

NIGHT ON THE BAYOU.

Where the dark garments of the evening trail
Over the shadows of the wild lagoon
Flow, so slowly, through the twilight's veil
Rises the burnished, copper-colored moon.

And where the Mississippi wanders by,
Deep murmuring its mellow, rhythmic tune,
See where her long, gray tresses floating lie,
The ivory tinted tresses of the moon.

—Ernest M'Gaffey.

POPOFF'S JOURNEY.

"Well, what think you of my project, my little dove?"
"Tomfoolery," retorted the "little dove," without raising her eyes from the "Life of the Saints," in which she seemed to be absorbed.

"But I shall only be absent ten days in all, my little soul—four to go, four to return—and!"
"Oh, be quiet," said the "little soul," with a scant courtesy. "You seem to take me for an idiot. I know your reason for wishing to meander off into foreign lands; you want to go on a carouse—have a good time! Don't tell me you don't. I'm ashamed of you. Drink your tea and let me alone."

Whereupon the "little soul" plunged still deeper into her favorite work.
The above conversation occurred one fine Sunday at Moscow between Vassili Iwanovitch Popoff, a middle class "notable" and merchant, and his wife, Avdotia Iwanowna. The worthy couple were sitting after mass at a table, on which stood a gigantic "samovar" puffing out jets of vapor. For the ten years preceding the same conversation, slightly varied, had occurred as regular as Sunday had come round, that being the only day of the week that the Popoffs were able to see much of each other on account of the encroachments of business cares, on the other days the husband going to his office promptly at 7 in the morning, and not returning until evening.

Avdotia Iwanowna was a dark little woman, strongly resembling a withered olive, with sharp features and abrupt in her movements. Her shrill voice made her servants tremble and cut her husband's long speeches very short. The latter was a large, tall man, with fat cheeks, a heavy beard and eyes that were constantly winking. He was as timid as he was big, and obeyed his wife as implicitly as one of the enormous larks that are sometimes seen on the river is responsive to the slightest motion of the little snorting tug that is towing it along. Apparently they were the matrimonial complements of each other, for they had lived in this way twenty years, during which period not a single cloud had arisen above the family horizon.

For the past ten years, however, an idea had gradually invaded the circumscribed brain of Vassili Iwanovitch, and had at last taken complete possession of that organ.
He wanted to see Paris. The narratives of his friends regarding the wonders of that astonishing city, which they had visited either on business or pleasure, haunted him with the pertinacity of an oft recurring dream, and had finally aroused in him an insatiable curiosity that he was unable, even if he wished, to allay.

He had bought a "Guide to Paris," which he read secretly at his warehouse, and became so absorbed in it that he made the most absurd mistakes. Not only did he give his clerks wrong directions when under the influence of his Gallic mania, but one day, when a customer had asked him for the address of a merchant in St. Petersburg, he actually replied, "Place de la Concorde."

Avdotia Iwanowna, like a good wife, did all she could to dispel what she called her husband's "madness." She kept her "nervaines" burned candles before the miracle working Virgin of Tvers Kaya; consulted three celebrated fortune tellers of the city; made a pilgrimage to the convent of Troitzka, not far from Moscow; prayed, threatened to do many terrible things, but—did nothing.

With the dogged determination of weak natures, Vassili Iwanovitch maintained a stolid silence when assailed by his wife's prayers; but as soon as the violence of the storm was spent he would hazard a few timid observations on the general subject.

This journey, he would urge, might be the means of opening up relations with France for his business. The great exhibition that was about to take place would give him information regarding a number of matters concerning which he was profoundly ignorant; might, in fact, teach him much as to many industries, etc.

Wary of discussion, Avdotia Iwanowna had ended by turning a deaf ear to all her husband's references to the unwelcome subject—a policy that caused the confiding Vassili, compelled to make a confidant of some one, to pour out the fullness of his heart into the bosom of his old servant, Anissime.

The day following that on which the above conversation occurred, that is to say, on Monday, an unprecedented event took place in the Popoff household. Contrary to the custom of years, Vassili Iwanovitch came rushing home at noon, flushed with excitement, out of breath, his face covered with perspiration, and holding an open letter in his hand.

"Here, read this; it has just come!" he shouted, as he caught sight of his better half. The poor woman gazed at him in amazement and alarm. She believed her husband had become suddenly insane.

The letter bore a foreign stamp, and was couched in the following terms:
"Sir—The numerous orders that we are constantly receiving from Russia for our new sewing machine, 'The Lightning,' have caused us to decide to open an agency at Moscow. Our sales in your empire foot up from 5,000 to 6,000 machines annually.

