inhabitants, contained at that time more than 300,000—that is to say, the population was increased tenfold. This addition was in consequence of the celebrated fair which was held within the walls for three weeks. Formerly Makariew had the benefit of this concourse of traders, but since 1817 the fair had been removed to Nijni Novgorod.

The town, dreary enough at most times, then presented a truly animated scene. Six different races of merchants, European and Asiatic, were fraternizing under the congenial influence of trade.

Michael Strogoff strolled through the town quietly, looking out for some inn. He was looking for supper rather than a bed, but he found both at the sign of the City of Constantinople.

His supper finished, Michael Strogoff instead of going up to his bedroom again strolled out into the town.

Why did not Michael Strogoff go quietly to bed, as would have seemed more seasonable after a long railway journey? Was he thinking of the young Livonian girl who had for so many hours been his traveling companion? Having nothing better to do, he was thinking of her.

"Alone," he said to himself; "alone in the midst of these wandering tribes! And yet the present dangers are nothing to those she must undergo. Siberia! Irkutsk! I am about to dare all risks for Russia, for the czar, while she is about to do so for whom? For what? She is authorized to cross the frontier! And the country beyond is in revolt! The steppes beyond are full of Tartar bands!"

Michael Strogoff stopped for an instant and reflected.

"Without doubt," thought he, "she must have determined on undertaking her journey before the invasion. Perhaps she is even now ignorant of what is happening. But, no; that cannot be, for the merchants discussed before her the disturbances in Siberia, and she did not seem even surprised. She did not even ask for an explanation. She must have known it then, and, though knowing it, she is still resolute. Poor girl! Her motive for the journey must be urgent indeed! But, though she may be brave—and she certainly is so—her strength must fail her, and, to say nothing of dangers and obstacles, she will be unable to endure the fatigue of such a journey. Never can she pass Irkutsk!"

Indulging in such reflections, Michael Strogoff wandered on as chance led him; but, being well acquainted with the town, he knew that he could without difficulty retrace his steps.

Having strolled on for about an hour, he seated himself on a bench against the wall of a large wooden cottage which stood, with others, on a vast open space.

He had scarcely been there five minutes when a hand was laid heavily on his shoulder.

"What are you doing here?" roughly demanded a large and powerful man who had approached unperceived.

"I am resting," replied Michael Strogoff.

"Do you mean to stay all night on the bench?" asked the man.

"Yes, if I feel inclined to do so," answered Michael Strogoff in a tone somewhat too sharp for the simple merchant he wished to personate.

"Come forward, then, that I may see you," said the man.

"It is not necessary," he replied, and he calmly stepped back ten paces or so.

The man seemed, as Michael observed him well, to have the look of a Bohemian, such as are met at fairs and with whom contact, either physical or moral, is unpleasant. Then, as he looked more attentively through the dusk which was coming on, he perceived near the cottage a large caravan, the usual traveling dwelling of the gypsies who swarm in Russia wherever a few copecks can be obtained.

As the gypsy took two or three steps forward and was about to interrogate Michael Strogoff more closely the door of the cottage was opened. He could just see a woman, who advanced quickly and in a language which Michael Strogoff knew to be a mixture of the Mongol and Siberian she said: "Another spy! Let him alone and come to supper. It is waiting for you."

Michael Strogoff could not help smiling at the epithet bestowed on him, dreading spies as he did above all things.

But in the same dialect, although his accent was very different, the Bohemian replied in words which signify:

"You are right, Sangarre. Besides, we start tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!" repeated the woman in surprise.

"Yes, Sangarre," replied the Bohemian, "tomorrow, and the Father himself sends us—where we are going."

Thereupon the man and woman entered the cottage and carefully closed the door.

"Good!" said Michael Strogoff to himself. "If these gypsies do not wish to be understood when they speak before me, they had better use some other language."

From his Siberian origin and because he had passed his childhood in the steppes Michael Strogoff, it has been said, understood almost all the languages in usage from Tartary to the Sea of Ice. As to the exact signification of the words exchanged between the gypsy and his companion he did not trouble his head. For why should it interest him?

An hour after Michael Strogoff was sleeping soundly on one of those Russian beds which always seem so hard to strangers, and on the morrow, the 17th of July, he awoke at break of day.

