he spoke, but before he could reach it, Nicolas Poussin came sleepily forward.

"Ha! How's this? What does all this noise mean?" he asked.

Platoff dragged him to the window and pointed to the soldiers in the yard.

"They are seeking us," he said. "Some wretch has put them on our track. It is not too late yet to escape, provided a way is open in the rear. My only fears are for your safety. How can you explain? How can you extricate yourself from your perilous position?"

"I do not believe the soldiers are here for that purpose," said Poussin, in a calm voice, but the pallor of his face belied his words. "I advise you to wait before you attempt anything rash."

"They are coming," cried Platoff, as footsteps were heard in the next apartment, and, rushing to the door, he propped his huge frame against it, calling on Maurice to assist.

"Be careful, be careful!" said Poussin, nervously. "Don't go too far." A sharp rat-tat-tat was heard on the panels, and, as no one answered, the familiar voice of the starosta called on them to open.

With a sudden change of demeanour Platoff seized the handle and flung the door far back.

The torch gleam from the yard revealed the starosta and a burly captain of Cossacks standing on the threshold.

**CHAPTER XXII.
A DARING DEED.**

The starosta evidently failed to notice the consternation that his visit had produced.

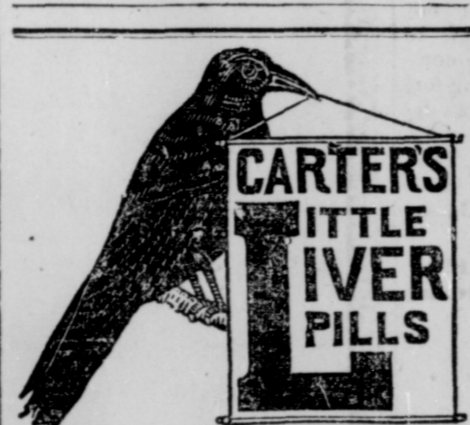
"Pardon, a thousand pardons, your Honour!" he exclaimed, volubly, addressing Poussin, who had pushed his way to the front. "I am sorry that I must disturb you, but I really have no choice, as your Honour can readily see for yourself. This is a Government position, you know, and of course I must be very careful."

"What are you talking about?" interrupted Poussin, angrily, glancing askant at his companions, who had edged across the room. "Speak and explain yourself."

"Why, don't you know?" said the starosta, in a surprised tone. "Didn't you hear the noise and see the Cossacks in the yard? His Excellency the Government Inspector will be here in an hour or two, and this room must



Platoff seized the handle and flung the door far back.



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is made ready for him. He was not expected so soon, but it seems that he fears the winter weather will set in before he reaches the Pacific. He has come clear from St. Petersburg. This

is the commander of the Cossack advance guard, who always precedes his Excellency some miles." And the starosta indicated the officer at his side, who at once muttered out an apology for disturbing the travellers at their rest.

Back in the shadow of the wall Platoff and Maurice drew a sigh of relief that was audible in the doorway. Poussin, too, was overcome by the sudden transition from despair to hope, but he retained his self-possession admirably, and replied with a well-assumed touch of indignation:

"It is shameful that travellers should suffer these inconveniences, but since it is his Excellency the Inspector who wishes our apartment, we will gladly give it up. Convey to him our best regards on his arrival. And now where can we sleep for the remainder of the night?"

"I can put you on the floor of the post-room," said the starosta, doubtfully, "if your Honour doesn't object to the other occupants."

"And who else is there?" asked Poussin.

"Well," replied the starosta, counting on his fingers, "there are four peasants, and two soldiers, and a Cossack lieutenant, and three drunken buriats, and a merchant from Tomsk, and a dog—"

"That will do," interrupted Poussin. "I don't want to hear any more. I see that the moon is shining. Travelling will be good. Fetch me a relay of the best horses you can get, and at once, mind you. We will start immediately and make up for loss of rest at the next station we reach."

"But, your Honour," stammered the starosta, "I am afraid—horses—they are scarce, and his Excellency will want—" Here he paused and glanced over his shoulder, but the Cossack, having lent his presence to the edict of expulsion, had made his way unnoticed into the courtyard.

