

Nadia had followed her companion in his search after a suitable vehicle. Although the object of each was different, both were equally anxious to arrive and consequently to start. On would have said the same will animated them both.

"Sister," said Michael, "I wish I could have found a more comfortable conveyance for you."

when I would have gone on foot, if space of time. meed were, to rejoin my father?"

"I do not doubt your courage, Nadia, but there are physical fatigues which a woman may be unable to endure."

"I shall endure them, whatever they may be, ' replied the girl. "If you ever hear a complaint from my lips, you may leave me in the road and continue your journey alone."

Half an hour later on, the podorojna being presented by Michael, three post horses were harnessed to the tarantass. These animals, covered with long hair, were very like long legged bears. They were small, but spirited, being of Siberian breed.

They were harnessed thus: One, the largest, was secured between two long shafts on whose farther end was a hoop called a douga, carrying tassels and bells. The two others were simply fastened by ropes to the steps of the taranta. 3. This was the complete harness, with mere strings for reins.

Neither Michael Strogoff nor the young Lymian girl had any baggage. The repidity with which one whited to make the journey and the more than modest resources of the other prevented them from embarrassing themselves with packages. It was a fortunate thing under the circumstances, for the tarantass could not have carried both baggage and travelers. It was only made for two persons, without counting the driver, who kept his equilibrium on his narrow sent in a marvelous manner.

The driver is changed at every relay. The man who drove the tarantase during the first stag, was, like his horses,

some minutes. The two carriages were hidden in a cloud of dust. From this goff immediately asked for horses. cloud issued the cracking of whips, mingled with excited shouts and exclamations of anger.

Nevertheless the advantage remained with Michael, which might be vory im portant to him if the relay were poorly provided with horses. Two carriages were perhaps more than the postmaster "Do you say that to me, brother, could provide for at least in a short

Half an hour after the berlin was left far behind, looking only a speck on the horizon on the steppe.

It was 8 ô'clock in the evening when Michael and his companion arrived at

the posthouse in lehim. The news was worse and worse with regard to the invasion.

Here had arrived just a short time before two men.

The one was English, the other French. Both were tall and thin, but the latter was sallow, as are the south ern provencals, while the former was

ruddy like a Lancashire gentleman. The Anglo-Norman, formal, cold, grave, parsimonious of gestures and words, appearing only to speak or gesticulate

under the influence of a spring operating at regular intervals. The Gaul, on the contiary, was lively and petulant, expressed himself with lips, eyes, hauds, all at once, having twenty dif

ferent ways of explaining his thoughts, Blount. whereas his interlocutor seemed to have only one immutably stereotyped on his brain.

The strong contrast they presented would at once have struck the most superficial observer, but a physiognomist, regarding them more closely. lishman was "all ears."

Englishman became erect and turned

Their journals did not restrict them

vocation when political or social inter-

ests were at stake. In a word, they

made what has been for some years

called "the great political and military

expend the money required.

graph.

die.

reports."

that of those conjurers who recognize handled whip. a card merely by a rapid movement in "Horses," he demanded, with the air

a Siberian and no less shaggy than cutting the pack or by the arrangement of a man accustomed to command. they-long hair, cut square on the fore- only of marks invisible to others. The "I have no more disposable horses." head, hat with turned up rim, red belt. Frenchman, indeed, possessed in the answered the postmaster, bowing. coat with crossed facings and buttons | highest degree what may be called 'I must have some this moment. "It is impossible." The Englishman, on the contrary, ap "What are those horses which have

generally exists between rivais in the to brutality.

"No," answered Michael, without moving, but looking the other straight they did not avoid one another, but en- in the face. "The horses this moment," said the

man and left the room. The postmastwo sportsmen, after all, hunting on ter followed him. The effect produced on the reporters by this incident was not to Michael's

> advantage. Their discomfiture was visible. How could this strong young man allow himself to be struck like that and not demand satisfaction for such an insult? They contented themselves with bowing to him and retired. A moment afterward the noise of wheels and the cracking of a whip showed that the berlin, drawn by the

tarantass' horses, was driving rapidly away from the posthouse. Nadia, unmoved, and Michael, still

quivering, remained alone in the room. The courier of the czar, his arms crossed over his chest, was seated motionless as a statue. However, a color which could not have been the blush f shame had replaced the paleness on

his manly countenance. Nadia did not doubt that powerful reasons alone could have allowed him to suffer so great a humiliation from

such a man. Then, going up to him as he had come o her in the police station at Nijni Novgorod, she said:

"Your hand, brother." And at the same time her hand with an almost maternal gesture wiped away a tear which sprung to her compan-

CHAPTER VII.

