"The VOLGA BOATMAN"
(LES BATELIERS de la VOLGA)
Starring
PIERRE BLANCHAR
VOLGA BOATMEN

Serenely wending its course through the immense Russian steppes runs a mighty river—The Volga. Like a long and curly serpent, it trails its muddy waters down to the Caspian Sea. Today on the banks of this mighty Father of all the waters in Russia, we see a group of derelicts toiling along, tied to their miserable life of hauling the Volga barges up and down the river, their eyes bloodshot, their feet covered with rags and swollen from hours and hours of marching over hard rocks, over sand, and over muddy mashes; weary in body and soul.

There is one face that stands out in this forsaken lot, a youngish face but showing signs of toil in his sunken cheek bones. He pulls hard on those ropes that chain him to the boat, as if life itself were chained within him. All of a sudden one of their gang sees something in the bushes. They investigate and find a woman washed ashore. Our hero, Borzine, has her taken aboard the barge and cared for. He recognizes her, and the old and almost forgotten past flashes before him.

A young and dashing officer of the Imperial Army, on leave, makes the acquaintance of a charming lady on board one of the Volga pleasure boats. They fall in love with each other, and neither reveals their identity. He knows her only as Lydia. After a night which was meant for love, she disappears but he vows to find her again.

Reporting to his Colonel Goreff, he is invited to a military ball, and here he finds his love again. But she turns out to be the wife of his Colonel. He does not wish to give her up, but after much persuasion she makes him promise not to annoy her so as not to cause any scandal.

Back on duty, he is instructed by the Colonel to take some plans to the Ministry. As they are very important he is told to be very cautious. He arrivers at the ministry only to find the plans missing from his briefcase. For this negligence he is court-martialed, degraded and sentenced to imprisonment in a fortress. But he escapes and joins the legion of forgotten men, the Volga Boatmen.

But now he has found his love again, and he will not lose her again. He sends his trusted friend, Broinka, to her mansion. There he arranges an appointment for his friend but the Colonel overhears and in place of his wife, he awaits Borzine. He threatens him with exposure and re-arrest but Borzine does not care any more.

Lydia also wants Borzine. She has had enough of the Colonel's crazy jealousy. She has Borzine arrested and the trial re-opened. She admits that she was the last person who was with Borzine before his plans disappeared, and as she is above suspicion she infers that it must have been some one else who took the plans. She insinuates to the judge that there was one person who had every interest to get rid of Lieut. Borzine, and when the judge inquires who that person might be, a shot rings out, and Colonel Goreff falls dead to the floor. The answer is given and Lieut. Borzine is completely rehabilitated.