He had still five hours to pass at Nijni Novgorod. It seemed to him an age. How was he to spend the morning unless in wandering, as he had done the evening before, through the streets? By the time he had finished his breakfast, strapped up his bag, had his podorojna inspected at the police office, he would have nothing to do but start. But he was not a man to lie in bed after the sun had risen, so he rose, dressed himself and placed the letter with the imperial arms on it carefully at the bottom of its usual pocket within the lining of his coat, over which he fastened his belt. He then closed his bag and threw it over his shoulder.

This done, he had no wish to return to the City of Constantinople, and, intending to breakfast on the bank of the Volga near the wharf, he settled his bill and left the inn. By the way of precaution Michael Strogoff went first to the office of the steam packet company and there made sure that the Caucasus would start at the appointed hour. As he did so the thought for the first time struck him that since the young Livonian girl was going to Perm it was very possible that her intention was also to embark in the Caucasus, in which case he should accompany her.

Michael Strogoff found himself in the central square when the report spread that the head of police had been summoned by a courier to the palace of the governor general. An important dispatch from Moscow, it was said, was the cause of it.

"The fair is to be closed," said one.

"The regiment of Nijni Novgorod has received the route," declared another.

"They say that the Tartars menace Tomsk!"

"Here is the head of police!" was shouted on every side. A loud clapping of hands was suddenly raised, which subsided by degrees and finally was succeeded by absolute silence. The head of police arrived in the middle of the central square, and it was seen by all that he held in his hand a dispatch.

Then in a loud voice he read the following announcements:

"By order of the governor of Nijni Novgorod:

"All Russian subjects are forbidden to quit the province upon any pretext whatsoever.

"All strangers of Asiatic origin are commanded to leave the province within twenty-four hours."

CHAPTER IV.

JUST as the reading of the proclamation by the head of the police came to an end an idea darted instinctively into the mind of Michael Strogoff.

"What a singular coincidence," thought he, "between this proclamation expelling all foreigners of Asiatic origin and the words exchanged last evening between those two gypsies of the Zingari race! 'The Father himself sends us where we wish to go,' that old man said. But 'the Father' is the emperor. He is never called anything else among the people. How could those gypsies have foreseen the measure taken against them? How could they have known it beforehand, and where do they wish to go? Those are suspicious people, and it seems to me that to them the government proclamation must be more useful than injurious."

But these reflections, though certainly correct, were completely dispelled by another, which drove every other thought out of Michael's mind. He forgot the Zingaris, their suspicious words, the strange coincidence which resulted from the proclamation. The remembrance of the young Livonian girl suddenly rushed into his mind.

"Poor child!" he thought to himself. "She cannot now cross the frontier."

In truth the young girl was from Riga. She was Livonian, consequently Russian, and now could not leave Russian territory. The permit which had been given her before the new measures had been promulgated was evidently no longer available. All routes to Siberia had just been pitilessly closed to her, and whatever was the motive which was taking her to Irkutsk, she was now forbidden to go there.

This thought greatly occupied Michael Strogoff. He said to himself, vaguely at first, that without neglecting anything of what was due to his important mission it would perhaps be possible for him to be of some use to this brave girl, and this idea pleased him. Knowing how serious were the dangers which he, an energetic and vigorous man, would have personally to encounter through a country of which, however, the roads were familiar, he could not conceal from himself how infinitely greater they would prove to a young, unprotected girl. As she was going to Irkutsk, she would be obliged to follow the same road as himself; she would have to pass through the bands of invaders, as he was about to attempt doing himself. If, moreover, and according to all probability, she had at her disposal only the resources necessary for a journey taken under ordinary circumstances, how could she manage to accomplish it under conditions which late events would render not only perilous, but expensive?

"Well," said he, "if she takes the route to Perm it is nearly impossible but that I shall fall in with her. Then I will watch over her without her suspecting it, and as she appears to be as anxious as myself to reach Irkutsk she will cause me no delay."

But one thought leads to another. Michael Strogoff had till now reasoned on the supposition of doing a kind action, of rendering a service, but now another idea flashed into his brain, and the question presented itself under quite a new aspect.

"The fact is," said he to himself, "that I have much more need of her than she can have of me. Her presence will be useful in drawing off suspicion from me. A man traveling alone across the steppes may be easily guessed to be a courier to the czar. If, on the contrary, this young girl accompanies me, I shall appear in the eyes of all the Nicholas Korpanoff of my podorojna. Therefore she must accompany me. Therefore I must find her again at any cost. It is not probable that since yesterday evening she has been able to get a carriage and leave Nijni Novgorod. I must look for her. And may God guide me!"