ADIA, with the clear perception of a right minded woman, guessed that some secret motive directed all Michael Strogoff's actions; that he for a reason unknown to her

did not belorg to himself; that he had near enough. not the power of doing what he desired, and that in this instance especial-

ly he had heroically sacrificed to duty even his resentment at the gross injury he had received.

Nadia, therefore, asked no explanaion from Michael. Had not the hand which she had extended to him already

replied to all that he might have been able to tell her? Michael remained silent all the even

ing. The postmaster not being able to supply them with fresh horses until the next morning, a whole night must be passed at the house. Nadia could are, broad shouldered, with a strongly profit by it to take some rest, and a

room was therefore prepared for her. The young girl would no doubt have

alone, and she make ready to go to her room. Just as she was about to retire she

could not refrain from going up to Michnel to say good night.

Russian specially exempted from opeyeđ. ing these orders would certainly have Michael recognized the Tartar war-

drawn nublic attention to himself, a thing above all to be avoided by the flat on the ground. czar's courier. As to the driver's hesitation, either the rascal traded on the traveler's impatience or he really had good reason to fear some misfortune. However, at last the tarantass started and made such good way that by 3 in the afternoon if had reached Koulatsinskoe, eighty versts farther on. An hour after this it was on the banks of the Irtish. Omsk was now only

twenty versts distant. The Irtish is a large river and one of the principal of those which flow toward the north of Asia. Bising in the Atai mountains, it flows from the southeast to the northwest and empties itself into the Obl after a course of nearly 7.000 versts.

At this time of year, when all the rivers of the Siberlan basin are much swollen, the waters of the Irtish were very high. In consequence the current was changed to a regular torrent, rendering the passage difficult enough. A swimmer could not have crossed, how-

ever powerful a one he might be, and even in a ferryboat there would be some danger.

But Michael and Nadia, determined to brave all perils whatever they might be, did not dream of shrinking from this one.

However, Michael proposed to his young companion that he should cross first, embarking in the ferryboat with the tarantass and horses, as he feared that the weight of this load would render it less safe. After landing the car- him and to whom he owed his life. riage on the opposite bank he would

return and fetch Nadia. delay of an hour, and she would not he saw the handsome bearded face for her safety alone be the cause of it. bending over him and regarding him out difficulty, for the banks were partly ask where he was when the mujik, anflooded and the boat could not get in ticipating him, said:

the three horses on board. Michael, that has passed since I brought thee to Nadia and the driver embarked also, my cabin." and they shoved off.

For a few minutes all went well. A little way up the river the current was struggle which he had witnessed-the broken by a long point projecting from the bank and formed an eddy easily boats, the pillage of the tarantass and crossed by the boat. The two boatmen | the massacre of the boatmen. propelled their barge with long poles, which they handled cleverly, but as they gained the middle of the stream it grew deeper and deeper until at last they could only just reach the bottom. The ends of the poles were only a foot above the water, which rendered their use difficult and insufficient. Michael preferred not to leave her companion, and Nadia, seated in the stern of the boat and always in dread of a delay, watched the boatmen with some uneasiness. "Look out!" cried one of them to his

comrade. The shout was occasioned by the new

among them, and two of the horses were mortally wounded. At the next moment a violent blow was felt. The boats had run into the

ery, which is usually answered by lying

As neither he nor the boatmen obeyed

this injunction, a volley was let fly

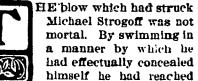
ferryboat. "Come, Nadia!" cried Michael, ready to jump overboard.

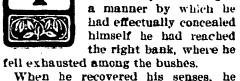
The girl was about to follow him when a blow from a lance struck him, and he was thrown into the water. The current swept him away. His hand raised for an instant above the waves, and then he disappeared.

