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CATHEDRAL AT OSTANKION, NEAR MOSCOW.

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CHAPTER I

THE ANCIENT SCYTHIANS

Far over the eastern half of Europe extends a vast and mighty plain, spreading thousands of miles to the north and south, to the east and west, in the north a land of forests, in the south and east a region of treeless levels. Here stretches the Black Land, whose deep dark soil is fit for endless harvests; here are the arable steppes, a vast fertile prairie land, and here again the barren steppes, fit only for wandering herds and the tents of nomad shepherds. Across this great plain, in all directions, flow myriads of meandering streams, many of them swelling into noble rivers, whose waters find their outlet in great seas. Over it blow the biting winds of the Arctic zone, chaining its waters in fetters of ice for half the year. On it in summer shine warm suns, in whose enlivening rays life flows full again.

Such is the land with which we have to deal, Russia, the seeding-place of nations, the home of restless tribes. Here the vast level of Northern Asia spreads like a sea over half of Europe, following the lowlands between the Urals and the Caspian Sea. Over these broad plains the fierce horsemen of the East long found an easy pathway to the rich and doomed cities of the West. Russia was playing its part in the grand drama of the nations in far-off days when such a land was hardly known to exist.

Have any of my readers ever from a hill-top looked out over a broad, low-lying meadow-land filled with morning mist, a dense white shroud under which everything lay hidden, all life and movement lost to view? In such a scene, as the mist thins under the rays of the rising sun, vague forms at first dimly appear, magnified and monstrous in their outlines, the shadows of a buried wonderland. Then, as the mist slowly lifts, like a

great white curtain, living and moving objects appear below, still of strange outlines and unnatural dimensions.. Finally, as if by the sweep of an enchanter's wand, the mists vanish, the land lies clear under the solar rays, and we perceive that these seeming monsters and giants are but the familiar forms which we know so well, those of houses and trees, men and their herds, actively stirring beneath us, clearly revealed as the things of every day.

It is thus that the land of Russia appears to us when the mists of prehistoric time first begin to lift. Half-formed figures appear, rising, vanishing, showing large through the vapor; stirring, interwoven, endlessly coming and going; a phantasmagoria which it is impossible more than half to understand. At that early date the great Russian plain seems to have been the home of unnumbered tribes of varied race and origin, made up of men doubtless full of hopes and aspirations like ourselves, yet whose story we fail to read on the blurred page of history, and concerning whom we must rest content with knowing a few of the names.

Yet progressive civilizations had long existed in the countries to the south, Egypt and Assyria, Greece and Persia. History was actively being made there, but it had not penetrated the mist-laden North. The Greeks founded colonies on the northern shores of the Black Sea, but they troubled themselves little about the seething tribes with whom they came there into contact. The land they called Scythia, and its people Scythians, but the latter were scarcely known until about 500 B.C., when Darius, the great Persian king, crossed the Danube and invaded their country. He found life there in abundance, and more war-like activity than he relished, for the fierce nomads drove him and his army in terror from their soil, and only fortune and a bridge of boats saved them from perishing.

It was this event that first gave the people of old Russia a place on the page of history. Herodotus, the charming old historian and story-teller, wrote down for us all he could learn about them, though what he says has probably as much fancy in it as fact.

We are told that these broad levels were formerly inhabited by a people called the Cimmerians, who were driven out by the Scythians and went—it is hard to tell whither. A shadow of their name survives in the Crimea, and some believe that they were the ancestors of the Cymri, the Celts of the West.

The Scythians, who thus came into history like a cloud of war, made the god of war their chief deity. The temples which they built to this deity were of the simplest, being great heaps of fagots, which were added to every year as they rotted away under the rains. Into the top of the heap was thrust an ancient iron sword as the emblem of the god. To this grim symbol more victims were sacrificed than to all the other deities; not only cattle and horses, but prisoners taken in battle, of whom one out of every hundred died to honor the god, their blood being caught in vessels and poured on the sword.

A people with a worship like this must have been savage in grain. To prove their prowess in war they cut off the heads of the slain and carried them to the king. Like the Indians of the West, they scalped their enemies. These scalps, softened by treatment, they used as napkins at their meals, and even sewed them together to make cloaks. Here was a refinement in barbarity undreamed of by the Indians.

These were not their only savage customs. They drank the blood of the first enemy killed by them in battle, and at their high feasts used drinking-cups made from the skulls of their foes. When a chief died cruelty was given free vent. The slaves and horses of the dead chief were slain at his grave, and placed upright like a circle of horsemen around the royal tomb, being impaled on sharp timbers to keep them in an upright position.

Tribes with habits like these have no history. There is nothing in their careers worth the telling, and no one to tell it if there were. Their origin, manners, and customs may be of interest, but not their intertribal quarrels.

Herodotus tells us of others besides the Scythians. There were the Melanchlainai, who dressed only in black; the Neuri,

who once a year changed into wolves; the Agathyrei, who took pleasure in trinkets of gold; the Sauromati, children of the Amazons, or women warriors; the Argippeï, bald-headed and snub-nosed from their birth; the Issedones, who feasted on the dead bodies of their parents; the Arimaspians, a one-eyed race; the Gryphons, guardians of great hoards of gold; the Hyperboreans, in whose land white feathers (snow-flakes?) fell all the year round from the skies.

Such is the mixture of fact and fable which Herodotus learned from the traders and travellers of Greece. We know nothing of these tribes but the names. Their ancestors may have dwelt for thousands of years on the Russian plains; their descendants may still make up part of the great Russian people and retain some of their old-time habits and customs; but of their doings history takes no account.

The Scythians, who occupied the south of Russia, came into contact with the Greek trading colonies north of the Black Sea, and gained from them some little veneer of civilization. They aided the Greeks in their commerce, took part in their caravans to the north and east, and spent some portion of the profits of their peaceful labor in objects of art made for them by Greek artists.

This we know, for some of these objects still exist. Jewels owned by the ancient Scythians may be seen to-day in Russian museums. Chief in importance among these relics are two vases of wonderful interest kept in the museum of the Hermitage, at St. Petersburg. These are the silver vase of Nicopol and the golden vase of Kertch, both probably as old as the days of Herodotus. These vases speak with history. On the silver vase we may see the faces and forms of the ancient Scythians, men with long hair and beards and large features. They resemble in dress and aspect the people who now dwell in the same country, and they are shown in the act of breaking in and bridling their horses, just as their descendants do to-day. Progress has had no place on these broad plains. There life stands still.

On the golden vase appear figures who wear pointed caps and dresses ornamented in the Asiatic fashion, while in their hands are bows of strange shape. But their features are those of men of Aryan descent, and in them we seem to see the far-off progenitors of the modern Russians.

Herodotus, in his chatty fashion, tells us various problematical stories of the Scythians, premising that he does not believe them all himself. A tradition with them was that they were the youngest of all nations, being descended from Targitaus, one of the numerous sons of Jove. The three children of Targitaus for a time ruled the land, but their joint rule was changed by a prodigy. There fell from the skies four implements of gold,—a plough, a yoke, a battle-axe, and a drinking-cup. The oldest brother hastened eagerly to seize this treasure, but it burst into flame at his approach. The second then made the attempt, but was in his turn driven back by the scorching flames. But on the approach of the youngest the flames vanished, the gold grew cool, and he was enabled to take possession of the heaven-given implements. His elders then withdrew from the throne, warned by this sign from the gods, and left him sole ruler. The story proceeds that the royal gold was guarded with the greatest care, yearly sacrifices being made in its honor. If its guardian fell asleep in the open air during the sacrifices he was doomed to die within the year. But as reward for the faithful keeping of his trust he received as much land as he could ride round on horseback in a day.

The old historian further tells us that the Scythian warriors invaded the kingdom of Media, which they conquered and held for twenty-eight years. During this long absence strange events were taking place at home. They had held many slaves, whom it was their custom to blind, as they used them only to stir the milk in the great pot in which koumiss, their favorite beverage, was made.

The wives of the absent warriors, after years of waiting, gave up all hopes of their return and married the blind slaves;

and while the masters tarried in Media the children of their slaves grew to manhood.

The time at length came when the warriors, filled with home-sickness, left the subject realm to seek their native plains. As they marched onward they found themselves stopped by a great dike, dug from the Tauric Mountains to Lake Maeotis, behind which stood a host of youthful warriors. They were the children of the slaves, who were determined to keep the land for themselves. Many battles were fought, but the young men held their own bravely, and the warriors were in despair.

Then one of them cried to his fellows,—

"What foolish thing are we doing, Scythians? These men are our slaves, and every one of them that falls is a loss to us; while each of us that falls reduces our number. Take my advice, lay aside spear and bow, and let each man take his horsewhip and go boldly up to them. So long as they see us with arms in our hands they fancy that they are our equals and fight us bravely. But let them see us with only whips, and they will remember that they are slaves and flee like dogs from before our faces."

It happened as he said. As the Scythians approached with their whips the youths were so astounded that they forgot to fight, and ran away in trembling terror. And so the warriors came home, and the slaves were put to making koumiss again.

These fabulous stories of the early people of Russia may be followed by an account of their funeral customs, left for us by an Arabian writer who visited their land in the ninth century. He tells us that for ten days after the death of one of their great men his friends bewailed him, showing the depth of their grief by getting drunk on koumiss over his corpse.

Then the men-servants were asked which of them would be buried with his master. The one that consented was instantly seized and strangled. The same question was put to the women, one of whom was sure to accept. There may have been some rare

future reward offered for death in such a cause. The willing victim was bathed, adorned, and treated like a princess, and did nothing but drink and sing while the obsequies lasted.

On the day fixed for the end of the ceremonies, the dead man was laid in a boat, with part of his arms and garments. His favorite horse was slain and laid in the boat, and with it the corpse of the man-servant. Then the young girl was led up. She took off her jewels, a glass of kvass was put in her hand, and she sang a farewell song.

"All at once," says the writer, "the old woman who accompanied her, and whom they called the angel of death, bade her to drink quickly, and to enter into the cabin of the boat, where lay the dead body of her master. At these words she changed color, and as she made some difficulty about entering, the old woman seized her by the hair, dragged her in, and entered with her. The men immediately began to beat their shields with clubs to prevent the other girls from hearing the cries of their companion, which might prevent them one day dying for their master."

The boat was then set on fire, and served as a funeral pile, in which living and dead alike were consumed.

CHAPTER II

OLEG THE VARANGIAN

For ages and ages, none can say how many, the great plain of Russia existed as a nursery of tribes, some wandering with their herds, some dwelling in villages and tilling their fields, but all warlike and all barbarians. And over this plain at intervals swept conquering hordes from Asia, the terrible Huns, the devastating Avars, and others of varied names. But as yet the Russia we know did not exist, and its very name had never been heard.

As time went on, the people in the centre and north of the country became peaceful and prosperous, since the invaders did not cross their borders, and a great and wealthy city arose, whose commerce in time extended on the east as far as Persia and India, on the south to Constantinople, and on the west far through the Baltic Sea. Though seated in Russia, still largely a land of barbarous tribes, Novgorod became one of the powerful cities of the earth, making its strength felt far and wide, placing the tribes as far as the Ural Mountains under tribute, and growing so strong and warlike that it became a common saying among the people, "Who can oppose God and Novgorod the Great?"

But trouble arose for Novgorod. Its chief trade lay through the Baltic Sea, and here its ships met those terrible Scandinavian pirates who were then the ocean's lords. Among these bold rovers were the Danes who descended on England, the Normans who won a new home in France, the daring voyagers who discovered Iceland and Greenland, and those who sailed up the Mediterranean as far as Constantinople, conquering kingdoms as they went.

To some of these Scandinavians the merchants of Novgorod turned for aid against the others. Bands of them had made their way into Russia and settled on the eastern shores of

the Baltic. To these the Novgorodians appealed in their trouble, and in the year 862 asked three Varangian brothers, Rurik, Sinaf, and Truvor, to come to their aid. The warlike brothers did so, seated themselves on the frontier of the republic of Novgorod, drove off its foes—and became its foes themselves. The people of Novgorod, finding their trade at the mercy of their allies, submitted to their power, and in 864 invited Rurik to become their king. His two brothers had meantime died.

Thus it was that the Russian empire began, for the Varangians came from a country called Ross, from which their new realm gained the name of Russia.

Rurik took the title of Grand Prince, made his principal followers lords of the cities of his new realm, and the republic of Novgorod came to an end in form, though not in spirit. It is interesting to note at this point that Russia, which began as a republic, has ended as one of the most absolute of monarchies. The first step in its subjection was taken when Novgorod invited Rurik the Varangian to be its prince; the other steps came later, one by one.

For fifteen years Rurik remained lord of Novgorod, and then died and left his four-year-old son Igor as his heir, with Oleg, his kinsman, as regent of the realm. It is the story of Oleg, as told by Nestor, the gossip old Russian chronicler, that we propose here to tell, but it seemed useful to precede it by an account of how the Russian empire came into existence.

Oleg was a man of his period, a barbarian and a soldier born; brave, crafty, adventurous, faithful to Igor, his ward, cruel and treacherous to others. Under his rule the Russian dominions rapidly and widely increased.

At an earlier date two Varangians, Askhold and Dir by name, had made their way far to the south, where they became masters of the city of Kief. They even dared to attack Constantinople, but were driven back from that great stronghold of the South.

It by no means pleased Oleg to find this powerful kingdom founded in the land which he had set out to subdue. He determined that Kief should be his, and in 882 made his way to its vicinity. But it was easier to reach than to take. Its rulers were brave, their Varangian followers were courageous, the city was strong. Oleg, doubting his power to win it by force of arms, determined to try what could be done by stratagem and treachery.

Leaving his army, and taking Igor with him, he floated down the Dnieper with a few boats, in which a number of armed men were hidden, and at length landed near the ancient city of Kief, which stood on high ground near the river. Placing his warriors in ambush, he sent a messenger to Askhold and Dir, with the statement that a party of Varangian merchants, whom the prince of Novgorod had sent to Greece, had just landed, and desired to see them as friends and men of their own race.

Those were simple times, in which even the rulers of cities did not put on any show of state. On the contrary, the two princes at once left the city and went alone to meet the false merchants. They had no sooner arrived than Oleg threw off his mask. His followers sprang from their ambush, arms in hand.

"You are neither princes nor of princely birth," he cried; "but I am a prince, and this is the son of Rurik."

And at a sign from his hand Askhold and Dir were laid dead at his feet.

By this act of base treachery Oleg became the master of Kief. No one in the city ventured to resist the strong army which he quickly brought up, and the metropolis of the south opened its gates to the man who had wrought murder under the guise of war. It is not likely, though, that Oleg sought to justify his act on any grounds. In those barbarous days, when might made right, murder was too much an every-day matter to be deeply considered by any one.

Oleg was filled with admiration of the city he had won. "Let Kief be the mother of all the Russian cities!" he exclaimed. And such it became, for he made it his capital, and for three centuries it remained the capital city of the Russian realm.

What he principally admired it for was its nearness to Constantinople, the capital of the great empire of the East, on which, like the former lords of Kief, he looked with greedy and envious eyes.

For long centuries past Greece and the other countries of the South had paid little heed to the dwellers on the Russian plains, of whose scattered tribes they had no fear. But with the coming of the Varangians, the conquest of the tribes, and the founding of a wide-spread empire, a different state of affairs began, and from that day to this Constantinople has found the people of the steppes its most dangerous and persistent foes.

Oleg was not long in making the Greek empire feel his heavy hand. Filling the minds of his followers and subjects with his own thirst for blood and plunder, he set out with an army of eighty thousand men, in two thousand barks, passed the cataracts of the Borysthenes, crossed the Black Sea, murdered the subjects of the empire in hosts, and, as the chronicles say, sailed overland with all sails set to the port of Constantinople itself. What he probably did was to have his vessels taken over a neck of land on wheels or rollers.

Here he threw the imperial city into mortal terror, fixed his shield on the very gate of Constantinople, and forced the emperor to buy him off at the price of an enormous ransom. To the treaty made the Varangian warriors swore by their gods Perune and Voloss, by their rings, and by their swords,—gold and steel, the things they honored most and most desired.

Then back in triumph they sailed to Kief, rich with booty, and ever after hailing their leader as the Wise Man, or Magician. Eight years afterwards Oleg made a treaty of alliance and commerce with Constantinople, in which Greeks and Russians stood on equal footing. Russia had made a remarkable

stride forward as a nation since Rurik was invited to Novgorod a quarter-century before.

For thirty-three years Oleg held the throne. His was too strong a hand to yield its power to his ward. Igor must wait for Oleg's death. He had found a province; he left an empire. In his hands Russia grew into greatness, and from Novgorod to Kief and far and wide to the right and left stretched the lands won by his conquering sword.

He was too great a man to die an ordinary death. According to the tradition, miracle had to do with his passing away. Nestor, the prince of Russian chroniclers, tells us the following story:

Oleg had a favorite horse, which he rode alike in battle and in the hunt, until at length a prediction came from the soothsayers that death would overtake him through his cherished charger. Warrior as he was, he had the superstition of the pagan, and to avoid the predicted fate he sent his horse far away, and for years avoided even speaking of it.

Then, moved by curiosity, he asked what had become of the banished animal. "It died years ago," was the reply; "only its bones remain."

"So much for your soothsayers," he cried, with a contempt that was not unmixed with relief. "That, then, is all this prediction is worth! But where are the bones of my good old horse? I should like to see what little is left of him."

He was taken to the spot where lay the skeleton of his old favorite, and gazed with some show of feeling on the bleaching bones of what had once been his famous war-horse. Then, setting his foot on the skull, he said,—

"So this is the creature that is destined to be my death."

At that moment a deadly serpent that lay coiled up within the skull darted out and fixed its poisonous fangs in the conqueror's foot. And thus ignobly he who had slain men by thousands and conquered an empire came to his death.

CHAPTER III

THE VENGEANCE OF QUEEN OLGA

The death of Oleg brought Igor his ward, then nearly forty years of age, to the throne of Rurik his father. And the same old story of bloodshed and barbarity went on. In those days a king was king in name only. He was really but the chief of a band of plunderers, who dug wealth from the world with the sword instead of the spade, threw it away in wild orgies, and then hounded him into leading them to new wars.

The story of the Northmen is everywhere the same. While in the West they were harrying England, France, and the Mediterranean countries with fire and sword, in the East their Varangian kinsmen were spreading devastation through Russia and the empire of the Greeks.

Like his predecessor, Igor invaded this empire with a great army, landing in Asia Minor and treating the people with such brutal ferocity that no earthquake or volcano could have shown itself more merciless. His prisoners were slaughtered in the most barbarous manner, fire swept away all that havoc had left, and then the Russian prince sailed in triumph against Constantinople, with his ten thousand barks manned by murderers and laden with plunder.

But the Greeks were now ready for their foes. Pouring on them the terrible Greek fire, they drove them back in dismay to Asia Minor, where they were met and routed by the land forces of the empire. In the end Igor hurried home with hardly a third of his great army.

Three years afterward he again led an army in boats against Constantinople, but this time he was bought off by a tribute of gold, silver, and precious stuffs, as Oleg had been before him.

Igor was now more than seventy years old, and naturally desired to spend the remainder of his days in peace, but his followers would not let him rest. The spoils and tribute of the Greeks had quickly disappeared from their open hands, and the warlike profligates demanded new plunder.

"We are naked," they bitterly complained, "while the companions of Sveneld have beautiful arms and fine clothing. Come with us and levy contributions, that we and you may dwell in plenty together."

Igor obeyed—he could not well help himself—and led them against the Drevlians, a neighboring nation already under tribute. Marching into their country, he forced them to pay still heavier tribute, and allowed his soldiers to plunder to their hearts' content.

Then the warriors of Kief marched back, laden with spoils. But the wolfish instincts of Igor were aroused. More, he thought, might be squeezed out of the Drevlians, but he wanted this extra plunder for himself. So he sent his army on to Kief, and went back with a small force to the country of the Drevlians, where he held out his band—with the sword in it—for more.

He got more than he bargained for. The Drevlians, driven to extremity, came with arms instead of gold, attacked the king and his few followers, and killed the whole of them upon the spot. And thus in blood ended the career of this white-haired tribute-seeker.

The fallen prince left behind him a widow named Olga and a son named Sviatoslaf, who was still a child, as Igor had been at the death of his father. So Olga became regent of the kingdom, and Sveneld was made leader of the army.

How deeply Olga loved Igor we are not prepared to say, but we are told some strange tales of what she did to avenge him. These tales we may believe or not, as we please. They are legends only, like those of early Rome, but they are all the

history we have, and so we repeat the story much as old Nestor has told it.

The death of Igor filled the hearts of the Drevlians with hope. Their great enemy was gone; the new prince was a child: might they not gain power as well as liberty? Their prince Male should marry Olga the widow, and all would be well with them.

So twenty of their leading men were sent to Kief, where they presented themselves to the queenly regent. Their offer of an alliance was made in terms suited to the manners of the times.

"We have killed your husband," they said, "because he plundered and devoured like a wolf. But we would be at peace with you and yours. We have good princes, under whom our country thrives. Come and marry our prince Male and be our queen."

Olga listened like one who weighed the offer deeply.

"After all," she said, "my husband is dead, and I cannot bring him to life again. Your proposal seems good to me. Leave me now, and come again to-morrow, when I will entertain you before my people as you deserve. Return to your barks, and when my people come to you to-morrow, say to them. 'We will not go on horseback or on foot; you must carry us in our barks.' Thus you will be honored as I desire you to be."

Back went the Drevlians, glad at heart, for the queen had seemed to them very gracious indeed. But Olga had a deep and wide pit dug before a house outside the city, and next day she went to that house and sent for the ambassadors.

"We will not go on foot or on horseback," they said to the messengers; "carry us in our barks."

"We are your slaves," answered the men of Kief. "Our ruler is slain, and our princess is willing to marry your prince."

So they took up on their shoulders the barks, in which the Drevlians proudly sat like kings on their thrones, and carried

them to the front of the house in which Olga awaited them with smiling lips but ruthless heart.

There, at a sign from her hand, the ambassadors and the barks in which they sat were flung headlong into the yawning pit.

"How do you like your entertainment?" asked the cruel queen.

"Oh!" they cried, in terror, "pity us! Forgive us the death of Igor!"

But they begged in vain, for at her command the pit was filled up and the Drevlians were buried alive.

Then Olga sent messengers to the land of the Drevlians, with this message to their prince:

"If you really wish for me, send me men of the highest consideration in your country, that my people may be induced to let me go, and that I may come to you with honor and dignity."

This message had its effect. The chief men of the country were now sent as ambassadors. They entered Kief over the grave of their murdered countrymen without knowing where they trod, and came to the palace expecting to be hospitably entertained.

Olga had a bath made ready for them, and sent them word,—

"First take a bath, that you may refresh yourselves after the fatigue of your journey, then come into my presence."

The bath was heated, and the Drevlians entered it. But, to their dismay, smoke soon began to circle round them, and flames flashed on their frightened eyes. They ran to the doors, but they were immovable. Olga had ordered them to be made fast and the house to be set on fire, and the miserable bathers were all burned alive.

But even this terrible revenge was not enough for the implacable widow. Those were days when news crept slowly,

and the Drevlians did not dream of Olga's treachery. Once more she sent them a deceitful message: "I am about to repair to you, and beg you to get ready a large quantity of hydromel in the place where my husband was killed, that I may weep over his tomb and honor him with the trizna [funeral banquet]."

The Drevlians, full of joy at this message, gathered honey in quantities and brewed it into hydromel. Then Olga sought the tomb, followed by a small guard who were only lightly armed. For a while she wept over the tomb. Then she ordered a great mound of honor to be heaped over it. When this was done she directed the trizna to be set out.

The Drevlians drank freely, while the men of Kief served them with the intoxicating beverage.

"Where are the friends whom we sent to you?" they asked.

"They are coming with the friends of my husband," she replied.

And so the feast went on until the unsuspecting Drevlians were stupid with drink. Then Olga bade her guards draw their weapons and slay her foes, and a great slaughter began. When it ended, five thousand Drevlians lay dead at her feet.

Olga's revenge was far from being complete: her thirst for blood grew as it was fed. She returned to Kief, collected her army, took her young son with her that he might early learn the art of war, and returned inspired by the rage of vengeance to the land of the Drevlians.

Here she laid waste the country and destroyed the towns. In the end she came to the capital, Korosten, and laid siege to it. Its name meant "wall of bark," so that it was, no doubt, a town of wood, as probably all the Russian towns at that time were.

The siege went on, but the inhabitants defended themselves obstinately, for they knew now the spirit of the woman with whom they had to contend. So a long time passed and Korosten still held out.

Finding that force would not serve, Olga tried stratagem, in which she was such an adept.

"Why do you hold out so foolishly?" she said. "You know that all your other towns are in my power, and your country people are peacefully tilling their fields while you are uselessly dying of hunger. You would be wise to yield; you have no more to fear from me; I have taken full revenge for my slain husband."

The Drevlians, to conciliate her, offered a tribute of honey and furs. This she refused, with a show of generosity, and said that she would ask no more from them than a tribute of a pigeon and three sparrows from each house.

Gladdened by the lightness of this request, the Drevlians quickly gathered the birds asked for, and sent them out to the invading army. They did not dream what treachery lay in Olga's cruel heart. That evening she let all the birds loose with lighted matches tied to their tails. Back to their nests in the town they flew, and soon Korosten was in flames in a thousand places.

In terror the inhabitants fled through their gates, but the soldiers of the bloodthirsty queen awaited them outside, sword in hand, with orders to cut them down without mercy as they appeared. The prince and all the leading men of the state perished, and only the lowest of the populace were left alive, while the whole land thereafter was laid under a load of tribute so heavy that it devastated the country like an invading army and caused the people to groan bitterly beneath the burden.

And thus it was that Olga the widow took revenge upon the murderers of her fallen lord.

CHAPTER IV

VLADIMIR THE GREAT

Vladimir, Grand Prince of Russia before and after the year 1000, won the name not only of Vladimir the Great but of St. Vladimir, though he was as great a reprobate as he was a soldier and monarch, and as unregenerate a sinner as ever sat on a throne. But it was he who made Russia a Christian country, and in reward the Russian Church still looks upon him as "coequal with the Apostles." What he did to deserve this high honor we shall see.

Sviatoslaf, the son of Olga, had proved a hardy soldier. He disdained the palace and lived in the camp. In his marches he took no tent or baggage, but slept in the open air, lived on horse-flesh broiled by himself upon the coals, and showed all the endurance of a Cossack warrior born in the snows. After years of warfare he fell on the field of battle, and his skull, ornamented with a circle of gold, became a drinking-cup for the prince of the Petchenegans, by whose hands he had been slain. His empire was divided between his three sons, Yaropolk reigning in Kief, Oleg becoming prince of the Drevlians, and Vladimir taking Rurik's old capital of Novgorod.

These brothers did not long dwell in harmony. War broke out between Yaropolk and Oleg, and the latter was killed. Vladimir, fearing that his turn would come next, fled to the country of the Varangians, and Yaropolk became lord over all Russia. It is the story of the fugitive prince, and how he made his way from flight to empire and from empire to sainthood, that we are now about to tell.

For two years Vladimir dwelt with his Varangian kinsmen, during which time he lived the wild life of a Norseman, joining the bold vikings in their raids for booty far and wide over the seas of Europe. Then, gathering a large band

of Varangian adventurers, he returned to Novgorod, drove out the men of Yaropolk, and sent word by them to his brother that he would soon call upon him at Kief.

Vladimir quickly proved himself a prince of barbarian instincts. In Polotsk ruled Rogvolod, a Varangian prince, whose daughter Rogneda, famed for her beauty, was betrothed to Yaropolk. Vladimir demanded her hand, but received an insulting reply.

"I will never unboot the son of a slave," said the haughty princess.

It was the custom at that time for brides, on the wedding night, to pull off the boots of their husbands; and Vladimir's mother had been one of Queen Olga's slave women.

But insults like this, to men like Vladimir, are apt to breed bloodshed. Hot with revengeful fury, he marched against Polotsk, killed in battle Rogvolod and his two sons, and forced the disdainful princess to accept his hand still red with her father's blood.

Then he marched against Kief, where Yaropolk, who seems to have had more ambition than courage, shut himself up within the walls. These walls were strong, the people were faithful, and Kief might long have defied its assailant had not treachery dwelt within. Vladimir had secretly bought over a villain named Blude, one of Yaropolk's trusted councillors, who filled his master's mind with suspicion of the people of Kief and persuaded him to fly for safety. His flight gave Kief into his brother's hands.

To Rodnia fled the fugitive prince, where he was closely besieged by Vladimir, to whose aid came a famine so fierce that it still gives point to a common Russian proverb. Flight or surrender became necessary. Yaropolk might have found strong friends among some of the powerful native tribes; but the voice of the traitor was still at his ear, and at Blude's suggestion he gave himself up to Vladimir. It was like the sheep yielding

himself to the wolf. By the victor's order Yaropolk was slain in his father's palace.

And now the traitor sought his reward, Vladimir felt that it was to Blude he owed his empire, and for three days he so loaded him with honors and dignities that the false-hearted wretch deemed himself the greatest among the Russians.

But the villain had been playing with edge tools. At the end of the three days Vladimir called Blude before him.

"I have kept all my promises to you," he said. "I have treated you as my friend; your honors exceed your highest wishes; I have made you lord among my lords. But now," he continued, and his voice grew terrible, "the judge succeeds the benefactor. Traitor and assassin of your prince, I condemn you to death."

And at his stern command the startled and trembling traitor was struck dead in his presence.