"Having consulted the American consul in your city, he has mentioned you as being one of the most honorable representatives of Muscovite commerce, and therefore the best adapted to fill the position of agent for our incomparable invention.
"We therefore ask you to accept the agency and a commission of 10 per cent. on all sales, which would result in an annual profit to you of not less than from 300,000 to 300,000 francs.

"That there should be no misunderstanding, a personal interview is desirable. Our Mr. Spark will be at the Hotel du Louvre until June 25, after which date he will return to New York.
"We have the honor to remain your obedient servants,
WILLIAM SPARK & CO.
"P. S.—If we do not hear from you prior to the 25th we shall conclude arrangements with another Moscow house that is awaiting our answer."

Avdotia Iwanowna read the letter several times attentively, while her husband watched the expression of her face with intense anxiety. To his profound astonishment, after a short silence Avdotia Iwanowna remarked in her calmest tones:
"You must go, and should leave at once, for today is the 18th, and"
"Four days to go and"—interrupted Vassili Iwanovitch, as though he were repeating some lesson learned by rote.
"Make haste and pack your trunks, and don't waste time in talking nonsense," said his wife sternly.
He did not wait to hear the conclusion of

the admonition, but hurried to his room to prepare for the long wished for journey.

The necessary arrangements were soon made. At the last moment Avdotia Iwanowna hung around her husband's neck a ribbon from which was suspended a little image that had been blessed by the priest, and embraced him with many tears, for it was their first separation since their marriage, and the little woman, though abrupt in manner, had still a warm and kindly heart in her breast.

She deluged her spouse with advice and cautions. He must avoid draughts of air, and must be especially careful not to run to excess in either eating or drinking.
"You will find some excellent prime brandy in your bag that I made twelve years ago," were her last words at the station. "If you have any stomach trouble take one glass, but no more. Avoid foreign brandy. I am told it is made from seawater and fish.

"Oh, are you sure you've got your flannel waistcoats? Don't fail to come back as soon as possible. I shall expect you on the 30th. Until then I shall keep praying for you to the Holy Virgin." Here she paused to wipe away a tear.
"And be sure not to spend more money than you have taken with you. Don't forget me over yonder—among those pagans.

"And you too, Anissime," he continued, turning to the old servant, "mind you don't leave your master for an instant, and should you be attacked by brigands, remember it is your duty to sacrifice your life to save his. Do you understand me?"
"Be calm, Avdotia Iwanowna," replied the old man. "Heaven is merciful; we shall return safe and sound."

Vassili Iwanovitch, affected by the many proofs of his wife's affection, stammered out a few incoherent words, and—burst into tears, to the great astonishment of the other travelers.

Our two Muscovites made the journey to Paris without accident, arriving there at 11 p. m. on the 23d. From Berlin Popoff had telegraphed William Spark that he would see him the next day.

At the Gare du Nord an interpreter got them a carriage, that in due course deposited them in the immense courtyard of the Hotel du Louvre, which, large as it seemed, was filled with vociferating travelers and their luggage.

In the midst of the tumult Popoff and Anissime by expressive gestures succeeded in explaining to the hotel people that they were in want of rooms. After some trouble they were ushered into an elevator and carried to the sixth story with a rapidity that caused poor Anissime to cry out in fright. He believed that he was being carried off by the spirit of evil.

Vassili Iwanovitch, scarcely less perturbed than his humble companion, was not at all sorry to get out of the flying machine. They then went along the corridor, as they had been directed—there happening to be no servant disengaged at the moment to show the way—and pushing open a door that closed again of its own accord, they found themselves in utter darkness. As Vassili Iwanovitch stumbled against a bed, and not being acquainted with the customs of Paris hotels, he undressed himself by the sense of feeling, and, nearly dead with fatigue from his long journey, tumbled in and was soon asleep.

How much time had elapsed since that moment! Mystery of mysteries! Vassili Iwanovitch first opened one eye, then the other, and said, with a yawn:
"Art thou asleep, Anissime?"
"No, Vassili Iwanovitch," replied the faithful valet.

"Hast thou been awake long?"
"I know not, Vassili Iwanovitch."
"Since it is still night, let us try to get more sleep, Anissime."
Silence reigned again. Popoff, who had been following his own advice, was awakened by the falling of a piece of furniture.

"Is it thou, Anissime?" he cried.
"It is I, Vassili Iwanovitch," replied the servant. "I have been feeling my way around the room, and have found a window. I looked out, but it is still as black as your hat outside."
"Well, let us sleep again then; it seems to me that the nights are of an extraordinary length in this latitude."

