

THE WANDERING JEW



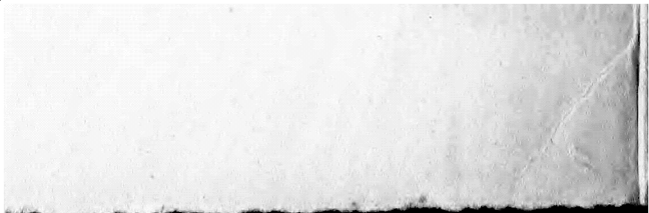
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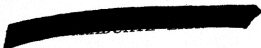


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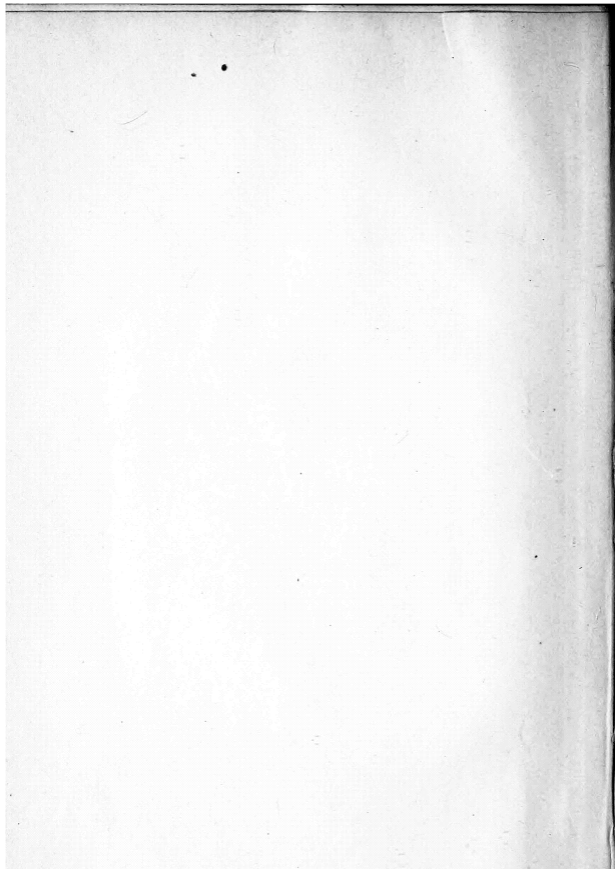
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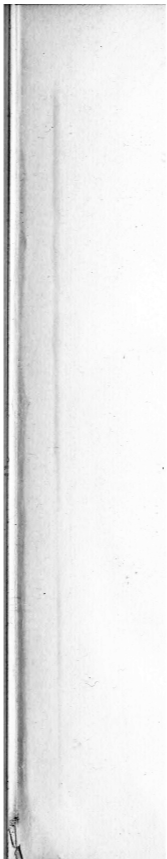