The tide of affairs had strikingly turned. Vladimir, late a fugitive, was now lord of all the realm of Russia. His power assured, he showed himself in a new aspect. Yaropolk's widow, a Greek nun of great beauty, was forced to become his wife. Not content with two, he continued to marry until he had no less than six wives, while he filled his palaces with the daughters of his subjects until they numbered eight hundred in all.

"Thereby hangs a tale," as Shakespeare says. Rogneda, Vladimir's first wife, had forgiven him for the murder of her father and brothers, but could not forgive him for the insult of turning her out of his palace and putting other women in her place. She determined to be revenged.

One day when he had gone to see her in the lonely abode to which she had been banished, he fell asleep in her presence. Here was the opportunity her heart craved. Seizing a dagger, she was on the point of stabbing him where he lay, when Vladimir awoke and stopped the blow. While the frightened woman stood

trembling before him, he furiously bade her prepare for death, as she should die by his own hand.

"Put on your wedding dress," he harshly commanded; "seek your handsomest apartment, and stretch yourself on the sumptuous bed you there possess. Die you must, but you have been honored as the wife of Vladimir, and shall not meet an ignoble death."

Rogneda did as she was bidden, yet hope had not left her heart, and she taught her young son Isiaslaf a part which she wished him to play. When the frowning prince entered the apartment where lay his condemned wife, he was met by the boy, who presented him with a drawn sword, saying, "You are not alone, father. Your son will be witness to your deed."

Vladimir's expression changed as he looked at the appealing face of the child.

"Who thought of seeing you here?" he cried, and, flinging the sword to the floor, he hastily left the room.

Calling his nobles together, he told them what had happened and asked their advice.

"Prince," they said, "you should spare the culprit for the sake of the child. Our advice is that you make the boy lord of Rogvolod's principality."

Vladimir did so, sending Rogneda with her son to rule over her father's realm, where he built a new city which he named after the boy.

Vladimir had been born a pagan, and a pagan he was still, worshipping the Varangian deities, in particular the god Perune, of whom he had a statue erected on a hill near his palace adorned with a silver head. On the same sacred hill were planted the statues of other idols, and Vladimir proposed to restore the old human sacrifices by offering one of his own people as a victim to the gods.

For this purpose there was selected a young Varangian who, with his father, had adopted the Christian faith. The father refused to give up his son, and the enraged people, who looked on the refusal as an insult to their prince and their gods, broke into the house and murdered both father and son. These two have since been canonized by the Russian Church as the only martyrs to its faith.

Vladimir by this time had become great in dominion, his warlike prowess extending the borders of Russia on all sides. The nations to the south saw that a great kingdom had arisen on their northern border, ruled by a warlike and conquering prince, and it was deemed wise to seek to win him from the worship of idols to a more elevated faith. Askhold and Dir had been baptized as Christians. Olga, after her bloody revenge, had gone to Constantinople and been baptized by the patriarch. But the nation continued pagan, Vladimir was an idolater in grain, and a great field lay open for missionary zeal.

No less than four of the peoples of the south sought to make a convert of this powerful prince. The Bulgarians endeavored to win him to the religion of Mohammed, picturing to him in alluring language the charms of their paradise, with its lovely houris. But he must give up wine. This was more than he was ready to do.

"Wine is the delight of the Russians," he said: "we cannot do without it."

The envoys of the Christian churches and the Jewish faith also sought to win him over. The appeal of the Jews, however, failed to impress him, and he dismissed them with the remark that they had no country, and that he had no inclination to join hands with wanderers under the ban of Heaven. There remained the Christians, comprising the Roman and Greek Churches, at that time in unison. Of these the Greek Church, the claims of which were presented to him by an advocate from Constantinople, appealed to him most strongly, since its doctrines had been accepted by Queen Olga.

As may be seen, religion with Vladimir was far more a matter of policy than of piety. The gods of his fathers, to whom he had done such honor, had no abiding place in his heart; and that belief which would be most to his advantage was for him the best.

To settle the question he sent ten of his chief boyars, or nobles, to the south, that they might examine and report on the religions of the different countries. They were not long in coming to a decision. Mohammedanism and Catholicism, they said, they had found only in poor and barbarous provinces. Judaism had no land to call its own. But the Greek faith dwelt in a magnificent metropolis, and its ceremonies were full of pomp and solemnity.

"If the Greek religion were not the best," they said, in conclusion, "Olga, your ancestress, and the wisest of mortals, would never have thought of embracing it."

Pomp and solemnity won the day, and Vladimir determined to follow Olga's example. As to what religion meant in itself he seems to have thought little and cared less. His method of becoming a Christian was so original that it is well worth the telling.

Since the days of Olga Kief had possessed Christian churches and priests, and Vladimir might easily have been baptized without leaving home. But this was far too simple a process for a prince of his dignity. He must be baptized by a bishop of the parent Church, and the missionaries who were to convert his people must come from the central home of the faith.

Should he ask the emperor for the rite of baptism? Not he; it would be too much like rendering homage to a prince no greater than himself. The haughty barbarian found himself in a quandary; but soon he discovered a promising way out of it. He would make war on Greece, conquer priests and churches, and by force of arms obtain instruction and baptism in the new faith. Surely never before or since was a war waged with the object of winning a new religion.

Gathering a large army, Vladimir marched to the Crimea, where stood the rich and powerful Greek city of Kherson. The ruins of this city may still be seen near the modern Sevastopol. To it he laid siege, warning the inhabitants that it would be wise in them to yield, for he was prepared to remain three years before their walls.

The Khersonites proved obstinate, and for six months he besieged them closely. But no progress was made, and it began to look as if Vladimir would never become a Christian in his chosen mode. A traitor within the walls, however, solved the difficulty. He shot from the ramparts an arrow to which a letter was attached, in which the Russians were told that the city obtained all its fresh water from a spring near their camp, to which ran underground pipes. Vladimir cut the pipes, and the city, in peril of the horrors of thirst, was forced to yield.

Baptism was now to be had from the parent source, but Vladimir was still not content. He demanded to be united by ties of blood to the emperors of the southern realm, asking for the hand of Anna, the emperor's sister, and threatening to take Constantinople if his proposal were rejected.

Never before had a convert come with such conditions. The princess Anna had no desire for marriage with this haughty barbarian, but reasons of state were stronger than questions of taste, and the emperors (there were two of them at that time) yielded. Vladimir, having been baptized under the name of Basil, married the princess Anna, and the city he had taken as a token of his pious zeal was restored to his new kinsmen. All that he took back to Russia with him were a Christian wife, some bishops and priests, sacred vessels and books, images of saints, and a number of consecrated relics.

Vladimir displayed a zeal in his new faith in accordance with the trouble he had taken to win it. The old idols he had worshipped were now the most despised inmates of his realm. Perune, as the greatest of them all, was treated with the greatest indignity. The wooden image of the god was tied to the tail of a

horse and dragged to the Borysthenes, twelve stout soldiers belaboring it with cudgels as it went. The banks reached, it was flung with disdain into the river.

At Novgorod the god was treated with like indignity, but did not bear it with equal patience. The story goes that, being flung from a bridge into the Voikhof, the image of Perune rose to the surface of the water, threw a staff upon the bridge, and cried out in a terrifying voice, "Citizens, that is what I leave you in remembrance of me."

In consequence of this legend it was long the custom in that city, on the day which was kept as the anniversary of the god, for the young people to run about with sticks in their hands, striking one another unawares.

As for the Russians in general, they discarded their old worship as easily as the prince had thrown overboard their idols. One day a proclamation was issued at Kief, commanding all the people to repair to the river-bank the next day, there to be baptized. They assented without a murmur, saying, "If it were not good to be baptized, the prince and the boyars would never submit to it."

These were not the only signs of Vladimir's zeal. He built churches, he gave alms freely, he set out public repasts in imitation of the love-feasts of the early Christians. His piety went so far that he even forbore to shed the blood of criminals or of the enemies of his country.

But horror of bloodshed did not lie long on Vladimir's conscience. In his later life he had wars in plenty, and the blood of his enemies was shed as freely as water. These wars were largely against the Petchenegs, the most powerful of his foes. And in connection with them there is a story extant which has its parallel in the history of many another country.

It seems that in one of their campaigns the two armies came face to face on the opposite sides of a small stream. The prince of the Petchenegs now proposed to Vladimir to settle

their quarrel by single combat and thus spare the lives of their people. The side whose champion was vanquished should bind itself to a peace lasting for three years.

Vladimir was loath to consent, as he felt sure that his opponents had ready a champion of mighty power. He felt forced in honor to accept the challenge, but asked for delay that he might select a worthy champion.

Whom to select he knew not. No soldier of superior strength and skill presented himself. Uneasiness and agitation filled his mind. But at this critical interval an old man, who served in the army with four of his sons, came to him, saying that he had at home a fifth son of extraordinary strength, whom he would offer as champion.

The young man was sent for in great haste. On his arrival, to test his powers, a bull was sent against him which had been goaded into fury with hot irons. The young giant stopped the raging brute, knocked him down, and tore off great handfuls of his skin and flesh. Hope came to Vladimir's soul on witnessing this wonderful feat.

The day arrived. The champions advanced between the camps. The Petchenegan warrior laughed in scorn on seeing his beardless antagonist. But when they came to blows he found himself seized and crushed as in a vice in the arms of his boyish foe, and was flung, a lifeless body, to the earth. On seeing this the Petchenegans fled in dismay, while the Russians, forgetting their pledge, pursued and slaughtered them without mercy.

Vladimir at length (1015 A D.) came to his end. His son Yaroshif, whom he had made ruler of Novgorod, had refused to pay tribute, and the old prince, forced to march against his rebel son, died of grief on the way.

With all his faults, Vladimir deserved the title of Great which his country has given him. He put down the turbulent tribes, planted colonies in the desert, built towns, and embellished his cities with churches, palaces, and other

buildings, for which workmen were brought from Greece. Russia grew rapidly under his rule. He established schools which the sons of the nobles were made to attend. And though he was but a poor pattern for a saint, he had the merit of finding Russia pagan and leaving it Christian.

CHAPTER V

THE LAWGIVER OF RUSSIA

The Russia of the year 1000 lay deep in the age of barbarism. Vladimir had made it Christian in name, but it was far from Christian in thought or deed. It was a land without fixed laws, without settled government, without schools, without civilized customs, but with abundance of ignorance, cruelty, and superstition.

It was strangely made up. In the north lay the great commercial city of Novgorod, which, though governed by princes of the house of Rurik, was a republic in form and in fact. It possessed its popular assembly, of which every citizen was a member with full right to vote, and at whose meetings the prince was not permitted to appear. The sound of a famous bell, the Vetchevoy, called the people together, to decide on questions of peace and war, or to elect magistrates, and sometimes the bishop, or even the prince. The prince had to swear to carry out the ancient laws of the republic and not attempt to lay taxes on the citizens or to interfere with their trade. They made him gifts, but paid him no taxes. They decided how many hours he should give to pleasure and how many to business; and they expelled some of their princes who thought themselves beyond the power of the laws.

It seems strange that the absolute Russia of to-day should then have possessed one of the freest of the cities of Europe. Novgorod was not only a city, it was a state. The provinces far and wide around were subject to it, and governed by its prince, who had in them an authority much greater than he possessed over the proud civic merchants and money lords.

In the south, on the contrary, lay the great imperial city of Kiev, the capital of the realm, and the seat of a government as arbitrary as that of Novgorod was free. Here dwelt the grand

prince as an irresponsible autocrat, making his will the law, and forcing all the provinces, even haughty Novgorod, to pay a tax which bore the slavish title of tribute. Here none could vote, no assembly of citizens ever met, and the only restraint on the prince was that of his warlike and turbulent nobles, who often forced him to yield to their wishes. The government was a drifting rather than a settled one. It had no anchors out, but was moved about at the whim of the prince and his unruly lords.

Under these two forms of government lay still a third. Rural Russia was organized on a democratic principle which still prevails throughout that broad land. This is the principle of the Mir, or village community, which most of the people of the earth once possessed, but which has everywhere passed away except in Russia and India. It is the principle of the commune, of public instead of private property. The land of a Russian village belongs to the people as a whole, not to individuals. It is divided up among them for tillage, but no man can claim the fields he tills as his own, and for thousands of years what is known as communism has prevailed on Russian soil.

The government of the village is purely democratic. All the people meet and vote for their village magistrate, who decides, with the aid of a council of the elders, all the questions which arise within its confines, one of them being the division of the land. Thus at bottom Russia is a field sown thick with little communistic republics, though at top it is a despotism. The government of Novgorod doubtless grew out of that of the village. The republican city has long since passed away, but the seed of democracy remains planted deeply in the village community.

All this is preliminary to the story of the Russian lawgiver and his laws, which we have set out to tell. This famous person was no other than that Yaroslaf, prince of Novgorod, and son of Vladimir the Great, whose refusal to pay tribute had caused his father to die of grief.

Yaroslaf was the fifth able ruler of the dynasty of Rurik. The story of his young life resembles that of his father. He found his brother strong and threatening, and designed to fly from Novgorod and join the Varangians as a viking lord, as his father had done before him. But the Novgorodians proved his friends, destroyed the ships that were to carry him away, and provided him with money to raise a new army. With this he defeated his base brother, who had already killed or driven into exile all their other brothers. The result was that Yaroslof, like his father, became sovereign of all Russia.

But though this new grand prince extended his dominions by the sword, it was not as a soldier, but as a legislator, that he won fame. His genius was not shown on the field of battle, but in the legislative council, and Russia reveres Yaroslaf the Wise as its first maker of laws.

The free institutions of Novgorod, of which we have spoken, were by him sustained and strengthened. Many new cities were founded under his beneficent rule. Schools were widely established, in one of which three hundred of the youth of Novgorod were educated. A throng of Greek priests were invited into the land, since there were none of Russian birth to whom he could confide the duty of teaching the young. He gave toleration to the idolaters who still existed, and when the people of Suzdal were about to massacre some hapless women whom they accused of having brought on a famine by sorcery, he stayed their hands and saved the poor victims from death. The Russian Church owed its first national foundation to him, for he declared that the bishops of the land should no longer depend for appointment on the Patriarch of Constantinople.

There are no startling or dramatic stories to be told about Yaroslaf. The heroes of peace are not the men who make the world's dramas. But it is pleasant, after a season spent with princes who lived for war and revenge, and who even made war to obtain baptism, to rest awhile under the green boughs and beside the pleasant waters of a reign that became famous for the triumphs of peace.

Under Yaroslaf Russia united itself by ties of blood to Western Europe. His sons married Greek, German, and English princesses; his sister became queen of Poland; his three daughters were queens of Norway, Hungary, and France. Scandinavian in origin, the dynasty of Rurik was reaching out hands of brotherhood towards its kinsmen in the West.

But it is as a law-maker that Yaroslaf is chiefly known. Before his time the empire had no fixed code of laws. To say that it was without law would not be correct. Every people, however ignorant, has its laws of custom, unwritten edicts, the birth of the ages, which have grown up stage by stage, and which are only slowly outgrown as the tribe develops into the nation.

Russia had, besides Novgorod, other commercial cities, with republican institutions. Kief was certainly not without law. And the many tribes of hunters, shepherds, and farmers must have had their legal customs. But with all this there was no code for the empire, no body of written laws. The first of these was prepared about 1018 by Yaroslaf, for Novgorod alone, but in time became the law of all the land. This early code of Russian law is a remarkable one, and goes farther than history at large in teaching us the degree of civilization of Russia at that date.

In connection with it the chronicles tell a curious story. In 1018, we are told, Novgorod, having grown weary of the insults and oppression of its Varangian lords and warriors, killed them all. Angry at this, Yaroslaf enticed the leading Novgorodians into his palace and slaughtered them in reprisal. But at this critical interval, when his guards were slain and his subjects in rebellion, he found himself threatened by his ambitious brother. In despair he turned to the Novgorodians and begged with tears for pardon and assistance. They forgave and aided him, and by their help made him sovereign of the empire.

How far this is true it is impossible to say, but the code of Yaroslaf was promulgated at that date, and the rights given to Novgorod showed that its people held the reins of power. It

confirmed the city in the ancient liberties of which we have already spoken, giving it a freedom which no other city of its time surpassed. And it laid down a series of laws for the people at large which seem very curious in this enlightened age. It must suffice to give the leading features of this ancient code.

It began by sustaining the right of private vengeance. The law was for the weak alone, the strong being left to avenge their own wrongs. The punishment of crime was provided for by judicial combats, which the law did not even regulate. Every strong man was a law unto himself.

Where no avengers of crime appeared, murder was to be settled by fines. For the murder of a boyar eighty grivnas were to be paid, and forty for the murder of a free Russian, but only half as much if the victim was a woman. Here we have a standard of value for the women of that age.

Nothing was paid into the treasury for the murder of a slave, but his master had to be paid his value, unless he had been slain for insulting a freeman. His value was reckoned according to his occupation, and ranged from twelve to five grivnas.

If it be asked what was the value of a grivna, it may be said that at that time there was little coined money, perhaps none at all, in Russia. Gold and silver were circulated by weight, and the common currency was composed of pieces of skin, called kuni. A grivna was a certain number of kunis equal in value to half a pound of silver, but the kuni often varied in value.

All prisoners of war and all persons bought from foreigners were condemned to perpetual slavery. Others became slaves for limited periods,—freemen who married slaves, insolvent debtors, servants out of employment, and various other classes. As the legal interest of money was forty percent, the enslavement of debtors must have been very common, and Russia was even then largely a land of slaves.

The loss of a limb was fined almost as severely as that of a life. To pluck out part of the beard cost four times as much as

to cut off a finger, and insults in general were fined four times as heavily as wounds. Horse-stealing was punished by slavery. In discovering the guilty the ordeals of red-hot iron and boiling water were in use, as in the countries of the West.

There were three classes in the nation,—slaves, freemen, and boyars, or nobles, the last being probably the descendants of Rurik's warriors. The prince was the heir of all citizens who died without male children, except of boyars and the officers of his guard.

These laws, which were little more primitive than those of Western Europe at the same period, seem never to have imposed corporal punishment for crime. Injury was made good by cash, except in the case of the combat. The fines went to the lord or prince, and were one of his means of support, the other being tribute from his estates. No provision for taxation was made. The mark of dependence on the prince was military service, the lord, as in the feudal West, being obliged to provide his own arms, provisions, and mounted followers.

Judges there were, who travelled on circuits, and who impanelled twelve respectable jurors, sworn to give just verdicts. There are several laws extending protection to property, fixed and movable, which seem specially framed for the merchants of Novgorod.

Such are the leading features of the code of Yaroslaf. The franchises granted the Novgorodians, which for four centuries gave them the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," form part of it. Crude as are many of its provisions, it forms a vital starting-point, that in which Russia first came under definite in place of indefinite law. And the bringing about of this important change is the glory of Yaroslaf the Wise.

CHAPTER VI

THE YOKE OF THE TARTARS

In Asia, the greatest continent of the earth, lies its most extensive plain, the vast plateau of Mongolia, whose true boundaries are the mountains of Siberia and the Himalayan highlands, the Pacific Ocean and the hills of Eastern Europe, and of which the great plain of Russia is but an outlying section. This mighty plateau, largely a desert, is the home of the nomad shepherd and warrior, the nesting-place of the emigrant invader. From these broad levels in the past horde after horde of savage horsemen rode over Europe and Asia,—the frightful Huns, the devastating Turks, the desolating Mongols. It is with the last that we are here concerned, for Russia fell beneath their arms, and was held for two centuries as a captive realm.

The nomads are born warriors. They live on horseback; the care of their great herds teaches them military discipline; they are always in motion, have no cities to defend, no homes to abandon, no crops to harvest. Their home is a camp; when they move it moves with them; their food is on the hoof and accompanies them on the march; they can go hungry for a week and then eat like cormorants; their tools are weapons, always in hand, always ready to use; a dozen times they have burst like a devouring torrent from their desert and overwhelmed the South and West.

While the Turks were still engaged in their work of conquest, the Mongols arose, and under the formidable Genghis Khan swept over Southern Asia like a tornado, leaving death and desolation in their track. The conqueror died in 1227,—for death is a foe that vanquishes even the greatest of warriors,—and was succeeded by his son Octoi, as Great Khan of the Mongols and Tartars. In 1235, Batou, nephew of the khan, was sent with an army of half a million men to the conquest of Europe.

This flood of barbarians fell upon Russia at an unfortunate time, one of anarchy and civil war, when the whole nation was rent and torn and there were almost as many sovereigns as there were cities. The system of giving a separate dominion to every son of a grand prince had ruined Russia. These small potentates were constantly at war, confusion reigned supreme, Kief was taken and degraded and a new capital, Vladimir, established, and Moscow, which was to become the fourth capital of Russia, was founded. Such was the state of affairs when Batou, with his vast horde of savage horsemen, fell on the distracted realm.

Defence was almost hopeless. Russia had no government, no army, no imperial organization. Each city stood for itself, with great widths of open country around. Over these broad spaces the invaders swept like an avalanche, finding cultivated fields before them, leaving a desert behind. They swam the Don, the Volga, and the other great rivers on their horses, or crossed them on the ice. Leathern boats brought over their wagons and artillery. They spread from Livonia to the Black Sea, poured into the kingdoms of the West, and would have over-run all Europe but for the vigorous resistance of the knighthood of Germany.

The cities of Russia made an obstinate defence, but one after another they fell. Some saved themselves by surrender. Most of them were taken by assault and destroyed. City after city was reduced to ashes, none of the inhabitants being left to deplore their fall. The nomads had no use for cities. Walls were their enemies: pasturage was all they cared for. The conversion of a country into a desert was to them a gain rather than a loss, for grass will grow in the desert, and grass to feed their horses and herds was what they most desired.

So far as the warriors of Mongolia were concerned, their conquests left them no better off. They still had to tend and feed their herds, and they could have done that as well in their native land. But the leaders had the lust of dominion, their followers the

blood-fury, and inspired by these feelings they ravaged the world.

One thing alone saved Russia from being peopled by Tartars,—its climate. This was not to their liking, and they preferred to dwell in lands better suited to their tastes and habits. The great Tartar empire of Kaptchak, or the Golden Horde, was founded on the eastern frontier; other khanates were founded in the south; but the Russian princes were left to rule in the remainder of the land, under tribute to the khans, to whom they were forced to do homage. In truth, these Tartar chiefs made themselves lords paramount of the Russian realm, and no prince, great or small, could assume the government of his state until he had journeyed to Central Mongolia to beg permission to rule from the khan of the Great Horde.

The subjection of the princes was that of slaves. A century afterward they were obliged to spread a carpet of sable fur under the hoofs of the steed of the khan's envoy, to prostrate themselves at his feet and learn his mission on their knees, and not only to present a cup of koumiss to the barbarian, but even to lick from the neck of his horse the drops of the beverage which he might let fall in drinking. More shameful subjection it would be difficult to describe.

Several princes who proved insubordinate were summoned to the camp of the Horde and there tried and executed. Rivals sought the khan, to buy power by presents. During their journeys, which occupied a year or more, the Tartar bashaks ruled their dominions. Tartar armies aided the princes in their civil wars, and helped these ambitious lords to keep their country in a state of subjection.

Fortunately for Russia, the great empire of the Mongols gradually fell to pieces of its own weight. The Kaptchak, or Golden Horde, broke loose from the Great Horde, and Russia had a smaller power to deal with. The Golden Horde itself broke into two parts. And among the many princes of Russia a grand

prince was still acknowledged, with right by title to dominion over the entire realm.

One of these grand princes, Alexander by name, son of the grand prince of Vladimir, proved a great warrior and statesman and gained the poster as well as the title. Prince of Novgorod by inheritance, he defeated all his enemies, drove the Germans from Russia, and recovered the Neva from the Swedes, which feat of arms gained him the title of Alexander Nevsky. The Tartars were too powerful to be attacked, so he managed to gain their good will. The khan became his friend, and when trouble arose with Kief and Vladimir their princes were dethroned and these principalities given to the shrewd grand prince.

Russia seemed to be rehabilitated. Alexander was lord of its three capitals, Novgorod, Kief, and Vladimir, and grand prince of the realm. But the Russians were not content to submit either to his authority or to the yoke of the Tartars. His whole life was spent in battle with them, or in journeys to the tent of the khan to beg forgiveness for their insults.

The climax came when the Tartar collectors of tribute were massacred in some cities and ignominiously driven out of others. When these acts became known at the Horde the angry khan sent orders for the grand prince and all other Russian princes to appear before him and to bring all their troops. He said that he was about to make a campaign, and needed the aid of the Russians.

This story Alexander did not believe. He plainly perceived that the wily Tartar wished to deprive Russia of all its armed men, that he might the more easily reduce it again to subjection. Rather than see his country ruined, the patriotic prince determined to disobey, and to offer himself as a victim by seeking alone the camp of Usbek, the great khan, a mission of infinite danger.

He hoped that his submission might save Russia from ruin, though he knew that death lay on his path. He found Usbek

bitterly bent on war, and for a whole year was kept in the camp of the Horde, seeking to appease the wrath of the barbarian. In the end he succeeded, the khan promising to forgive the Russians and desist from the intended war, and in the year 1262 Alexander started for home again.

He had seemingly escaped, but not in reality. He had not journeyed far before he suddenly died. To all appearance, poison had been mingled with his food before he left the camp of the khan. Alexander had become too great and powerful at home for the designs of the conquerors. He died the victim of his love of country. His people have recognized his virtue by making him a saint. He had not labored in vain. In his hands the grand principship had been restored, Vladimir had become supreme, and a centre had been established around which the Russians might rally. But for a century and more still they were to remain subject to the Tartar yoke.

CHAPTER VII

THE VICTORY OF THE DON

The history of Russia during the century after the Mongol conquest is one of shame and anarchy. The shame was that of slavish submission to the Tartar khan. Each prince, in succession, fell on his knees before this high dignitary of the barbarians and begged or bought his throne. The anarchy was that of the Russian princes, on which the khan looked with winking eyes, thinking that the more they weakened themselves the more they would strengthen him. The rulers of Moscow, Tver, Vladimir, and Novgorod fought almost incessantly for supremacy, crushing their people beneath the feet of their ambition, now one, now another, gaining the upper hand.

In the end the princes of Moscow became supreme. They grew rich, and were able to keep up a regular army, that chief tool of despotism. The crown lands alone gave them dominion over three hundred thousand subjects. The time was coming in which they would be the absolute rulers of all Russia. But before this could be accomplished the power of the khans must be broken, and the first step towards this was taken by the great Dmitri Donskoi, who became grand prince of Moscow in 1362.

Dmitri came to the throne at a fortunate epoch. The Golden Horde was breaking to pieces. There were several khans, at war with one another, and discord ruled among the overlords of Russia. Still greater discord reigned in Russia itself. For eighteen years Dmitri was kept busy in wars with the princes of Tver, Kief, and Lithuania. Terrible was the war with Tver. Four times he overcame Michael, its prince. Four times did Michael, aided by the prince of Lithuania, gain the victory. During this obstinate conflict Moscow was twice besieged. Only its stone walls, lately built, saved it from capture and ruin. At length

Olguerd, the fiery prince of Lithuania, died, and Tver yielded. Moscow became paramount among the Russian principalities.

And now Dmitri, with all Russia as his realm, dared to defy the terrible Tartars. For more than a century no Russian prince had ventured to appear before the khan of the Golden Horde except on his knees. Dmitri had thus humbled himself only three years before. Now, inflated with his new power, he refused to pay tribute to the khan, and went so far as to put to death the Tartar envoy, who insolently demanded the accustomed payment.

Dmitri had burned his bridges behind him. He had flung down the gage of war to the Tartars, and would soon feel their hand in all its dreaded strength. The khan, on hearing of the murder of his ambassador, burst into a terrible rage. The civil wars which divided the Golden Horde had for the time ceased, and Mamai, the khan, gathered all the power of the Horde and marched on defiant Moscow, vowing to sweep that rebel city from the face of the earth.

The Russians did not wait his coming. All dissensions ceased in the face of the impending peril, all the princes sent aid, and Dmitri marched to the Don at the head of an army of two hundred thousand men. Here he found the redoubtable Mamai with three times that number of the fierce Tartar horsemen in his train.

"Yonder lies the foe," said Dmitri to his princely associates. "Here runs the Don. Shall we await him here, or cross and meet him with the river at our backs?"

"Let us cross," was the unanimous verdict. "Let us be first in the assault."

At once the order was given, and the battalions marched on board the boats and were ferried across the stream, at a short distance from the opposite bank of which the enemy lay. No sooner had they landed than Dmitri ordered all the boats to be cast adrift. It was to be victory or death; no hope of escape by

flight was left; but well he knew that the men would fight with double valor under such desperate straits.

The battle began. On the serried Russian ranks the Tartars poured in that impetuous assault which had so often carried their hosts to victory. The Russians defended themselves with fiery valor, assault after assault was repulsed, and so fiercely was the field contested that multitudes of the fallen were trampled to death beneath the horses' feet. At length, however, numbers began to tell. The Russians grew weary from the closeness of the conflict. The vast host of the Tartars enabled them to replace with fresh troops all that were worn in the fight. Victory seemed about to perch upon their banners.



GENERAL VIEW OF MOSCOW.

Dismay crept into the Russian ranks. They would have broken in flight, but no avenue of escape was left. The river ran behind them, unruffled by a boat. Flight meant death by drowning; fight meant death by the sword. Of the two the latter seemed best, for the Russians firmly believed that death at the

hands of the infidels meant an immediate transport to the heavenly mansions of bliss.

At this critical moment, when the host of Dmitri was wavering between panic and courage, the men ready to drop their swords through sheer fatigue, an unlooked-for diversion inspired their shrinking souls. The grand prince had stationed a detachment of his army as a reserve, and these, as yet, had taken no part in the battle. Now, fresh and furious, they were brought up, and fell vigorously upon the rear of the Tartars, who, filled with sudden terror, thought that a new army had come to the aid of the old. A moment later they broke and fled, pursued by their triumphant foes, and falling fast as they hurried in panic fear from the encrimsoned field.