Michael left the great square of Nijni Novgorod, where the tumult produced by the carrying out of the prescribed measures had now reached its height. Recriminations from the banished strangers, shouts from the agents and Cossacks who were using them so brutally, all together made an indescribable uproar. The girl for whom he searched could not be there. It was now 9 o'clock in the morning. The steamboat did not start till 12. Michael Strogoff had therefore nearly three hours to employ in searching for her whom he wished to make his traveling companion.

He crossed the Volga again and hunted through the quarters on the other side, where the crowd was much less considerable. He visited every road, both in the high and low towns. He entered the churches, the natural refuge for all who weep, for all who suffer. Nowhere did he meet with the young Livonian.

"And yet," he repeated, "she could not have left Nijni Novgorod yet. We'll have another look."

Michael wandered about thus for two hours. He went on without stopping, feeling no fatigue, but obeying the potent instinct which allowed him no room for thought. All was in vain.

It then occurred to him that perhaps the girl had not heard of the order, though this was improbable enough, for such a thunderclap could not have burst without being heard by all. Evidently interested in knowing the smallest news from Siberia, how could she be ignorant of the measures taken by the governor—measures which concerned her so directly? But if she was ignorant of it she would come in an hour to the quay, and there some merciless agent would brutally refuse her a passage. At any cost he must see her beforehand and do what he could to enable her to avoid such a repulse.

But all his endeavors were in vain, and he at length almost despaired of finding her again.

It was now 11 o'clock, and Michael, though under any other circumstances it would have been useless, thought of presenting his podorojna at the office of the head of police. The proclamation evidently did not concern him, since the emergency had been foreseen for him, but he wished to make sure that nothing would hinder his departure from the town.

Michael then returned to the other side of the Volga, to the quarter in which was the office of the head of police.

Every one was in a hurry, for the means of transport would be much sought after among this crowd of banished people, and those who did not set about it soon ran a great risk of not being able to leave the town in the prescribed time, which would expose them to some brutal treatment from the governor's agents.

Owing to the strength of his elbows, Michael Strogoff was able to cross the court. But to get into the office and up to the clerk's little window was a much more difficult business. However, a word into an inspector's ear and a few judiciously given rubles were powerful enough to gain him a passage. The man, after taking him into the waiting room, went to call the proper clerk.

Michael Strogoff would not be long in making everything right with the police and being free in his movements.

While waiting he looked about him, and what did he see? There, fallen rather than seated on a bench, was a girl, a prey to silent despair, although her face could scarcely be seen, the profile alone being visible against the wall.

Michael Strogoff could not be mistaken. He instantly recognized the young Livonian.

Not knowing the governor's orders, she had come to the police office to get her pass signed. They had refused to sign it. No doubt she was authorized to go to Irkutsk, but the order was peremptory; it annulled all previous authorizations, and the routes to Siberia were closed to her. Michael, delighted at having found her again, approached the girl.

She looked up for a moment, and her face brightened on recognizing her traveling companion. She instinctively rose, and, like a drowning man who clutches at a spar, she was about to ask his help. At that moment the agent touched Michael on the shoulder.

"The head of police will see you," he said.

"Good!" returned Michael, and without saying a word to her for whom he had been searching all day, without reassuring her by even a gesture which might compromise either her or himself, he followed the man through the crowd.

The young Livonian, seeing the only being to whom she could look for help disappear, fell back again on her bench.

Three minutes had not passed before Michael Strogoff reappeared, accompanied by the agent. In his hand he held his podorojna, which threw open the roads to Siberia for him. He again approached the young Livonian, and, holding out his hand, "Sister," said he.

She understood. She rose as if some sudden inspiration prevented her from hesitating a moment.

"Sister," repeated Michael Strogoff, "we are authorized to continue our journey to Irkutsk. Will you come?"

"I will follow you, brother," replied the girl, putting her hand into that of Michael Strogoff, and together they left the police station.

