

THE MYSTERY OF GRASLOV

By Ashley Towne

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(CONTINUED).

Vladimir, though devoured by curiosity, knew the peculiarities of the old man and ate in silence.

CHAPTER III.

VLADIMIR SENT TO SIBERIA.

ATTACHED to the police of the government of Perm was an inspector named Ignatz Jansky. He was ambitious to rise and was of that mental and physical caliber that makes a man successful when he bends all his energies, regardless of all scruples, to the attainment of his goal.



"Who is this—it is a beautiful woman—"

Inspector Jansky, having received a message from Prince Neslerov, hastened to obey, for he knew the power of Neslerov, and if there should chance to be promotion in his path at any time Neslerov, as a wealthy noble of Graslov, could further his possibilities.

Inspector Jansky entered the palace of the prince with a humility that would have charmed the poor devils whom his eagerness had sent to Siberia.

"Sit down," said the prince, and the inspector sat down with a suddenness that proved his desire to please his sponsor. "I sent for you."

"You did, your excellency. I received your message and made all haste to obey."

"I trust it did not inconvenience you to a great extent," said the prince, who was quite familiar with the peculiarities of the inspector's nature.

"Not at all, your excellency—that is, not so much but what it gave me pleasure to obey. I am always busy, as you know."

"Yes, you are assiduous. Well, I have news for you. But first I should be pleased to receive from you an answer to a question. What do you wish for the most?"

Jansky hesitated. His servile mind saw far into the future, as a rule, but it could not fathom the meaning of this strange question. What did it matter to the prince what he wanted most unless the prince was disposed to grant it?

"I should like promotion, your excellency. Of course, I make no claim. You have befriended me. You have made me what I am. I have in my humble way endeavored to so acquit myself that you would not be displeased. I would not ask you for more. But, since you ask my dearest wish, it is promotion."

"It is a possibility," the prince replied.

Having said this, he deliberately lighted a cigar, leaving the inspector on nettles, wondering if the possibility were to materialize into a fact.

"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 for-

mer 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 develop. 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 sentinels over the czar's great dominion 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 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 nihilists."

"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 horse-shoes with his thumbs and forefingers? The simple minded son of old Michael? What has he to do with nihilists?"

"He is their leader," Neslerov said quietly.

Jansky turned white, whether from surprise or horror at the devilish plot he scented we do not know. But he sat there waiting. The police of Tomsk needed a chief. The chief would have a palace and a large salary.

"Yes," continued Neslerov, "this Paulpoff, as I accidentally discovered, is the leader of a band of nihilists who meet 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 nihilists in the shops of Paulpoff?"

"Yes. Now, it has long been suspected that there were many nihilists 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 nihilists, they will go across the border and you will be

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Red is the color of danger, whether on the semaphore or on the skin. When the face is reddened by eruptions, when boils break out on the body, or the angry red of sores and ulcers is displayed in the flesh, it is nature's danger signal. The blood is obstructed and tainted by impurities, and there can be no safety until the blood is made pure.

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appointed 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! Their success is possible!" said Jansky, grasping the hand of his noble benefactor.

"Possible! It is certain. Come with me."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Origin of the Frock Coat.

The frock coat is unquestionably an English invention, and its first recorded appearance is in 1540, in the reign of Henry VIII. It is described as "a coat of velvet somewhat shaped like a frock, embroidered all over with flatted gold of damasks."

Fortune smiles on the few. To the majority she gives the laugh.

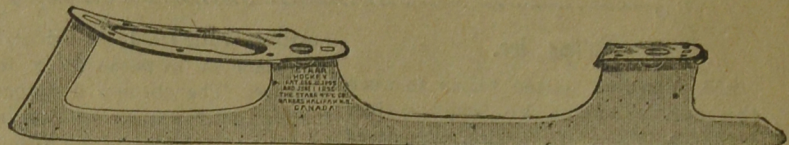
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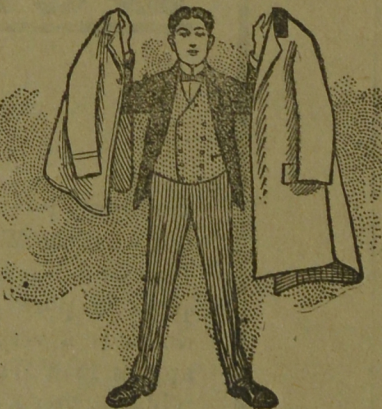
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