Something like amazement filled the souls of the Russians as they saw their dreaded enemies in flight. Such a consummation they had scarcely dared hope for, accustomed as they had been for a century to crouch before this dreadful foe. They had bought their victory dearly. Their dead strewed the ground by thousands. Yet to be victorious over the Tartar host seemed to them an ample recompense for an even greater loss than that sustained. Eight days were occupied by the survivors in burying the slain. As for the Tartar dead, they were left to fester on the field. Such was the great victory of the Don, from which Dmitri gained his honorable surname of Donskoi. He died nine years afterwards (1389), having won the high honor of being the first to vanquish the terrible horsemen of the Steppes, firmly founded the authority of the grand princes, and made Moscow the paramount power in Russia.

CHAPTER VIII

IVAN, THE FIRST OF THE CZARS

The victory of the Don did not free Russia from the Tartar yoke. Two years afterwards the principality of Moscow was overrun and ravaged by a lieutenant of the mighty Tamerlane, the all conquering successor of Genghis Khan. Several times Moscow was taken and burned. Full seventy years later, at the court of the Golden Horde, two Russian princes might have been seen disputing before the great khan the possession of the grand principality and tremblingly awaiting his decision. Nevertheless, the battle of the Don had sounded the knell of the Tartar power. Anarchy continued to prevail in the Golden Horde. The power of the grand princes of Moscow steadily grew. The khans themselves played into the hands of their foes. Russia was slowly but surely casting off her fetters, and deliverance was at hand.

Ivan III., great-grandson of Dmitri Donskoi, ascended the throne in 1462, nearly two centuries and a half after the Tartar invasion. During all that period Russia had been the vassal of the khans. Only now was its freedom to come. It was by craft, more than by war, that Ivan won. In the field he was a dastard, but in subtlety and perfidy he surpassed all other men of his time, and his insidious but persistent policy ended by making him the autocrat of all the Russian.

He found powerful enemies outside his dominions, the Tartars, the Lithuanians, and the Poles. He succeeded in defeating them all. He had powerful rivals within the domain of Russia. These also he overcame. He made Moscow all-powerful, imitated the tyranny of the Tartars, and founded the autocratic rule of the czars which has ever since prevailed.

The story of the fall of the Golden Horde maybe briefly told. It was the work of the Russian army, but not of the Russian

prince. In 1469, after collecting a large army, Ivan halted and began negotiating. But the army was not to be restrained. Disregarding the orders of their general, they chose another leader, and assailed and captured Kasan, the chief Tartar city. As for the army of the Golden Horde, it was twice defeated by the Russian force. In 1480 a third invasion of the Tartars took place, which resulted in the annihilation of their force.

The tale, as handed down to us, is a curious one. The army, full of martial ardor, had advanced as far as the Oka to meet the Tartars; but on the approach of the enemy Ivan, stricken with terror, deserted his troops and took refuge in far-off Moscow. He even recalled his son, but the brave boy refused to obey, Baying that "he would rather die at his post than follow the example of his father."

The murmurs of the people, the supplication of the priests, the indignation of the boyars, forced him to return to the army, but he returned only to cover it with shame and himself with disgrace. For when the chill of the coming winter suddenly froze the river between the two forces, offering the foe a firm pathway to battle, Ivan, in consternation, ordered a retreat, which his haste converted into a disorderly flight. Yet the army was two hundred thousand strong and had not struck a blow.

Fortune and his allies saved the dastard monarch. For at this perilous interval the khan of the Crimea, an ally of Russia, attacked the capital of the Golden Horde and forced a hasty recall of its army; and during its disorderly homeward march a host of Cossacks fell upon it with such fury that it was totally destroyed. Russia, threatened with a new subjection to the Tartars by the cowardice of its monarch, was finally freed from these dreaded foes through the aid of her allies.

But the fruits of this harvest, sown by others, were reaped by the czar. His people, who had been disgusted with his cowardice, now gave him credit for the deepest craft and wisdom. All this had been prepared by him, they said. His flight was a ruse, his pusillanimity was prudence; he had made the

Tartars their own destroyers, without risking the fate of Russia in a battle; and what had just been contemned as dastard baseness was now praised as undiluted wisdom.

Ivan would never have gained the title of Great from his deeds in war. He won it, and with some justice, from his deeds in peace. He was great in diplomacy, great in duplicity, great in that persistent pursuit of a single object through which men rise to power and fame. This object, in his case, was autocracy. It was his purpose to crush out the last shreds of freedom from Russia, establish an empire on the pernicious pattern of a Tartar khanate, which had so long been held up as an example before Russian eyes, and make the Prince of Moscow as absolute as the Emperor of China. He succeeded. During his reign freedom fled from Russia. It has never since returned.

The story of how this great aim was accomplished is too long to be told here, and the most important part of it must be left for our next tale. It will suffice, at this point, to say that by astute policy and good fortune Ivan added to his dominions nineteen thousand square miles of territory and four millions of subjects, made himself supreme autocrat and his voice the sole arbiter of fate, reduced the boyars and subordinate princes to dependence on his throne, established a new and improved system of administration in all the details of government, and by his marriage with Sophia, the last princess of the Greek imperial family,—driven by the Turks from Constantinople to Rome,—gained for his standard the two-headed eagle, the symbol of autocracy, and for himself the supreme title of czar.

CHAPTER IX

THE FALL OF NOVGOROD THE GREAT

The Czar of Russia is the one political deity in Europe, the sole absolute autocrat. More than a hundred millions of people have delivered themselves over, fettered hand and foot, almost body and soul, to the ownership of one man, without a voice in their own government, without daring to speak, hardly daring to think, otherwise than he approves. Thousands of them, millions of them, perhaps, are saying to-day, in the words of Hamlet, "It is not and it cannot come to good; but break my heart, for I must hold my tongue."

Who is this man, this god of a nation, that he should loom so high? Is he a marvel of wisdom, virtue, and nobility, made by nature to wear the purple, fashioned of porcelain clay, greater and better than all the host to whom his word is the voice of fate? By no means; thousands of his subjects tower far above him in virtue and ability, but, puppet-like, the noblest and best of them must dance as he pulls the strings, and hardly a man in Russia dares to say that his soul is his own if the czar says otherwise.

Such a state of affairs is an anachronism in the nineteenth century, a hideous relic of the barbarism and anarchy of mediaeval times. In America, where every man is a czar, so far as the disposal of himself is concerned, the enslavement of the Russians seems a frightful disregard of the rights of man, the nation a giant Gulliver bound down to the earth by chains of creed and custom, of bureaucracy and perverted public opinion. Like Gulliver, it was bound when asleep, and it must continue fettered while its intellect remains torpid. Some day it will awake, stretch its mighty limbs, burst its feeble bonds, and hurl in disarray to the earth the whole host of liliputian officials and

dignitaries who are strutting in the pride of ownership on its great body, the czar tumbling first from his great estate.

This does not seem a proper beginning to a story from Russian history, but, to quote from Shakespeare again, "Thereby hangs a tale." The history of Russia has, in fact, been a strange one; it began as a republic, it has ended as a despotism; and we cannot go on with our work without attempting to show how this came about.

It was the Mongol invasion that enslaved Russia. Helped by the khans, Moscow gradually rose to supremacy over all the other principalities, trod them one by one under her feet, gained power by the aid of Tartar swords and spears or through sheer dread of the Tartar name, and when the Golden Horde was at length overthrown the Grand Prince took the place of the Great Khan and ruled with the same absolute sway. It was the absolutism of Asia imported into Europe. Step by step the princes of Moscow had copied the system of the khan. This work was finished by Ivan the Great, at once the deliverer and the enslaver of Russia, who freed that country from the yoke of the khan, but laid upon it a heavier burden of servility and shame.

Under the khan there had been insurrection. Under the czar there was subjection. The latter state was worse than the former. The subjection continues still, but the spirit of insurrection is again rising. The time is coming in which the rule of that successor of the Tartar khan, miscalled the czar, will end, and the people take into their own hands the control of their bodies and souls.

There were republics in Russia even in Ivan's day, free cities which, though governed by princes, maintained the republican institutions of the past. Chief among these was Novgorod, that Novgorod the Great which invited Rurik into Russia and under him became the germ of the vast Russian empire. A free city then, a free city it continued. Rurik and his descendants ruled by sufferance. Yaroslaf confirmed the free

institutions which Rurik had respected. For centuries this great commercial city continued prosperous and free, becoming in time a member of the powerful Hanseatic League. Only for the invasion of the Mongols, Novgorod instead of Moscow might have become the prototype of modern Russia, and a republic instead of a despotism have been established in that mighty land. The sword of the Tartar cast into the scales overweighted the balance. It gave Moscow the supremacy, and liberty fell.

Ivan the Great, in his determined effort to subject all Russia to his autocratic sway, saw before him three republican communities, the free cities of Novgorod, Viatka, and Pskof, and took steps to sweep these last remnants of ancient freedom from his path. Novgorod, as much the most important of these, especially demands our attention. With its fall Russian liberty fell to the earth.

At that time Novgorod was one of the richest and most powerful cities of the earth. It was an ally rather than a subject of Moscow, and all the north of Russia was under its sway and contributed to its wealth. But luxury had sapped its strength, and it held its liberties more by purchase than by courage. Some of these liberties had already been lost, seized by the grand prince. The proud burghers chafed under this invasion of their time-honored privileges, and in 1471, inspired by the seeming timidity of Ivan, they determined to regain them.

It was a woman that brought about the revolt. Marfa, a rich and influential widow of the city, had fallen in love with a Lithuanian, and, inspired at once by the passions of love and ambition, sought to attach her country to that of her lover. She opened her palace to the citizens and lavished on them her treasures, seeking to inspire them with her own views. Her efforts were successful: the officers of the grand prince were driven out, and his domains seized; and when he threatened reprisal they broke into open revolt, and bound themselves by treaty to Casimir, prince of Lithuania.

But events were to prove that the turbulent citizens were no match for the crafty Ivan, who moved slowly but ever steadily to his goal, and made secure each footstep before taking a step in advance. His insidious policy roused three separate hostilities against Novgorod. The pride of the nobles was stirred up against its democracy; the greed of the princes made them eager to seize its wealth; the fanatical people were taught that this great city was an apostate to the faith.

These hostile forces proved too much for the city against which they were directed. Novgorod was taken and plundered, though Ivan did not yet deprive it of its liberties. He had powerful princes to deal with, and did not dare to seize so rich a prey without letting them share the spoil. But he ruined the city by devastation and plunder, deprived it of its tributaries, the city and territory of Perm, and turned from Novgorod to Moscow the rich commerce of this section. Taking advantage of some doubtful words in the treaty of submission, he held himself to be legislator and supreme judge of the captive city. Such was the first result of the advice of an ambitious woman.

The next step of the autocrat added to his influence. Novgorod being threatened with an attack from Livonia, he sent thither troops and envoys to fight and negotiate in his name, thus taking from the city, whose resources he had already drained, its old right of making peace and war.

The ill feeling between the rich and the poor of Novgorod was fomented by his agents; all complaints were required to be made to him; he still further impoverished the rich by the presents and magnificent receptions which his presence among them demanded, and dazzled the eyes of the people by the Oriental state and splendor which had been adopted by the court of Moscow, and which he displayed in their midst.

The nobles who had formerly been his enemies now became his victims. He had induced the people to denounce them, and at once seized them and sent them in chains to Moscow. The people, blinded by this seeming attention to their

complaints, remained heedless of the violation of the ancient law of their republic, "that none of its citizens should ever be tried or punished out of the limits of its own territory."

Thus tyranny made its slow way. The citizens, once governed and judged by their own peers, now made their appeals to the grand prince and were summoned to appear before his tribunal. "Never since Rurik," say the annals, "had such an event happened; never had the grand princes of Kief and Vladimir seen the Novgorodians come and submit to them as their judges. Ivan alone could reduce Novgorod to that degree of humiliation."

This work was done with the deliberation of a settled policy. Ivan did not molest Marfa, who had instigated the revolt; his sentences were just and equitable; men were blinded by his seeming moderation; and for full seven years he pursued his insidious way, gradually weaning the people from their ancient customs, and taking advantage of every imprudence and thoughtless concession on their part to ground on it a claim to increased authority.

It was the glove of silk he had thus far extended to them. Within it lay concealed the hand of iron. The grasp of the iron hand was made when, during an audience, the envoy of the republic, through treason or thoughtlessness, addressed him by the name of sovereign (Gondar, "liege lord," instead of Gospodin, "master," the usual title).

Ivan, taking advantage of this, at once claimed all the absolute rights which custom had attached to that title. He demanded that the republic should take an oath to him as its judge and legislator, receive his boyars as their rulers, and yield to them the ancient palace of Yaroslaf, the sacred temple of their liberties, in which for more than five centuries their assemblies had been held.

This demand roused the Novgorodians to their danger. They saw how blindly they had yielded to tyranny. A transport of indignation inspired them. For the last time the great bell of

liberty sent forth its peal of alarm. Gathering tumultuously at the palace from which they were threatened with expulsion, they vigorously resolved,—

"Ivan is in fact our lord, but he shall never be our sovereign; the tribunal of his deputies may sit at Goroditch, but never at Novgorod: Novgorod is, and always shall be, its own judge."

In their rage they murdered several of the nobles whom they suspected of being friends of the tyrant. The envoy who had uttered the imprudent word was torn to pieces by their furious hands. They ended by again invoking the aid of Lithuania.

On hearing of this outbreak the despot feigned surprise. Groans broke from his lips, as if he felt that he had been basely used. His complaints were loud, and the calling in of a foreign power was brought against Novgorod as a frightful aggravation of its crime. Under cover of these groans and complaints an army was gathered to which all the provinces of the empire were forced to send contingents.

These warlike preparations alarmed the citizens. All Russia seemed arrayed against them, and they tremblingly asked for conditions of peace in accordance with their ancient honor. "I will reign at Novgorod as I do at Moscow," replied the imperious despot. "I must have domains on your territory. You must give up your Posadnick, and the bell which summons you to the national council." Yet this threat of enslavement was craftily coupled with a promise to respect their liberty.

This declaration, the most terrible that free citizens could have heard, threw them into a state of violent agitation. Now in defiant fury they seized their arms, now in helpless despondency let them fall. For a whole month their crafty adversary permitted them to exhibit their rage, not caring to use the great army with which he had encircled the city when assured that the terror of his presence would soon bring him victory.

They yielded: they could do nothing but yield. No blood was shed. Ivan had gained his end, and was not given to useless cruelty. Marta and seven of the principal citizens were sent prisoners to Moscow and their property was confiscated, No others were molested. But on the 15th of January, 1478, the national assemblies ceased, and the citizens took the oath of subjection. The great republic, which had existed from prehistoric times, was at an end, and despotism ruled supreme.

On the 18th the boyars of Novgorod entered the service of Ivan, and the possessions of the clergy were added to the domain of the prince, giving him as vassals three hundred thousand boyar-followers, on whom he depended to hold Novgorod in a state of submission. A great part of the territories belonging to the city became the victor's prize, and it is said that, as a share of his spoil, he sent to Moscow three hundred cart-loads of gold, silver, and precious stones, besides vast quantities of furs, cloths, and other goods of value.

Pskov, another of the Russian republics, had been already subdued. In 1479, Viatka, a colony of Novgorod, was reduced to like slavery. The end had come. Republicanism in Russia was extinguished, and gradually the republican population was removed to the soil of Moscow and replaced by Muscovites, born to the yoke.

The liberties of Novgorod were gone. It had been robbed of its wealth. Its commerce remained, which in time would have restored its prosperity. But this too Ivan destroyed, not intentionally, but effectually. A burst of despotic anger completed the work of ruin. The tyrant, having been insulted by a Hanseatic city, ordered all the merchants of the Hansa then in Novgorod to be put in chains and their property confiscated. As a result, that confidence under which alone commerce can flourish vanished, the North sought new channels for its trade, and Novgorod the Great, once peopled by four hundred thousand souls, declined until only an insignificant borough marks the spot where once it stood.

It is an interesting fact that this final blow to Russian republicanism was dealt in 1492, the very year in which Columbus discovered a new world beyond the seas, within which the greatest republic the world has ever known was destined to arise.

CHAPTER X

IVAN THE TERRIBLE

In seeking examples of the excesses to which absolute power may lead, we usually name the wicked emperors of Rome, among whom Nero stands most notorious as a monster of cruelty. Modern history has but one Nero in its long lines of kings and emperors, and him we find in Ivan IV. of Russia, surnamed the Terrible.

This cruel czar succeeded to the throne when but three years of age. In his early years he lived in a state of terror, being insulted and despised by the powerful nobles who controlled the power of the throne. At fourteen years of age his enemies were driven out and his kinsmen came into power. They, caring only for blood and plunder, prompted the boy to cruelty, teaching him to rob, to torture, to massacre. They applauded him when he amused himself by tormenting animals; and when, riding furiously through the streets of Moscow, he dashed all before him to the ground and trampled women and children under his horses' feet, they praised him for spirit and energy.

This was an education fitted to make a Nero. But, happily for Russia, for thirteen years the tiger was chained. Ivan was seventeen years of age when a frightful conflagration which broke out in Moscow gave rise to a revolt against the Glinski, his wicked kinsmen. They were torn to pieces by the furious multitude, while terror rent his youthful soul. Amid the horror of flames, cries of vengeance, and groans of the dying, a monk appeared before the trembling boy, and with menacing looks and upraised hand bade him shrink from the wrath of Heaven, which his cruelty had aroused.

Certain appearances which appeared supernatural aided the effect of these words, the nature of Ivan seemed changed as by a miracle, dread of Heaven's vengeance controlled his nature,

and he yielded himself to the influence of the wise and good. Pious priests and prudent boyars became his advisers, Anastasia, his young and virtuous bride, gained an influence over him, and Russia enjoyed justice and felicity.

During the succeeding thirteen years the country was ably and wisely governed, order was everywhere established, the army was strengthened, fortresses were built, enemies were defeated, the morals of the clergy were improved, a new code of laws was formed, arts were introduced from Europe, a printing-office was opened, the city of Archangel was built, and the north of the empire was thrown open to commerce.

All this was the work of Adashef, Ivan's wise prime minister, aided by the influence of the noble-hearted Anastasia. In 1560, at the end of this period of mild and able administration, a sudden change took place and the tiger was set free. Anastasia died. A disease seized Ivan which seemed to affect his brain. The remainder of his life was marked by paroxysms of frightful barbarity.

A new terror seized him, that of a vast conspiracy of the nobles against his power, and for safety he retired to Alexandrovsky, a fortress in the midst of a gloomy forest. Here he assumed the monkish dress with three hundred of his minions, abandoning to the boyars the government of the empire, but keeping the military power in his own hands.

On all sides Russia now suffered from its enemies. Moscow, with several hundred thousand Muscovites, was burned by the Tartars in 1571. Disaster followed disaster, which Ivan was too cowardly and weak to avert. Trusting to incompetent generals abroad, he surrounded himself at home with a guard of six thousand chosen men, who were hired to play the part of spies and assassins. They carried as emblems of office a dog's head and a broom, the first to indicate that they worried the enemies of the czar, the second that they swept them from the face of the earth. They were chosen from the lowest

class of the people, and to them was given the property of their victims, that they might murder without mercy.

The excesses of Ivan are almost too horrible to tell. He began by putting to death several great boyars of the family of Rurik, while their wives and children were driven naked into the forests, where they died under the scourge. Novgorod had been ruined by his grandfather. He marched against it, in a freak of madness, gathered a throng of the helpless people within a great enclosure, and butchered them with his own hand. When worn out with these labors of death, he turned on them his guard, his slaves, and his dogs, while for a month afterwards hundreds of them were flung daily into the waters of the river, through the broken ice. What little vitality Ivan III. had left in the republican city was stamped out under the feet of this insensate brute.

Tver and Pskov, two others of the free cities of the empire, suffered from his frightful presence. Then returning to Moscow, he filled the public square with red-hot brasiers, great brass caldrons, and eighty gibbets, and here five hundred of the leading nobles were slain by his orders, after being subjected to terrible tortures.

Women were treated as barbarously as men. Ivan, with a cruelty never before matched, ordered many of them to be hanged at their own doors, and forced the husbands to go in and out under the swinging and festering corpses of those they had loved and cherished. In other cases husbands or children were fastened, dead, in their seats at table, and the family forced to sit at meals, for days, opposite these terrifying objects.

Seeking daily for new conceits of cruelty, he forced one lord to kill his father and another his brother, while it was his delight to let loose his dogs and bears upon the people in the public square, the animals being left to devour the mutilated bodies of those they killed. Eight hundred women were drowned in one frightful mass, and their relatives were forced under torture to point out where their wealth lay hidden.

It is said that sixty thousand people were slain by Ivan's orders in Novgorod alone; how many perished in the whole realm history does not relate. His only warlike campaign was against the Livonians. These he failed to conquer, but held their resistance as a rebellion, and ordered his prisoners to be thrown into boiling caldrons, spitted on lances, or roasted at fires which he stirred up with his own hands.



CHURCH AND TOWER OF IVAN THE GREAT

This monster of iniquity married in all, seven wives. He sought for an eighth from the court of Queen Elizabeth of

England, and the daughter of the Earl of Huntington was offered him as a victim,—a willing one, it seems, influenced by the glamour which power exerts over the mind; but before the match was concluded the intended bride took fright, and begged to be spared the terrible honor of wedding the Russian czar.

Yet all the excesses of Ivan did not turn the people against him. He assumed the manner of one inspired, claiming divine powers, and all the injuries and degradation which he inflicted upon the people were accepted not only with resignation but with adoration. The Russians of that age of ignorance seem to have looked upon God and the czar as one, and submitted to blows, wounds, and insults with a blind servility to which only abject superstition could have led.

The end came at last, in a final freak of madness. An humble supplication, coming from the most faithful of his subjects, was made to him; but in his distorted brain it indicated a new conspiracy of the boyars, of which his eldest and ablest son was to be the leader. In a transport of insane rage the frenzied emperor raised his iron-bound staff and struck up the earth with a mortal blow this hope of his race.

This was his last excess. Regret for his hasty act, though not remorse for his murders, assailed him, and he soon after died, after twenty-six years of insane cruelties, ordering new executions almost with his latest breath.

CHAPTER XI

THE CONQUEST OF SIBERIA

In the year 1558 a family of wealthy merchants, Stroganof by name, began to barter with the Tartar tribes dwelling east of the Ural Mountains. Ivan IV. had granted to this family the desert districts of the Kama, with great privileges in trade, and the power to levy troops and build forts—at their own expense—as a security against the robbers who crossed the Urals to prey upon their settled neighbors to the west. In return the Stroganofs were privileged to follow their example in a more legal manner, by the brigandage of trade between civilization and barbarism.

These robbers came from the region now known as Siberia, which extends to-day through thousands of miles of width, from the Urals to the Pacific. Before this time we know little about this great expanse of land. It seems to have been peopled by a succession of races, immigrants from the south, each new wave of people driving the older tribes deeper into the frozen regions of the north. Early in the Christian era there came hither a people destitute of iron, but expert in the working of bronze, silver, and gold. They had wide regions of irrigated fields, and a higher civilization than that of those who in time took their place.

People of Turkish origin succeeded these tribes about the eleventh century. They brought with them weapons of iron and made fine pottery. In the thirteenth century, when the great Mongol outbreak took place under Genghis Khan, the Turkish kingdom in Siberia was destroyed and Tartars took their place. Civilization went decidedly down hill. Such was the state of affairs when Russia began to turn eyes of longing towards Siberia.

The busy traders of Novgorod had made their way into Siberia as early as the eleventh century. But this republic fell, and the trade came to an end. In 1555, Khan Ediger, who had made himself a kingdom in Siberia, and whose people had crossed swords with the Russians beyond the Urals, sent envoys to Moscow, who consented to pay to Russia a yearly tribute of a thousand sables, thus acknowledging Russian supremacy.

This tribute showed that there were riches beyond the mountains. The Stroganofs made their way to the barrier of the hills, and it was not long before the trader was followed by the soldier. The invasion of Siberia was due to an event which for the time threatened the total overthrow of the Russian government. A Cossack brigand, Stepan Rozni by name, had long defied the forces of the czar, and gradually gained in strength until he had an army of three hundred thousand men under his command. If he had been a soldier of ability he might have made himself lord of the empire. Being a brigand in grain, he was soon overturned and his forces dispersed.

Among his followers was one Yermak, a chief of the Cossacks of the Don, whom the czar sentenced to death for his love of plunder, but afterwards pardoned. Yermak and his followers soon found the rule of Moscow too stringent for their ideas of personal liberty, and he led a Cossack band to the Stroganof settlements in Perm.

Tradition tells us that the Stroganof of that date did not relish the presence of his unruly guests, with their free ideas of property rights, and suggested to Yermak that Siberia offered a promising field for a ready sword. He would supply him with food and arms if he saw fit to lead an expedition thither.

The suggestion accorded well with Yermak's humor. He at once began to enlist volunteers for the enterprise, adding to his own Cossack band a reinforcement of Russians and Tartars and of German and Polish prisoners of war, until he had sixteen hundred and thirty-six men under his command. With these he crossed the mountains in 1580, and terrified the natives to

submission with his fire-arms, a form of weapon new to them. Making their way down the Tura and Taghil Rivers, the adventurers crossed the immense untrodden forests of Tobol, and Kutchum, the Tartar khan, was assailed in his capital town of Ister, near where Tobolsk now stands.



KIAKHTA, SIBERIA

Many battles with the Tartars were fought, Ister was taken, the khan fled to the steppes, and his cousin was made prisoner by the adventurers. Yermak now, having added by his valor a great domain to the Russian empire, purchased the favor of Ivan IV by the present of this new kingdom. He made his way to the Irtysh and Obi, opened trade with the rich khanato of Bokbara, south of the desert, and in various ways sought to consolidate the conquest he had made. But misfortune came to the conqueror. One day, being surprised by the Tartars when unprepared, he leaped into the Irtysh in full armor and tried to swim its rapid current. The armor he wore had been sent him by the czar, and had served him well in war. It proved too heavy for his powers of swimming, bore him beneath the hungry waters, and brought the career of the victorious brigand to an end. After his death his dismayed followers fled from Siberia, yielding it to Tartar hands again.

Yermak—in his way a rival of Cortez and Pizarro—gained by his conquest the highest fame among the Russian people. They exalted him to the level of a hero, and their church has raised him to the rank of a saint, at whose tomb miracles are performed. As regards the Russian saints, it may here be remarked that they have been constructed, as a rule, from very unsanctified timber, as may be seen from the examples we have heretofore given. Not only the people and the priests but the poets have paid their tribute to Yermak's fame, epic poems having been written about his exploits and his deeds made familiar in popular song.

Though the Cossacks withdrew after Yermak's death, others soon succeeded them. The furs of Siberia formed a rich prize whose allurements could not be ignored, and new bands of hunters and adventurers poured into the country, sustained by regular troops from Moscow. The advance was made through the northern districts to avoid the denser populations of the south. New detachments of troops were sent, who built forts and settled laborers around them, with the duty of supplying the garrisons with food, powder, and arms. By 1650 the Amur was reached and followed to the Pacific Ocean.

It was a brief period in which to conquer a country of such vast extent. But no organized resistance was met, and the land lay almost at the mercy of the invaders. There was vigorous opposition by the tribes, but they were soon subdued. The only effective resistance they met was that of the Chinese, who obliged the Cossacks to quit the Amur, which river they claimed. In 1855 the advance here began again, and the whole course of the river was occupied, with much territory to its south. Siberia, thus conquered by arms, is being made secure for Russia by a trans-continental railroad and hosts of new settlers, and promises in the future to become a land of the greatest prosperity and wealth.

CHAPTER XII

THE MACBETH OF RUSSIA

On the 15th of May, 1591, five boys were playing in the court-yard of the Russian palace at Uglitch. With them were the governess and nurse of the principal child—a boy ten years of age—and a servant-woman. The child had a knife in his hand, with which he was amusing himself by thrusting it into the ground or cutting a piece of wood.

Unluckily, the attention of the women for a brief interval was drawn aside. When the nurse looked at her charge again, to her horror she found him writhing on the ground, bathed in blood which poured from a large wound in his throat.

The shrieks of the nurse quickly drew others to the spot, and in a moment there was a terrible uproar, for the dying boy was no less a person than Dmitri, son of Ivan the Terrible, brother of Feodor, the reigning czar, and heir to the crown of Russia. The tocsin was sounded, and the populace thronged into the courtyard, thinking that the palace was on fire. On learning what had actually happened they burst into uncontrollable fury. The child had not killed himself, but had been murdered, they said, and a victim for their rage was sought.

In a moment the governess was hurled bleeding and half alive to the ground, and one of her slaves, who came to her aid, was killed. The keeper of the palace was accused of the crime, and, though he fled and barred himself within a house, the infuriated mob broke through the doors and killed him and his son. The body of the child was carried into a neighboring church, and here the son of the governess, against whom suspicion had been directed, was murdered before it under his mother's eyes. Fresh victims to the wrath of the populace were sought, and the lives of the governess and some others were with difficulty saved.

As for the child who had killed himself or had been killed, alarming stories had recently been set afloat. He was said to be the image of his terrible father, and to manifest an unnatural delight in blood and the sight of pain, his favorite amusement being to torture and kill animals. But it is doubtful if any of this was true, for there was then one in power who had a reason for arousing popular prejudice against the boy.

