

**INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL IN  
GREECE, TURKEY, RUSSIA,  
AND POLAND, IN TWO  
VOLUMES, VOL. II, PP. 7-250**

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by John Lloyd Stephens

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**JOHN LLOYD STEPHENS**

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## INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL

III

### GREECE, TURKEY, RUSSIA, AND POLAND.

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#### CHAPTER I.

Choice of a Conveyance.—Hiring a Servant.—Another American.—Beginning of Troubles.—A Bivouac.—Russian Jews.—The Steppes of Russia.—A Traveller's Story.—Approach to Chioff.—How to get rid of a Servant.—History of Chioff.

I HAD before me a journey of nearly two thousand miles, through a country more than half barbarous, and entirely destitute of all accommodation for travellers. Southern Russia was the Scythia of Darius, "savage from the remotest time." "All the way," says an old traveller, "I never came in a house, but lodged in the wilderness by the river side, and carried provisions by the way, for there be small succour in those parts;" and we were advised that a century had made but little change in the interior of the empire. There were no public conveyances, and we had our choice of three modes of travelling; first, by a Jew's wagon, in which the traveller stretches out his bed, and is trundled along like a bale of goods, always with the same horses, and therefore, of necessity, making slow progress; secondly, the char de poste, a mere box of wood on four wheels, with straw in the bottom; very fast, but to be changed always with the posthorses; and, thirdly, posting with our own carriage. We did not hesitate long in choos

ing the last, and bought a carriage, fortunately a good one, a large calèche which an Italian nobleman had had made for his own use in travelling on the Continent, and which he now sold, not because he did not want it, but because he wanted money more. Next we procured a *podoroshni*, under which, "By order of his Majesty Nicolas the First, autocrat of all the Russias, from Odessa to Moscow and Petersburgh, all the post-offices were commanded to give — and —, with their servant, four horses with their drivers, at the price fixed by law." Besides this, it was necessary to give security that we left no debts behind us; and if Mr. Ralli undertakes for all Americans the same obligation he did for me, it may happen that his office of consul will be no sinecure. Next, and this was no trifling matter, we got our passports arranged; the Russian ambassador at Constantinople, by-the-way, had given me a new passport in Russian, and my companion, that he might travel with the advantages of rank and title, got himself made "noble" by an extra stroke of his consul's pen.

The last thing was to engage a servant. We had plenty of applications, but, as very few talked any language we understood, we had not much choice; one, a German, a capital fellow, was exactly the man we wanted, only he could not speak a word of Russian, which was the principal qualification we required in a servant. At length came a Frenchman, with an unusual proportion of whiskers and mustaches, and one of the worst of the desperate emigrés whom the French Revolution, or, rather, the Restoration, sent roaming in foreign lands. He had naturally a most unprepossessing physiognomy, and this was heightened by a sabre-cut which had knocked out several of his

teeth, and left a huge gash in his cheek and lip, and, moreover, made him speak very unintelligibly. When I asked him if he was a Frenchman, he drew himself up with great dignity, and replied, "Monsieur je suis *Parisien*." His appearance was a gross libel upon the Parisians; but, as we could get no one else, we took him upon little recommendation the day before our departure, and, during the same day, threatened half a dozen times to discharge him. The police regulation, obliging him to pay his debts before leaving Odessa, he seemed to consider peculiarly hard; and, all the time he was with us, kept referring to his having been obliged to fritter away thirty or forty rubles before he could leave. We ought to have furnished ourselves with provisions for the whole road to Moscow, and even cooking utensils; but we neglected it, and carried with us only tea and sugar, a tin teapot, two tin cups, two tin plates, two knives and forks, and some Bologna sausages, trusting, like Napoleon when he invaded Russia, to make up the rest by foraging.

Before beginning our journey we had a foretaste of the difficulty of travelling in Russia. We had ordered post-horses three times, and had sent for them morning and evening, and received for answer that there were none in. At the third disappointment, our own consul being out of town, my friend the Spanish consul went with me to the director of the post, and found that during the time in which they had told us they had no horses, they had sent out more than a hundred. Instead of taxing them with their rascality, he talked the matter over very politely; paid the price of the horses, gave them a bonus of ten rubles, and obtained a promise by all the saints in the Russian calendar for daylight the next morning.

The next morning at eight o'clock the horses came,

four shaggy, wild-looking little animals, which no comb or brush had ever touched, harnessed with a collar and rope lines. They were tied in with rope traces, all abreast, two on each side the pole, and a postillion with a low wool cap, sheepskin coat and trousers, the woolly side next the skin, who would make an English whip stare, mounted the box. Henri followed, and my companion and myself took our seats within. The day before we had a positive quarrel upon a point unnecessary here to mention, in which I thought and still think he acted wrong, and the dispute had run so high that I told him I regretted exceedingly having made arrangements for travelling with him, and proposed even then to part company; he objected, and as we had purchased a carriage jointly, and particularly as our passports were prepared, our *podoroshni* made out, and servant hired in our joint names, I was fain to go on; and in this inauspicious humour toward each other we set out for a journey of nearly two thousand miles, through a wild and desolate country, among a half-civilized people, whose language we could not understand, and with a servant whom we distrusted and disliked.

