

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

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649611966

Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland. In Two Volumes. Vol. II by John Lloyd Stephens

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JOHN LLOYD STEPHENS

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INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL

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GREECE, TURKEY, RUSSIA, AND POLAND.

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 choose

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