That this may be better understood we must go back. Ivan had killed his ablest son, as told in a previous story, and Feodor, the present czar, was a feeble, timid, sickly incapable, who was a mere tool in the hands of his ambitious minister, Boris Godunof. Boris craved the throne. Between him and this lofty goal lay only the feeble Feeder and the child Dmitri, the sole direct survivors of the dynasty of Rurik. With their death without children that great line would be extinguished.

The story of Boris reminds us in several particulars of that of the Scotch usurper Macbeth. His future career had been predicted, in the dead of night, by astrologers, who said, "You shall yet wear the crown," Then they became silent, as if seeing horrors which they dared not reveal. Boris insisted on knowing more, and was told that he should reign, but only for seven years. In joy he exclaimed, " No matter, though it be for only seven days, so that I reign!"

This ambitious lord, who ruled already if he did not reign, had therefore a purpose in exciting prejudice against and distrust of Dmitri, the only heir to the crown, and in taking steps for his removal. Feodor dead, the throne would fall like ripe fruit into his own hands.

Yet, whether guilty of the murder or not, he took active steps to clear himself of the dark suspicion of guilt. An inquest was held, and the verdict rendered that the boy had killed himself by accident. At once the regent proceeded to punish those who had taken part in the outbreak at Uglitch. The czaritza, mother of Dmitri, who had first incited the mob, was forced to take the veil. Her brothers, who had declared the act

one of murder, were sent to remote prisons. Uglitch was treated with frightful severity. More than two hundred of its inhabitants were put to death. Others were maimed and thrown into dungeons. All the rest, except those who had fled, were exiled to Siberia, and with them was banished the very church-bell which had called them out by its tocsin peal. A town of thirty thousand inhabitants was depopulated that, as people said, every evidence of the guilt of Boris Godunof might be destroyed.

This dreadful violence did Boris more harm than good. Macbeth stabbed the sleeping grooms to hide his guilt. Boris destroyed a city. But he only caused the people to look on him as an assassin and to doubt the motives of even his noblest acts.

A fierce fire broke out that left much of Moscow in ruin. Boris rebuilt whole streets and distributed money freely among the people. But even those who received this aid said that he had set fire to the city himself that he might win applause with his money. A Tartar army invaded the empire and appeared at the gates of Moscow. All were in terror but Boris, who hastily built redoubts, recruited soldiers, and inspired all with his own courage. The Tartars were defeated, and hardly a third of them reached home again. Yet all the return the able regent received was the popular saying that he had called in the Tartars in order to make the people forget the death of Dmitri.

A child was born to Feodor,—a girl. The enemies of the regent instantly declared that a boy had been born and that he had substituted for it a girl. It died in a few days, and then it was said that he had poisoned it.

Yet Boris went on, disdaining his enemies, winning power as he went. He gained the favor of the clergy by giving Russia a patriarch of its own. The nobles who opposed him were banished or crushed. He made the peasants slaves of the land, and thus won over the petty lords. Cities were built, fortresses erected, the enemies of Russia defeated; Siberia was brought under firm control, and the whole nation made to see that it had never been ruled by abler hands.

Boris in all this was strongly paving his way to the throne. In 1598 the weak Feodor died. He left no sons, and with him, its fifty-second sovereign, the dynasty of Rurik the Varangian came to an end. It had existed for more than seven centuries. Branches of the house of Rurik remained, yet no member of it dared aspire to that throne which the tyrant Ivan had made odious.

A new ruler had to be chosen by the voice of those in power, and Boris stood supreme among the aspirants. The chronicles tell us, with striking brevity, "The election begins; the people look up to the nobles, the nobles to the grandees, the grandees to the patriarch; he speaks, he names Boris; and instantaneously, and as one man, all re-echo that formidable name."

And now Godunof played an amusing game. He held the reins of power so firmly that he could safely enact a transparent farce. He refused the sceptre. The grandees and the people begged him to accept it, and he took refuge from their solicitations in a monastery. This comedy, which even Caesar had not long played, Boris kept up for over a month. Yet from his cell he moved Russia at his will.

In truth, the more he seemed to withdraw the more eager became all to make him accept. Priests, nobles, people, besieged him with their supplications. He refused, and again refused, and for six weeks kept all Russia in suspense. Not until he saw before him the highest grandees and clergy of the realm on their knees, tears in their eyes, in their hands the relics of the saints and the image of the Redeemer, did he yield what seemed a reluctant assent, and come forth from his cell to accept that throne which was the chief object of his desires.

But Boris on the throne still resembled Macbeth. The memory of his crimes pursued him, and he sought to rule by fear instead of love. He endeavored, indeed, to win the people by shows and prodigality, but the powerful he ruled with a heavy hand, destroying all whom he had reason to fear, threatening the

extinction of many great families by forbidding their members to marry, seizing the wealth of those he had ruined. The family of the Romanofs, allied to the line of Rurik, and soon to become pre-eminent in Russia, he pursued with rancor, its chief being obliged to turn monk to escape the axe. As monk he in time rose to the headship of the church.

The peasantry, who had before possessed liberty of movement, were by him bound as serfs to the soil. Thousands of them fled, and an insupportable inquisition was established, as hateful to the land-owners as to the serfs. All this was made worse by famine and pestilence, which ravaged Russia for three years. And in the midst of this disaster the ghost of the slain Dmitri rose to plague his murderer. In other words, one who claimed to be the slain prince appeared, and avenged the murdered child, his story forming one of the most interesting tales in the history of Russia. It is this which we have now to tell.

About midsummer of the year 1603 Adam Wiszniowiecki a polish prince, angry at some act of negligence in a young man whom he had lately employed, gave him a box on the ear and called him by an insulting name.

"If you knew who I am, prince," said the indignant youth. "you would not strike me nor call me by such a name."

"Knew who you are! Why, who are you?"

"I am Dmitri, son of Ivan IV., and the rightful czar of Russia."

Surprised by this extraordinary statement, the prince questioned him, and was told a plausible story by the young man. He had escaped the murderer, he said, the boy who died being the son of a serf, who resembled and had been substituted for him by his physician Simon, who knew what Boris designed. The physician had fled with him from Uglitch and put him in the hands of a loyal gentleman, who for safety had consigned him to a monastery.

The physician and gentleman were both dead. but the young man showed the prince a Russian seal which bore Dmitri's arms and name, and a gold cross adorned with jewels of great value, given him, he said, by his princely godfather. He was about the age which Dmitri would have reached, and, as a Russian servant who had seen the child said, had warts and other marks like those of the true Dmitri. He possessed also a persuasiveness of manner which soon won over the polish prince.

The pretender was accepted as an illustrious guest by Prince Wiszniowiecki, given clothes, horses, carriages, and suitable retinue, and presented to other Polish dignitaries. Dmitri, as he was thenceforth known, bore well the honors now showered upon him. He was at ease among the noblest; gracious, affable, but always dignified; and all said that he had the deportment of a prince.

He spoke Polish as well as Russian, was thoroughly versed in Russian history and genealogy, and was, moreover, an accomplished horseman, versed in field sports, and of striking vigor and agility, qualities highly esteemed by the Polish nobles.

The story of this event quickly reached Russia, and made its way with surprising rapidity through all the provinces. The czarevitch Dmitri had not been murdered, after all! He was alive in Poland, and was about to call the usurper to a terrible reckoning. The whole nation was astir with the story, and various accounts of his having been seen in Russia and of having played a brave part in the military expeditions of the Cossacks were set afloat.

Boris soon heard of this claimant of the throne. He also received the disturbing news that a monk was among the Cossacks of the Don urging them to take up arms for the czarevitch who would soon be among them. His first movement was the injudicious one of trying to bribe Wiszniowiecki to give up the impostor to him the result being to confirm the belief that he was in truth the prince he claimed to be.

The events that followed are too numerous to be given in detail, and it must suffice here to say that on October 31, 1604, Dmitri entered Russian territory at the head of a small Polish army, of less than five thousand in all. This was a trifling force with which to invade an empire, but it grew rapidly as he advanced. Town after town submitted on his appearance, bringing to him, bound and gagged, the governors set over them by Boris. Dmitri at once set the free and treated them with polite humanity.

The first town to offer resistance was Novgorod-Swarski, which Peter Basmanof, a general of Boris, had garrisoned with five hundred men. Basmanof was brave and obstinate, and for several weeks he held the force of Dmitri before this petty place while Boris was making vigorous efforts to collect an army among his discontented people. On the last day of 1604 the two armies met, fifteen thousand against fifty thousand, and on a broad open plain that gave the weaker force no advantage of position.

But Dmitri made up for weakness by soldierly spirit. At the head of some six hundred mail-clad Polish knights he vigorously charged the Russian right wing, hurled it back upon the centre, and soon had the whole army in disorder. The soldiers flung down their arms and fled, shouting, "The czarevitch! the czarevitch!"

Yet in less than a month this important victory was followed by a defeat. Dmitri had been weakened by his Poles being called home. Boris gathered new forces, and on January 20, 1605, the armies met again, now seventy thousand Muscovites against less than quarter their number. Yet victory would have come to Dmitri again but for treachery in his army. He charged the enemy with the same fierceness as before, bore down all before him, routed the cavalry, tore a great gap in the line of the infantry, and would have swept the field had the main body of his army, consisting of eight thousand Zaporogues, come to his aid.

At this vital moment this great body of cavalry, half the entire army, wheeled and quit the field,—bribed, it is said, by Boris. Such a defection, at such a moment, was fatal. The Russians rallied; the day was lost; nothing but flight remained. Dmitri fled, hotly pursued, and his horse suffering from a wound. He was saved by his devoted Cossack infantry, four thousand in number, who stood to their guns and faced the whole Muscovite army. They were killed to a man, but Dmitri escaped,—favored, as we are told, by some of the opposing leaders, who did not want to make Boris too powerful.

All was not lost while Dmitri remained at liberty. Lost armies could be restored. He took refuge in Putivle, one of the towns which had pronounced in his favor, and while his enemies, who proved half-hearted in the cause of Boris, wasted their time in besieging a small fortress, new adherents flocked to his banner. Boris was furious against his generals, but his fury caused them to hate instead of to serve him. He tried to get rid of Dmitri by poison, but his agents were discovered and punished, and the attempt helped his rival more than a victory would have done.

Dmitri wrote to Boris, declaring that Heaven had protected him against this base attempt, and ironically promising to extend mercy towards him. "Descend from the throne you have usurped, and seek in the solitude of the cloister to reconcile yourself with Heaven. In that case I will forget your crimes, and even assure you of my sovereign protection."

All this was bitter to the Russian Macbeth. The princely blood which he had shed to gain the throne seemed to redden the air about him. The ghost of his slain victim haunted him. His power, indeed, seemed as great as ever. He was an autocrat still, the master of a splendid court, the ruler over a vast empire. Yet he knew that they who came with reverence and adulation into his presence hated him in their hearts, and anguish must have smitten the usurper to the soul.

His sudden death seemed to indicate this. On the 13th of April, 1605, after dining in state with some distinguished foreigners, illness suddenly seized him, blood burst from his mouth, nose, and ears, and within two hours he was dead. He had reigned six years,—nearly the full term predicted by the sooth sayers.

The story of Dmitri is a long one still, but must be dealt with here with the greatest brevity. Feodor, the son of Boris, was proclaimed czar by the boyars of the court. The oath of allegiance was taken by the whole city; all seemed to favor him; yet within six weeks this boyish czar was deposed and executed without a sword being drawn in his defence.

Basmanof, the leading general of Boris, had turned to the cause of Dmitri, and the army seconded him. The people of Moscow declared in favor of the pretender, there were a few executions and banishments, and on the 20th of June the new czar entered Moscow in great pomp, amid the acclamations of an immense multitude, who thronged the streets, the windows, and the house-tops; and the young man who, less than two years before, had had his ears boxed by a Polish prince, was now proclaimed emperor and autocrat of the mighty Russian realm.

It was a short reign to which the false Dmitri for there seems to be no doubt of the death of the true Dmitri—had come. Within less than a year Moscow was in rebellion, he was slain, and the throne was vacant. And this result was largely due to his generous and kindly spirit, largely to his trusting nature and disregard of Russian opinion.

No man could have been more unlike the tyrant Ivan, his reputed father. Dmitri proved kind and generous to all, even bestowing honors upon members of the family of Godunof. He remitted heavy taxes, punished unjust judges, paid the debts contracted by Ivan, passed laws in the interest of the serfs, and held himself ready to receive the petitions and redress the grievances of the humblest of his subjects. His knowledge of state affairs was remarkable for one of his age, and Russia had

never had an abler, nobler-minded, and more kindly-hearted czar.

But Dmitri in discretion was still a boy, and made trouble where an older head would have mended it. He offended the boyars of his council by laughing at their ignorance.

"Go and travel," he said; "observe the ways of civilized nations, for you are no better than savages." The advice was good, but not wise. He offended the Russian demand for decorum in a czar by riding through the streets on a furious stallion, like a Cossack of the Don. In religion he was lax, favoring secretly the Latin Church. He chose Poles instead of Russians for his secretaries. And he excited general disgust by the announcement that he was about to marry a Polish woman, heretical to the Russian faith. The people were still more incensed by the conduct of Marina, this foreign bride, both before and after the wedding, she giving continual offence by her insistence on Polish customs.

While thus offending the prejudices and superstitions of his people, Dmitri prepared for his downfall by his trustfulness and clemency. He dismissed the spies with whom former czars had surrounded themselves, and laid himself freely open to treachery. The result of his acts and his openness was a conspiracy, which was fortunately discovered. Shuiski, its leader, was condemned to be executed. Yet as he knelt with the axe lifted above him, he was respited and banished to Siberia; and on his way thither a courier overtook him, bearing a pardon for him and his banished brothers. His rank was restored, and he was again made a councillor of the empire.

Clemency like this was praiseworthy, but it proved fatal. Like Caesar before him, Dmitri was over-clement and over-confident, and with the same result. Yet his answer to those who urged him to punish the conspirator was a noble one, and his trustfulness worth far more than a security due to cruelty and suspicion.

"No," he said, "I have sworn not to shed Christian blood, and I will keep my oath. There are two ways of governing an empire,—tyranny and generosity. I choose the latter. I will not be a tyrant. I will not spare money; I will scatter it on all hands."

Only for the offence which he gave his people by disregarding their prejudices, Dmitri might have long and ably reigned. His confidence opened the way to a new conspiracy, of which Shuiski was again at the head. Reports were spread through the city that Dmitri was a heretic and an impostor and that he had formed a plot to massacre the Moscovites by the aid of the Poles whom he had introduced into the city.



THE KREMLIN.

As a result of the insidious methods of the conspirators, the whole city broke out in rebellion, and at daybreak on the 29th of May, 1606, a body of boyars gathered in the great square in full armor, and, followed by a multitude of townsmen, advanced on the Kremlin, whose gates were thrown open by traitors within.

Dmitri, who had only fifty guards in the Palace, was aroused by the din of bells and the uproar in the streets. An

armed multitude filled the outer court, shouting, "Death to the impostor!"

Soon conspirators appeared in the palace, where the czar, snatching a sword from one of the guards, and attended by Basmanof, attacked them, crying out, "I am not a Boris for you!"

He killed several with his own hands, but Basmanof was slain before him, and he and the guards were driven back from chamber to chamber, until the guards, finding that the czar had disappeared, laid down their arms.

Dmitri, seeing that resistance was hopeless, had sought a distant room, and here had leaped or been thrown from a window to the ground. The height was thirty feet, his leg was broken by the fall, and he fainted with the pain.

His last hope of life was gone. Some faithful soldiers who found him sought to defend him against the mob who soon appeared, but their resistance was of no avail. Dmitri was seized, his royal garments were torn off, and the caftan of a pastry-cook was placed upon him. Thus dressed, he was carried into a room of the palace for the mockery of a trial.

"Bastard dog," cried one of the Russians, "tell us who you are and whence you came."

"You all know I am your czar," replied Dmitri, bravely, "the legitimate son of Ivan Vassilievitch. If you desire my death, give me time at least to collect my senses."

At this a Russian gentleman named Valniefshouted out,

"What is the use of so much talk with the heretic dog? This is the way I confess this Polish fifer." And he put an end to the agony of Dmitri by shooting him through the breast.

In an instant the mob rushed on the lifeless body, slashing it with axes and swords. It was carried out, placed on a table, and a set of bagpipes set on the breast with the pipe in the mouth.

"You played on us long enough; now play for us," cried the ribald insulter.

Others lashed the corpse with their whips, crying, "Look at the czar, the hero of the Germans."

For three days Dmitri's body lay exposed to the view of the populace, but it was so hacked and mangled that none could recognize in it the gallant young man who a few days before had worn the imperial robes and crown.

On the third night a blue flame was seen playing over the table, and the guards, frightened by this natural result of putrefaction, hastened to bury the body outside the walls. But superstitious terrors followed the prodigy: it was whispered that Dmitri was a wizard who, by magic arts, had the power to come to life from the grave. To prevent this the body was dug up again and burned, and the ashes were collected, mixed with gunpowder, and rammed into a cannon, which was then dragged to the gate by which Dmitri had entered Moscow. Here the match was applied, and the ashes of the late czar were hurled down the road leading to Poland, whence he had come.

Thus died a man who, impostor though he seems to have been, was perhaps the noblest and best of all the Russian czars, while the story of his rise and fall forms the most dramatic tale in all the annals of the empire over which for one short year he ruled.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ERA OF THE IMPOSTORS

We have told how the ashes of Dmitri were loaded into a cannon and fired from the gate of Moscow. They fell like seeds of war on the soil of Russia, and for years that unhappy land was torn by faction and harried by invasion. From those ashes new Dmitris seemed to spring, other impostors rose to claim the crown, and until all these shades were laid peace fled from the land.

Vassili Shuiski, the leader in the insurrection against Dmitri, had himself proclaimed czar. He was destined to learn the truth of the saying, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." For hardly had the mob that murdered Dmitri dispersed before rumors arose that their victim was not dead. His body had been so mangled that none could recognize it, and the story was set afloat that it was one of his officers who had been killed, and that he had escaped. Four swift horses were missing from the stables of the palace, and these were at once connected with the assumed flight of the czar. Rumor was in the air, and even in Moscow doubts of Dmitri's death grew rife.

Fuel soon fell on the flame. Three strangers in Russian dress, but speaking the language of Poland, crossed the Oka River, and gave the ferryman the high fee of six ducats, saying, "You have ferried the czar; when he comes back to Moscow with a Polish army he will not forget your service."

At a German inn, a little farther on, the same party used similar language. This story spread like wild-fire through Russia, and deeply alarmed the new czar. To put it down he sought to play on the religious feelings of the Russians, by making a saint of the original Dmitri. A body was produced, said to have been taken from the grave of the slain boy at Uglitch, but in a remarkable state of preservation, since it still displayed the fresh

hue of life and held in its hand some strangely preserved nuts. Tales of miracles performed by the relics of the new saint were also spread, but with little avail, for the people were not very ready to believe the man who had stolen the throne.

War broke out despite these manufactured miracles. Prince Shakhofskoi—the supposed leader of the party who had told the story at the Oka—was soon in the field with an army of Cossacks and peasants, and defeated the royal army. But the new Dmitri, in whose name he fought, did not appear. It seemed as if Shakhofskoi had not yet been able to find a suitable person to play the part.

Russia, however, was not long without a pretender. During Dmitri's reign a young man had appeared among the Cossacks of the Volga, calling himself Peter Feodorovitch, and claiming to be the son of the former czar Feodor. This man now reappeared and presented himself to the rebel army as the representative of his uncle Dmitri. He was eagerly welcomed by Shakhofskoi, who badly needed some one whom he might offer to his men as a prince.

And now we have to describe one of the strangest sieges in the annals of history. Shakhofskoi, finding himself threatened by a powerful army, took refuge in the fortified town of Toula. Here he was soon joined by Bolotnikof, a Polish general who had come to Russia with a commission bearing the imperial seal of Dmitri. In this stronghold they were besieged by an army of one hundred thousand men, led by the czar himself.

Toula was strong. It was vigorously defended, the garrison fighting bravely for their lives. No progress was made with the siege, and Shuiski grew disconsolate, for he knew that to fail now would be ruin.

From this state of anxiety he was relieved by a remarkable proposal, that of an obscure individual who promised to drown all the people of Toula and deliver the town into his hands. This extraordinary offer, made by a monk named Kravkof, was at first received with incredulous laughter, and it

was some time before the czar and his council could be brought to listen to the words of an idle braggart, as they deemed the stranger. In the end the czar asked him to explain his plan.

It proved to be the following. Toula lay in a little narrow valley, down whose center flowed the little river Oupa, passing through the town. Kravkof suggested that they should dam this stream below the town. "Do as I say," he remarked, "and if the whole town is not under water in a few hours, I will answer for the failure with my head." The project thus presented seemed feasible. Immediately all the millers in the army, men used to the kind of work required, were put under his orders, and the other soldiers were set to carrying sacks of earth to the place chosen for the dam. As this rose in height, the water backed up in the town. Soon many of the streets became canals, hundreds of houses, undermined by the water, were destroyed, and the promise of Kravkof seemed likely to be fulfilled.

Yet the garrison, confined in what had become a walled in lake, fought with desperate obstinacy. Water surrounded them, yet they waded to the walls and fought. Famine decimated them, yet they starved and fought. A terrible epidemic broke out in the water-soaked city, but the garrison fought on. Dreadful as were their surroundings, they held out with unflinching courage and intrepidity.

The dam was the centre of the struggle. The besiegers sought to raise it still higher and deepen the water in the streets; the besieged did their best to break it down and relieve the city. It had grown to a great height with such rapidity that the superstitious people of Toula felt sure that magic had aided in its building and fancied that it might be destroyed by magic means. A monk declared that Shuiski had brought devils to his aid, but professed to be a proficient in the black art, and offered, for a hundred roubles, to fight the demons in their own element.

Bolotnikof accepted his terms, and he stripped, plunged into the river, and disappeared. For a full hour nothing was seen of him, and every one gave him up for lost. But at the end of that

time he rose to the surface of the water, his body covered with scratches. The story he had to tell was, to say the least, remarkable.

"I have had a frightful conflict," he said, "with the twelve thousand devils Shuiski has at work upon his dam. I have settled six thousand of them, but the other six thousand are the worst of all, and will not give in."

Thus against men and devils alike, against water, famine, and pestilence, fought the brave men of Toula, holding out with extraordinary courage. Letters came to them in Dmitri's name, promising help, but it never came. At length, after months of this brave defence had elapsed, Shakhofskoi proposed that they should capitulate. The Cossacks of the garrison, furious at the suggestion, seized and thrust him into a dungeon. Not until every scrap of food had been eaten, horses and dogs devoured, even leather gnawed as food, did Bolotnikof and Peter the pretender offer to yield, and then only on condition that the soldiers should receive honorable treatment. If not, they would die with arms in their hands, and devour one another as food, rather than surrender. As for themselves, they asked for no pledges of safety.

Shuiski accepted the terms, and the gates were opened. Bolotnikof advanced boldly to the czar and offered himself as a victim, presenting his sword with the edge laid against his neck.

"I have kept the oath I swore to him who, rightly or wrongly, calls himself Dmitri," he said. "Deserted by him, I am in your power. Cut off my head if you will; or, if you will spare my life, I will serve you as I have served him."

This appeal was wasted on Shuiski. He forgot the clemency which the czar Dmitri had formerly shown to him, sent Bolotnikof to Kargopol, and soon after ordered him to be drowned. Peter the pretender was hanged on the spot. Shakhofskoi alone was spared. They found him in chains, which he said had been placed on him because he counselled the

obstinate rebels to submit. Shuiski set him free, and the first use he made of his liberty was to kindle the rebellion again.

Thus ended this remarkable siege, one in some respects without parallel in the history of war. What followed must be briefly told. Though the siege of Toula ended with the hanging of one pretender to the throne, another was already in the field. The new Dmitri, in whose name the war was waged, had made his appearance during the siege. Some of the officers of the first Dmitri pretended to recognize him, but in reality he was a coarse, vulgar, ignorant knave, who had badly learned his lesson, and lacked all the native princeliness of his predecessor.

Yet he had soon a large army at his back, and with it, on April 24, 1608, he defeated the army of the czar with great slaughter. He might easily have taken Moscow, but instead of advancing on it he halted at the village of Tushino, twelve versts away, where he held his court for seventeen months.

Meanwhile still another pretender appeared, who called himself Feodor, son of the czar Feodor. He presented himself to the Don Cossacks, who brought him in chains to Dmitri, by whom he was promptly put to death. Soon afterwards Marina, wife of the first Dmitri, who had been released, with her father, by Shuiski, was brought into the camp of the pretender. And here an interesting bit of comedy was played. Marina, rather than go back to meet ridicule in Poland, was ready to become the wife of this vulgar impostor, though she saw at once that he was not the man he claimed to be.

She met him coldly at first, but at a second meeting she greeted him with a great show of tenderness before the whole army, being glad, it would appear, to regain her old position on any terms. The news that Marina had recognized the pretender brought over numbers to his side, and soon nearly all Russia had declared for him, the only cities holding out being Moscow, Novgorod, and Smolensk.

The false Dmitri had now reached the summit of his fortunes. A rapid decline followed. One of his generals, who laid

siege to the monastery of the Trinity, near Moscow, was repulsed. His partisans were defeated in other quarters. Soon the whole aspect of the war changed. A new enemy to Russia came into the field, Sigismund, King of Poland, who laid siege to the strong city of Smolensk, while the army of the czar, which marched to its relief, suffered an annihilating defeat.

This result closed the reign of Shuiski. An insurrection broke out in Moscow, he was forced to become a monk, and in the end was delivered to Sigismund and died in prison. Thus was Dmitri avenged. The new condition of affairs proved as disastrous to the false Dmitri. His Poles deserted him, his power vanished, and he descended to the level of a mere Cossack robber. In December, 1610, murder ended his career.



CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION, MOSCOW, IN WHICH THE CZAR IS CROWNED.

Smolensk fell after a siege of eighteen months, but at the last moment a powder magazine exploded and set fire to the city,

and Sigismund became master only of a heap of ruins. The Poles in Moscow, attacked by the Russians, took possession of the Kremlin, burned down most of the city, and massacred a hundred thousand of the people. Anarchy was rampant everywhere. New chiefs appeared in all quarters. Each town declared for itself. The Swedes took possession of Novgorod. A third Dmitri appeared, and dwelt in state for a while, but was soon taken and hanged. The whole great empire was in a state of frightful confusion, and seemed as if it was about to fall to pieces.

From this fate it was saved by one of the common people, a butcher of Nijni Novgorod, Kozma Minin by name. Brave, honest, patriotic, and sensible, this man aroused his fellow-citizens, who took up arms for the deliverance of their country. Other towns followed this example, an army was raised with Prince Pojarski at its head, and Minin, the patriotic butcher, seconded him in an administrative capacity, being hailed by the people as "the elect of the whole Russian empire."

Driving the Poles before him, Pojarski entered Moscow, and in October, 1612, became master of the Kremlin. The impostors all disappeared; Marina and her three-year-old son Ivan were captured, the child to be hanged and she to end her eventful life in prison; anarchy vanished, and peace returned to the realm.

The end came in 1613, when a national council was convened to choose a new czar. Pojarski refused the crown, and Michael Romanof, a boy of sixteen, scion of one of the noblest families of Russia, and allied to the Ruriks by the female line, was elected czar. His descendants still hold the throne.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BOOKS OF ANCESTRY

The noble families of Russia, for the most part descendants of the Scandinavian adventurers who had come in with Rurik, were as proud in their way as the descendants of the vikings who came to England under William of Normandy. Their books of pedigree were kept with the most scrupulous care, and in these were set down not only the genealogies of the families, but every office that had been held by any ancestor, at court, in the army, or in the administration.

With this there is no special fault to be found. It is as well, doubtless, to keep the pedigrees of men as it is to keep those of horses and dogs; though the animals, being ignorant of their records, are less likely to make them a matter of pride and presumption. In Russia the fact that certain men knew the names and standing of their ancestors led to the most absurd consequences. The books of ancestry were constantly appealed to for the support of foolish pretensions, and the nobles of Russia strutted like so many peacocks in their insensate pride of family.

In no other country has the question of precedence been carried to such ridiculous lengths as it was in Russia in the days of the early Romanofs. If a nobleman were appointed to a post at court or a position in the army, he at once examined the books of ancestry to learn if the officials under whom he would serve had fewer ancestors on record than he. If such proved to be the case the office was refused, or accepted under protest, the government being, metaphorically, forced to fall on its knees to the haughtiness of its offended lordling.

The folly of the nobles went even farther than this. The height of their genealogy counted for as much as its length. They would refuse to accept positions under persons whose ancestors

were shown by the books to have been subordinate to theirs in the same positions. If it appeared that the John of five centuries before had been under the Peter of that period, the modern Peter was too proud to accept a similar position under the modern John. And so it went, until court life became a constant scene of bickering and discontent, and of murmurs at the most trifling slights and neglects. In short, it became necessary that an office of genealogy should be established at court, in which exact copies of the family trees and service registers of the noble families were kept, and the officers here employed found enough to keep them busy in settling the endless disputes of their lordly clients.

In the reign of Theodore, the third czar of the Romanof dynasty, this ridiculous sentiment reached its climax, and it became almost impossible to appoint a wise man to office over a fool, if the fool's ancestors had happened to hold the same office over those of the man of wisdom. The fancy seemed to be held that folly and wisdom are handed down from father to son, a conceit which is often the very reverse of the truth.

Theodore was a feeble youth, who reigned little more than five years, yet in that time he managed to bury this folly out of sight. Annoyed by the constant bickerings of courtiers and officials, he consulted with his able minister, Prince Vassili Galitzin, and hit on a means of ridding himself of the difficulty.