Nadla uttered a cry, but before she had time to throw herself after him she was seized and dragged into one of the boats.

In a few minutes the boatmen were killed and the ferryboat was left to drift away while the Tartars continued to descend the Irtish.

CHAPTER VIII.





found himself in the cabin of a mujik, who had picked him up and cared for For how long a time had he been the guest of this brave Siberian? He could The girl refused. It would be the not guess, but when he opened his eyes The embarkation was made not with- with pitying eyes. He was about to

"Do not speak, little father, do not However, after half an hour's exer- speak. Thou art still too weak. I will tion the boatmen got the tarantass and | tell three where thou art and everything

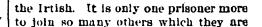
> And the mujik related to Michael Strogoff the different incidents of the attack upon the ferry by the Tartar

> But Michael Strogoff listened no longer, and, slipping his hand under his garment, he felt the imperial letter still secured in his breast.

He breathed a sigh of relief. But that was not all.

"A young girl accompanied me," said he.

"They have not killed her," replied the mujik, anticipating the anxiety which he read in the eyes of his guest. "They have carried her off in their boat and have continued the descent of



"It is possible," answered Michael, 'since I am going straight there.' "Well, I wish you a safe journey, Mr.

Korpanoff," said Alcide.

would have defined their particular. It was the traveler of the berlin, a

characteristics by saying that if the military looking man, apparently about Frenchman was "all eyes," the Eng- forty years of age, tall, robust in fig-

In fact, the visual apparatus of the set head and thick mustache meeting one had been singularly perfected by red whiskers. He wore a plain uni-

must have been as instantaneous as side, and in his hand he held a short but she felt that he would rather be

long stage. The postmaster gave the order to put to. As the two correspondents intended to stop at Ichim, they had not to trouble themselves to find means of transport and therefore had their carriage

same calling, might have reudered

them but little sympathetic. However,

deavored rather to exchange with each

other the news of the day. They were

the same grounds, in the same pre-

serve. That which one missed might

be advantageously secured by the oth-

er, and it was to their interest to meet

From these two correspondents Mi

chael learned that the town itself was

menaced by the Tartar vanguard, and

two days before the authorities had

been obliged to retreat to Tobolsk.

There was not an officer nor a soldier

On arriving at the relay Michael Stro-

He had been fortunate in distancing

Only three horses were in a fit state

to be immediately harnessed. The oth-

ers had just come in worn out from a

and converse together.

left in Ichim.

the berlin.

put away. In ten minutes Michael was told that

his tarantass was ready to start. "Good," said he.

Then, turning to the two reporters, he said:

lou's syes. "Well, gentlemen, since you remain at Ichim, I wish you success in the

prosecution of your mission." "What, Mr. Korpanoff." said Alcide

Jolivet, "shall you not stop even for an hour at Ichim?" "No, sir, and I also wish to leave the

posthouse before the arrival of a berlin which I distanced."

"Are you afraid that the traveler will dispute the horses with you?" "I particularly wish to avoid any dif-

-theulty." "It is possible that we shall meet you

again in a few days at Omsk," added

Almost immediately the sound of a carriage was heard outside, the door

was flung open and a man appeared.

practice. The sensibility of its retina form. A cavalry saber hung at his

stamped with the imperial cipher. The memory of the eye." driver on coming up with his team threw an inquisitive glance at the passengers of the tarantass. No luggage? | and to hear. When his aural appara-And had there been, where in the tus had been once struck by the sound world could he have stowed it? Rath- of a voice, he could not forget it, and er shabby in appearance too. He looked contemptuous.

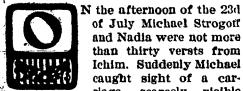
"Crows," said he, without caring whether he was overheard or not; "crows at 6 copecks a verst!" "No; engles," said Michael, who understood the slang perfectly; "eagles, do you hear, at 9 copecks a verst and a sess, in fact, a very limited power of tip besides." in affirming that those of the said

i He was answered by a merry crack | of the whip.

