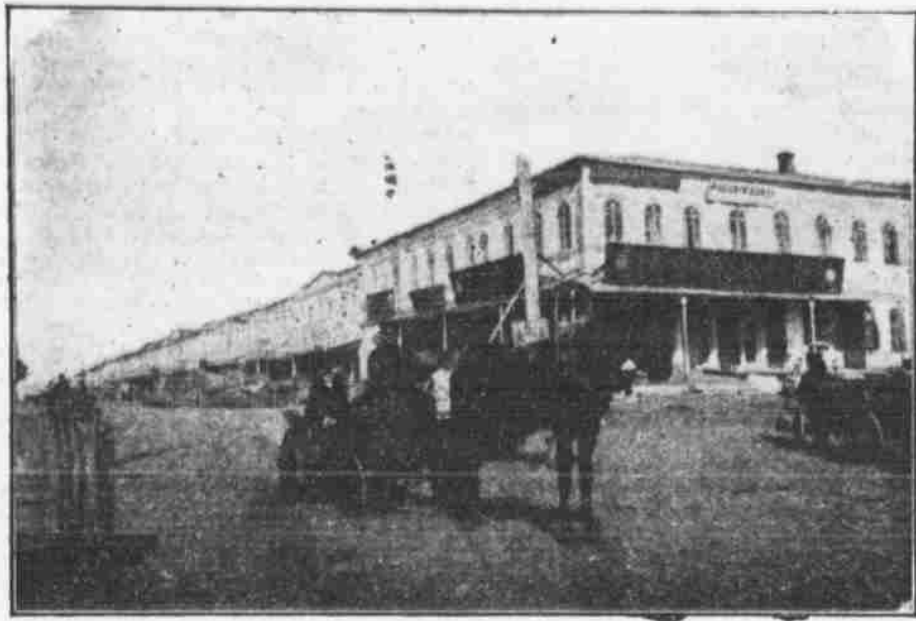
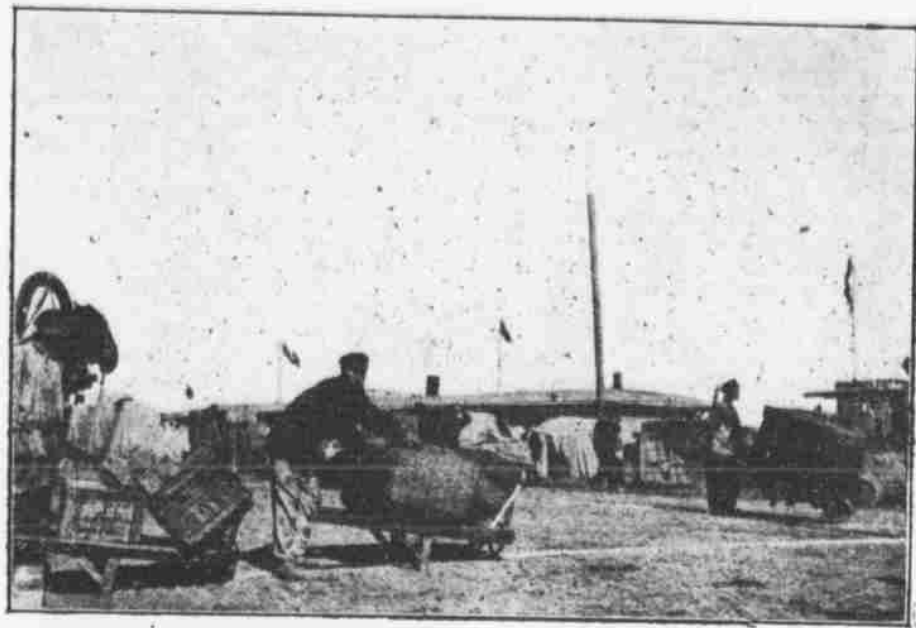


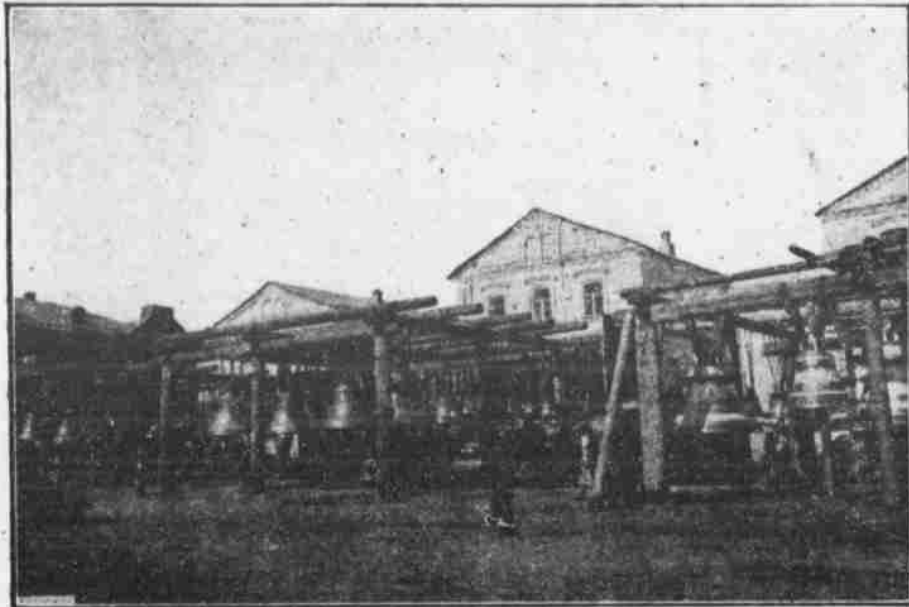
Nijni Novgorod, the World's Biggest Fair