Proclamation was made that all the noble families of the kingdom should deliver their service rolls into court by a fixed date, that they might be cleared of certain errors which had unavoidably crept into them. The order was obeyed, and a multitude of these precious documents were brought into the palace halls of the czar. The heads of the noble families and the higher clergy were now sent for, composing a proud assembly, before whom the patriarch, who had received his instructions, made an eloquent address. He ended by speaking of the claims to precedence in the following words:

"They are a bitter source of every kind of evil; they render abortive the most useful enterprises, in like manner as the tares stifle the good grain; they have introduced, even into the hearts of families, dissension, confusion, and hatred. But the pontiff comprehends the grand design of his czar; God alone could have inspired it!"

Though utterly ignorant of what that design was, the grandees felt compelled to express a warm approval of these words. At this Theodore, who pretended to be enraptured by their applause, suddenly rose, and, simulating a burst of patriotic enthusiasm, proclaimed the abolition of all their hereditary claims.

"That the very recollection of them may be forever extinguished," he exclaimed, let all the papers relative to these titles be instantly consumed."

The fire was already prepared, and by his orders the precious papers were hurled into the flames before the anguished eyes of the nobles, who did not dare in that despotic court to express their true feelings, and strove to hide their dismay under hollow acclamations of assent.

As what they deemed their most valuable possessions were thus converted to ashes before their eyes, the patriarch again rose, and declared an anathema against any one who should dare to oppose this order of the czar. An "Amen" that was like a groan came from the lips of the horrified nobles, and precedence went up in flames.

The czar had no thought of effacing the noble families. New books were prepared, in which their ancestry was described. But the absurd claims which had caused such discord were forever abolished, and court life thereafter proved smoother and easier in consequence of the iconoclastic act of the czar Theodore.

CHAPTER XV

BOYHOOD OF PETER THE GREAT

Peter the Great, grandson of the first emperor of the Romanof line, was a man of such extraordinary power of body and mind, such a remarkable combination of common sense, mental activity, advanced ideas, and determination to lift Russia to a high place among the nations, with cruelty, grossness, and infirmities of vice and passion, that his reign of forty-three years fills as large a place in Russian history as do the annals of all the preceding centuries, and the progress of Russia during this short period was greater than in any other epoch of three or four times its length.

The character of the man showed in the boy, and while a mere child he began those steps of progress which were continued throughout his life. He had two brothers, both older than he, and sons of a different mother, so that the throne seemed far from his grasp. But Theodore, the oldest of the three, died after a brief reign, leaving no heirs to the throne. Ivan, the second son, was an imbecile, nearly blind, and subject to epileptic fits. The clergy and grandees, in consequence, looked upon Peter as the most promising successor to the throne. But he was still only a child, not yet ten years of age.

The czar Alexis had left also several daughters; but in those days the fate of princesses of the blood was a harsh one. They were not permitted to marry, and were consigned to convents, where they knew nothing of what was passing in the busy world without. One of the daughters, Sophia by name, had escaped from this fate. At her earnest request she was taken from the convent and permitted to nurse her sickly brother Theodore.

She was a woman of high intelligence, bold and ambitious by nature, and during her residence in court learned much of the politics of the empire and took some part in its

government. After the death of Theodore she contrived to have herself named regent for her two brothers, Ivan being plainly unfit to rule, and Peter too young.

There are many stories told about her, of which probably the half are not true. It is said that she kept her young brother at a distance from Moscow, where she surrounded him with ministers of evil, whose business it was to encourage him in riot and dissipation, to the end that he might become a moral monster, odious and insupportable to the nation at large. Such a course had been pursued with Ivan the Terrible, and to it was largely due his incredible iniquity.

If Sophia had really any such purpose in view, she was playing with edge-tools. She quite mistook the character of her young brother, and forgot that the same rule may work differently in different cases. The steps taken to make the boy base, if really so intended, aided to make him great. His morals were corrupted, his health was impaired, and his heart hardened by the excesses of his youth, but his removal from the palace atmosphere of flattery and effeminacy tended to make him self-reliant, while his free life in the country and the activity which it encouraged helped to develop the native energy of his character.

It is probable that Sophia had no such intention to corrupt the nature of the child, for she showed no ill will against him. It was apparently to his mother, rather than to his sister, that his residence in the country was due, and he was obliged to go frequently to Moscow, to take part in ceremonial affairs, while his name was used in all public documents, many of which he was required to sign.

From early life the boy had shown himself active, intelligent, quick to learn, and full of curiosity. He was particularly interested in military affairs, and playing at soldiers was one of the leading diversions of his youth. Only a day or two after a great riot in Moscow, in which numbers of nobles were slaughtered, and in which the child had looked unmoved into the savage faces of the rioters, he sent to the arsenal for

drums, banners, and arms. Uniforms and wooden cannon were supplied him, and on his eleventh birthday—in 1683—he was allowed to have some real guns, with which he fired salutes.

From his country home at Preobrajensk messengers came almost daily to Moscow for powder, lead, and shot; small brass and iron cannon were supplied the boy, and drummer-boys, selected from the different regiments, were sent to him. Thus he was allowed to play at soldier to his heart's content.

A company was formed from the younger domestics of the place, fifty in number, the officers being sons of the boyars or lords. But these were required by the alert boy to pass through all the grades of the service, which he also did himself; serving successively as private, sergeant, lieutenant, and captain, and finally as colonel of the regiment which grew from this youthful company. Peter called his company "the guards," but it was known in Moscow as the "pleasure company," or "troops for sport." In time, however, it grew into the Preobrajensky Guards, a celebrated regiment which is still kept up as the first regiment of the Russian Imperial Guard, and of which the emperor is always the colonel. Another company, formed on the same plan in an adjoining village, became the Semenofsky Regiment. From these rudiments grew the present Russian army.

These military exercises soon ceased to be child's play to the active lad. He gave himself no rest from his prescribed duties, stood his watch in turn, shared in the labors of the camp, slept in the tents of his comrades, and partook of their fare. He used to lead his company on long marches, during which the strictest discipline was maintained, and the camps at night were guarded as in an enemy's country.

On reaching his thirteenth year the boy took further steps in his military education, building a small fortress, whose remains are still preserved. This was constructed with great care, and took nearly a year to build. At the suggestion of a German officer it was named Pressburg, the name being given with much

ceremony, Peter leading from Moscow a procession of most of the court officials and nobles to take part in the performance.

These military sports were not enough for the active mind of the boy, who kept himself busy at a dozen labors. He used to hammer and forge in the blacksmith's shop, became an expert with the lathe, and learned the art of printing and binding books. He built himself a wheelbarrow and other articles which he needed, and at a later date it was said that he "knew excellently well fourteen trades."

When in Moscow, Peter spent much of his time in the foreign quarter, joining his associates there in the beer, wine, and tobacco of which they were specially fond, and questioning them about a thousand subjects unknown to the Russians, thus acquiring a wide knowledge of men and affairs. He troubled himself little about rank or position, making a companion of any one, high or low, from whom anything could be learned, while any mechanical curiosity particularly attracted him.

A sextant and astrolabe were brought him from France, of whose use no one could inform him, though he asked all whom he met. At length a Dutch merchant, Franz Timmermann by name, was brought him, who measured with the instrument the distance to a neighboring house. Peter was delighted, and eagerly asked to be taught how to use the instrument himself.

"It is not so easy," replied Timmermann; "you must first learn arithmetic and geometry."

Here was a new incentive. The boy at once set to work, spending all his leisure time, day and night, over these studies, to which he afterwards added geography and fortification. It was in this desultory way that his education was gained, no regular course of training being prescribed, and his strong self will breaking through all family discipline.

We may end here what we have to say about the boy's military activity. His army gradually grew until it numbered five thousand men, mainly foreigners, who were commanded by

General Gordon, a Scotch officer. Lefort, a Swiss, who had become one of Peter's favorite companions, now undertook to raise an army of twelve thousand men. He succeeded in this, and unexpectedly found himself made general of this force.

It is, however, of the boy's activity in naval affairs that we must now speak. Timmermann had become one of his constant companions, and was always teaching him something new. One day in 1688, when Peter was sixteen years old, he was wandering about one of the country estates of the throne, near the village of Ismailovo. An old building in the flax-yard attracted his attention, and he asked one of the servants what it was.

"It is a storehouse," the man said, "in which was put all the rubbish that was left after the death of Nikita Romanof, who used to live here."

Peter at once, curious to see this "rubbish," had the doors opened, went in, and looked about. In one corner, bottom upward, lay a boat, very different in build from the flat-bottomed, square-sterned boats which were in use on the Russian rivers.

"What is that?" he asked.

"It is an English boat," said Timmermann.

"But what is it good for? Is it better than our boats?" demanded Peter.

"Yes. If you had sails for it, you would find that it would not only go with the wind, but against the wind."

"Against the wind! Is that possible? How can it be possible?"

With his usual impatience, the boy wanted to try it at once. But the boat proved to be too rotten for use. It would need to be repaired and tarred, and a mast and sails would have to be made.

Where could these be had? Who could make them? Timmermann was able to tell him. Some thirty years before, a number of Dutch ship-carpenters had been brought from Holland and had built some vessels on the Volga River for the czar Alexis. These had been burned by a brigand, and Brandt, the builder, had returned to Moscow, where he still worked as a joiner. In those days it was easier to get into Russia than to get out again, foreigners who entered the land being held there as virtual prisoners. Even General Gordon tried in vain to get back to his native land.

Old Brandt was found, looked over the boat, put it in order, and launched it on a neighboring stream. To Peter's surprise and delight, he saw the boat moving under sail up and down the river, turning to right and left in obedience to the helm. Greatly excited, he called on Brandt to stop, jumped in, and, antler the old man's directions, began to manage the boat himself.

But the river was too narrow and the water too shallow for easy sailing, and the energetic boy had the boat dragged overland to a large pond, where it went better, but still not to his satisfaction. Where was a better body of water? He was told that there was a large lake about fifty miles away, but that it would be easier to build a new boat than to drag the English boat that distance.

"Can you do that?" asked the eager boy.

"Yes, sire," said Brandt, "but I will need many things."

"Oh, that does not matter at all," said Peter. "We can have anything."

No time was lost. Brandt, with one of his old comrades and Timmermann, went to work at once in the woods bordering the lake, Peter working with them when he could get away from Moscow, where he was frequently needed. It took time. Timber had to be prepared, a hut built to live in, and a dock to launch the boats, which were built on a larger scale than the small English

craft. Thus it was not until the following spring that the new boats were ready to launch.



ALEXANDER III., CZAR OF RUSSIA.

Peter meanwhile had been married. But the charms of his wife could not keep him from his beloved boats. Back he went, aided in completing and launching the new craft, and took such delight in sailing them about the lake that he could hardly be induced to return to Moscow for important duties.

In this humble way began the Russian navy, which had grown to large proportions before Peter died. The little English boat, which some think was one sent by Queen Elizabeth to Ivan the Terrible, has ever since Peter's time been known as the "Grandsire of the Russian navy." It is kept with the greatest care

in a small brick building within the fortress at St. Petersburg, and was one of the principal objects of interest in the great parade in that city in 1870 on the two hundredth anniversary of Peter's birth.

It will suffice to say, in conclusion, that shortly after these events Peter became the reigning czar, and turned from sport to earnest. Sophia had enjoyed so long the pleasure of ruling that her ambition grew with its exercise, and she sought to retain her position as long as possible. It is even said that she laid a plot to assassinate Peter, so that only the feeble Ivan should be left. The boy, told that assassins were seeking him, fled for his life. His fright seems to have been groundless, but it made him an undying enemy of his sister. The affair ended in the bulk of the nobility and soldiery turning to his side and in Sophia being obliged to leave the throne for a convent, where she spent the remainder of her life in the misery of strict seclusion.

CHAPTER XVI

CARPENTER PETER OF ZAANDAM

On the banks of the river Zaan, about five miles from Amsterdam, lies the picturesque little town of Zaandam, with its cottages of blue, green, and pink, half hidden among the trees, while a multitude of windmills surround the town like so many monuments to thrift and enterprise. Here, two centuries ago, ship-building was conducted on a great scale, the timber being sawed by windmill power, while the workmen were so numerous that a vessel was often on the sea in five weeks after the keel had been laid.

To this place, in August, 1697, came a workman of foreign birth, who found humble quarters in a small frame but and entered himself as a ship-carpenter at the wharf of Lynst Rogge. There was nothing specially noticeable about the stranger, who wore a workman's dress and a tarpaulin hat. But with him were some comrades dressed in the strange garb of Russia, who attracted the attention of the people.

As for the new workman, he did not long escape curious looks. The rumor had got about that no less a personage than the Czar of Russia was in the town, and it began to be suspected that this unobtrusive stranger might be the man, so that it was not long before inquisitive eyes began to follow him wherever he went. The rumor soon brought large crowds from Amsterdam, whose presence made the streets of the small Dutch town anything but comfortable.

It was well known that Peter I., Czar of Russia, was travelling through the nations of the West. A large embassy, composed of several hundred people, some of them the highest officials of the court, had left the Muscovite kingdom, and visited the several courts and large cities on their route, being everywhere received with the greatest distinction. But the czar

did not appear openly among them. He was there in disguise, but had given strict orders that his presence should not be revealed. He hated crowds, hated adulation, and wished only to be let alone to see and learn all he could. So while the ambassadors were receiving the highest honors of kingdoms and courts and bowing and parading to their hearts' content, the czar kept himself in the background as an amused spectator, thought by most observers to be one of the servants of the gorgeous train.

And thus he reached Zaandam, which he had been told was the best place to learn how ships were built. Here he saw fishing in the river one of his old acquaintances of the foreign quarter of Moscow, a smith named Gerrit Kist. Calling him from his rod, and binding him to secrecy, he told him why he had come to Holland. and insisted on taking up quarters in his house. This house, a small frame hut, is now preserved as a sacred object, enclosed within a brick building, and has long been a place of pilgrimage even for royal travellers. Emperors and kings have bent their lofty heads to enter its low door.

Yet Peter lived in Zaandam only a week, and during that week did little work at ship-building, spending much of his time in rowing about among the shipping, and visiting most of the factories and mills, at one of which he made a sheet of paper with his own royal hands.

One day the disguised emperor met with an adventure. He had bought a hatful of plums, and was eating them in the most plebeian fashion as he walked along the street, when he met a crowd of boys. He shared his fruit with some of these, but those to whom he refused to give plums began to follow him with boyish reviling, and when he laughed at them they took to pelting him with mud and stones. Here was a situation for an emperor away from home. The Czar of all the Russias had to take to his heels and run for refuge to the Three Swans Inn, where he sent for the burgomaster of the town, told who he was, and demanded aid and relief. At least we may suppose so, for an edict was soon issued threatening punishment to all who should insult "distinguished persons who wished to remain unknown."

The end of Peter's stay soon came. A man in Zaandam had received a letter from his son in Moscow, saying that the czar was with the great Russian embassy, and describing him so closely that he could no longer remain unknown. This letter was seen by Pomp, the barber of Zaandam, and when Peter came into his place with his Russian comrades he at once knew him from the description and spread the news.

From that time the czar had no rest. Wherever he went he was followed by crowds of curious people. They grew so annoying that at length he leaped in anger from his boat and gave one of the most forward of his persecutors a sharp cuff on the cheek.

"Bravo, Marsje!" cried the crowd in delight: "you are made a knight."

The czar rushed angrily to an inn, where he shut himself up out of sight. The next day a large ship was to be moved across the dike by means of capstans and rollers, a difficult operation, in which Peter took deep interest. A place was reserved for him to see it, but the crowd became so great as to drive back the guards, break down the railings, and half fill the reserved space. Peter, seeing this, refused to leave his house. The burgomaster and other high officials begged him to come, but the most he could be got to do was to thrust his head out of the door and observe the situation.

"*Te veel volks, to veel volks*" ("too many people"), he bluntly cried, and refused to budge.

The next day was Sunday, and all Amsterdam seemed to have come to Zaandam to see its distinguished guest. He escaped them by fleeing to Amsterdam. Getting to a yacht he had bought, and to which he had fitted a bowsprit with his own hands, he put to sea, giving no heed to warnings of danger from the furious wind that was blowing. Three hours after he reached Amsterdam, where his ambassadors then were, and where they were to have a formal reception the next day.

Receptions were well enough for ambassadors, but they were idle flummery to the czar, who had come to see, not to be seen, and who did his best to keep out of sight. He visited the fine town hall, inspected the docks, saw a comedy and a ballet, consented to sit through a great dinner, witnessed a splendid display of fireworks, and, most interesting to him of all, was entertained with a great naval sham fight, which lasted a whole day.

Zaandam has the credit of having been the scene of Peter the Great's labor as a shipwright, but it was really at Amsterdam that his life as a workman was passed. At his request he was given the privilege of working at the docks of the East India Company, a house being assigned him within the enclosure where he could dwell undisturbed, free from the curiosity of crowds. As a mark of respect it was determined to begin the construction of a new frigate, one hundred feet long, so that the distinguished workman might see the whole process of the building of a ship. With his usual impetuosity Peter wished to begin work immediately, and could hardly be induced to wait for the fireworks to burn themselves out. Then he set out for Zaandam on his yacht to fetch his tools, and the next day, August 30, presented himself as a workman at the East India Company's wharf.

For more than four months, with occasional breaks, Peter worked diligently as a ship-carpenter, ten of his Russian companions—probably much against their will—working at the wharf with him. He was known simply as Baas Peter (Carpenter Peter), and, while sitting on a log at rest, with his hatchet between his knees, was willing to talk with any one who addressed him by this name, but had no answer for those who called him Sire or Your Majesty. Others of the Russians were put to work elsewhere, to study the construction of masts, blocks, sails, etc., some of them were entered as sailors before the mast, and Prince Alexander of Imeritia went to the Hague to study artillery. None of them was allowed "to take his ease at his inn."

Peter insisted on being treated as a common workman, and would not permit any difference to be made between him and his fellow-laborers. He also demanded the usual wages for his work. On one occasion, when the Earl of Portland and another nobleman came to the yard to have a sight of him, the overseer, to indicate him, called out, "Carpenter Peter of Zaandam, why don't you help your comrades?" Without a word, Peter put his shoulders under a log which several men were carrying, and helped to lift it to its place.

His evenings were spent in studying the theory of ship-building, and his spare hours were fully occupied in observation. He visited everything worth seeing, factories, museums, cabinets of coins, theatres, hospitals, etc., constantly making shrewd remarks and inquiries, and soon becoming known from his quick questions, "What is that for? How does that work? That will I see."

He went to Zaandam to see the Greenland whaling fleet, visited the celebrated botanical garden with the great Boerhaave, studied the microscope at Delft under Leuwenhoek, became intimate with the military engineer Coehorn, talked with Schynvoet of architecture, and learned to etch from Schonebeck. An impression of a plate made by him, of Christianity victorious over Islam, is still extant.

He made himself familiar with Dutch home life, mingled with the merchants engaged in the Russian trade, went to the Botermarkt every market-day, and took lessons from a travelling dentist, experimenting on his own servants and suite, probably not much to their enjoyment. He mended his own clothes, learned enough of cobbling to make himself a pair of slippers, and, in short, was insatiable in his search for information of every available kind.

His work on the frigate whose keel he had helped to lay was continued until it was launched. It was well built, and for many years proved a good and useful ship, braving the perils of the seas in the East India trade. But with all this the imperial

carpenter was not satisfied. The Dutch methods did not please him. The ship-masters seemed to work without rules other than the "rule of thumb," having no theory of ship-building from which the best proportions of a vessel could be deduced.

Learning that things were ordered differently in English ship-yards, that there work was done by rule and precept, Peter sent an order to the Russian docks not to allow the Dutch shipwrights to work as they pleased, but to put them under Danish or English overseers. For himself, he resolved to go to England and follow up his studies there. King William had sent him a warm invitation and presented him a splendid yacht, light, beautifully proportioned, and armed with twenty brass cannon. Delighted with the present, he sailed in it to England, escorted by an English fleet, and in London found an abiding-place in a house which a few years before had been the refuge of William Penn when charged with treason. Here he slept in a small room with four or five companions, and when the King of England came to visit him, received his fellow-monarch in his shirt-sleeves. The air of the room was so bad that, though the weather was very cold, William insisted on a window being raised.

In England the czar, though managing to see much outside the ship-yards, worked steadily at Deptford for several months, leaving only when he had gained all the special knowledge which he could obtain. His admiration for the English ship-builders was high, he afterwards saying that but for his journey to England he would have always remained a bungler. While here he engaged many men to take service in Russia, shipwrights, engineers, and others; he also engaged numerous officers for his navy from Holland, several French surgeons, and various persons of other nationality, the whole numbering from six to eight hundred skilled artisans and professional experts. To raise money for their advance payment he sold the monopoly of the Russian tobacco trade for twenty thousand pounds. Sixty years before, his grandfather Michael had forbidden the use of tobacco in Russia under pain of death, and the prejudice against it was still strong. But in spite of this

the use of tobacco was rapidly spreading, and Peter thus threw down the bars.

Great numbers of anecdotes are afloat about Peter's doings in Holland and England,—many of them, doubtless, invented. The sight of a great monarch going about in workman's clothes and laboring like a common ship-carpenter was apt to aid the imagination of story-tellers and give rise to numerous tales with little fact to sustain them.

In May, 1698, Peter left England and proceeded to Amsterdam, where his embassy had remained, often in great distress about him, for the winter was cold and stormy and at one time no news was received from him for a month. From Amsterdam he made his way to Vienna, whence he proposed to go to Venice and Rome, but was prevented by disturbing news from Moscow, which turned his steps homeward. Here he was to show a new phase of his varied character, as will be seen in the following tale.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FALL OF THE STRELITZ

History presents us with four instances of an imperial soldiery who took the power into their own bands and for a time ruled as the tyrants of a nation. These were the Pretorian Guards of Rome, the Mamelukes of Egypt, the Janissaries of Turkey, and the Strelitz of Russia. Of these, the Pretorian Guards remained preeminent, and made emperors at their will. The other three came to a terrible end. History elsewhere records the tragic fate of the Mamelukes and the Janissaries: we are here concerned only with that of the Strelitz corps of Russia.

The Strelitz were the first regular military force of Russia, a permanent militia of fusileers, formed during the early reign of Ivan the Terrible, and themselves in time becoming a terror to the nation. The first serious outbreak of this dangerous civic guard was on the nomination of Peter I. to the throne of the czar. They did not dream then of the terrible revenge which this despised boy would take upon them.

Two days after the funeral of the czar Theodore the insurrection began, the Strelitz marching in an armed body to the Kremlin, where they accused nine of their colonels of defrauding them of their pay. The frightened ministers hastened to dismiss these officers, but this did not satisfy the savage soldiery, who insisted on their being delivered into their hands. This done, the unfortunate officers were sentenced to be scourged, some of them by that fearful Russian whip called the knout.

Their success in this outbreak led the Strelitz to greater outrages. The tiger in their savage natures was let loose, and only blood could appease its rage. Marching to the Kremlin, they declared that the late czar had been poisoned by his doctor, and demanded the death of all those in the plot. Breaking into the palace, they seized two of the suspected princes and flung them

from the windows, to be received upon the pikes of the soldiers in the street below. The next victim was one of the Narishkins, the uncles of Peter the Great. He was massacred in the same brutal manner and his bleeding body dragged through the streets. Three of the proscribed nobles had fled for sanctuary to a church, but were torn from the altar, stripped of their clothing, and cut to pieces with knives.

The next victim was a friend and favorite of the Strelitz, who was killed under the belief that he was one of the Narishkins. Discovering their error, the assassins carried the mangled body of the young nobleman to the house of his father for interment. The old man, timid by nature, did not dare to complain of the savage act, and even rewarded them for bringing him the body of his son. For this weakness he was bitterly reproached by his wife and daughters and the weeping wife of the victim.

"What could I do?" pleaded the helpless father; "let us wait for an opportunity to be revenged."

A revengeful servant overheard these words and repeated them to the soldiers. In a sudden fury the savages returned, dragged the old man from the room by the hair of his head, and cut his throat at his own door.

Meanwhile some of the Strelitz, seeking the Dutch physician Vongad, who had attended the dying czar and was accused of poisoning him, met his son and asked where his father was. "I do not know," replied the trembling youth. His ignorance was instantly punished with death.

In a few minutes a German physician fell in their way. "You are a doctor," they cried. "If you have not poisoned our master Theodore, you have poisoned others. You deserve death." And in a moment the unlucky doctor fell a victim to their blind rage.

The Dutch physician was at length discovered and dragged to the palace. Here the princesses begged hard for his

life, declaring that he was a skilful doctor and a good man and had worked hard to save their brother's life. They answered that he deserved to die as a sorcerer as well as a physician, for they had found the skeleton of a toad and the skin of a snake in his cabinet.

The next victim demanded was Ivan Narishkin, who they were sure was somewhere concealed in the palace. Not finding him, they threatened to burn down the building unless he were delivered into their hands. At this terrifying threat the young man was taken from his place of concealment and brought to them by the patriarch, who held in his hands an image of the Virgin Mary which was said to have performed miracles. The princesses surrounded the victim, and, kneeling to the soldiers, prayed with tears for his life.

All their supplications and the demands of the venerable patriarch were without effect on the savage soldiery, who dragged their captives to the bottom of the stairway, went through the forms of a mock trial, and condemned them to the torture. They were sentenced to be cut to pieces, a form of punishment to which parricides are condemned in China and Tartary. This tragedy went on until all the proscribed on whom they could lay their hands had perished and Sophia felt secure in her power.

In the end, Ivan and Peter were declared joint sovereigns (1682), and their sister Sophia was made regent. The acts of the Strelitz were approved and they rewarded, the estates of their victims were confiscated in their favor, and a monument was erected on which the names of the victims were inscribed as traitors to their country.

The Strelitz had learned their power, and took frequent occasion to exercise it. Twice again they broke out in revolt during the regency of Sophia. After the accession of Peter their hostility continued. He had sent them to fight on the frontiers. He had supplanted them with regiments drilled in the European manner. He had organized a corps of twelve thousand foreigners

and heretics. He had ordered the construction of a fleet of a hundred vessels, which would add to the weight of taxes and bring more foreigners into the country. And he proposed to leave Russia, to journey in the lands of the heretics, and to bring back to their sacred land the customs of profane Europe.



DINING-ROOM IN THE PALACE OF PETER THE GREAT, MOSCOW

All this was too much for the leaders of the Strelitz, who represented old Russia, as Peter represented new. They resolved to sacrifice the czar to their rage. Tradition tells the following story, which, though probably not true, is at least interesting. Two leaders of the Strelitz laid a plot to start a fire at night, feeling sure that Peter, with his usual activity, would hasten to the scene. In the confusion attending the fire they meant to murder him, and then to massacre all the foreigners whom he had introduced into Moscow.

The time fixed for the consummation of this plot was at hand. A banquet was held, at which the principal conspirators assembled, and where they sought in deep potations the courage necessary for their murderous work. Unfortunately for them, liquor does not act on all alike. While usually giving boldness, it sometimes produces timidity. Two of the villains lost their

courage through their potations, left the room on some pretext, promising to return in time, and hastened to the czar with the story of the plot.

Peter knew not the meaning of the words timidity and procrastination. His plans were instantly laid. The time fixed for the conflagration was midnight. He gave orders that the hall in which the conspirators were assembled should be surrounded exactly at eleven. Soon after, thinking that the hour had come, he sought the place alone and boldly entered the room, fully expecting to find the conspirators in the hands of his guards.

To his consternation, not a guard was present, and he found himself alone and unarmed in the midst of a furious band who were just swearing to compass his destruction.

The situation was a critical one. The conspirators, dismayed at this unlooked-for visit, rose in confusion. Peter was furious at his guards for having exposed him to this peril, but instantly perceived that there was only one course for him to pursue. He advanced among the throng of traitors with a countenance that showed no trace of his emotions, and pleasantly remarked,

"I saw the light in your house while passing, and, thinking that you must be having a gay time together, I have come in to share your pleasure and drain a cup with you."

Then, seating himself at the table, he filled a cup and drank to his would-be assassins, who, on their feet about him, could not avoid responding to the toast and drinking his health.

But this state of affairs did not long continue. The courage of the conspirators returned, and they began to exchange looks and signs. The opportunity had fallen into their hands; now was the time to avail themselves of it. One of them leaned over to Sukanim and said, in a low tone,—

"Brother, it is time."

"Not yet," said Sukanim, hesitating at the critical moment.

At that instant Peter heard the footsteps of his guards outside, and, starting to his feet, knocked the leader of the assassins down by a violent blow in his face, exclaiming,—

"If it is not yet time for you, scoundrel, it is for me."

At the same moment the guards entered the room, and the conspirators, panic-stricken by the sight, fell on their knees and begged for pardon.

"Chain them!" said the czar, in a terrible voice.

Turning then to the commander of the guards, he struck him and accused him of having disobeyed orders. But the officer proving to him that the hour fixed had just arrived, the czar, in sudden remorse at his haste, clasped him in his arms, kissed him on the forehead, proclaimed his fidelity, and gave the traitors into his charge.

And now Peter showed the savage which lay within him under the thin veneer of civilization. The conspirators were put to death with the cruellest of tortures, and, to complete the act of barbarity, their heads were exposed on the summit of a column with their limbs arranged around them as ornaments.

Satisfied that this fearful example would keep Russia tranquil during his absence, Peter set out on his journey, visiting most of the countries of Western Europe. He had reached Vienna, and was on the point of setting out for Venice, when word was brought him from Russia that the Strelitz had broken out in open insurrection and were marching from their posts on the frontier upon Moscow.