In spite of all this, however, I felt a high degree of excitement in starting for the capital of Russia; and I will do my companion the justice to say that he had been always ready to receive my advances, and to do more than meet me half way, which I afterward learned was from an apprehension of the taunts of his companions, who, not satisfied with getting rid of him, had constantly told him that it was impossible for an Englishman and an American to travel together, and that we would quarrel and fight the first day. I believe that I am enough of an American in my feelings, but such an idea had never entered my head; I met many



Englishmen, and with some formed a friendship which, I trust, will last through life; and among all I met, these two were the only *young* men so far behind the spirit of the age as to harbour such a thought. I did meet one *old* gentleman, who, though showing me personally the greatest kindness, could not forget the old grudge. But men cannot be driving their elbows into each other's ribs, comparing money accounts, and consulting upon the hundred little things that present themselves on such a journey, without getting upon at least sociable terms; and before night of the first day the feelings of my companion and myself had undergone a decided change.

But to go back to Odessa. At the barrier we found a large travelling-carriage stopping the way, in which was my friend Mr. Ralli, with his lady, on his way to Nicolaïf; part of his business there was to erect a monument to the memory of a deceased countryman. Mr. Munroe, son of a former postmaster in Washington, is another instance of the success of American adventurers in Russia. He went out to St. Petersburg with letters from the Russian ambassador and others, and entered the army, the only road to distinction in Russia. He accompanied the Grand-duke Constantine to Poland, and was made one of his aiddecamps, and on the death of Constantine was transferred to the staff of the Emperor Nicolas. At the time of the invasion of Turkey by the Egyptians under Ibrahim Pacha, Mr. Munroe held the rank of colonel in the army sent to the aid of the sultan. While the Russians were encamped at the foot of the Giant's Mountain, he visited Constantinople, and became acquainted with the American missionaries, who all spoke of him in the highest terms. He was a tall, well-made man, carried himself with a military air, and looked admirably well in the

Russian uniform. On the withdrawal of the Russians from the Black Sea, Mr. Munroe was left in some important charge at Nicolaïf, where he died in the opening of a brilliant career. I heard of him all over Russia, particularly from officers of the army; and being often asked if I knew him, regretted to be obliged to answer no. But, though personally unacquainted, as an American I was gratified with the name he had left behind him.

To return again to our journey: a few rubles satisfied the officer at the barrier that we were carrying nothing prohibited out of the "free port" of Odessa, and we started on a full run, to the great peril of our necks, and, to use the climax of a Dutch proclamation, "what's more, of breaking our carriage." In less than an hour we brought up before the door of a posthouse. Our wheels were smoking when we stopped. On our hind axle we carried a bucket of grease; half a dozen bipeds in sheepskin whipped off the wheels and greased them; four quadrupeds were tied into the carriage, another bête mounted the box, and we were off again at a full run. My companion undertook to keep a memorandum of expenses, and we put a certain sum in a purse and paid out of it till all was gone. This was a glorious beginning for a journey of two thousand miles. The country possessed little interest, being mostly level, and having but few villages. On the way we saw a natural phenomenon that is common enough in Egypt and the East, where the country is level, and known by the name of *mirage*. At a distance it seemed a mere pond or lake, and a drove of cattle passing over it looked as if they were walking in the water. We rolled on rapidly all day, passed through Balgarha, Kodurseve, and Pakra, timing every post and noting every village with a particularity.

which it would be tedious here to repeat, and at about eight in the evening dashed into the little town of Vosnezeuski, one hundred and thirty versts from Odessa. Here we came to a dead stand. We had begun to entertain some apprehensions from the conduct of Monsieur Henri, who complained of the hardness of his seat, and asked if we did not intend to stop at night, recommending Vosnezeuski as a place where we could sleep in the posthouse; we told him that we had no idea of stopping but to change horses, and should go on immediately.

Vosnezeuski lies on the river Bog, and is the chief town of the Cossacks of the Bog. This river is navigable for large vessels one hundred and fifty versts; beyond this for three or four hundred versts it is full of cataracts. The Cossacks of the Bog are a warlike tribe, numbering from six to seven thousand, and living under the same military system with the Cossacks of the Don. But we fell into worse hands than the Cossacks. The postmaster was a Jew, and at first told us that he had no horses; then that he had no postillion, but would hire one if we would pay him a certain sum, about four times the amount fixed by law. We had been obliged before to pay a few extra rubles, but this was our first serious difficulty with the postmasters; and, in pursuance of the advice received at Odessa, we talked loud, demanded the book which is nailed to the table in every posthouse for travellers to enter complaints in, and threatened the vengeance of Count Woronzow and every one else, up to the emperor; but the Jew laughed in our faces; looked in our *podoroshni*, where we were described as simple travellers, without any of the formidable array of titles which procure respect in Russia; told us we were no grand seigneurs, and that we must