Michael Strogoff and the young Livonian had taken passage on board the Caucasus. Their embarkation was made without any difficulty. As is known, the podorojna, drawn up in the name of Nicholas Korpanoff, authorized this merchant to be accompanied on his journey to Siberia. They appeared, therefore, to be a brother and sister traveling under the protection of the imperial police. Both, seated together at the stern, gazed at the receding town so disturbed by the governor's order. Michael had as yet said nothing to the girl. He had not even questioned her. He waited until she should speak to him whenever that was necessary. She had been anxious to leave that town, in which but for the providential intervention of this unexpected protector she would have remained imprisoned. She said nothing, but her looks spoke her thanks.

The Caucasus had been steaming on for about two hours when the young Livonian, addressing herself to Michael Strogoff, said:

"Are you going to Irkutsk, brother?"

"Yes, sister," answered the young man. "We are both going the same way. Consequently wherever I go you shall go."

"Tomorrow, brother, you shall know why I left the shores of the Baltic to go beyond the Ural mountains."

"I ask you nothing, sister."

"You shall know all," replied the girl, with a faint smile. "A sister should hide nothing from her brother. But I cannot today. Fatigue and sorrow have broken me down."

"Will you go and rest in your cabin?" asked Michael.

"Yes—yes, and tomorrow"—

"Come, then"—

He hesitated to finish his sentence as if he had wished to end it by the name of his companion, of which he was still ignorant.

"Nadia," said she, holding out her hand.

"Come, Nadia," answered Michael, "and make what use you like of your brother Nicholas Korpanoff." And he led the girl to the cabin engaged for her off the saloon.

Michael Strogoff returned on deck, and, eager for any news which might bear on his journey, he mingled in the groups of passengers, though without taking any part in the conversation. Should he by any chance be questioned and obliged to reply he would announce himself as the merchant Nicholas Korpanoff, going back to the frontier in the Caucasus, for he did not wish it to be suspected that a special permission authorized him to travel to Siberia.

The young Livonian did not come to dinner. She was asleep in her cabin, and Michael did not like to awaken her.

Between 11 and 2, the moon being new, it was almost dark. Nearly all the passengers were then asleep on the deck, and the silence was disturbed only by the noise of the paddles striking the water at regular intervals. Anxiety kept Michael Strogoff awake. He walked up and down, but always in the stern of the steamer. Once, however, he happened to pass the engine room. He then found himself in the part reserved for second and third class passengers.

He stopped. Voices appeared to come from a group of passengers enveloped in cloaks and wraps, so that it was impossible to recognize them in the dark. But it sometimes happened that when the steamer's chimney sent forth a plume of ruddy flames among the volumes of smoke the sparks seemed to fall among the group as though thousands of spangles had been suddenly illuminated. Michael was about to step up the ladder when a few words reached his ear, distinctly uttered in that strange tongue which he had heard during the night at the fair.

Instinctively he stopped to listen. Protected by the shadow of the forecastle, he could not be perceived himself. As to seeing the passengers who were talking, that was impossible. He was obliged to confine himself to listening.

The first words exchanged were of no importance—to him at least—but they allowed him to recognize the voices of the man and woman whom he had heard at Nijni Novgorod. This, of course, made him redouble his attention. It was, indeed, not at all impossible that the gypsies, a scrap of whose conversation he had overheard, now banished with all their fellows, should be on board the Caucasus.

And it was well for him that he listened, for he distinctly heard this question and answer made in the Tartar idiom:

"It is said that a courier has set out from Moscow for Irkutsk."

"It is so said, Sangarre, but either this courier will arrive too late, or he will not arrive at all."

Michael Strogoff started involuntarily at this reply which concerned him so directly. He tried to see if the man and woman who had just spoken were really those whom he suspected, but the shadow was too deep, and he could not succeed.

In a few moments Michael Strogoff had regained the stern of the vessel without having been perceived, and, taking a seat by himself, he buried his face in his hands. It might have been supposed that he was asleep.

He was not asleep, however, and did not even think of sleeping. He was reflecting on this, not without a lively apprehension: "Who is it knows of my departure and who can have any interest in knowing it?"

CHAPTER V.

THE next day, the 18th of July, at twenty minutes to 7 in the morning, the Caucasus reached the Kasan quay, seven versts from the town.

Michael did not even think of landing. He was unwilling to leave the young Livonian girl alone on board, as she had not yet reappeared on deck.

There was a report along all the eastern frontier of Russia that the insurrection and invasion had reached considerable proportions. Communication between Siberia and the empire was already extremely difficult. All this Michael Strogoff knew without having the least idea of the Caucasus' destination.