The czar at once left Vienna and journeyed with all possible speed to Russia, reaching Moscow in September, 1698. His appearance took all by surprise, for none knew that he had yet left Austria.

He came too late to suppress the insurrection. That had been already done by General Gordon, who, marching in all haste, had met the rebels about thirty miles from Moscow and called on them to surrender. As they refused and attacked the

troops, he opened on them with cannon, put them to flight, and of the survivors took captive about two thousand. These were decimated on the spot, and the remainder imprisoned.

This was punishment enough for a soldier, but not enough for an autocrat, whose mind was haunted by dark suspicions, and who looked upon the outbreak as a plot to dethrone him and to call his sister Sophia to the throne. In his treatment of the prisoners the spirit of the monster Ivan IV. seems to have entered into his soul, and the cruelty shown, while common enough in old-time Russia, is revolting to the modern mind.

The trial was dragged out through six weeks, with daily torture of some of the accused, under the eyes of the czar himself, who sought to force from them a confession that Sophia had been concerned in the outbreak. The wives of the prisoners, all the women servants of the princesses, even poor beggars who lived on their charity, were examined under torture. The princesses themselves, Peter's sisters, were questioned by the czar, though he did not go so far as to torture them. Yet with all this nothing was discovered. There was not a word to connect Sophia with the revolt.

The trial over, the executions began. Of the prisoners, some were hanged, some beheaded, others broken on the wheel. It is said that those beheaded were made to kneel in rows of fifty before trunks of trees laid on the ground, and that Peter compelled his courtiers and nobles to act as executioners, Mentchikof specially distinguishing himself in this work of slaughter. It is even asserted that the czar wielded the axe himself, though of this there is some doubt. The opinion grew among the people that neither Peter nor Prince Ramodanofsky, his cruel viceroy, could sleep until they had tasted blood, and a letter from the prince contains the following lurid sentence: "I am always washing myself in blood."

The headless bodies of the dead were left where they had fallen. The long Russian winter was just beginning, and for five

months they lay unburied, a frightful spectacle for the eyes of the citizens of Moscow.

Of those hanged, nearly two hundred were left depending from a large square gallows in front of the cell of Sophia at the convent in which she was confined, and with a horrible refinement of cruelty three of these bodies were so placed as to hang all winter under her very window, one of them holding in his hand a folded paper to represent a petition for her aid.

The six regiments of Strelitz still on the frontier showed signs of a similar outbreak, but the news of the executions taught them that it was safest to keep quiet. But many of them were brought in chains to Moscow and punished for their intentions. Various stories are told of Peter's cruelty in connection with these executions. One is that he beheaded eighty with his own hand, Plestchef, one of his boyars, holding them by the hair. Another story, told by M. Printz, the Prussian ambassador, says that at an entertainment given him by the czar, Peter, when drunk, had twenty rebels brought in from the prisons, whom he beheaded in quick succession, drinking a bumper after each blow, the whole concluding within the hour. He even asked the ambassador to try his skill in the same way. It may be said here, however, that these stories rest upon very poor evidence, and that anecdote-makers have painted Peter in blacker colors than he deserves.

In the end the corps of the Strelitz was abolished, their houses and lands in Moscow were taken from the survivors, and all were exiled into the country, where they became simple villagers.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CRUSADE AGAINST BEARDS AND CLOAKS

The return of Peter the Great from his European journey was marked by other events than his cruel revenge upon the rebellious Strelitz. That had affected only a few thousand people; the reforms he sought to introduce affected the nation at large. The Russians were then more Oriental than European in style, wearing the long caftan or robe of Persia and Turkey, which descended to their heels, while their beards were like those of the patriarchs, the man deeming himself most in honor who had the longest and fullest crop of hair upon his face.

To Peter, fresh from the West, and strongly imbued with European views, all this was ridiculous, if not abominable. He determined to reform it all, and at once set to work in his impetuous way, which could not brook a day's delay, to deprive the Russians of their beards and the tails of their coats. He had scarcely arrived before the boyars and leading citizens of Moscow, who flocked to congratulate him on his return, were taken aback by the edict that whiskers were condemned, and that the razor must be set at work without delay upon their honorable chins.

This edict was like a thunder-clap from a clear sky. The Russians admired and revered their beards. They were time-honored and sacred in their eyes. To lose them was like losing their family trees and patents of nobility. But Peter was without reverence for the past, and his word was law. He had ordered a mowing and reaping of hair, and the harvest must be made, or worse might come. General Shein, commander-in-chief of the army, was the first to yield to the imperative edict and submit his venerable beard to the indignity of the razor's edge. The old age

seemed past and the new age come when Shein walked shamefacedly into court with a clean chin.



PETER THE GREAT

The example thus set was quickly followed. Beards were tabooed within the precincts of the court. All shared the same fate, none being left to laugh at the rest. The patriarch, it is true, was exempted, through awe for his high office in the Church,

while reverence for advanced years reprieved Prince Teherkasy, and Tikhon Streshnef was excused out of honor for his services as guardian of the czaritza. Every one else within the court had to submit to the razor's fatal edge or feel the czar's more fatal displeasure, and beards fell like "autumnal leaves that strow the brooks in Vallombrosa."

An observer speaks as follows concerning a feast given by General Shein: "A crowd of boyars, scribes, and military officers almost incredible was assembled there, and among them were several common sailors, with whom the czar repeatedly mixed, divided apples, and even honored one of them by calling him his brother. A salvo of twenty-five guns marked each toast. Nor could the irksome offices of the barber check the festivities of the day, though it was well known he was enacting the part of jester by appointment at the czar's court. It was of evil omen to make show of reluctance as the razor approached the chin, and hesitation was to be forthwith punished with a box on the ears. In this way, between mirth and the wine-cup, many were admonished by this insane ridicule to abandon the olden guise."

For Peter to shave was easy, as he had little beard and a very thin moustache. But by the old-fashioned Russian of his day the beard was cherished as the Turk now cherishes his hirsute symbol of dignity or the Chinaman his long-drawn-out queue. Shortly after Peter came to the throne the patriarch Adrian had delivered himself in words of thunder against all who were so unholy and heretical as to cut or shave their beards, a God-given ornament, which had been worn by prophets and apostles and by Christ himself. Only heretics, apostates, idol-worshippers, and image-breakers among monarchs had forced their subjects to shave, he declared, while all the great and good emperors had indicated their piety in the length of their beards.

To Peter, on the contrary, the beard was the symbol of barbarity. He was not content to say that his subjects might shave, he decreed that they must shave. It began half in jest, it was continued in solid earnest. He could not well execute the non-shavers, or cut off the beads of those who declined to cut off

their beards, but he could fine them, and he did. The order was sent forth that all Russians, with the exception of the clergy, should shave. Those who preferred to keep their beards could do so by paying a yearly tax into the public treasury. This was fixed at a kopeck (one penny) for peasants, but for the higher classes varied from thirty to a hundred rubles (from sixty dollars to two hundred dollars). The merchants, being at once the richest and most conservative class, paid the highest tax. Every one who paid the tax was given a bronze token, which had to be worn about the neck and renewed every year.

The czar would allow no one to be about him who did not shave, and many submitted through "terror of having their beards (in a merry humor) pulled out by the roots, or taken so rough off that some of the skin went with them." Many of those who shaved continued to do reverence to their beards by carrying them within their bosoms as sacred objects, to be buried in their graves, in order that a just account might be rendered to St. Nicholas when they should come to the next world.

The ukase against the beard was soon followed by one against the caftan, or long cloak, the old Russian dress. The czar and the leading officers of his embassy set the example of wearing the German dress, and he cut off, with his own hands, the long sleeves of some of his officers. "Those things are in your way," he would say. "You are safe nowhere with them. At one moment you upset a glass, then you forgetfully dip them in the sauce. Get gaiters made of them."

On January 14, 1704, a decree was issued commanding all courtiers and officials throughout the empire to wear the foreign dress. This decree had to be frequently repeated, and models of the clothing exposed. It is said that patterns of the garments and copies of the decrees were hung up together at the gates of the towns, while all who disobeyed the order were compelled to pay a fine. Those who yielded were obliged "to kneel down at the gates of the city and have their coats cut off just even with the ground," the part that lay on the ground as they knelt being condemned to suffer by the shears. "Being

done with a good humor; it occasioned mirth among the people, and soon broke the custom of their wearing long coats, especially in places near Moscow and those towns wherever the czar came.

This demand did not apply to the peasantry, and was therefore more easily executed. Even the women were required to change their Russian robes for foreign fashions. Peter's sisters set the example, which was quickly followed, the women showing themselves much less conservative than the men in the adoption of new styles of dress.

The reform did not end here. Decrees were issued against the high Russian boots, against the use of the Russian saddle, and even against the long Russian knife. Peter seemed to be infected with a passion for reform, and almost everything Russian was ordered to give way before the influx of Western modes. Western ideas did not come with them. To change the dress does not change the thoughts, and it does not civilize a man to shave his chin. Though outwardly conforming to the advanced fashions of the West, inwardly the Russians continued to conform to the unprogressive conceptions of the East.

It may be said that these changes did not come to stay. They were too revolutionary to take deep root. There is no disputing the fact that a coat down to the heels is more comfortable in a cold climate than one ending at the knees, and is likely to be worn in preference. Students in Russia to-day wear the red shirt, the loose trousers tucked into the high boots, and the sleeveless caftan of the peasant, to show that they are Slavs in feeling, while the old Russian costume is the regulation court dress for ladies on occasions of state.

We cannot here name the host of other reforms which Peter introduced. The army was dressed and organized in the fashion of the West. A navy was rapidly built, and before many years Russia was winning victories at sea. Peter had not worked at Amsterdam and Deptford in vain. The money of the country was reorganized, and new coins were issued. The year, which

had always begun in Russia on September 1, was now ordered to begin on January 1, the first new year on the new system, January 1, 1700, being introduced with impressive ceremonies. Up to this time the Russians had counted their year from the supposed date of creation. They were now ordered to date their chronology from the birth of Christ, the first year of the new era being dated 1700 instead of 7208. Unluckily, the Gregorian calendar was not at the same time introduced, and Russia still clings to the old style, so that each date in that country is twelve days behind the same date in the rest of the Christian world.

Another reform of an important character was introduced. Peter had observed the system of local self-government in other countries, and resolved to have something like it in his realm. In Little Russia the people already had the right of electing their local officials. A similar system was extended to the whole empire, the merchants in the towns being permitted to choose good and honest men, who formed a council which had general charge of municipal affairs. Where bribery and corruption were discovered among these officials the knout and exile were applied as inducements to honesty in office. Even death was threatened; yet bribery went on. Honesty in office cannot be made to order, even by a czar.

CHAPTER XIX

MAZEPPA, THE COSSACK CHIEF

Among the romantic characters of history none have attained higher celebrity than the hero of our present tale, whose remarkable adventure, often told in story, has been made immortal in Lord Byron's famous poem of "Mazeppa." Those who wish to read it in all its dramatic intensity must apply to the poem. Here it can only be given in plain prose.

Mazeppa was a scion of a poor but noble Polish family, and became, while quite young, a page at the court of John Casimir, King of Poland. There he remained until he reached manhood, when he returned to the vicinity of his birth. And now occurred the striking event on which the fame of our hero rests. The court-reared young man is said to have engaged in an intrigue with a Polish lady of high rank, or at least was suspected by her jealous husband of having injured him in his honor.

Bent upon a revenge suitable to the barbarous ideas of that age, the furious nobleman had the young man seized, cruelly scourged, and in the end stripped naked and firmly bound upon the back of an untamed horse of the steppes. The wild animal, terrified by the strange burden upon its back, was then set free on the borders of its native wilds of the Ukraine, and, uncontrolled by bit or rein, galloped madly for miles upon miles through forest and over plain, until, exhausted by the violence of its flight, it halted in its wild career. For a dramatic rendering of this frightful ride our readers must be referred to Byron's glowing verse.

The savage Polish lord had not dreamed that his victim would escape alive, but fortune favored the poor youth. He was found, still fettered to the animal's back, insensible and half dead, by some Cossack peasants, who rescued him from his

fearful situation, took him to their hut, and eventually restored him to animation.

Mazeppa was well educated and fully versed in the art of war of that day. He made his home wit his new friends, to whom his courage, agility, an sagacity proved such warm recommendations that he soon became highly popular among the Cossack clans. He was appointed secretary and adjutant to Samilovitch, the hetman or chief of the Cossacks, and on the disgrace and exile of this chief in 1687 Mazeppa succeeded him as leader of the tribe. He distinguished himself particularly in the war waged by the army of the Princess Sophia against the Turks and Tartars of the Crimea, in which Mazoppa led his Cossack followers with the greatest courage and skill.

On the return of the army to Moscow, Prince Galitzin, its leader, brought into the capital a strong force of Cossacks, with Mazeppa at their bead. It was the first time the Cossacks had been allowed to enter Moscow, and their presence gave great offence. It was supposed to be a part of the plot of Sophia to dethrone her young brother and seize the throne for herself. It was known that they would execute to the full any orders given them by their chief; but their motions were so restricted by the indignant people that the ambitious woman, if she entertained such a design, found herself unable to employ them in it.

The daring hetman of the Cossacks became afterwards a cherished friend of Peter the Great, who conferred on him the title of prince, and severely punished those who accused him of conspiring with the enemies of Russia. Having the fullest confidence in his good faith, Peter banished or executed his foes as liars and traitors. Yet they seem to have been the true men and Mazeppa the traitor, for at length, when sixty-four years of age, he threw off allegiance to Russia and became an ally of the Swedish enemies of the realm.

The fiery and ungovernable temper of Peter is said to have been the cause of this. The story goes that one day, when Mazeppa was visiting the Russian court, and was at table with

the czar, Peter complained to him of the lawless character of the Cossacks, and proposed that Mazeppa should seek to bring them under better control by a system of organization and discipline.

The chief replied that such measures would never succeed. The Cossacks were so fierce and uncontrollable by nature, he said, and so fixed in their irregular habits of warfare, that it would be impossible to get them to submit to military discipline, and they must continue to fight in their old, wild way.

These words were like fire to flax. Peter, who never could bear the least opposition to any of his plans or projects, and was accustomed to have everybody timidly agree with him, broke into a furious rage at this contradiction, and visited his sudden wrath on Mazeppa, as usual, in the most violent language. He was an enemy and a traitor, who deserved to be and should be impaled alive, roared the furious czar, not meaning a tithe of what he said, but saying enough to turn the high-spirited chief from a friend to a foe.

Mazeppa left the czar's presence in deep offence, muttering the displeasure which it would have been death to speak openly, and bent on revenge. Soon after he entered into communication with Charles XII. of Sweden, the bitter enemy of Russia, which he was then invading. He suggested that the Swedish army should advance into Southern Russia, where the Cossacks would be sure to be sent to meet it. He would then go over with all his forces to the Swedish side, so strengthening it that the army of the czar could not stand against it. The King of Sweden might retain the territory won by his arms, while the Cossacks would retire to their own land, and become again, as of old, an independent tribe.

The plot was well laid, but it failed through the loyalty of the Cossacks. They broke into wild indignation when Mazeppa unfolded to them his plan, most of them refusing to join in the revolt, and threatening to seize him and deliver him, bound hand and foot, to the czar. Some two thousand in all adhered to Mazeppa, and for a time it seemed as if a bloody battle would

take place between the two sections of the tribe, but in the end the chief and his followers made their way to the Swedish camp, while the others marched back and put themselves under the command of the nearest Russian general.

Mazeppa was now sentenced to death, and executed,—luckily for him, in effigy only. In person he was out of the reach of his foes. A wooden image was made to represent the culprit, and on this dumb block the penalties prescribed for him were inflicted. A pretty play—for a savage horde—they made of it. The image was dressed to imitate Mazeppa, while representations of the medals, ribbons, and other decorations he usually wore were placed upon it. It was then brought out before the general and leading officers, the soldiers being drawn up in a square around it. A herald now read the sentence of condemnation, and the mock execution began. First Mazeppa's patent of knighthood was torn to pieces and the fragments flung into the air. Then the medals and decorations were rent from the image and trampled underfoot. Finally the image itself was struck a blow that toppled it over into the dust. The hangman now took it in hand, tied a rope round its neck, and dragged it to a gibbet, on which it was hung. The affair ended in the Cossacks choosing a new chief.

The remainder of Mazeppa's story may soon be told. The battle of Pultowa, fought, it is said, by his advice, ended the military career of the great Swedish general. The Cossack chief made his escape, with the King of Sweden, into Turkish territory, and the reward which the czar offered for his body, dead or alive, was never claimed. Mentchikof took what revenge he could by capturing and sacking his capital city, Baturin, while throughout Russia his name was anathematized from the pulpit. Traitor in his old days, and a fugitive in a foreign land, the disgrace of his action seemed to weigh heavily upon the mind of the old chief of the Ukraine, and in the following year he put an end to the wretchedness of his life by poison.

CHAPTER XX

A WINDOW OPEN TO EUROPE

Peter the great hated Moscow. It was to him the embodiment of that old Russia which he was seeking to reform out of existence. Had he been able to work his own will in all things, he would never have set foot within its walls; but circumstances are stronger than men, even though the latter be Russian czars. In one respect Peter set himself against circumstance, and built Russia a capital in a locality seemingly lacking in all natural adaptation for a city.

In the early days of the eighteenth century his armies captured a small Swedish fort on Lake Ladoga near the river Neva. The locality pleased him, and he determined to build on the Neva a city which should serve Russia as a naval station and commercial port in the north. Why he selected this spot it is not easy to say. Better localities for his purpose might have been easily chosen. There was old Novgorod, a centre of commerce during many centuries of the past, which it would have been a noble tribute to ancient Russian history to revive. There was Riga, a city better situated for the Baltic commerce. But Peter would have none of these; he wanted a city of his own, one that should carry his name down through the ages, that should rival the Alexandria of Alexander the Great, and he chose for it a most inauspicious and inhospitable site.

The Neva, a short but deep and wide stream, which carries to the sea the waters of the great lakes Ladoga, Onega, and Ilmen, breaks up near its mouth and makes its way into the Gulf of Finland through numerous channels, between which lie a series of islands. These then bore Finnish names equivalent to Island of Hares, Island of Buffaloes, and the like. Overgrown with thickets, their surfaces marshy, liable to annual overflow, inhabited only by a few Finnish fishermen, who fled from their

huts to the mainland when the waters rose, they were far from promising; yet these islands took Peter's fancy as a suitable site for a commercial port, and with his usual impetuosity he plunged into the business of making a city to order.



ST. PETERSBURG HARBOR, NEVA RIVER.

In truth, he fell in love with the spot, though what he saw in it to admire is not so clear. In summer mud ruled there supreme: the very name Neva is Finnish for "mud." During four months of the year ice took the place of mud, and the islands and stream were fettered fast. The country surrounding was largely a desert, its barren plains alternating with forests whose only inhabitants were wolves. Years after the city was built, wolves prowled into its streets and devoured two sentries in front of one of the government buildings. Moscow lay four hundred miles away, and the country between was bleak and almost uninhabited. Even to-day the traveller on leaving St. Petersburg finds himself in a desert. The great plain over which he passes spreads away in every direction, not a steeple, not a tree, not a man or beast, visible upon its bare expanse. There is no pasturage nor farming land. Fruits and vegetables can scarcely be grown; corn must be brought from a distance. Rye is an

article of garden culture in St. Petersburg, cabbages and turnips are its only vegetables, and a beehive there is a curiosity.

Yet, as has been said, Peter was attracted to the place, which in one of his letters he called his "paradise." It may have reminded him of Holland, the scene of his nautical education. The locality had a certain sacredness in Russian tradition, being looked upon as the most ancient Russian ground. By the mouth of the Neva had passed Rurik and his fellows in their journeys across the Varangian sea,—their own sea. The czar was willing to restore to Sweden all his conquests in Livonia and Esthonia, but the Neva he would not yield. From boyhood he had dreamed of giving Russia a navy and opening it up to the world's commerce, and here was a ready opening to the waters of the Baltic and the distant Atlantic.

St. Petersburg owed its origin to a whim; but it was the whim of a man whose will swayed the movements of millions. He was not even willing to begin his work on the high ground of the mainland, but chose the Island of Hares, the nearest of the islands to the gulf. It was a seaport, not a capital, that he at first had in view. Legend tells us that he snatched a halberd from one of his soldiers, cut with it two strips of turf, and laid them crosswise, saying, "Here there shall be a town." Then, dropping the halberd, he seized a spade and began the first embankment. As he dug, an eagle appeared and hovered above his head. Shot by one of the men, it fluttered to his feet. Picking up the wounded bird, he set out in a boat to explore the waters around. To this event is given the date of May 16, 1703.

The city began in a fortress, for the building of which carpenters and masons were brought from distant towns. The soldiers served as laborers. In this labor tools were notable chiefly for their absence. Wheelbarrows were unknown; they are still but little used in Russia. Spades and baskets were equally lacking, and the czar's impatience could not wait for them to be procured. The men scraped up the earth with their hands or with sticks and carried it in the skirts of their caftans to the ramparts. The czar sent orders to Moscow that two thousand of the thieves

and outlaws destined for Siberia should be despatched the next summer to the Neva.

The fort was at first built of wood, which was replaced by stone some years afterwards. Logs served for all other structures, for no stone was to be had. Afterwards every boat coming to the town was required to bring a certain number of stones, and, to attract masons to the new city, the building of stone houses in Moscow or elsewhere was forbidden. As for the fortress, which was erected at no small cost in life and money, it soon became useless, and to-day it only protects the mint and cathedral of St. Petersburg.

The new city, named Petersburg from its founder, has long been known as St. Petersburg. While the fort was in process of erection a church was also built, dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. The site of this wooden edifice is now occupied by the cathedral, begun in 1714, ten years later. As regarded a home for himself, Peter was easily satisfied. A hut of logs—his palace he called it—was built near the fortress, fifty-five feet long by twenty-five wide, and containing but three rooms. At a later date, to preserve this his first place of residence in his new city, he enclosed it within another building. Thus it still remains, a place of pilgrimage for devout Russians. It contains many relics of the great czar. His bedroom is now a chapel.

Such a city, in such a situation, should have taken years to build. Peter wished to have it done in months, and he pushed the labor with little regard for its cost in life and treasure. Men were brought from all sections of Russia and put to work. Disease broke out among them, engendered by the dampness of the soil; but the work went on. Floods came and covered the island, drowning some of the sick in their beds; but there was no alleviation. History tells us that Swedish prisoners were employed, and that they died by thousands. Death, in Peter's eyes, was only an unpleasant incident, and new workmen were brought in multitudes, many of them to perish in their turn. It has been said that the building of the city cost two hundred thousand lives. This is, no doubt, an exaggeration, but it indicates a

frightful mortality. But the feverish impatience of the czar told in results, and by 1714 the city possessed over thirty-four thousand buildings, with inhabitants in proportion.



SLEIGHING IN RUSSIA

The floods came and played their part in the work of death. In that of 1706, Peter measured water twenty-one inches deep on the floor of his hut. He thought it "extremely amusing" as men, women, and children were swept past his windows on floating wreckage down the stream. What the people themselves thought of it history does not say.

As yet Peter had no design of making St. Petersburg the capital of his empire. That conception seems not to have come to him until after the crushing defeat of the Swedish monarch Charles XII. at the battle of Pultowa. And indeed it was not until

1817 that it was made the capital. It was the fifth Russian capital, its predecessors in that honor having been Novgorod, Kief, Vladimir, and Moscow.

To add a commercial quarter to the new city, Peter chose the island of Vasily Ostrof,—the Finnish "Island of Buffaloes,"—where a town was laid out in the Dutch fashion, with canals for streets. This island is still the business centre of the city, though the canals have long since disappeared. The streets of St. Petersburg for many years continued unpaved, notwithstanding the marshy character of the soil, and in the early days boats replaced carriages for travel and traffic.

The work of building the new capital was not confined to the czar. The nobles were obliged to build palaces in it,—very much to their chagrin. They hated St. Petersburg as cordially as Peter hated Moscow. They already had large and elegant mansions in the latter city, and had little relish for building new ones in this desert capital, four hundred miles to the north. But the word of the czar was law, and none dared say him nay. Every proprietor whose estate held five hundred serfs was ordered to build a stone house of two stories in the new city. Those of greater wealth had to build more pretentious edifices. Peter's own taste in architecture was not good. He loved low and small rooms. None of his palaces were fine buildings. In building the Winter Palace, whose stories were made high enough to conform to others on the street, he had double ceilings put in his special rooms, so as to reduce their height.

The city under way, the question of its defence became prominent. The Swedes, the mortal enemies of the czar, looked with little favor on this new project, and their prowling vessels in the gulf seemed to threaten it with attack. Peter made vigorous efforts to prepare for defence. Ship-building went on briskly on the Svir River, between Lakes Ladoga and Onega, and the vessels were got down as quickly as possible into the Neva. Peter himself explored and measured the depth of water in the Gulf of Finland. Here, some twenty miles from the city, lay the island of Cronslot, seven miles long, and in the narrowest part of

the gulf. The northern channel past this island proved too shallow to be a source of danger. The southern channel was navigable, and this the czar determined to fortify.

A fort was begun in the water near the island's shores, stone being sunk for its foundation. Work on it was pressed with the greatest energy, for fear of an attack by the Swedish fleet, and it was completed before the winter's end. With the idea of making this his commercial port, Peter had many stone warehouses built on the island, most of which soon fell into decay for want of use. But to-day Cronstadt, as the new town and fortress were called, is the greatest naval station and one of the most flourishing commercial cities in Russia, while its fortifications protect the capital from dangers of assault.

In those early days, however, St. Petersburg was, designed to be the centre of commerce, and Peter took what means he could to entice merchant vessels to his new city. The first to appear—coming almost by accident—was of Dutch build. It arrived in November, 1703, and Peter himself served as pilot to bring it up to the town. Great was the astonishment of the skipper, on being afterwards presented to the czar, to recognize in him his late pilot. And Peter's delight was equally great on learning that the ship had been freighted by Cornelis Calf, one of his old Zaandam friends. The skipper was feasted to his heart's content and presented with five hundred ducats, while each sailor received thirty thalers, and the ship was renamed the St. Petersburg. Two other ships appeared the same year, one Dutch and one English, and their skippers and crews received the same reward. These pioneer vessels were exempted forever from all tolls and dues at that port.

St. Petersburg, as it exists to-day, bears very little resemblance to the city of Peter's plan. To his successors are due the splendid granite quays, which aid in keeping out the overflowing stream, the rows of palaces, the noble churches and public buildings, the statues, columns, and other triumphs of architecture which abundantly adorn the great modern capital. The marshy island soil has been lifted by two centuries of

accretions, while the main city has crept up from its old location to the mainland, where the fashionable quarters and the government offices now stand.

St. Petersburg is still exposed to yearly peril by overflow. The violent autumnal storms, driving the waters of the gulf into the channel of the stream, back up terrible floods. The spring-time rise in the lakes which feed the Neva threatens similar disaster. In 1721 Peter himself narrowly escaped drowning in the Nevski Prospect, now the finest street in Europe.

Of the floods that have desolated the city, the greatest was that of November, 1824. Driven into the river's mouth by a furious southwest storm, the waters of the gulf were heaped up to the first stories of the houses even in the highest streets. Horses and carriages were swept away; bridges were torn loose and floated off; numbers of houses were moved from their foundations; a full regiment of carbineers, who had taken refuge on the roof of their barracks, perished in the furious torrent. At Cronstadt the waters rose so high that a hundred-gun ship was left stranded in the market-place. The czar, who had just returned from a long journey to the east, found himself made captive in his own palace. Standing on the balcony which looks up the Neva, surrounded by his weeping family, he saw with deep dismay wrecks of every kind, bridges and merchandise, horses and cattle, and houses peopled with helpless inmates, swept before his eyes by the raging flood. Boats were overturned and emptied their crews into the stream. Some who escaped death by drowning died from the bitter cold as they floated downward on vessels or rafts. It seemed almost as if the whole city would be carried bodily into the gulf.

The official reports of this disaster state that forty-five hundred of the people perished,—probably not half the true figure. Of the houses that remained, many were ruined, and thousands of poor wretches wandered homeless through the drenched streets. Such was one example of the inheritance left by Peter the Great to the dwellers in his favorite city, his "window to Europe," as it has been called.

CHAPTER XXI

FROM THE HOVEL TO THE THRONE

The reign of Peter the Great was signalized by two notable instances of the rise of persons from the lowest to the highest estate, ability being placed above birth and talent preferred to noble descent. A poor boy, Mentchikof by name, son of a monastery laborer, had made his way to Moscow and there found employment with a pastry-cook, who sent him out daily with a basket of mince pies, which he was to sell in the streets. The boy was destitute of education, but he had inherited a musical voice and a lively manner, which stood him in good stead in proclaiming the merits of his wares. He could sing a ballad in taking style, and became so widely known for his songs and stories that he was often invited into gentlemen's houses to entertain company. His voice and his wit ended in making him a prince of the empire, a favorite of the czar, and in the end virtually the emperor of Russia.

Being one day in the kitchen of a boyar's house, where dinner was being prepared for the czar, who had promised to dine there that day, young Mentchikof overheard the master of the house give special directions to his cook about a dish of meat of which he said the czar was especially fond, and noticed that he furtively dropped a powder of some kind into it, as if by way of spice.

This act seemed suspicious to the acute lad. Noting particularly the composition of the dish, he betook himself to the street, where he began again to exalt the merits of his pies and to entertain the passers by with ballads. He kept in the vicinity of the boyar's house until the czar arrived, when he raised his voice to its highest pitch and began to sing vociferously. The czar, attracted by the boy's voice and amused by his manner, called

him up, and asked him if he would sell his stock in trade, basket and all.

