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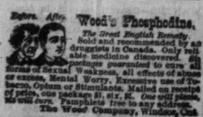
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THE COURIR OF THE CZR

By Jules Verne

"I will traverse it." "Above all, beware of the traitor Ivan Ogareff, who will perhaps meet thee on the way."

"I will beware of him." "Wilt thou pass through Omsk?"

"Sire, that is my route." "If thou dost see thy mother, there will be the risk of being recognized.

Thou must not see her!" Michael Strogoff hesitated a moment. "I will not see her," said he. "Swear to me that nothing will make

thee acknowledge who thou art nor whither thou art going." "I swear It." "Michael Strogoff," continued the czar,

giving the letter to the young courier, "take this letter. On it depends the safety of all Siberia and perhaps the life of my brother, the grand duke." "This letter shall be delivered to his highness the grand duke."

Thou wilt pass whatever happens?" "I shall pass, or they shall kill me."
"I want thee to live." "I shall live, and I shall pass," an-

wered Michael Strogoff.

The czar appeared satisfied with Strogoff's calm and simple answer.

"Go, then, Michael Strogoff," said he,
"go for God, for Russia, for my brother

and for myself." The courier, having saluted his sovereign, immediately left the imperial

cabinet and in a few minutes the New palace. "You made a good choice there, general," said the czar.

"I think so, sire," replied General Kissoff, "and your majesty may be

sure that Michael Strogoff will do all that & wan can do."

"He is indeed a man," said the czar. CHAPTER III.



HE distance between Mos cow and Irkutsk, about to be traversed by Michael Strogoff, was 5,200 versts. Before the telegraph wire extended from the Ural mountains to

the eastern frontier of Siberia the dispatch service was performed by cou-riers, those who traveled the most rapidly taking eighteen days to get from Moscow to Irkutsk.

In the first place, however, he must not travel as a courier of the czar usually would. No one must even suspect what he really was. Spies swarm in a rebellious country. Let him be recognized, and his mission would be in dan-

ger. Also, while supplying him with a large sum of money, which was sufficient for his journey and would facilisoff had not given him any document specifying that he was in the emperor's service, which is the sesame par exellence. He contented himself with

furnishing him with a podorojna.

The podorojna was made out in the name of Nicholas Korpanoff, merchant, living at Irkutsk. It authorized Nicholas Korpanoff to be accompanied, if requisite, by one or more persons, and, noreover, it was by special notification made available in the event of the Musrovite government forbidding natives of any other countries to leave Russia.

The podorojna is simply a permission to take post horses, but Michael Stro-************ goff was not to use it unless be was sure that by so doing he would not excite suspicion as to his mission—that is to say, while he was on European territory. The consequence was that in Siberia, while traversing the insurgent provinces, he would have no power over the relays either in the choice of horses in preference to others or in demanding conveyances for his personal use. Neither was Michael Strogoff to

forget that he was no longer a courier, but a plain merchant, Nicholas Korpanoff, traveling from Moscow to Irkutsk, and as such exposed to all the impedi-ments of an ordinary journey. To pass unknown more or less rapid-

ly, but to pass somehow or other—such were the directions he had received.

Thirty years previously the escort of a traveler of rank consisted of not less than 200 mounted Cossacks, 200 foot soldiers, 25 Baskir horsemen, 300 camels, 400 horses, 25 wagons, 2 portable boats and 2 pieces of cannon. All this was requisite for a journey in Siberia. Michael Strogod, however, had nei-ther cannon nor horsemen nor foot sol-diers nor beasts of burden. He would travel in a carriage or on horsebac when he could, on foot when he could

There would be no difficulty in get-ting over the first 1,500 versts, the dis-tance between Moscow and the Rus-sian frontier. Railronds, post carriages, steamboats, relays of horses, were at every one's disposal and consequently at the disposal of the courier of the

Accordingly on the morning of the 16th of July, having doffed his uniform, with a knapsack on his back, dressed in the simple Russian costume, tightly fitting tunic, the traditional belt of the moujik, wide trousers, gartered at the knees, and high boots, Michael Strogoff arrived at the station in time for the first train. He carried no arms, openly at least, but under his belt was hidden a revolver and in his pocket one of those large knives with which a Siberian hunter can so neatly disembowel a bear without injuring its pre-

A crowd of travhad collected at the Moscow statiThe stations on the Russian railrore much used as places for meetint only by those who are about to ed by the train, but by friends wine to see them off. It indeed rejes from the va-riety of charactesembled a small

news exchange.
The train in whichael took his place was to set down at Nijni Novgorod. Thereninated at that time the iron roach, uniting Mos-cow and St. Peters, will eventually ntinue to the Ru frontier. It was a journey of abot versts, and the train would accord it in ten bours. Once arrived at | Novgorod, Strogoff would, accordo elrcumstances, either take the lajute or the steamer on the Volga, sto reach the Ural

mountains as soopossible.

Michael Strogdisconsed blimself in his corner lit worthy citizen whose affairs goll with him and who endeavors to time by sleep.