Another relapse into the arms of the sleepy god when Vassili Iwanovitch was suddenly brought to his senses by a very decided and not very agreeable feeling of cramps in his stomach.
"Anissime," he exclaimed, "knowest thou that I am terribly hungry! Look again through the window and see whether there are yet any signs of the dawn."
"I too, am hungry, Vassili Iwanovitch, but it still night. However, one thing surprises me greatly. Outside the window there is a most overpowering smell of cheese."

"Cheese! We must have been lodged over a creamery, then, Anissime. I wish we could get down to it, but there is no chance of its being open at this hour."
"I am afraid not, Vassili Iwanovitch."
Meantime the pain gnawing at the vitals of the traveler had increased in intensity.

What! What a spasm. The Spartan boy himself never suffered agony equal to this.
"Anissime! Anissime!" shouted the unfortunate Popoff, unable longer to disregard his physical tortures. "I believe I have the cholera. Thou must find the door."
The two travelers began to call for help, pounded on the walls, and demanded themselves more like lunatics escaped from La Salpetriere than like ordinary lodgers in a first class hotel.

At last steps could be heard in the corridor. A bolt was drawn on the outside, and curious faces peered into the room. By the light of the "bougies" that form so large an item in the cost of continental traveling, the Russians discovered that they were occupying a room used for the storage of worn-out trumpery, with a closet at the back, in which a large piece of cheese had been stored and forgotten.

The services of an interpreter having been obtained, it was explained that search had been made in vain throughout the capacious hotel to learn the whereabouts of the travelers, it having been discovered that they were not in the room that had been assigned them. An American guest had been anxious to see Mr. Popoff, but he had left an hour ago.

"Left?" shouted Popoff. "Why, what day of the month is it then?"
"The 25th."
"You don't mean to tell me that we have been two days in this wretched hole!" cried Vassili Iwanovitch, now quite beside himself.

"Such seems to be the case," returned the interpreter. "And here is a letter that the American left for you."
More dead than alive from astonishment and dismay, our Muscovite succeeded, after a few moments, in so far collecting his senses as to comprehend the unpleasant significance of the following note:
"DEAR SIR—I waited for you until the 25th. After endeavoring in vain to gain tidings of you at the hotel, where you seem to have arrived, I have given the agency to the house of Strogoff, of your city. I sail to-morrow for New York."

Vassili Iwanovitch, as he hurries back to his waiting spouse as fast as the train will carry him, and with no heart to indulge in the pleasures he had so often enjoyed in imagination, is now a firm believer in the truth of the aphorism:
"It is only the unexpected that happens."
—From the French.

A HIDDEN TREASURE.

One dismal, rainy evening in the fall of 1857 a wayfarer entered a country inn in Indiana and secured lodgings for the night. He was a sailor, he said, and was on his way to a town twenty miles distant, where he had relatives. He was a stout built, rugged looking fellow, but next morning he was found dead in his bed. The above facts were clearly established, but a certain other fact could only be surmised. Word was sent to the dead man's relatives, the coroner took charge of the remains, and all personal effects were turned over with the remains. The deceased had a few dollars in money and a few trinkets, but the relatives at once claimed that he had been robbed of valuable papers.

The proprietor of the inn was a veritable Yankee, including a hawk bill nose and the legendary twang, and his wife was his counterpart. He was known to be sharper than steel in a horse trade, and he never put out a dollar that he did not get a big interest; but no one believed he had rifled the dead man's baggage. When the relatives were asked about the nature of the alleged valuable papers they refused to answer, and this evasion threw doubts on their allegation. In a few weeks the affair blew over, and in about three months the landlord and wife began to feel lonesome for the hills of old New Hampshire. This was an excuse for offering all their property for sale, and six months after the death of the stranger in the hotel the place passed into other hands.

The next session in New Orleans. I was then employed by Blank & Blank, wreckers, as general manager of the business. We had three vessels, steam pumps, divers, and all other necessary apparatus. I was called into the private office one day, and there found Jonas Stebbins, the hook nosed Yankee who had sold out his hotel in Indiana. He had something to say, but he hesitated to say it. It was half an hour before we could bring him to the point, and then only after the three of us had placed our hands on a small Bible, which Stebbins had thoughtfully provided for, and sworn never to reveal his secret. Then he brought forth two letters and a map, and we saw that another buried treasure crank had struck the city. Such incidents were not uncommon. In the five years I had been manager we had encountered a full dozen of these cranks, and on two occasions the firm had lost heavily by entering into partnerships which failed to pan out. As soon as Mr. Stebbins unfolded himself he got the cold shoulder, but he would not take it that way.