MR. CARPENTER IN DROSHKY IN NIJNI



UNLOADING GOODS AT NIJNI



BELL BAZAAR, NIJNI



BRIDGE OF BOATS, NIJNI FAIR

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NIJNI NOVGOROD, Aug. 3.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—The great fair of Nijni Novgorod is now at its thickest. It is frequented daily by 300,000 buyers and sellers from all parts of Russia and western Asia, and its exchanges amount to \$5,000,000 every twenty-four hours. They will aggregate \$200,000,000 or \$300,000,000 during the time of the fair, and if our American exporters had their goods here on sale our trade with Russia might be increased to an enormous extent.

Indeed, the United States should study the fairs of Russia and lay out a trade route for the American invasion along the lines of their meeting. This country does business after the style of the middle ages. It has more than 10,000 fairs to which the people come from all quarters to buy and sell, and if our American goods could be placed in them our factories should have to employ extra hands.

I have the figures of the exchanges of these fairs before me. They are furnished by the Treasury department of Russia and may be considered correct. Central Russia has 2,000 fairs every year with exchanges amounting to \$300,000,000, which, if I remember correctly, is as great as the foreign trade of all China a few years ago. Eastern Russia has 2,000 fairs, with returns of \$25,000,000, and Little Russia, 2,000, with a sale of more than \$80,000,000 worth of goods. In southern Russia there are 825 fairs annually, with \$50,000,000 of exchanges; in middle Russia, 2,300, with \$35,000,000, and in the Baltic region, 1,500 fairs, with a business of \$5,000,000.

Away up along the Arctic ocean there are 400 fairs, which do a business of more than \$7,000,000, and in Siberia the fairs already number 500, with annual returns amounting to \$25,000,000. In central Asia the exact number of fairs is not known, but their sales amount to \$20,000,000 a year, and, in addition to this, there are 1,200 fairs in Poland and some in other parts of the empire. Altogether \$500,000,000 worth of business is annually done in the Russian fairs alone.

Many of these fairs have their specialties. I describe those of Nijni Novgorod, the greatest of all, farther on in this letter. The fair at Irbit in the government of Perm is held during the month of February. It is largely frequented by people from Siberia and China. It handles tea, silks, camel's hair and goat's wool from China and Central Asia, and furs, hides, fish, honey, butter and oil from Siberia, as well as all kinds of wares, from Russia in Europe. Its sales amount to \$40,000,000.

There is another fair in the same region of about the same character which sells over \$2,000,000 worth of goods, and one known as the fair of Karavan, not far from here, which deals almost exclusively

in metals, especially iron and cast-iron. Its annual exchanges are about \$1,000,000.

There is a big June fair not far from here which deals chiefly in timber, and there are fairs in the south devoted to live stock to which whole droves of horses are brought in from the plains for sale. There are a vast number of agricultural fairs, where our farm implements could be sold in great quantities, and the northern fairs have large sales of fish and furs, codliver oil and such things.

I despair of giving you a vivid description of the fair of Nijni Novgorod. It is one of the wonders of the world and is a greater wonder every year. It was predicted that the Transiberian road would kill it, but it is growing and its exchanges are greater than ever.

Think of a city with a population of 200,000 merchants which does business for only about a month every year, and that a business running into the hundreds of millions. Think of a city which has grown up to accommodate this business and which for one month is full of life and trade, but for the rest of the year is as dead as a graveyard, and you have some idea of Nijni Novgorod.

The word "fair," however, gives you a poor idea. It makes you think of tents and booths and ragged buildings with flags flying. You imagine circuses, fake shows and merry-go-rounds. Nijni Novgorod has all these, but they are on the outskirts. The real town is more like a substantial wholesale business center trading quietly and without noise. The fair city is located on a narrow tongue of land where the great rivers Volga and Oka join. It is washed on each side by water, and the rivers for miles are filled with shipping, loading and discharging goods. There are something like ten miles of wharves covered with merchandise of all kinds, and carts and wagons moving to and from them into the city.