"I have orders only to sell the pies," replied the shrewd vender: "I cannot sell the basket without asking my master's leave. But, as everything in Russia belongs to your majesty, you have only to lay on me your commands."

This answer so greatly pleased the czar that he bade the boy come with him into the house and wait on him at table, much to the young pie-vender's joy, as it was just the result for which he had hoped. The dinner went on, Mentchikof waiting on the czar with such skill as he could command, and watching eagerly for the approach of the suspected dish. At length it was brought in and placed on the table before the czar. The boy thereupon leaned forward and whispered in the monarch's ear, begging him not to eat of that dish.

Surprised at this request, and quick to suspect something wrong, the czar rose and walked into an adjoining room, bidding the boy accompany him.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Why should I not eat of that particular dish?"

"Because I am afraid it is not all right," answered the boy. "I was in the kitchen while it was being prepared, and saw the boyar, when the cook's back was turned, drop a powder into the dish. I do not know what all this meant, but thought it my duty to put your majesty on your guard."

"Thanks for your shrewdness, my lad," said the czar; "I will bear it in mind."

Peter returned to the table with his wonted cheerfulness of countenance, giving no indication that he had heard anything unusual.

"I should like your majesty to try that dish," said the boyar: "I fancy that you will find it very good."

"Come it here beside me," suggested Peter. It was the custom at that time in Moscow for the master of a house to wait on the table when he entertained guests.

Peter put some of the questionable dish on a plate and placed it before his host.

"No doubt it is good," he said. "Try some of it yourself and set me an example."

This request threw the host into a state of the utmost confusion, and with trembling utterance he replied that it was not becoming for a servant to eat with his master.

"It is becoming to a dog, if I wish it," answered Peter, and he set the plate on the floor before a dog which was in the room.

In a moment the brute had emptied the dish. But in a short time the poor animal was seen to be in convulsions, and it soon fell dead before the assembled company.

"Is this the dish you recommended so highly?" said Peter, fixing a terrible look on the shrinking boyar. "So I was to take the place of that dead dog?"

Orders were given to have the animal opened and examined, and the result of the investigation proved beyond doubt that its death was due to poison. The culprit, however, escaped the terrible punishment which he would have suffered at Peter's hands by taking his own life. He was found dead in bed the next morning.

We do not vouch for the truth of this interesting story. Though told by a writer of Peter's time, it is doubted by late historians. But such is the fate of the best stories afloat, and the voice of doubt threatens to rob history of much of its romance. The story of Mentchikof, in its most usual shape, states that Le Fort, general and admiral, was the first to be attracted to the sprightly boy, and that Peter saw him at Le Fort's house, was delighted with him, and made him his page.

The pastry-cook's boy soon became the indispensable companion of the czar, assisted him in his workshop, attended him in his wars, and at the siege of Azov displayed the greatest bravery. He accompanied Peter in his travels, worked with him in Holland, and distinguished himself in the wars with the Swedes, receiving the order of St. Andrew for gallantry at the battle of the Neva. In 1704 he was given the rank of general, and was the first to defeat the Swedes in a pitched battle. At the czar's request he was made a prince of the Holy Roman Empire. As Prince Mentchikof the new grandee loomed high. His house in Moscow was magnificent, his banquets were gorgeous with gold and silver plate, and the ambassadors of the powers of Europe figured among his guests. Such was the bright side of the picture. The dark side was one of extortion and robbery, in which the favorite of the czar out-did in peculation all the other officials of the realm.

Peculation in Russia, indeed, assumed enormous proportions, but this was a crime towards which Peter did not manifest his usual severity. Two of the robbers in high places were executed, but the others were let off with fines and a castigation with Peter's walking-stick, which he was in the habit of using freely on high and low alike. As for Mentchikof, he was incorrigible. So high was he in favor with his master that the senators, who had abundant proofs of his robberies and little love for him personally, dared not openly accuse him before the czar. The most they ventured to do was to draw up a statement of his peculations and lay the paper on the table at the czar's seat. Peter saw it, ran his eye over its contents, but said nothing. Day after day the paper lay in the same place, but the czar continued silent. One day as he sat in the senate, the senator Tolstoi, who sat beside him, was bold enough to ask him what he thought of that document.

"Nothing," Peter replied, "but that Mentchikof will always be Mentchikof."

The death of Peter placed the favorite in a precarious position. He had a host of enemies, who would have rejoiced in

his downfall. These, who formed what may be called the Old Russian party, wished to proclaim as monarch the grandson of the deceased czar. But Mentchikof and the party of reform were beforehand with them, and gave the throne to Catharine, the widow of the late monarch. Under her the pastry-cook's boy rose to the summit of his power and virtually governed the country. Unluckily for the favorite, Catharine died in two years, and a new czar, Peter II., grandson of Peter the Great, came to the throne.

Mentchikof had been left guardian of the youthful czar, to whom his daughter was betrothed, and whom he took to his house and surrounded with his creatures. And now for a time the favorite soared higher than ever, was practically lord of the land, and made himself more feared than had been Peter himself.

But he had reached the verge of a precipice. There was no love between the young czar and Mary Mentchikof, and the youthful prince was soon brought to dislike his guardian. Events moved fast. Peter left Mentchikof's house and sought the summer palace, to which his guardian was refused admittance. Soon after he was arrested, the shock of the disgrace bringing on an apoplectic stroke. In vain he appealed to the emperor; he was ordered to retire to his estate, and soon after was banished, with his whole family, to Siberia. This was in 1727. The disgraced favorite survived his exile but two years, dying of apoplexy in 1729. Four months afterwards the new czar followed in death the man he had disgraced.

The other instance of a rise from low to high estate was that of the empress herself, whose career was very closely related to that of Mentchikof. There are various instances in history of a woman of low estate being chosen to share a monarch's throne, but only one, that of Catharine of Russia, in which a poor stranger, taken from among the ruins of a plundered town, became eventually the absolute sovereign of that empire into which she had been carried as captive or slave.

It was in 1702, during the sharply contested war between Russia and Sweden, that, while Charles XII. of Sweden was making conquests in Poland, the Russian army was having similar success in Livonia and Ingria. Among the Russian successes was the capture of a small town named Marienburg, which surrendered at discretion, but whose magazines were blown up by the Swedes. This behavior so provoked the Russian general that he gave orders for the town to be destroyed and all its inhabitants to be carried off.

Among the prisoners was a girl, Catharine by name, a native of Livonia, who had been left an orphan at the age of three years, and had been brought up as a servant in the family of M. Gluck, the minister of the place. Such was the humble origin of the woman who was to become the wife of Peter the Great, and afterwards Catharine I., Empress of Russia.

In 1702 Catharine, then seventeen years of age, married a Swedish dragoon, one of the garrison of Marienburg. Her married life was a short one, her husband being obliged to leave her in two days to join his regiment. She never saw him again. She could neither read nor write, and, like Mentchikof, never learned those arts. She was, however, handsome and attractive, delicate and well formed, and of a most excellent temper, being never known to be out of humor, while she was obliging and civil to all, and after her exaltation took good care of the family of her benefactor Gluck. As for her first husband, she sent him sums of money until 1705, when he was killed in battle.

It was a common fate of prisoners of war then to be sold as slaves to the Turks, but the beauty of Catharine saved her from this. After some vicissitudes, she fell into the bands of Mentchikof, at whose quarters she was seen by the czar. Struck by her beauty and good sense, Peter took her to his palace, where, finding in her a warm appreciation of his plans of reform and an admirable disposition, he made her his own by a private marriage. In 1711 this was supplemented by a public wedding.

Catharine was soon able amply to reward the czar for the honor he had conferred upon her. He was at war with the Turks, and, through a foolish contempt for their generalship and military skill, allowed himself to fall into a trap from which there seemed no escape. He found himself completely surrounded by the enemy and cut off from all supplies, and it seemed as if he would be forced to surrender with his whole force to the despised foe.

From this dilemma Catharine, who was in the camp, relieved him. Collecting a large sum of money and presents of jewelry, and seeking the camp of the enemy, she succeeded in bribing the Turkish general, or in some way inducing him to conclude peace and suffer the Russian army to escape. Peter repaid his able wife by conferring upon her the dignity of empress.

The death of the czar was followed, as we have said, by the elevation of his wife to the vacant throne, principally through the aid of Mentchikof, her former lord and master, aided by the effect of her seemingly inconsolable grief and the judicious distribution of money and jewels as presents.

For two years Catharine and Mentchikof, whose life had begun in the hovel, and who were now virtually together on the throne, were the unquestioned autocrats of Russia. Catharine had no genius for government, and left the control of affairs to her minister, who was to all intents and purposes sovereign of Russia. The empress, meanwhile, passed her days in vice and dissipation, thereby hastening her end. She died in 1727, at the age of about forty years. In the same year, as already stated, the man who had grown great with her fell from his high estate.

CHAPTER XXII

BUFFOONERIES OF THE RUSSIAN COURT

Amid the serious matters which present themselves so abundantly in the history of Russia, buffooneries of the coarsest character at times find place. Numerous examples of this might be drawn from the reign of Peter the Great, whose idea of humor was broad burlesque, and who, despite the religious prejudices of the people, did not hesitate to make the church the subject of his jests. One of the broadest of these farces was that known as the Conclave, the purpose of which was to burlesque or treat with contumely the method of selecting the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

At the court of the czar was an old man named Sotof, a drunkard of inimitable powers of imbibition, and long a butt for the jests of the court. He had taught the czar to write, a service which he deemed worthy of being rewarded by the highest dignities of the empire.

Peter, who dearly loved a practical joke, learning the aspirations of the old sot, promised to confer on him the most eminent office in the world, and accordingly appointed him *Kniaz Papa*, that is, prince-pope, with a salary of two thousand roubles and a palace at St. Petersburg. The exaltation of Sotof to this dignity was solemnized by a performance more gross than ludicrous. Buffoons were chosen to lift the new dignitary to his throne, and four fellows who stammered with every word delivered absurd addresses upon his exaltation. The mock pope then created a number of cardinals, at whose head he rode through the streets in procession, his seat of state being a cask of brandy which was carried on a sledge drawn by four oxen.

The cardinals followed, and after them came sledges laden with food and drink, while the music of the procession consisted of a hideous turmoil of drums, trumpets, horns, fiddles,

and hautboys, all playing out of time, mingled with the ear-splitting clatter of pots and pans vigorously beaten by a troop of cooks and scullions. Next came a number of men dressed as Roman Catholic monks, each carrying a bottle and a glass. In the rear of the procession marched the czar and his courtiers, Peter dressed as a Dutch skipper, the others wearing various comic disguises.

The place fixed for the conclave being reached, the cardinals were led into a long gallery, along which had been built a range of closets. In each of these a cardinal was shut up, abundantly provided with food and drink. To each of the cardinals two conclavists were attached, whose duty it was to ply them with brandy, carry insulting messages from one to another, and induce them, as they grew tipsy, to bawl out all sorts of abuse of one another. To all this ribaldry the czar listened with delight, taking note at the same time of anything said of which he might make future use against the participants.

This orgy lasted three days and three nights, the cardinals not being released until they had agreed upon answers to a number of ridiculous questions propounded to them by the *Kniaz Papa*. Then the doors were flung open, and the pope and his cardinals were drawn home at mid-day dead drunk on sledges,—that is, such of them as survived, for some had actually drunk themselves to death, while others never recovered from the effect of their debauch.

This offensive absurdity appealed so strongly to the czar's idea of humor that he had it three times repeated, it growing more gross and shameless on each successive occasion; and during the last conclave Peter indulged in such excesses that his death was hastened by their effects.

As for the national church of Russia, Peter treated it with contemptuous indifference. The office of patriarch becoming vacant, he left it unfilled for twenty-one years, and finally, on being implored by a delegation from the clergy to appoint a patriarch, he started up in a furious passion, struck his breast

with his fist and the table with his cutlass, and roared out, "Here, here is your patriarch!" He then stamped angrily from the room, leaving the prelates in a state of utter dismay.

Soon after he took occasion to make the church the subject of a second coarse jest. Another buffoon of the court, Buturlin by name, was appointed Kniaz Papa, and a marriage arranged between him and the widow of Sotof, his predecessor. The bridegroom was eighty-four years of age, the bride nearly as old. Some decrepit old men were chosen to play the part of bridesmaids, four stutterers invited the wedding guests, while four of the most corpulent fellows who could be found attended the procession as running footmen. A sledge drawn by bears held the orchestra, their music being accompanied with roars from the animals, which were goaded with iron spikes. The nuptial benediction was given in the cathedral by a blind and deaf priest, who wore huge spectacles. The marriage, the wedding feast, and the remaining ceremonies were all conducted in the same spirit of broad burlesque, in which one of the sacred ceremonies of the Russian Church was grossly paraphrased.

Peter did not confine himself to coarse jests in his efforts to discredit the clergy. He took every occasion to unmask the trickery of the priests. Petersburg, the new city he was building, was an object of abhorrence to these superstitious worthies, who denounced it as one of the gates of hell, prophesying that it would be overthrown by the wrath of heaven, and fixing the date on which this was to occur. So great was the fear inspired by their prophecies that work was suspended in spite of the orders of the terrible czar.

To impress the people with the imminency of the peril, the priests displayed a sacred image from whose eyes flowed miraculous tears. It seemed to weep over the coming fate of the dwellers within the doomed city.

"Its hour is at hand," said the priests; "it will soon be swallowed up, with all its inhabitants, by a tremendous inundation."

When word of this seeming miracle and of the consternation which it had produced was brought to the czar, he hastened with his usual impetuosity to the spot, bent on exposing the dangerous fraud which his enemies were perpetrating. He found the weeping image surrounded by a multitude of superstitious citizens, who gazed with open-eyed wonder and reverence on the miraculous feat.

Their horror was intense when Peter boldly approached and examined the image. Petrified with terror, they looked to see him stricken dead by a bolt from heaven. But their feelings changed when the czar, breaking open the head of the image, explained to them the ingenious trick which the priests had devised. The head was found to contain a reservoir of congealed oil, which, as it was melted by the heat of lighted tapers beneath, flowed out drop by drop through artfully provided holes, and ran from the eyes like tears. On seeing this the dismay of the people turned to anger against the priests, and the building of the city went on.

The court fool was an institution born in barbarism, though it survived long into the age of civilization, having its latest survival in Russia, the last European state to emerge from barbarism. In the days of Peter the Great the fool was a fixed institution in Russia, though this element of court life had long vanished from Western Europe. In truth, the buffoon flourished in Russia like a green bay-tree. Peter was never satisfied with less than a dozen of these fun-making worthies, and a private family which could not afford at least one hired fool was thought to be in very straitened circumstances.

In the reign of the empress Anne the number of court buffoons was reduced to six, but three of the six were men of the highest birth. They had been degraded to this office for some fault, and if they refused to perform such fooleries as the queen and her courtiers desired they were whipped with rods.

Among those who suffered this indignity was no less a grandee than Prince Galitzin. He had changed his religion, and

for this offence he was made court page, though he was over forty years of age, and buffoon, though his son was a lieutenant in the army, and his family one of the first in the realm. His name is here given in particular as he was made the subject of a cruel jest, which could have been perpetrated nowhere but in the Russian court at that period.

The winter of 1740, in which this event took place, was of unusual severity. Prince Galitzin's wife having died, the empress forced him to marry a girl of the lowest birth, agreeing to defray the cost of the wedding, which proved to be by no means small.

As a preliminary a house was built wholly of ice, and all its furniture, tables, seats, ornaments, and even the nuptial bedstead, were made of the same frigid material. In front of the house were placed four cannons and two mortars of ice, so solid in construction that they were fired several times without bursting. To make up the wedding procession persons of all the nations subject to Russia, and of both sexes, were brought from the several provinces, dressed in their national costumes.

The procession was an extraordinary one. The new-married couple rode on the back of an elephant, in a huge cage. Of those that followed some were mounted on camels, some rode in sledges drawn by various beasts, such as reindeer, oxen, dogs, goats, and hogs. The train, which all Moscow turned out to witness, embraced more than three hundred persons, and made its way past the palace of the empress and through all the principal streets of the city.

The wedding dinner was given in Biren's riding-house, which was appropriately decorated, and in which each group of the guests were supplied with food cooked after the manner of their own country. A ball followed, in which the people of each nation danced their national dances to their national music. The pith of the joke, in the Russian appreciation of that day, came at the end, the bride and groom being conducted to a bed of ice in an icy palace, in which they were forced to spend the night,

guards being stationed at the door to prevent their getting out before morning.

Though not so gross as Peter's nuptial jests, this was more cruel, and, in view of the social station of the groom, a far greater indignity.

A Russian state dinner during the reign of Peter the Great, as described by Dr. Birch, speaking from personal observation, was one in which only those of the strongest stomach could safely take part. On such occasions, indeed, the experienced ate their dinners beforehand at home, knowing well what to expect at the czar's table. Ceremony was absolutely lacking, and, as two or three hundred persons were usually invited to a feast set for a hundred, a most undignified scuffling for seats took place, each holder of a chair being forced to struggle with those who sought to snatch it from him. In this turmoil distinguished foreigners had to fight like the natives for their seats.

Finally they took their places without regard to dignity or station. "Carpenters and shipwrights sit next to the czar; but senators, ministers, generals, priests, sailors, buffoons of all kinds, sit pell-mell, without any distinction." And they were crowded so closely that it was with great difficulty they could lift their hands to their mouths. As for foreigners, if they happened to sit between Russians, they were little likely to have any appetite to eat. All this Peter encouraged, on the plea that ceremony would produce uneasiness and stiffness.

There was usually but one napkin for two or three guests, which they fought for as they had for seats; while each person had but one plate during dinner, "so if some Russian does not care to mix the sauces of the different dishes together, he pours the soup that is left in his plate either into the dish or into his neighbor's plate, or even under the table, after which he licks his plate clean with his finger, and, last of all, wipes it with the table-cloth."

Liquids seem to have played as important a part as solids at these meals, each guest being obliged to begin with a cup of brandy, after which great glasses of wine were served, "and between whiles a bumper of the strongest English beer, by which mixture of liquors every one of the guests is fuddled before the soup is served up." And this was not confined to the men, the women being obliged to take their share in the liberal potations. As for the music that played in the adjoining room, it was utterly drowned in the noise around the table, the uproar being occasionally increased by a fighting-bout between two drunken guests, which the czar, instead of stopping, witnessed with glee.

We may close with a final quotation from Dr. Birch. "At great entertainments it frequently happens that nobody is allowed to go out of the room from noon till midnight; hence it is easy to imagine what pickle a room must be in that is full of people who drink like beasts, and none of whom escape being dead drunk.

"They often tie eight or ten young mice in a string, and hide them under green peas, or in such soups as the Russians have the greatest appetites to, which sets them a kicking and vomiting in a most beastly manner when they come to the bottom and discover the trick. They often bake cats, wolves, ravens, and the like in their pastries, and when the company have eaten them up, they tell them what they have in their stomachs.

"The present butler is one of the czar's buffoons, to whom he has given the name of Wiaschi, with this privilege, that if any one calls him by that name he has leave, to drub him with his wooden sword. If, therefore, anybody, by the czar's setting them on, calls out Wiasehi, as the fellow does not know exactly who it is, he falls to beating them all around, beginning with prince Mentchikof and ending with the last of the company, without excepting even the ladies, whom he strips of their head clothes, as he does the old Russians of their wigs, which he tramples upon, on which occasion it is pleasant enough to see the variety of their bald pates."

On reading this account of a Russian court entertainment two centuries ago, we cannot wonder that after the visit of Peter the Great and his suite to London it was suggested that the easiest way to cleanse the palace in which they had been entertained might be to set it on fire and burn it to the ground.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW A WOMAN DETHRONED A MAN

We have told how one Catharine, of lowly birth and the captive of a warlike raid, rose to be Empress of Russia. We have now to tell how a second of the same name rose to the same dignity. This one was indeed a princess by descent, her birthplace being a little German town. But if she began upon a higher level than the former Catharine, she reached a higher level still, this insignificant German princess becoming known in history as Catharine the Great, and having the high distinction of being the only woman to whose name the title Great has ever been attached. We may here say, however, that many women have lived to whom it might have been more properly applied.

In 1744 this daughter of one of the innumerable German kinglings became Grand Duchess of Russia, through marriage with Peter, the coming heir to the throne. We may here step from the beaten track of our story to say that Russia, at this period of its history, was ruled over by a number of empresses, though at no other time have women occupied its throne. The line began with Sophia, sister of Peter the Great, who reigned for some years as virtual empress. Catharine, the wife of Peter, became actual empress, and was followed, with insignificant intervals of male rulers, by Anne, Elizabeth, and Catharine the Great. These male rulers were Peter II., whose reign was brief, Ivan, an infant, and Peter III., husband of Catharine, who succeeded Elizabeth in 1762. It is with the last named that we are concerned.

Peter III., though grandson of Peter the Great, was as weak a man as ever sat on a throne; Catharine a woman of unusual energy. For years of their married life these two had been enemies. Peter had the misfortune to have been born a fool, and folly on the throne is apt to make a sorry show. He had, besides, become a drunkard and profligate. The one good point

about him, in the estimation of many, was his admiration for Frederick the Great, since he came to the throne of Russia at the crisis of Frederick's career, and saved him from utter ruin by withdrawing the Russian army from his opponents.

His folly soon raised up against him two powerful enemies. One of these was the army, which did not object, after fighting with the Austrians against the Prussians, to turn and fight with the Prussians against the Austrians, but did object to the Prussian dress and discipline, which Peter insisted upon introducing. It possessed a discipline of its own, which it preferred to keep, and bitterly disliked its change of dress. The czar even spoke of suppressing the Guards, as his grandfather had suppressed the corps of the Strelitz. This was a fatal offence. It made this strong force his enemy, while he was utterly lacking in the resolution with which Peter the Great had handled rebels in arms.

The other enemy was Catharine, whom he had deserted for an unworthy favorite. But her enmity was quiet, and might have remained so had he not added insult to injury. Heated by drink, he called her a "fool" at a public dinner before four hundred people, including the greatest dignitaries of the realm and the foreign ministers. He was not satisfied with an insult, but added to it the folly of a threat, that of an order for her arrest. This he withdrew,—a worse fault, under the circumstances, than to have made it. He had taught Catharine that her only safety lay in action, if she would not be removed from the throne in favor of the worthless creature who had supplanted her in her husband's esteem.

Events moved rapidly. It was on the 21st of June, 1762, that the insult was given and the threat made. Within a month the czar was dead and his wife reigned in his stead. On the 24th Peter left St. Petersburg for Oranienbaum, his summer residence. He did not propose to remain there long. He had it in view to join his army and defeat the Danes, his present foes, with the less defined intention of gaining glory on some great battle-field at the side of his victorious ally Frederick the Great. The fleet

with which Denmark was to be invaded was not ready to sail, many of the crew being sick; but this little difficulty did not deter the czar. He issued an imperial ukase Ordering the sick sailors to get well.

On going to his summer residence Peter had imprudently left Catharine at St. Petersburg, taking his mistress in her stead. On the 29th his wife received orders from him to go to Peterhof. Thither he meant to proceed before setting out on his campaign. His feast-day came on the 10th of July. On the morning of the 9th he set out with a large train of followers for the palace of Peterhof, where the next day Catharine was to give a grand dinner in his honor.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon when Peterhof was reached. To the utter surprise of the czar, there were none but servants to meet him, and they in a state of mortal terror.

"Where is the empress?" he demanded.

"Gone."

"Where?"

No one could tell him. She had simply gone,—where and why he was soon to learn. As he waited and fumed, a peasant approached and handed him a letter, which proved to be from Bressau, his former French valet. It contained the astounding information that the empress had arrived in St. Petersburg that morning and had been proclaimed sole and absolute sovereign of Russia.

The tale was beyond his powers of belief. Like a madman he rushed through the empty rooms, making them resound with vociferous demands for his wife; looked in every corner and cupboard; rushed wildly through the gardens, calling for Catharine again and again; while the crowd of frightened courtiers followed in his steps. It was in vain; no voice came in answer to his demand, no Catharine was to be found.

The story of what had actually happened is none too well known. It has been told in more shapes than one. What we know

is that there was a conspiracy to place Catharine on the throne, that the leaders of the troops had been tampered with, and that one of the conspirators, Captain Passek, had just been arrested by order of the czar. It was this arrest that precipitated the revolution. Fearing that all was discovered, the plotters took the only available means to save themselves.

The arrest of Passek had nothing to do with the conspiracy. It was for quite another cause. But it proved to be an accident with great results, since the Orlofs, who were deep in the conspiracy, thought that their lives were in danger, and that safety lay only in prompt action. As a result, at five A.M. on July 9, Alexis Orlof suddenly appeared at Peterhof, and demanded to see the empress at once.

Catharine was fast asleep when the young officer hastily entered her room. He lost no time in waking her. She gazed on him with surprise and alarm.

"It is time to get up," he said, in as calm a tone as if he had been announcing that breakfast was waiting. "Everything is ready for your proclamation."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Passek is arrested. You must come," he said, in the same tone.

This was enough. A long perspective of peril lay behind those words. The empress arose, dressed in all haste, and sprang into the coach beside which Orlof awaited her. One of her women entered with her, Orlof seated himself in front, a groom sprang up behind, and off they set, at headlong speed, for St. Petersburg.

The distance was nearly twenty miles, and the horses, which had already covered that distance, were in very poor condition for doubling it without rest. In his haste Orlof had not thought of ordering a relay. His carelessness might have cost them dear, since it was of vital moment to reach the city without delay. Fortunately, they met a peasant, and borrowed two horses

from his cart. Those two horses perhaps won the throne for Catharine.



A RUSSIAN DROSKY

Five miles from the city they met two others of the conspirators, devoured with anxiety. Changing to the new coach, the party drove in at breakneck pace, and halted before the barracks of the Ismailofsky regiment, with which the conspirators had been at work.

It was between six and seven o'clock in the morning. Only a dozen men were at the barracks. Nothing had been prepared. Excitement or terror had turned all heads. Yet now no time was lost. Drummers were roused and drums beaten. Out came soldiers in haste, half dressed and half asleep.

"Shout 'Long live the empress!'" demanded the visitors.

Without hesitation the guardsmen obeyed, their only thought at the moment being that of a free flow of vodka, the Russian drink. A priest was quickly brought, who, like the soldiers, was prepared to do as he was told. Raising the cross, he hastily offered them a form of oath, to which the soldiers

subscribed. The first step was taken; the empress was proclaimed.

The proclamation declared Catharine sole and absolute sovereign. It made no mention of her little son Paul, as some of the leaders in the conspiracy had proposed. The Orlofs controlled the situation, and the action of the Ismailofsky was soon sanctioned by other regiments of the guard. They hated the czar and were ripe for revolt.

One regiment only, the Preobrajensky, that of which the czar himself was colonel, resisted. It was led against the other troops under the command of a captain and a major. The hostile bodies came face to face a few paces apart; the queen's party greatest in number, but in disorder, the czar's party drawn up with military skill. A moment, a word, might precipitate a bloody conflict.

Suddenly a man in the ranks cried out, "Oura! Long live the empress!" In an instant the whole regiment echoed the cry, the ranks were broken, the soldiers embraced their comrades in the other ranks, and, falling on their knees, begged pardon of the empress for their delay.

And now the throng turned towards the neighboring church of Our Lady of Kasan, in which Catharine was to receive their oaths of fidelity. A crowd pushed in to do homage, composed not only of soldiers, but of members of the senate and the synod. A manifesto was quickly drawn up by a clerk named Tieploff, printed in all haste, and distributed to the people, who read it and joined heartily in the cry of "Long live the empress!"

Catharine next reviewed the troops, who again hailed her with shouts. And thus it was that a czar was dethroned and a new reign begun without the loss of a drop of blood. There was some little disorder. Several wine-shops were broken into, the house of prince George of Holstein was pillaged and he and his wife were roughly handled, but that was all: as yet it had been one of the simplest of revolutions.

Catharine was empress, but how long would she remain so? Her empire consisted of the fickle people of St. Petersburg, her army of four regiments of the guards. If Peter had the courage to strike for his throne, he might readily regain it. He had with him about fifteen hundred Holsteiners, an excellent body of troops, on whose loyalty he could fully rely, for they were foreigners in Russia, and their safety depended on him. At the head of these troops was one of the first soldiers of the age, Field-Marshal Munich. The main Russian army was in Pomerania, under the orders of the czar, if he were alert in giving them. He had it in view to annihilate the Danes, to show himself a hero under Frederick of Prussia; surely a handful of conspirators and a few regiments of malcontents would have but a shallow chance.

Yet Catharine knew the man with whom she dealt. The grain of courage which would have saved Peter was not to be found in his make-up, and Munich strove in vain to induce him to act with manly resolution. A dozen fancies passed through his mind in an hour. He drew up manifestoes for a paper campaign. He sent to Oranienbaum for the Holstein troops, intending to fortify Peterhof, but changed his mind before they arrived.

Munich now advised him to go to Cronstadt and secure himself in that stronghold. After some hesitation he agreed, but night had fallen before the whole party, male and female, set off in a yacht and galley, as if on a pleasure-trip. It was one o'clock in the morning when they arrived in sight of the fortress.

"Who goes there?" hailed a sentinel from the ramparts.

"The emperor."

"There is no emperor. Keep off!"

Delay had given Catharine ample time to get ahead of him.

"Do not heed the sentry," cried Munich. "They will not dare to fire on you. Land, and all will be safe."

But Peter was below deck, in a panic of fear. The women were shrieking in terror. Despite Munich, the vessels were put about. Then the old soldier, half in despair at this poltroonery, proposed another plan.