This information could not but cause him great uneasiness and increase his wish of being beyond the Ural chain, so as to judge for himself of the truth of these rumors and enable him to guard against any possible contingency. He was thinking of seeking more direct intelligence from some native of Kasan when his attention was diverted.

Among the passengers who were leaving the Caucasus Michael recognized the troop of gypsies who the day before had appeared in the Nijni Novgorod fair. There on the deck of the steamboat were the old Bohemian and the woman who had played the spy on him. With them and no doubt under their direction landed about twenty dancers and singers from fifteen to twenty years of age, wrapped in old cloaks which covered their spangled dresses. These dresses, just then glancing in the first rays of the sun, reminded Michael of the curious appearance which he had observed during the night. It must have been the glitter of those spangles in the bright flames issuing suddenly from the steamboat's funnel which had attracted his attention.

"Evidently," said Michael to himself, "this troop of Zingari, after remaining below all day, crouched under the forecastle during the night. Were these gypsies trying to show themselves as little as possible? Such is not according to the usual custom of their race."

Michael Strogoff no longer doubted that the expressions he had heard which so clearly referred to him had proceeded from this tawny group and had been exchanged between the old gypsy and the woman named Sangarre.

Michael involuntarily moved toward the gangway as the Bohemian troop was leaving the steamboat, not to return to it again.

The old Bohemian was there in a humble attitude, little conformable with the effrontery natural to his race. One would have said that he was endeavoring rather to avoid attention than to attract it. His battered hat, browned by the suns of every clime, was pulled forward over his wrinkled face. His arched back was bent under an old cloak, wrapped closely round him notwithstanding the heat. It would have been difficult in this miserable dress to judge of either his size or face. Near him was the gypsy Sangarre, a woman about thirty years old. She was tall and well made, with olive complexion, magnificent eyes and golden hair, and carried herself to perfection.

Sangarre was regarding him with a peculiar gaze as if she wished to fix his features indelibly in her memory.

It was but for a few moments, when Sangarre herself followed the old man and his troop, who had already left the vessel.

"That's a bold gypsy," said Michael to himself. "Could she have recognized me as the man whom she saw at Nijni Novgorod? These confounded Zingaris have the eyes of a cat! They can see in the dark, and that woman there might well know"—

Michael Strogoff was on the point of following Sangarre and the gypsy band, but he stopped.

"No," thought he, "no unguarded proceedings. If I were to stop that old fortune teller and his companions, my incognito would run a risk of being discovered. Besides, now they have landed, before they can pass the frontier I shall be already beyond the Ural. I know that they may take the route from Kasan to Ichim, but that affords no resources to travelers, and, besides, a tarantass drawn by four good Siberian horses will always go faster than a gypsy cart."

By this time the old man and Sangarre had disappeared in the crowd.

An hour afterward the bell rang on board the Caucasus, calling the new passengers and recalling the former ones. It was now 7 o'clock in the morning. The requisite fuel had been received on board, and about 10 o'clock in the morning the young Livonian, leaving her cabin, appeared on deck. Michael Strogoff went forward and took her hand.

"Look, sister," said he, leading her to the bows of the Caucasus.

The view was indeed well worth examining.

The Caucasus had just then reached the confluence of the Volga and the Kama. There the would leave the former river after having descended it for more than 400 versts to ascend the latter for 400 versts.

The Kama was here very wide and its wooded banks were lovely. A few white sails enlivened the sparkling water. The horizon was closed by a line of hills covered with aspens, alders and sometimes large oaks.

But these beauties of nature could not distract the thoughts of the young Livonian even for an instant. She had left her hand in that of her companion and soon, turning to him, said:

"At what distance are we from Molcow?"

"Nine hundred versts," answered Michael.

"Nine hundred out of seven thousand!"

The bell now announced the breakfast hour. Nadia followed Michael Strogoff to the restaurant. She ate little, as a poor girl whose means are small would do. Michael Strogoff thought it best to content himself with the fare which satisfied his companion, and in less than twenty minutes Michael Strogoff and Nadia returned on deck. There they seated themselves in the stern, and without other preamble Nadia, lowering her voice so as to be heard by him alone, began:

"Brother, I am the daughter of an exile. My name is Nadia Fedor. My mother died at Riga seven years ago, and I was sent to Perm, my native