In the language of the Russian postilions the "crow" is the stingy or poor gather in the sounds in a manner aptraveler who at the posthouses only parent only to the naturalist. It must pays 2 or 3 copecks a verst for the horses. The "eagle" is the traveler sight and hearing was of wonderful assistance to these two men in their who does not mind expense, to say vocation, for the Englishman acted as nothing of liberal tips. Therefore the crow could not claim to fly as rapidly correspondent for The Daily Telegraph as the imperial bird.

Nadia and Michael immediately took their places in the tarantass. A small store of provisions was put in the box, in case at any time they were delayed in reaching the posthouses, which are very comfortably provided under direction of the state. The hood was derfully shrewd and sagacious. Even pulled up, as it was insupportably hot, and at 12 o'clock the tarantass, drawn cloud of dust.

CHAPTER VI.



than thirty versts from Ichim. Suddenly Michael caught sight of a carriage, scarcely visible among the clouds of dust, preceding them along the road. As his horses were evidently less fatigued than those of the other traveler, he would not be long in overtaking it. This was neither a tarantass nor a telga, but a post berlin; all over dust and looking as if it had made a long journey. The postliion was thrashing his horses with all

of July Michael Strogott

and Nadia were not more

his might and only kept them at a mallop by dint of abuse and blows. The Berlin had certainly not passed through of information known to this day. It Novo-Saimsk and could only have must also be added, to their honor, that atruck the Irkutsk road by some less frequented route across the steppe.

Michael's first thought on seeing this berlin was to get in front of it and arrive first at the relay, so as to make sure of fresh horses. He said a word to his driver, who soon brought him up with the berlin.

As he passed a head was thrust out of the window of the berlin.

He had no time to see what it was like, but as he dashed by he distinctly eard this word uttered in an imperi-DIS TOBEL

But he did not stop. On the contrary, ne berlin was soon distanced by the

ow became a regular race, for the ed Alcide Jolivet. Harry Blount was the name of the Englishman. The dis-this affront!

peared especially organized to listen just been harnessed to the tarantass I saw at the door?" "They belong to this traveler" an-

swered the postmaster, pointing to Miafter ten or even twenty years he chael Strogoff. would have recognized it among a "Take them out!" said the traveler

thousand. His ears, to be sure, had in a tone which admitted of no reply. not the power of moving as freely as Michael then advanced. those of animals who are provided with "These horses are engaged by me,"

large auditory flaps; but, since scienhe said. tific men know that human ears pos-"What does that matter? I must have them - Come, be quick; I have no he was going - As to his face, the feamovement, we should not be far wrong

time to lose." "I have no time to lose either," replied Michael, endeavoring to be calm, but restraining himself with difficulty.

in all directions while endeavoring to Nadia was near him, calm also, but secretly uneasy at a scene which it be observed that this perfection of would have been better to avoid. "Enough!" said the traveler.

> Then, going up to the postmaster: "Let the horses be taken out of the tarantass and put into my berlin." he

and the Frenchman as correspondent exclaimed, with a threatening gesture. of the-of what newspaper or of what The postmaster, much embarrassed, newspapers he did not say, and when did not know whom to obey and looked asked he replied in a jocular manner at Michael, who evidently had the right that he corresponded with "his cousin to resist the unjust demands of the

Madeleine." This Frenchman, however, traveler. beneath his careless surface was won-Michael hesitated an instant. He did

not wish to make use of his podorojna, while speaking at random, perhaps the which would have drawn attention to better to hide his desire to learn, he him, and he was most unwilling either by its three horses, left Perm in a never forgot himself. His loquacity by giving up his horses to delay his even helped him to conceal his thoughts, journey, and yet it was important not and he was perhaps even more discreet to engage in a struggle which might

than his confrere of The Daily Telecompromise his mission. The two reporters looked at him,

It is needless to say that these two ready to support him should he appeal men were devoted to their mission in to them. the world-that they delighted to throw "My horses will remain in" my car-

themselves in the track of the most unriage," said Michael, but without raisexpected intelligence; that nothing tering his tone more than would be suitrified or discouraged them from sucable for a plain Irkutsk merchant. ceeding; that they possessed the im-The traveler advanced toward Miperturbable sang froid and the genuine chael and laid his hand heavily on his intrepidity of men of their calling. Enshoulder.