Nevertheless a way not sleep in Nevertheless, a was not alone in his compartment lept with one eye open and listened both his ears. In fact, the runf the rising of the Kirghiz hordes at the Tartar inva-sion had transp in some degree. The occupants op carriage, whom chance had madetraveling companons, discussed thoject, though with

that caution whhas become habit-

ual among Russ, who know that

spies are ever one watch for any

treasonable express which may be At the Wladimtation fresh travelers entered the n. Among others, a young girl preed herself at the door of the care occupied by Mi-



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E CURIOR NO PAY.

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A vacant place was found opposite the courier of the czar. The young girl took it after placing by her side a modest traveling bag of red leather which seemed to constitute her luggage. Then, seating herself with downcast cyes, she

prepared for a journey which was still to last several hours.

Michael Strogoff could not help look-ing attentively at his newly arrived felow traveler. As she was so placed as to travel with her back to the engine. he even offered her his seat, which she might prefer to her own, but she thank-ed him with a slight bend of her grace-

The young girl appeared to be about sixteen or seventeen years of age. Her

head, truly charming, was of the purest Slavonic type - slightly severe, and which would when a few summers had passed over her unfold into beauty rather than mere prettiness. From be-neath a sort of kerchief which she wore on her head escaped in profusion light golden hair. Her eyes were brown, soft and expressive of much sweetness of temper. The nose was straight and attached to her pale and somewhat thin cheeks by delicate mobile nostrils. The lips were finely cut, but it seemed as if they had long since forgotten how to

The young traveler was tall and upright, as well as could be judged of her figure from the very simple and ample pelisse that covered her. Although she was still a very young girl in the literal sense of the term, the develor her high forehead and clearly cut features gave the idea that she was the ssor of a great moral energy, a point which did not escape Michael Strogoff. Evidently this young girl had already suffered in the past, and the future doubtless did not present itself to her in glowing colors. But it was none the less certain that she had known how to struggle and that she had resolved to struggle still with the trials of life. Her energy was evidently prompt and persistent and her calmness unalterable even under circumstances in which a man would be likely

to give way or lose his self command. Such was the impression which she produced at first sight. Michael Strogoff, being himself of an energetic temperament, was naturally struck by the character of her physiognomy, and, while taking care not to cause her annoyance by a too persistent gaze, he observed his neighbor with no small interest. The costume of the young traveler was both extremely simple and appropriate. She was not rich-that could easily be seen-but not the slightest mark of negligence was to be discerned in her dress. All her luggage was contained in a leather bag under lock and key, and which, for want of

room, she held on her lap. She wore a long, dark pelisse, which was gracefully adjusted at the neck by a blue tie. Under this pelisse a short skirt, also dark, fell over a robe which reached to her ankles and of which the lower edge was ornamented with some simple embroidery. Half boots of worked leather and thickly soled, as if chosen in the anticipation of a long journey, covered her small feet.

Michael Strogoff fancied that he recognized by certain details the fashion of the costume of Livonia, and he thought that his neighbor must be native of the Baltic provinces.

But whither was this young girl go ing alone at an age when the fostering care of a father or the protection of a brother is considered a matter of necessity? Had she now come after an already long journey from the prov-inces of western Russia? Was she merely going to Nijni Novgorod, or was the end of her travels beyond the eastern frontier of the empire? Would some relation, some friend, await her arrival by the train, or was it not more probable, on the contrary, that she would find herself as much isolated in the town as she was in this compartment, where no one, she must think, appeared to care for her? It

Michael Strogoff observed her with terest, but, himself reserved, he sought no opportunity of accosting her, although several hours must clapse before the arrival of the train at Nijni

At last the train, at half past 8 in the evening, arrived at the station of Nijni

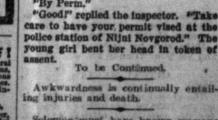
Before any one could get out of the carriages the inspectors of police presented themselves at the doors and examined the passengers.

Michael Strogoff showed his pode

rojna made out in the name of Nichola Korpanoff. He had consequently no difficulty. As to the other travelers in the com-partment, all bound for Nijni Novgo-

rod, their appearance, happily for them, The young girl in her turn exhibited not a passport, since passports are no longer required in Russia, but a permit indorsed with a private seal and which seemed to be of a special character.
The inspector read the permit with attention. Then, having attentively examined the person whose description it contained, he said:

"You are going to Irkutsk?"
"Yes." "By what route?"
"By Perm."



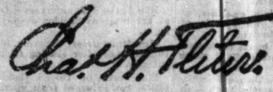
Awkwardness is continually entail-Solomon must have known women; he had a thousand. And this wise man feared the angry, brawling and contentious species. Rather than endure that kend, he would hie himself to the desert, or to the house-top. What

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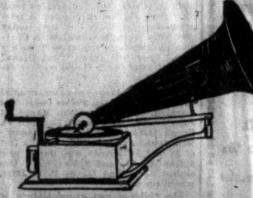
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