"Look here," he said, as he tilted his chair back, "do you take me for a fool?"
"Well, partly."
"Do you think I want a partnership in it?"
"Don't you?"
"Not by a jugful! I want to hire a schooner and crew and divers by the week for so many weeks. All are to be under my orders, and I am to have all that's found. Partnership! No, sir—e! What's your lowest figure?"

He had shown us a roughly drawn map of the Bahama Islands, one executed with pen and ink by some sailor. He wanted a schooner to proceed to one of the islands. All the apparatus he wanted was grapnels and divers. He might want us three weeks, but probably not over two. It was finally agreed that he should hire by the day. He beat us down \$5 on the figure named, and an iron clad agreement was drawn up and signed, and he counted out \$1,000 in gold. A sum sufficient to pay us for three weeks was deposited with a banker, and we at once began preparations for the trip. It had been stipulated that Mrs. Stebbins was to go along, and we had a stateroom fitted up for her.

This was the first time any treasure hunter had put down his own money for an expedition, and we could not doubt that Mr. Stebbins had what seemed to him a straight clew. It was not our business to throw cold water on his plans, even though we were firmly convinced that he would return empty handed. The flag decided that I should go out in charge of operations, and a couple of days after the contract was signed we were off for the Gulf. I expected the Stebbinses to be nervous and frustrated, but there was not a sign of it. They were as cool as if going on a visit to a relative. As we were going down the river, I said to him: "Now that the contract is signed and we are under way, I suppose you had as soon tell me about your treasure?"

"Well, no," he drawled; "you might leave the schooner somewhere and try to cut in ahead of me, or we may be wrecked before we get there. I think you are honest and straight, but I can't give you the exact location."
"No, indeed, we can't," added Mrs. Stebbins.

"You see, it has taken every dollar we could rake and scrape, and if we don't get the treasure we've been busted."
"But you seem to be certain of getting it."
"Oh, yes!" they replied in chorus.
"Is the amount large?"
They looked at each other a moment, and then Mrs. Stebbins replied:
"Jonas, I think we can safely tell him some few things, for he seems to wish us well."

"Yes, I guess so."
"Well, then, we expect to get about \$150,000, more or less, in gold and silver."
"Yes, that's about the figure," added Stebbins, "and as we are both getting along in years it will come in handy. If you had that much money, Mr. Marvin, would you buy a farm or move into a city?"

They seemed so firmly convinced of the existence of the treasure that I felt it my duty to warn them of possible disappointments.
"Yes, we might possibly fail, but 'tain't at all likely," he replied. "We ain't the sort of people to put up our last dollar on an uncertainty."
"No, Jonas, we ain't," added the wife.
"Was this treasure deposited years ago?" I asked.

"Yes, a good many years ago."
"On land?"
He looked from me to each other, and smiled in a knowing way. "Because," I continued, "there can't be a rod of any of the Bahamas, nor a bay, nor cove on the shores, but what has been explored over and over."
"Exactly," replied Stebbins, as he arose to spit over the rail. "If anybody has found the treasure then we shan't get it."
"Of course we shan't," replied the wife, and that closed the conversation.

Neither one of them had been to sea before, and while we were running down the Florida coast both were terribly seasick. They were around again as we came up with the cape, however, and when the captain asked Stebbins which one of the Bahamas he should steer for the man consulted his sketch afresh, compared it with the captain's chart of those waters, and finally replied, as he put his finger down, "This is Turk's Island."
"Yes."
"That's were they get a heap of salt."
"Yes."
"Well, here's an island to the northeast of it, fifteen or twenty miles away."
"Yes; that's called the Little Caycos."
"Well, now, you might bring up there."

During the remainder of the voyage, or until we sighted the island, the coolness of Stebbins and his wife was remarkable. The only game they knew how to play was for and guess, and they played from morning

still night and far into the evening. We threaded our way among the various islands to get to the east, and sails were in sight every hour in the day, but this queer couple could hardly be induced to raise their eyes from the game. Stebbins was always on hand when the captain picked off the day's run on the chart, and it was evident that he was keeping a sharp lookout to see that we were headed in the right direction.

In due time we raised Turk's Island, coming down from the north, and then we kept off a couple of points until Little Caycos was sighted. It is an island lying much lower than Turk's, almost surrounded with dangerous shoals and reefs, and at the time of which I write the only settlers were traders, wreckers and fishermen. There are harbors on the east and west shores, but by order of Stebbins we ran around to the south side and dropped anchor about a mile from the beach.