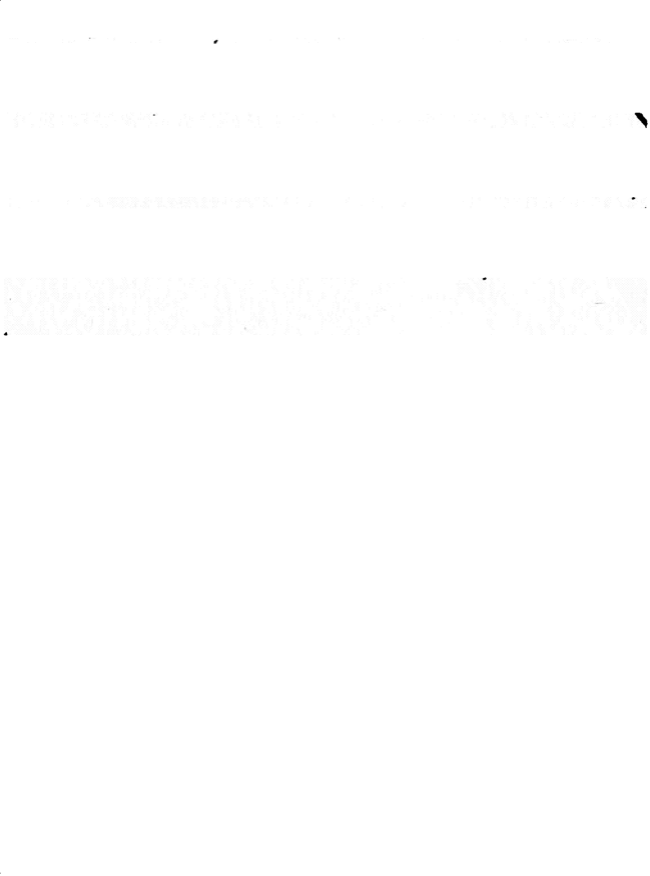


THE WANDERING JEW











The Dagobert Edition

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THE WANDERING JEW

By
Eugene Sue

In Three Volumes
Volume I.

Illustrated



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THE
WANDERING JEW



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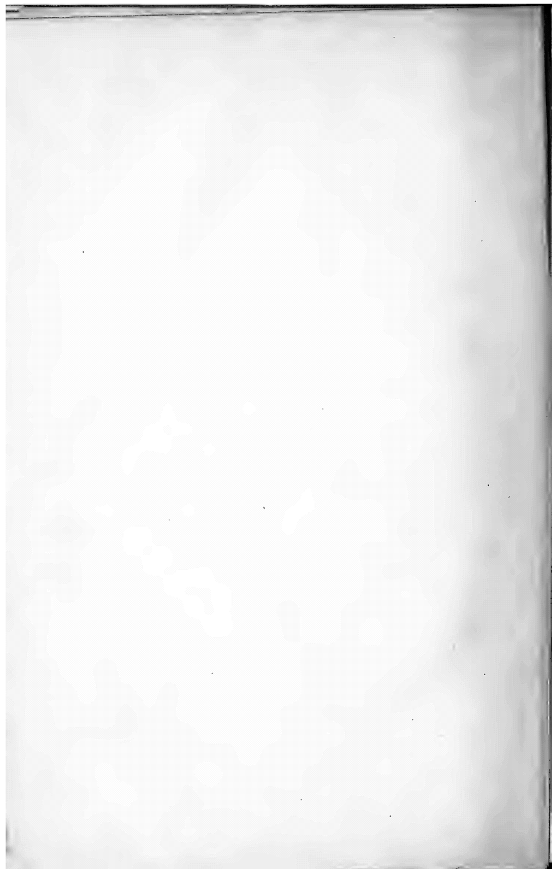
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THE WANDERING JEW.

PROLOGUE.

THE TWO WORLDS.

THE Arctic Ocean is encircled by a belt of eternal ice, the desert boundaries of Siberia and of Northern America — the extreme limits of the two worlds are separated by the narrow Straits of Behring.

The month of September is just at its close.

The equinox comes in with darkness and the northern storms, — night will soon displace one of the short and dull days of the poles.

The sky, of a dark violet colour, is feebly lighted by a sun which is without heat, whose white disc, scarcely seen above the horizon, turns pale before the dazzling brightness of the snow which covers and conceals the vast steppes.

To the north, this desert is bounded by a coast bristling with black and gigantic rocks. At the foot of their Titanic piles lies, motionless, the vast ocean, with its ice-bound waves, extended chains of frozen mountains, whose blue-tinted peaks are lost from view in a mass of snowy vapour.

To the east, between the two peaks of Cape Oulikine, the eastern confine of Siberia, there is visible a line of darkish green, whence slowly creep forth numerous white and glassy icebergs.

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It is Behring's Straits.

Beyond it, and towering above it, are the vast granitic masses of the Cape de Galles, the extreme point of North America. These desolate latitudes belong no more to the habitable world; their piercing and fierce cold rends the very stones, cleaves the trees, and bursts the ground, which groans in producing the germs of its icy herbage.