thusiastic jockeys in this steeplechase, "Is it so?" he said in a rough voice. this hunt after information, they leap-"You will not give up your horses to ed hedges, crossed rivers, sprang over me?"

fences with the ardor of pure blooded "No," answered Michael. racers who will run "a good first" or

"Very well, then they shall belong to whichever of us is able to start. Defend yourself, for I shall not spare with regard to money, the surest, the you!"

most rapid, the most perfect element So saying the traveler drew his saber from its sheath, and Nadia threw herself before Michael.

neither the one nor the other ever look-Blount and Alcide Jolivet advanced ed or listened at the walls of private toward him. life and that they only exercised their

"I shall not fight," said Michael quietly, folding his arms across his chest. "You will not fight?" "No."

"Not even after this?" exclaimed the traveler, and before any one could pre-

It will be seen in following them that vent him he struck Michael's shoulder they had generally an independent with the handle of the whip. At this mode of viewing events and, above all, insult Michael turned deadly pale. His their consequences, each having his hands moved convulsively, as, if he own way of observing and appreciatwould have knocked the brute down. ing. The object to be obtained being But by a tremendous effort he masterof adequate value, they never failed to ed himself. A duel! It was more than a delay; it was perhaps the failure of The French correspondent was namhis mission. It would be better to lose some hours. Yes, but to swallow

and note of the others, re- similarity of their characters, added to "Will you fight now, coward?" re-"Will you fight now, coward?" re-

'Brother," she whispered. But he checked her with a gesture.

The girl sighed and left the room. Michael Strogoff did not lie down. He could not have slept even for an hour. The place on which he had been struck by the brutal traveler felt like

a burn "For my country and the Father," he muttered as he ended his evening prav-

He especially felt a great wish to know who was the man who had struck him, whence he came and where tures of it were so deeply engraved on his memory that he had no fear of

ever forgetting them. Michael at last asked for the postmaster. The latter, a Siberian of the old type, came directly and, looking rather contemptuously at the young

man, waited to be questioned. "You belong to the country?" asked Michael.

"Yes.' "Do you know that man who took my horses?" "No."

"Had you never seen him before?" "Never."

"Who do you think he was?" "A man who knows how to make himself obeyed." Michael fixed his piercing gaze upon

the Siberian, but the other did not quail before it. "Do you dare to judge me?" exclaim-

ed Michael. "Yes," answered the Siberian, "for

there are some things that even a plain merchant cannot receive without returning.'

"Blows?" "Blows, young man. I am of an age and strength to tell you so."

Michael went up to the postmaster and laid his two powerful hands on his shoulders.

Then in a peculiarly calm tone be said:

"Be off, my friend; be off! I could till you."

The postmaster understood this time. "I like him better for that," he muttered as he retired without adding another word.

At 8 o'clock the next morning, the 24th of July, three strong horses were harnessed to the tarantass. Michael and Nadia took their places, and Ichim, with its disagreeable remembrances, was soon left far behind.

The next day, July 25, at 3 o'clock in the morning, the tarantass arrived at the posthouse in Tioukalmsk, having accomplished a distance of 120 versts since it had crossed the Ichim.

They rapidly changed horses. Here, however, for the first time the driver made difficulties about starting, declaring that detachments of Tartars were roving across the steppe and that travelers, horses and carriages would be a fine prize for such robbers.

Only by dint of a large bribe could Michael get over the unwillingness of the driver, for in this instance, as in many others, he did not wish to show his podorojna. The last ukase, having been transmitted by telegraph, was known in the Siberian provinces, and a

direction the boat was rapidly taking. It had got into the direct current and was being swept down the river. By diligent use of the poles, putting the ends in a series of notches cut below the gunwale, the boatmen managed to keep their craft against the stream and slowly urged it in a slanting direction toward the right bank.

They calculated on reaching it some five or six versts below the landing place; but, after all, that would not matter so long as men and beasts could disembark without accident. The two stout boatmen, stimulated, moreover, by the promise of double fare, did not doubt of succeeding in this difficult passage of the Irtish.