It was just at sundown when we came to anchor, and that evening the captain gave them the use of the cabin for a couple of hours to look over their papers. The island, with all the indentations, as well as the shoals, reefs and depth of water, was pictured on our chart, and they compared their pen and ink sketch with this, and consulted another paper which none of us had before seen, until they came to a decision. I was looking down upon them through the open skylight from the corner of my eye, and I saw Stebbins strike the table with his fist, and heard him whisper:
"We've got it, sure as shooting!"
"Hush!" she admonished. "Of course we've got it. We haven't nobody's fools, Jonas Stebbins. Do you suppose I'd have consented to put all our money into this venture if there was a chance to lose it?"
"By gum! but we'll be rich!"
"Of course we will."
"Richest folks in the hull count!"
"Yes, but don't get excited."

They sat on deck for an hour or two, Stebbins smoking and his wife knitting, and as they were about to retire for the night I felt bound to observe:
"Well, Mr. Stebbins, here we are in good shape, and now as I was sent to manage your business, you'd better explain matters pretty clearly. I may want to make some preparations for to-morrow."
"How long will it take you to get a diver ready to go down?" he asked.
"Not over half an hour."
"Well, that's all the preparations needed."
"What is the diver to go down after?"
"Sunshine! that won't run away before morning," answered Mrs. Stebbins, and with that both went below.

It was only natural that all of us should be curious about the expedition, but every attempt to find out anything had thus far been cleverly frustrated. The captain and I talked it over again for the twentieth time, and we came to the same old conclusion—that Stebbins had come on a wild goose chase after some old wreck. In our pipe at his refusal to furnish particulars we almost hoped he wouldn't find it. Stebbins was on deck at daylight next morning, and his wife half an hour later, and after breakfast, when the captain asked for orders, the Yankee waited to fill his pipe before replying:
"I guess we'll jog westward about five miles." The schooner was got under way, and when she had accomplished the distance named she was about a mile off shore, in fifty feet of water, and midway between her and the beach was a reef covered with not more than ten or twelve feet of water at low tide. As the anchor went down the schooner's head pointed directly toward the land, and Stebbins and his wife appeared to make out some landmarks, the sight of which brought smiles to their faces. It was a beautiful morning, with only a slight breeze blowing, and as the anchor went down Stebbins came to me and said:
"We shall have to go into the reef in a small boat, I suppose. Can a diver work from here?"

I assured him that it could be done, and we got down the boat, put in the pump and dres, and were shortly ready to pull off. Stebbins and his wife were both to go, making a party of six of us. We pulled almost straight for the reef, ported a little after crossing it, and then, as we anchored in three fathoms of water I looked about and discovered that we were in what might be called a basin, although it was open to the east.

"Yes, this is the spot," said Stebbins as he stood up and looked around.
"I'd almost know it at midnight," added his wife.
"What am I to look for?" asked the diver as he donned his dress.
"Some boxes about the size of them that axes come in," replied the Yankee. "There ought to be ten of 'em down there. They are iron bound and party hefty, but you look on and we'll do the hauling."

The diver winked at me to express his incredulity, and then his helpers screwed on his helmet and got him over the side on the rope ladder. The water was wonderfully clear, and we could follow him to the very bottom and see him move about. He headed north and crossed the basin; thence east to its mouth; then around to the north, and after being down twenty-five minutes he came up with a shell, and said, as soon as clear of his headpiece:
"Nothing but shells down there, sir. The bottom is hard sand, and I could have seen a dime down there."
"Didn't see no boxes?" gasped Stebbins.
"No, sir."
"Now, Jonas, don't get excited," cautioned his wife. "Them boxes is lying alongside of that wall (reef) to the west. The waves coming in from the east would shunt 'em over there."
"That's so," replied Stebbins, and when the diver had rested he was directed to search in that direction, and the anchor was lifted that we might hover over him as near as possible. He had not been down three minutes when he signalled us to haul away on the line attached to the tongs, and up came one of the boxes the Yankee and his wife were searching after. In five minutes we had another, and inside of an hour we had ten. We were an excited lot—all but Stebbins and his better half. They seemed to take it as a matter of course, and after the diver had sent up the tenth box and came up to rest the Yankee said:
"There might have been an eleventh box. My bill calls for ten, but there may be an extra one. And say, when you are down there kinder look around for any loose coin or other stuff."

Nothing further was found, however, and that afternoon we stood away for New Orleans. When aboard the schooner Stebbins informed us that there was \$15,000 in Spanish coin in each box, and that every box was in good order. I could not help but express my amazement over the find, and he calmly replied:
"Well, you see, me'n the woman are great hands to dream, and we dreamed it all out. There wasn't much chance for a slip after we had both dreamed."
But the pen and ink chart was no doubt taken from the wallet of the sailor who died in the country tavern.—New York Sun.

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