No human being would seem endued with power to dare the solitude of these regions of frost and tempest — of famine and of death.

Yet, strange to say, we trace steps on the snow which covers these deserts, these last boundaries of two continents divided by Behring's Straits.

On the American side are seen footprints which, by their smallness and lightness, denote a woman's presence.

She has moved in the direction of the rocks, from whose heights are seen, beyond the strait, the icy steppes of Siberia.

On the Siberian side footmarks, larger and deeper, denote the presence of a man. He, too, has turned towards the strait. It would seem that this man and this woman, thus reaching, from opposite directions, the extremities of the globe, have passed to see each other across the narrow armlet of the sea which separates the two worlds.

Still more strange! This man and this woman have crossed these solitudes during a fearful tempest.

Some black pines, the growth of centuries, pointing their bent heads in different directions of the solitude, like crosses in a churchyard, have been torn up, broken, and hurled in various places by the storm.

Through the raging hurricane, which uproots huge trees, which drives before it the mountains of ice and dashes them in masses against each other with the noise of thunder, — through this awful storm these travellers have made their way.

Yes, they have made their way without deviating, even

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for a pace, from the straight line which they have pursued, as might be seen from their equal, regular, and well-defined foot-track.

Who can they be, these two beings, who march onward thus calm and resolved in the midst of the convulsions and throes of nature ?

Chance, will, or fatality has formed beneath the iron-shod shoe of the man seven projecting nails which form a cross :



And everywhere he leaves this trace.

To see these deep imprints in the hard and polished ice, one could compare it to a sheet of marble stamped by a foot of iron.

But now a night without twilight has succeeded to day.

Dark, dark night !

By the bright refraction of the sun on the sea, the steppe loses its pure whiteness beneath a heavy cupola of so deep a blue that it would seem black ; the pale stars are lost in the depths of this palpable obscure.

Silence reigns !

But towards the Straits of Behring a feeble glimmer appears in the horizon. At first it is softly brilliant, blue as the light which precedes the rising of the moon ; then the brightness increases, spreads, and assumes a roseate hue.

In the other quarters of the heavens the darkness waxes deeper, and the whitened extent of the desert is hardly distinguishable from the midnight blackness of the vaulted firmament.

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In the midst of this obscurity are heard strange, confused sounds.

It would seem like the flight of large night-birds as they flap their wings noisily around and over the plain.

But no cry is heard.

This fearful silence betokens the approach of one of those imposing phenomena which strike with terror all animated beings, from the mere savage to the most timid. An *aurora borealis*, that magnificent spectacle so frequent in the polar regions, is at hand.

In the horizon there appears a half circle of dazzling brightness. From the centre of this shining hemisphere immense columns of light jet forth, which, rising to measureless heights, illumine heaven, earth, and sea. These rays, burning like fire, glide along the snows of the desert, empurpling the blue tops of the mountains of ice, and tinting with a deepened red the tall black rocks of the two continents.

After having reached the fullness of magnificence, the *aurora borealis* grows gradually pale, and its clear brightness becomes lost in a luminous mist.

At this moment, owing to the singular effect of the mirage, frequent in these latitudes, the American coast, although separated from Siberia by the interposition of an arm of the sea, appears suddenly so near that it would seem as though a bridge might be thrown from one world to the other.

At this instant, in the midst of that transparent and pale blue vapour, which pervaded the two worlds, two human figures were discernable.

On the Siberian cape, a man on his knees extended his arms towards America, with a gesture of measureless despair.

On the American promontory, a young and lovely woman responded to this attitude of hopeless wretchedness by pointing her taper finger towards heaven.

For several seconds these two tall figures might be

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seen pale and shadowy in the parting rays of the aurora borealis.

But the mist thickened gradually, and all was lost in the growing darkness.

Whence came these two beings who thus met in the polar glaciers at the very extremities of the earth?

Who were these two creatures, brought together for one instant by a deceptive mirage, but who seemed separated for eternity?