The fair is a real city, not one of boards and canvass. It is a city of stone and mortar, of 7,000 stores in good business buildings. It has miles of streets paved with cobblestones and with sidewalks of stone flagging. It has street cars, electric lights, theaters and big hotels. It has great golden domed churches full of treasure, presided over by long-haired priests in gowns of gold brocade. It has also a city hall and police to keep it in order. It has its stock exchange and its board of management and in fact everything that you will find in a great business center. Notwithstanding this, the city is alive only about one month of the year, and that month is now.

Suppose we go across the Oka and look at it. We are now in Nijni Novgorod proper, a town of about 100,000 people, a mile or more away from the fair. We are on a high hill separated from the fair city by the wide and fast flowing river. This

part of Nijni is the government of the province and has a large trade.

We stroll down to the bridge of boats, which connects this city with the fair proper, and make our way in and out through the endless caravan of goods and people which is always passing to and fro on it. There are hundreds of Russian wagons pulled by shaggy horses with high yokes over their necks and driven by shaggy Russian peasants in red shirts and trousers and yellow straw shoes. Their wagons are loaded with all sorts of goods. There at our right is a caravan of hides, the horses tied to the wagons in front and their drivers asleep on the skins. Behind comes a train of wagons containing hogsheds of wine from south Russia, and here at the left is one of great plates of steel.

See those carts going by now. They are filled with skin covered boxes marked with characters in Chinese. They contain tea, and have come here on camels from China via Kiahkta and Hankow. Then there are great loads of cotton, of wool, hardware and tools of all kinds. This stream of wagons flows on from daybreak until late in the evening all the fair through.

Watch out for those droschkie! The horses are on the dead run and the fat droschky drivers clad in blue broadcloth stretch out their arms as though to push on the reins and make them go faster. Some of the carriages contain Russian officials and we smaller men should keep out of the way.

Stop here in the middle of the bridge and look at the river. We are crossing the Oka. The Volga you can see further down where the Oka flows in and the two go on together. This river is but a branch of the main stream, but it is a mile wide at this point. It has a vast trade and is navigable for hundreds of miles. The Volga is 2,300 miles long. It is the longest river in Europe and with its tributaries it has almost 7,000 miles of navigable waterways, all of which contribute to this great Nijni fair. You can see something of the shipping by the boats in the Oka. They are of all kinds and they come from all parts of the empire, from St. Petersburg to the Caspian sea. The Volga is connected with St. Petersburg by canal and above Nijni alone it has 14,000 boats, employing 300,000 men, while from here to the Caspian there are, it is estimated, 8,500 more manned by 200,000 sailors and boatmen.

Over there on the banks you can see them unloading the steamers. The goods are taken off on rude wheelbarrows by shaggy-haired peasants in long boots and clothes of red cotton. They wear caps or go bare-headed and also barefooted; they look dirty and savage. Here they carry great boxes and bales on saddles on their backs, like the porters of Constantinople, and there they drag along iron rails or roll boxes over and over. The banks are filled with mountains

of cotton and wool. There are iron and steel yards and great pens filled with all sorts of goods.

But here we are in the city. There are carts and wagons moving this way and that. The carriages are as thick as they were on the bridge and foot passengers throng the sidewalks and streets. The most of the people are Russians, but we now and then see Persians, Armenians, Turks and Chinese. There is one street devoted to the stores of the Orient, where are rugs, perfumes and all sorts of Turkish goods. There is another devoted to Persian wares and another where the things are altogether Chinese.

The streets are wide. They are lined with two-story brick buildings, with windows of glass and shops fitted up like our stores at home. Many of them have porches in front so that you can walk from store to store, keeping out of the sun.

Nearly every business has its own section. At the right as we leave the bridge are long streets devoted to metals and hardware. Great piles of iron, lead, copper and other things lie out on the sidewalks. Most of the business is wholesale and single transactions often amount to thousands of dollars. Here are great piles of chains of all sizes, sheets of lead and copper as big as a table cloth, iron bars and leaden pigs piled up like cord wood. This street runs along the Oka and the stores upon it are filled to overflowing. The Russians make excellent iron and they can do anything in metal. Last year the empire produced about 3,000,000 tons of pig iron and 1,500,000 tons of rolled steel of various kinds.

This same section is devoted to hardware. In some blocks we find cutlery stores containing knives as fine as any made in Sheffield, as well as excellent razors, scissors and all sorts of tools. There are great steel mills not far from Nijni, and there are works making farm tools in many parts of the empire. We sell the Russians some agricultural machinery, but they make more at home. Their output of farm tools last year amounted to \$5,000,000; they manufacture shovels, spades, rakes and all sorts of scales, as well as larger machines of various kinds. The Germans are more important as competitors than we are, and we find their goods mixed in almost every store. None of the tools are as well finished as ours, and every kind of our improved farm machinery could be sold here at a profit.

Passing around the cathedral, which is near the hardware section, we come to the bell bazaar. This is a section which sells bells of all kinds, from a farm dinner bell to some almost as big as a haystack. The bells shine like silver. They are made of bronze and white metal, the larger ones costing thousands of dol-

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