But they reckoned without an incident which they were powerless to prevent, and neither their zeal nor their skillfulness could under the circumstances have done more.

The boat was in the middle of the current at nearly equal distances from either shore and being carried down at the rate of two versts an hour when Michael, springing to his feet, bent his gaze up the river.

Several boats, aided by oars as well as by the current, were coming swiftly down upon them.

Michael's brow contracted, and an exclamation escaped him.

"What is the matter?" asked the girl. But before Michael had time to reply one of the boatmen exclaimed in an accent of terror:

"The Tartars! The Tartars!"

They were indeed boats full of soldiers, and in a few minutes they must reach the ferryboat, it being too heavily laden to escape from them.

The terrified boatmen uttered exclamations of despair and dropped their poles.

"Courage, my friends!" cried Michael. "Courage! Fifty rubles for you if we reach the right bank before the boats overtake us!"

Incited by these words, the boatmen again worked manfully away, but it soon became evident that they could not escape the Tartars.

It was scarcely probable that they would pass without attacking them. On the contrary, there was everything to be feared from robbers such as these.

"Do not be afraid, Nadia," said Michael, "but be ready for anything." "I am ready," replied Nadia.

"Even to throw yourself into the water when I tell you?" "Whenever you tell me."

"Have confidence in me, Nadia." "I have indeed."

The Tartar boats were now only s hundred feet distant. They carried a detachment of Bokharian soldiers on their way to reconnoiter round Omsk. The ferryboat was still two lengths from the shore. The boatmen redoubled their efforts. Michael himself seized a pole and wielded it with superhuman strength. If he could land the tarantass and horses and dash off with them, there was some chance of escaping the Tartars, who were not mounteđ

But all their efforts were in vain. The soldiers from the first boat shout-

taking to Tomsk.

Michael Strogoff was unable to reply. He pressed his hand upon his heart to restrain its beating.

But, notwithstanding these many trials, the sentiment of duty mastered his whole soul.

He remembered the errand which he had undertaken. Indeed never by day or night was his emperor's mission for even a moment absent from his mind. Not the presence of the greatest danger, the tortures of hunger and thirst. the weariness of excessive fatigue, not even all combined could cause him to forget that a momentous matter was intrusted to his courage, his zeal, his fidelity and his endurance. Michael Strogoff was worthy of this trust.

"Where am I?" asked he. "Upon the right bank of the Irtish,

only five versts from Omsk," replied the mujik.

What wound can I have received which could have thus prostrated me? It was not a gunshot wound?"

"No; a lance thrust upon the head, now healing," replied the mujik. "After a few days' rest, little father, thou wilt be able to proceed. Thou didst fall into the river, but the Tartars neither touched nor searched thee, and thy purse is still in thy pocket.".

Michael Strogoff gripped the mujik's hand. Then, recovering himself with a sudden effort, "Friend," said he, "how long have I been in thy hut?"

"Three days."

"Three days lost!"

"Three days hast thou lain unconscious."

"Hast thou a horse to sell me?" "Thou wishest to go?"

"At once."

"I have neither horse nor carriage, little father. Where the Tartar has passed there remains nothing!"

"Well, I will go on foot to Omsk to find a horse."

"A few more hours of rest and thou wilt be in a better condition to pursue thy journey."

"Not an hour!"

"Come, now," replied the mujik, recognizing the fact that it was useless to struggle against the will of his guest, "I will guide thee myself. Besides," he added, "the Russians are still in great force at Omsk, and thou couldst perhaps pass unperceived."

"Friend," replied Michael, "heaven reward thee for all thou hast done for me."

"Reward! Only fools expect reward on earth," replied the mujik.

Michael Strogoff went out of the hut. When he tried to walk, he was seized with such faintness that without the assistance of the mujik he would have fallen, but the fresh air quickly revived him. He then felt the wound in his head, the violence of which his fur cap had lessened. With the energy which he possessed he was not a man to succumb under such a triffe. Before his eyes lay a single goal-far distant Irkutsk. He must reach it! But he must pass through Omsk without stopping there.

"God protect my mother and Nadia!" he murmured. "I have no longer the right to think of them?'