Poussin readily interpreted these little manoeuvres. "Get me the horses, and I will give you ten roubles extra," he said. "I want provisions also. Put me in sufficient for five days' travel. One cannot procure food fit for a dog to eat at the stations between here and Vladivostok."

"But food is even scarcer than horses," said the starosta, with a greedy twinkle in his eye. "All that can be procured will be consumed by his Excellency and party."

"Provide what I want, and I will pay your price," replied Poussin. "Make haste, now, and get our sledge ready. We will start at once, and his Excellency can have this room."

"Yes, your Honour," said the starosta, "I will do my best." And, bowing low, he departed. Poussin carefully closed the door after him and crossed the room.

"You heard all our conversation?" he asked, abruptly.

"Yes," said Platoff. "Thank heaven we are safe! It was a terrible fright, and I was sure that all was lost. Your coolness preserved us from a fatal blunder. You are a wonderful man!"

"Yes, it is true that we are safe for the present," answered Poussin, "but what I have just heard has a hidden meaning that I only could understand. You remember my telling you that I journeyed from Irkutsk to Toluvar in company with two men under whose names and with whose passports you are now travelling?"

"Yes," said Platoff, "I recollect."

"Well," resumed Poussin, "those men, Miroff and Lyapin, are both Russian officers, although they travelled incognito, and the passports made no mention of their rank. From Irkutsk they were sent ahead by his Excellency the Inspector, and when we arrived at Toluvar a telegram reached them containing instructions to await the arrival of the inspector at that station. They travelled with me, you see, in order that their rank might not be suspected. His Excellency was not due at Toluvar for some weeks, but it appears now that he has journeyed with unusual rapidity. He will be here in an hour or two. Miroff and Lyapin are with him. An examination of passports will lead to the discovery of our ruse, and disaster will follow."

Poussin threw himself on a chair and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"A bad state of affairs indeed!" said Platoff. "What can be done?"

"Little, I fear," replied Poussin. "I have ordered the sledge at once, and we may gain some hours on his Excellency. It all depends, however, on a single thing—the examination of the passports. It is possible that no such inspection will be made, since the inspector and his party are of such high rank. In that event all will go well, and by hard travelling we can reach Vladivostok before the inspector, but if the passports are requested by the officer who examined ours last night, and he hears the names of those men, the coincidence will at once strike him, and discovery will follow."

"Either Cossacks will then be sent in pursuit or orders will be telegraphed to the next station to arrest us on our arrival."

"But the chances are in our favour," exclaimed Maurice, eagerly. "At least so it seems to me. If these men had procured other passports, and these passports had been examined at various points along the route—points at which our passports had also been examined—would not this discovery have been made long ago?"

"Yes," assented Poussin.

"And in that event," resumed Maurice, "would it not have been a simple matter to telegraph orders for our arrest?"

Again Poussin nodded assent.

"Very well," said Maurice, triumphantly; "it is plain that their passports have not heretofore been examined. Why, then, would they be at this particular point?"

"That is clever reasoning," said Poussin. "You are right. The chances are greatly in our favour. Moreover, it is barely possible that these men are not with his Excellency at all. One cannot tell what may have happened. Perhaps they were sent back to Irkutsk or ordered to remain at Toluvar, but we will take no chances on that. To stay here an hour longer is dangerous."

At that instant a rap at the door was heard, and a second later the starosta entered.

"All is ready," he said, "the fresh horses and the provisions. Ah, your Honour, you little know with what difficulty I procured them. If it came to his Excellency's ears, I should lose my place."

"You are an extortionate rascal," said Poussin, coolly. "You can tell lies like a buriat. I won't quarrel over the price, though. I am in haste to leave. Here is the money for the horses, including the ten extra roubles. How much for the provisions?"

(To be Continued.)



Devout priests frequently mortify their flesh and voluntarily force themselves to undergo great bodily hardships and deprivation. They are enabled to do this and escape serious injury to their health by reason of the purity of their lives and the fact that they deny themselves the pleasures of the table. An ordinary man who lives in the ordinary way cannot long endure hardship, deprivation or overwork, unless he takes the right remedy to reinforce his nature. The average man when he is in good health eats too much. When he gets a little out of sorts he pays no heed and keeps right on "making a hog of himself."

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