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I have been given my papers and can start to-night. Splendid, after having had to spend 1906. several hours a day, for two weeks, in calling on ministries and other Government offices. July 6th. I leave by the night express.

Arrived in Moscow. Left for Nizhni-Novgorod<sup>1</sup> in the evening.

July 7th.

Just had time to see the old Kremlin before boarding the river steamer »Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna«. The passengers are very second-rate. One of them, a tall, young Roman-Catholic priest, is on his way from Saxony to Saratov; he has been given a living in one of the flourishing German settlements in that neighbourhood. The political situation is the general topic of conversation. The priest declares that the only hope for Russia is the formation of a party similar to the Catholic Centre in Germany. Splendid weather. The landscape is fairly hilly. Much traffic in the port of Nizhni-Novgorod,<sup>1</sup> steam launches, ships, timber rafts, etc., and yet trade is by no means brisk this summer. The journey is thoroughly enjoyable. Brief halts. Rapid progress. One lovely scene succeeds another, the landscape presenting a series of characteristic and beautiful pictures as it changes slowly from hilly woodland to a flat, yellow, sandy steppe. The towns we pass afford little of interest to a traveller already acquainted with Russian provincial towns. They cover too large an area in proportion to the population; the houses are small and in poor repair, surrounded by ill-kept gardens, and connected by dusty streets, badly paved or not paved at all and flanked by walks consisting of two parallel boards resting on logs. The larger towns boast squalid horse-trams, drawn by pathetic-looking beasts. In five days, with short stops at Kazan, Simbirsk, Samara, Sizran, Saratov and Tzaritzin, we reach Astrakhan, situated on one of the mouths of the Volga — a mouth so wide that it could be mistaken for a gulf. An immense number of boats, ships, barges, floating offices, timber rafts, »belyanas«, oil tankers, etc., help to make the river livelier than usual. I was just in time to have my luggage removed to the »General Kaufmann«, a river steamer that took us out to the steamers in the outer roads which navigate the Caspian. Mrs. G., an old friend from St. Petersburg,<sup>2</sup> and her husband came with me. It was windy and rainy. We reached the roads towards evening and left immediately on

<sup>1</sup> now »Gorki«.

<sup>2</sup> now »Leningrad«.