"Let us go to Revel, embark on a war-ship, and proceed to Pomerania. There you can take command of the army. Do this, sire, and within six weeks St. Petersburg and Russia will be at your feet. I will answer for this with my head."

But Peter was hopelessly incompetent to act. He would go back to Oranienbaum. He would negotiate. He arrived there to learn that Catharine was marching on him at the head of her regiments. On she came, her cap crowned with oak leaves, her hair floating in the wind. The soldiers had thrown off their Prussian uniforms and were dressed in their old garb. They were eager to fight the Holstein foreigners.

No opportunity came for this. A messenger met them with a flag of truce. Peter had sent an offer to divide the power with Catharine. Receiving no answer, in an hour he sent an offer to abdicate. He was brought to Peterhof, where Catharine had halted, and where he cried like a whipped child on receiving the orders of the new empress and being forcibly separated from the woman who had ruined him.

A day had changed the fate of an empire. Within little more than six months from his accession the czar had been hurled from his throne and his wife had taken his place. Peter was sent under guard to Ropcha, a lonely spot about twenty miles away, there to stay until accommodations could be prepared for him in the strong fortress of Schulusselburg.

He was never to reach the latter place. He had abdicated on July 14. On July 18 Alexis Orlof, covered with sweat and dust, burst into the dressing-room of the empress. He had a startling story to tell. He had ridden full speed from Ropcha with the news of the death of Peter III.

The story was that the czar had been found dead in his room. That was doubtless the case, but that he had been murdered no one had a shadow of a doubt. Yet no one knew, and no one knows to this day, just what had taken place. Stories of his having been poisoned and strangled have been told, not without warrant. A detailed account is given of poison being forced upon him by the Orlofs, who are said to have, on the poison failing to act, strangled him in a revolting manner by their own hands. Though this story lacks proof, the body was quite black. "Blood oozed through the pores, and even through the gloves which covered the hands." Those who kissed the corpse came away with swollen lips.

That Peter was murdered is almost certain; but that Catharine had anything to do with it is not so sure. It may have been done by the conspirators to prevent any reversal of the revolution. Prison-walls have hidden many a dark event; and we only know that the czar was dead and Catharine on the throne.

CHAPTER XXIV

A STRUGGLE FOR A THRONE

While the armies of Catharine II. were threatening with destruction the empire of Turkey, and her diplomats were deciding what part of dismembered Poland should fall to her share, her throne itself was put in danger of destruction by an aspirant who arose in the east and for two years kept Russia from end to end in a state of dire alarm. The summary manner in which Peter III. had been removed from the throne was not relished by the people. Numerous small revolts broke out, which were successively put down. St. Petersburg accepted Catharine, but Moscow did not, and on her visits to the latter city the political atmosphere proved so frigid that she was glad to get back to the more genial climate of the city on the Neva.

Years passed before Russia settled down to full acceptance of a reign begun in violence and sustained by force, and in this interval there were no fewer than six impostors to be dealt with, each of whom claimed to be Peter III. Murdered emperors sleep badly in their graves. The example of the false Dmitris, generations before, remained in men's minds, and it seemed as if every Russian who bore a resemblance to the vanished czar was ready to claim his vacated seat.

Of these false Peters, the sixth and most dangerous was a Cossack of the Don, whose actual name was Pugatchef, but whose face seemed capable of calling up an army wherever it appeared, and who, if his ability had been equal to his fortune, might easily have seated himself on the throne. The impostor proved to be his own worst foe, and defeated himself by his innate barbarity.

Pugatchef began his career as a common soldier, afterwards becoming an officer. Deserting the army after a period of service, he made his way to Poland, where he dwelt

with the monks of that country and pretended to equal the best of them in piety. Here he was told that he bore a striking resemblance to Peter III. The hint was enough. He returned to Russia, where he professed sanctity, dressed like a patriarch of the church, and scattered benedictions freely among the Cossacks of the Don. He soon gained adherents among the old orthodox party, who were bitter against the religious looseness of the court. Finally he gave himself out as Peter III., declaring that the story of his death was false, that he had escaped from the hands of the assassins, and that he desired to win the throne, not for himself, but for his infant son Paul.

The first result of this announcement was that the impostor was seized and taken to Masan as a prisoner. But the carelessness of his guards allowed him to escape from his prison cell, and he made his way to the Volga, near its entrance into the Caspian Sea, where he began to collect a body of followers among the Cossacks of that region. His first open declaration was made on September 17, 1773, when he appeared with three hundred Cossacks at the town of Yaitsk, and published an appeal to orthodox believers, declaring that he was the czar Peter III. and calling upon them for support.

His handful of Cossacks soon grew into an army, multitudes of the tribesmen gathered around him, and in a brief time he found himself at the head of a large body of the lowest of the people. The man was a savage at heart, betraying his innate depravity by foolish and useless cruelties, and in this way preventing the more educated class of the community from joining his ranks.

Yet he contrived to gather about him an army of several thousand men, and obtained a considerable number of cannon, with which he soon afterwards laid siege to the city of Orenburg. Both Yaitsk and Orenburg defied his efforts, but he had greater success in the field, defeating two armies in succession. These victories gave him new assurance. He now caused money to be coined in his name, as though he were the lawful emperor, and

marched northward at the head of a large force to meet the armies of the state.

His army was destitute of order or discipline and he woefully deficient in military skill, yet his proclamation of freedom to the people, and the opportunities he gave them for plunder and outrage, strengthened his hands, and recruits came in multitudes. The Tartars, Kirghis, and Bashkirs, who had been brought against their will under the Russian yoke, flocked to his standard, in the hope of regaining their freedom. Many of the Poles who had been banished from their country also sought his ranks, and the people of Moscow and its vicinity, who had from the first been opposed to Catharine's reign, waited his approach that they might break out in open rebellion.

The outbreak had thus become serious, and had Pugatchef been skilled as a leader he might have won the throne. As it was, his followers showed a fiery valor, and, undisciplined as they were, gave the armies of the empire no small concern. Bibikof, who had been sent to subdue them, failed through over-caution, and was slain in the field. His lieutenants, Galitzin and Michelson, proved more active, and frequently defeated the impostor, though only to find him rising again with new armies as often as the old ones were crushed, like the fabulous giant who sprang up in double form whenever cut in twain.

Prince Galitzin defeated him twice, the last time after a furious battle six hours in length. Pugatchef, abandoned by his followers, now fled to the Urals, but soon appeared again with a fresh body of troops. Between the beginning of March and the end of May, 1774, the rebel chief was defeated six or seven times by Michelson, in the end being driven as a fugitive to the Ural Mountains. But he had only to raise his standard again for fresh armies to spring up as if from the ground, and early June found him once more in the field. Defeated on June 4, he fled once more to the hills, but in the beginning of July was facing his foes again at the head of twenty-two thousand men.

Only the cruelty shown by himself and his followers, and his ruthlessness in permitting the plunder and burning of churches and convents, kept back the much greater hosts who would otherwise have flocked to his ranks. And at this critical moment in his career he committed the signal error of failing to march on Moscow, the principal seat of the old Russian faith which he proposed to restore, and where he would have found an army of partisans. He marched upon Kasan instead, took the city, but failed to capture the citadel. Here he was making havoc with fire and sword, when Michelson came up and defeated him in a long and obstinate fight.



THE CITY OF KASAN

He now fled to the Volga, wasting the land as he went, burning the crops and villages, and leaving desolation in his track. Men came in numbers to replace those he had lost, and an army of twenty thousand was soon again under his command. With these he surprised and routed a Russian force and took several forts on the Volga, while the German colonies of Moravians which had been established upon that stream, and were among the most industrious inhabitants of the empire,

suffered severely at his hands. In the town of Saratof he murdered all whom he met.

As an example of the character of this monster in human form, it is related that hearing that an astronomer from the Imperial Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg was near by, engaged in laying out the route of a canal from the Volga to the Don, he ordered him to be brought before him. When the peaceful astronomer appeared, the brutal ruffian bade his men to lift him on their pikes "so that he might be nearer the stars." Then he ordered him to be cut to pieces.

The end of this carnival of murder came at the siege of Zaritzin. Here Michelson came up on the 22nd of August and forced him to raise the siege. On the 24th the insurgents were attacked when in the intricate passes of the mountains and encumbered with baggage-wagons, women, and camp-followers. Though thus taken at a disadvantage, they defended themselves vigorously, the mass of them falling in the mountain passes or being driven over the cliffs and precipices. Pugatchef continued to fight till his army was destroyed, then made his escape, as so often before, swimming the Volga and vanishing in the desert. Only about sixty of his most faithful partisans accompanied him in his flight.

Michelson, failing to reach him in his retreat, took care that he should not emerge into the cultivated districts. But in the end the Russians were able to capture him only by treachery. They won over some of their Cossack prisoners, among them Antizof, the nearest friend of the fugitive. These were then set free, and sought the desert retreat of their late leader, where they, awaited an opportunity to take him by surprise.

This they were not able to do until November. Pugatchef was gnawing the bone of a horse for food when his false friends ran up to him, saying, "Come, you have long enough been emperor."

Perceiving that treachery was intended, he drew his pistol and fired at his foes, shattering the arm of the foremost. The

others seized and bound him and conveyed him to Goroduk in the Ural, the locality of Antizof's tribe. Michelson was still seeking him in the desert when word came to him that the fugitive had been delivered into Russian hands at Simbirsk, and was being conveyed to Moscow in an iron cage, like the beast of prey which he resembled in character.

On the way he sought to starve himself, but was forced to eat by the soldiers. On reaching Moscow he counterfeited madness. His trial was conducted without the torture which had formerly been so common a feature of Russian tribunals. The sentence of the court was that he should be exhibited to the people with his hands and feet cut off, and then quartered alive. With unyielding resolution Pugatchef awaited this cruel death, but the sentence, for some reason, was not executed, he being first beheaded and then quartered. Four of his principal followers suffered the same fate, and thus ended one of the most determined efforts on the part of an impostor to seize the Russian throne that had ever been known. The undoubted courage of the man was enough to prove that he was not Peter III. Had he combined military capacity with his daring he could readily have won the throne.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FLIGHT OF THE KALMUCKS

On the 5th of January, 1771, began one of the most remarkable events in the history of the world, the migration of an entire nation, more than half a million strong, with its women and children, flocks and herds, and all that it possessed, to a new home four thousand miles away. More than once—many times, apparently—in the history of the past such migrations have taken place. But those were war-like movements, with conquest as their aim. This was a peaceful migration, the only desire of those concerned being to be let alone. This desire was not granted, and death and terror marked every step of their frightful journey.

A century and a half earlier the fathers of these people, the Kalmuck Tartars, had left their homes in the Chinese empire and wandered west, finding a resting-place at last on the, Volga River, in the Russian realm. Here they would have been well content to remain but for the arts and designs of one man, Zebek-Dorchi by name, who, ambitious to be made khan of the tribe, and not being favored in his desires by the Russian court, determined to remove the whole Kalmuck nation beyond the reach of Russian control.

This was no easy matter to do. Russia had spread to the east until the whole width of Asia lay within its broad expanse and its boundary touched the Pacific waves. To reach China, the mighty Mongolian plain had to be crossed, largely a desert, swarming with hostile tribes; death and disaster were likely to haunt every mile of the way; and a general tomb in the wilderness, rather than a home in a new land, was the most probable destiny of the migrating horde.

Zebek-Dorchi was confronted with a difficult task. He had to induce the tribesmen to consent to the new movement, and that so quickly that a start could be made before the

Russians became aware of the scheme. Otherwise the path would be lined with armies and the movement checked.

Oubacha, the khan of the Kalmucks, was a brave but weak man. The conspirator controlled him, and through him the people. On a fixed day, through a false alarm that the Kirghises and Bashkirs had made an inroad upon the Kalmuck lands, he succeeded in gathering a great Kalmuck horde, eighty thousand in all, at a point out of reach of Russian ears. Here, with subtle eloquence, he told them of the oppressions of Russia, of her insults to the Kalmucks, her contempt for their religion, and her design to reduce them to slavery, and declared that a plan had been devised to rob them of their eldest sons. By a skilful mixture of truth and falsehood he roused their fears and their anger, and at length he proposed that they should leave their fields and make a rapid march to the Temba or some other great river, from behind which they could speak in bolder language to the Russian empress and claim better terms. He did not venture as yet to hint at his startling plan of a migration to far-off China.

The simpleminded Tartars, made furious by his skilful oratory, accepted his plan by acclamation, and returned home to push with the utmost haste the preparations for their stupendous task. The idea of a migration en masse did not frighten them. They were nomads and the descendants of nomads, who for ages had been used to fold their tents and flit away.

The Kalmuck villages extended on both sides of the Volga. A large section of the horde would have to cross that great stream, and this could be done with sufficient speed only when its surface was bridged with ice. For this reason midwinter was chosen for the flight, despite the sufferings which must arise from the bitter Russian cold, and the 5th of January was appointed for religious reasons by the leading Lama of the tribe. The year had been selected by the Great Lama of Thibet, the head of the Buddhist faith, to which the Kalmucks belonged, and to whom the conspirator had appealed.

Despite the secrecy and rapidity of the movement, tidings of it reached the Russian court. But the Russian envoy who dwelt among the Kalmucks was quite deceived by their wiles, and sent word to the imperial court that the rumors were false and nothing resembling an outbreak was in view. The governor of Astrachan, a man of more sense and discernment, sent courier after courier, but his warnings were ignored, and the fatal 5th of January came without a preventive step being taken by the govern Then the governor, learning that the migration had actually begun, sprang into his sleigh and drove over the Russian snows at the furious speed of three hundred miles a day, finally rushing into the imperial presence-chamber at St. Petersburg to announce to the empress that all his warnings had been true and that the Kalmucks were in full flight. Other couriers quickly confirmed his words, and the envoy paid for his blindness by death in a dungeon-cell.

Meanwhile the banks of the Volga had been the locality of a remarkable event. At early dawn of the selected day the Kalmucks east of the stream began to assemble in troops and squadrons, gathering in tens of thousands, a great body of the tribe setting out every half-hour on its march. Women and children, several hundred thousand in number, were placed on wagons and camels, and moved off in masses of twenty thousand at once, with escorts of mounted men. As the march proceeded, outlying bodies of the horde kept falling in during that and the following day.

From sixty to eighty thousand of the best mounted warriors stayed behind for work of ruin and revenge. Their first purpose was to destroy their own dwellings, lest some of the weak-minded might be tempted to return. Oubacha, the khan, set the example by applying the torch to his own palace. Before the day was over the villages throughout a district of ten thousand square mites were in a simultaneous blaze. Nothing was saved except the portable utensils and such of the wood-work as might be used in making the long Tartar lances.

This was but part of the destruction proposed. Zebek-Dorchi had it in view to pillage and destroy all the Russian towns, churches, and buildings of every kind within the surrounding district, with outrage and death to their inhabitants,—a frightful scheme, which was providentially checked. The day of flight had been selected, as has been said, in the worst season of the year, in order that the tribes west of the Volga might be able to cross its surface on a thick bridge of ice. Yet for some reason—possibly because of the weakness of the ice—the western Kalmucks failed to join their eastern brethren, and fully one hundred thousand of the Tartars were left behind. It was this that saved the Russian towns, it being feared by the leaders that such a vengeance would be repaid upon their brethren left to Russian reprisal. These western Kalmucks little guessed what horrors they were escaping by being prevented from joining in the flight.

The migrating horde was not less than six hundred thousand strong, while a vast number of horses, camels, cattle, goats, and sheep added to the multitude of living forms. The march was a forced one. Every day gained was of prime importance, for it was well known that Russian armies would soon be in hot pursuit, while the tribes on their line of march, hereditary foes of the Kalmucks, would gather from all sides to oppose their passage as the news of the flight reached their ears.

The river Jaik, three hundred miles away, must be reached before a day's rest could be had. The weather was not severely cold, and the journey might have been accomplished with little distress but for the forced pace. As it was, the cattle suffered greatly, the sheep died in multitudes, milk began to fail, and only the great number of camels saved the children and the infirm.

The first of the subjects of Russia with whom the Kalmucks came into collision were the Cossacks of the Jaik. At this season most of these were absent at the fisheries on the Caspian, and the others fled in crowds to the fortress of Koulagina, which was quickly summoned to surrender by the

Kalmuck khan. The Russian commandant, numerous as were his foes, refused, knowing that they must soon resume their flight. He had not long to wait. On the fifth day of the siege, from the walls of the fort a number of Tartar couriers, mounted on the swift Bactrian camels, were seen to cross the plains and ride into the Kalmuck camp at their highest speed.

Immediately a great agitation was visible in the camp, the siege was raised, and the signal for flight resounded through the host. The news brought was that an entire Kalmuck division, numbering nine thousand fighting-men, stationed on a distant flank of the line of march, and between whom and the Cossacks there was an ancient feud, had been attacked and virtually exterminated. The exhaustion of their horses and camels had prevented flight, quarter was not asked or given, and the battle continued until not a fighting-man was left alive.

The utmost speed was now necessary, for a sufficient reason. The next safe halting-place of the Kalmucks was on the east bank of the Toorgal River. Between it and them rose a hilly country, a narrow defile through which offered the nearest and best route. This lost, the need of pasturage would require a further sweep of five hundred miles. The Cossack light horsemen were only about fifty miles more distant from the pass. If it were to be won, the most rapid march possible must be made.

For a day and a night the flight went on, with renewed suffering and loss of animals. Then a snow-fall, soon too deep to journey through, checked all progress, and for ten days they had a season of rest, comfort, and plenty. The cows and oxen had perished in such numbers that it was resolved to slaughter what remained, feast to their hearts' content, and salt the remainder for future stores.

At length clear, frosty weather came: the snow ceased to drift, and its surface froze. It would bear the camels, and the flight was resumed. But already seventy thousand persons of all ages had perished, in addition to those slain in battle, and new

suffering and death impended, for word came that the troops of the empire were converging from all parts of Central Asia upon the fords of the Toorgai, as the best place to cut off the flight of the tribes, while a powerful army was marching rapidly upon their rear, though delayed by its artillery.

On the 2nd of February Ouchim, the much-desired defile, was reached. The Cossacks had been out-marched. A considerable body of them, it is true, had reached the pass some hours before, but they were attacked and so fiercely dealt with that few of them escaped. The Kalmucks here obtained revenge for the slaughter of their fellows twenty days before.

The road was now open. How long it would continue open was in doubt. Word came that a large Russian army, led by General Traubenberg, was advancing upon the Toorgai. He was to be met on his route by ten thousand Bashkirs and as many Kirghises, implacable enemies of the Kalmucks, from whom they had suffered in past years. The only hope now lay in speed, and onward the Kalmucks pressed, their line of march marked by the bodies of the dead. The weak, the sick, had to be left behind; nothing was suffered to impede the rapidity of their flight.

From the starting-point on the Volga to the halting-ground on the Toorgai, counting the circuits that had to be made, was full two thousand miles, much of it traversed in the dead of winter, the cold, for seven weeks of the journey, being excessively severe. Napoleon's army in its retreat from Moscow suffered no more from the winter chill than did this migrating nation. On many a morning the dawning light shone on a circle that had gathered the night before around a sparse fire (made from the lading of the camels or from broken-up baggage-wagons), now dead and frozen stiff as they sat.

But at length the snows ceased to fall, the frost to chill. Spring came. March and April passed away. May arrived with its balmy airs. Vernal sights and sounds cheered them on every side. During all these months they continued their march, and

towards the end of May the Toorgai was reached and crossed, and the weary wanderers, having left their enemies far in the rear, hoped to find comfort and security during weeks of rest, and to complete their journey with less of ruin and suffering. They little dreamed that the worst of their task had yet to be endured.

During the five months of their wanderings their losses had been frightfully severe. Not less than two hundred and fifty thousand members of the horde had perished, while their herds and flocks—oxen, cows, sheep, goats, horses, mules, and asses—had perished, only the camels surviving. These hardy creatures had come through the terrible journey unharmed, and on them rested all their hopes for the remainder of their flight.

But another two thousand miles lay before them, with hostility in front and in rear. Should they still go on, or should they return and throw themselves on the mercy of the empress? Oubacha, the khan, advised return, offering to take all the guilt of the flight upon himself. Zebek-Dorchi earnestly urged them to proceed, and not lose the fruit of all their suffering. But the people, worn out with the hardships and perils of their route, favored a return and a trust in the imperial mercy, and this would probably have been determined upon but for an untoward event.

This was the arrival of two envoys from Traubenberg, the Russian general, who, after a long and painful march, had approached within a few days' journey of the fugitives about the 1st of June. On his way he had been joined by large bodies of the Kirghis and Bashkir nomads. The harsh tone and peremptory demands of the envoys aroused hostile feelings among the Kalmuck chiefs. But the main check to negotiations was the action of the Bashkirs, who, finding that Traubenberg would not advance, left his camp in a body and set off for the Kalmuck halting-place.

In six days they reached the Toorgai, swam their horses across it, and fell in fury upon the Kalmucks, who were dispersed over leagues of ground in search of pasture and food.

Peace at once changed to war. Over a field from thirty to forty miles wide, fighting, flight and pursuit, rescue and death, went on at all points. More than once were the khan and Zebek-Dorchi in peril of death. At one time both were made prisoners. But at length, concentrating their strength, they forced the Bashkirs to retreat. For two days more the wild Bashkir and Kirghis cavalry continued their attacks, and the Kalmuck chiefs, looking upon these as the advance parties of the Russian army, felt themselves obliged to order a renewal of the flight. Thus suddenly ended their hoped-for season of repose.

One event took place during this period of which it is important to speak. A Russian gentleman, Weseloff by name, was held prisoner in the Kalmuck camp, and had been brought that far on their route. The khan Oubacha, who saw no object in holding him, now gave him leave to attempt his escape, and also asked him to accompany him during a private interview which he was to hold on the next night with the hetman of the Bashkirs. Weseloff declined to do so, and bade the khan to beware, as he feared the scheme meant treachery.

About ten that night Weseloff, with three Kalmucks who had offered to join in his flight, they having strong reasons for a return to Russia, sought a number of the half-wild horses of that district which they had caught and hidden in the thickets on the river's side. They were in the act of mounting, when the silence of the night was broken by a sudden clash of arms, and a voice, which sounded like that of the khan, was heard calling for aid.

The Russian, remembering what Oubacha had told him, rode off hastily towards the sound, bidding his companions follow. Reaching an open glade in the wood, he saw four men fighting with nine or ten, one, who looked like the khan, contending on foot against two horsemen. Weseloff fired at once, bringing down one of the assailants. His companions followed with their fire, and then all rode into the glade, whereupon the assailants, thinking that a troop of cavalry was upon them, hastily fled. The dead man, when examined, proved

to be a confidential servant of Zebek-Dorchi. The secret was out: this ambitious conspirator had sought the murder of the khan.

Accompanying the khan until he had reached a place of safety, Weseloff and his companions, at the suggestion of the grateful Oubacha, rode off at the utmost speed, fearing pursuit. Their return was made along the route the Kalmucks had traversed, every step of which could be traced by skeletons and other memorials of the flight. Among these were heaps of money which had been abandoned in the desert, and of which they took as much as they could conveniently carry. Weseloff at length reached home, rushed precipitately into the house where his loving mother had long mourned his loss, and so shocked her by the sudden revulsion of joy after her long sorrow that she fell dead on the spot. It was a sad ending to his happy return.

To return to the Kalmuck flight. Two thousand miles still remained to be traversed before the borders of China would be reached. All that took place in the dreary interval is too much to tell. It must suffice to say that the Bashkirs pursued them through the whole long route, while the choice of two evils lay in front. Now they made their way through desert regions. Now, pressed by want of food, they traversed rich and inhabited lands, through which they had to win a passage with the sword. Every day the Bashkirs attacked them, drawing off into the desert when too sharply resisted. Thus, with endless alternations of hunger and bloodshed, the borders of China at length were approached.

And now we have another scene in this remarkable drama to describe. Keen Lung, the emperor of China, had been long apprised of the flight of the Kalmucks, and had prepared a place of residence for these erring children of his nation, as he considered them, on their return to their native land. But he did not expect their arrival until the approach of winter, having been advised that they proposed to dwell during the summer heats on the Toorgai's fertile banks.

One fine morning in September, 1771, this fatherly monarch was enjoying himself in hunting in a wild district north

of the Great Wall. Here, for hundreds of square leagues, the country was overgrown with forest, filled with game. Centrally in this district rose a gorgeous hunting-lodge, to which the emperor retired annually for a season of escape from the cares of government. Leaving his lodge, he had pursued the game through some two hundred miles of forest, every night pitching his tent in a different locality. A military escort followed at no great distance in the rear.

On the morning in question the emperor found himself on the margin of the vast deserts of Asia, which stretched interminably away. As he stood in his tent door, gazing across the extended plain, he saw with surprise, far to the west, a vast dun cloud arise, which mounted and spread until it covered that whole quarter of the sky. It thickened as it rose, and began to roll in billowy volumes towards his camp.

This singular phenomenon aroused general attention. The suite of the emperor hastened to behold it. In the rear the silver trumpets sounded, and from the forest avenues rode the imperial cavalry escort. All eyes were fixed upon the rolling cloud, the sentiment of curiosity being gradually replaced by a dread of possible danger. At first the dust-cloud was imagined to be due to a vast troop of deer or other wild animals, driven into the plain by the hunting train or by beasts of prey. This conception vanished as it came nearer, until, seemingly, it was but a few miles away.

And now, as the breeze freshened a little, the vapory curtain rolled and eddied, until it assumed the appearance of vast aerial draperies depending from the heavens to the earth; sometimes, where rent by the eddying breeze, it resembled portals and archways, through which, at intervals, were seen the gleam of weapons and the dim forms of camels and human beings. At times, again, the cloud thickened, shutting all from view; but through it broke the din of battle, the shouts of combatants, the roar of infuriated hordes in mortal conflict.

It was, in fact, the Kalmuck host, now in the last stage of misery and exhaustion, yet still pursued by their unrelenting foes. Of the six hundred thousand who had begun the journey scarcely a third remained, cold, heat, famine, and warfare having swept away nearly half a million of the fleeing host, while of their myriad animals only the camels and the horses brought from the Toorgar remained. For the past ten days their suffering had reached a climax. They had been traversing a frightful desert, destitute alike of water and of vegetation. Two days before their small allowance of water had failed, and to the fatigue of flight had been added the horrors of insupportable thirst.

On came the flying and fighting mass. It was soon evident that it was not moving towards the imperial train, and those who knew the country judged that it was speeding towards a large fresh-water lake about seven or eight miles away. Thither the imperial cavalry, of which a strong body, attended with artillery, lay some miles in the rear, was ordered in all haste to ride; and there, at noon of September 8, the great migration of the Kalmucks came to an end, amid the most ferocious and blood-thirsty scene of its whole frightful course.

The lake of Tengis lies in a hollow among low mountains, on the verge of the great desert of Gobi. The Chinese cavalry reached the summit of a road that led down to the lake at about eleven o'clock. The descent was a winding and difficult one, and took them an hour and a half, during the whole of which they were spectators of an extraordinary scene below, the last and most fiendish spectacle in eight months of almost constant warfare.

The sight of the distant hills and forests on that morning, and the announcement of the guides that the lake of Tengis was near at hand, had excited the suffering host into a state of frenzy, and a wild rush was made for the water, in which all discipline was lost, and the heat of the day and the exhaustion of the people were ignored. The rear-guard joined in the mad flight. In among the people rode the savage Bashkirs, suffering as much as

themselves, yet still eager for blood, and slaughtering them by wholesale, almost without resistance. Screams and shouts filled the air, but none heeded or halted, all rushing madly on, spurred forward by the intolerable agonies of thirst.

At length the lake was reached. Into its waters dashed the whole suffering mass, forgetful of everything but the wild instinct to quench their thirst. But hardly had the water moistened their lips when the carnival of bloodshed was resumed, and the waters became crimsoned with gore. The savage Bashkirs rode fiercely through the host, striking off heads with unappeased fury. The mortal foes joined in a death-grapple in the waters, often sinking together beneath the ruffled surface. Even the camels were made to take part in the fight, striking down the foe with their lashing forelegs. The waters grew more and more polluted; but new myriads came up momentarily and plunged in, heedless of everything but thirst. Such a spectacle of revengeful passion, ghastly fear, the frenzy of hatred, mortal conflict, convulsion and despair as fell on the eyes of the approaching horsemen has rarely been seen, and that quiet mountain lake, which perhaps had never before vibrated with the sounds of battle, was on that fatal day converted into an encrimsoned sea of blood.

At length the Bashkirs, alarmed by the near approach of the Chinese cavalry, began to draw off and gather into groups, in preparation to meet the onset of a new foe. As they did so, the commandant of a small Chinese fort, built on an eminence above the lake, poured an artillery fire into their midst. Each group was thus dispersed as rapidly as it formed, the Chinese cavalry reached the foot of the hills and joined in the attack, and soon a new scene of war and bloodshed was in full process of enactment.

But the savage horsemen, convinced that the contest was growing hopeless, now began to retire, and were quickly in full flight into the desert, pursued as far as it was deemed wise. No pursuit was needed, even to satisfy the Kalmuck spirit of revenge. The fact that their enemies had again to cross that

inhospitable desert, with its horrors of hunger and thirst, was as full of retribution as the most vindictive could have asked.

Here ends our tale. The exhausted Kalmucks were abundantly provided for by their new lord and master, who supplied them with the food necessary, established them in a fertile region of his empire, furnished them with clothing, tools, a year's subsistence, grain for their fields, animals for their pastures, and money to aid them in their other needs, displaying towards his new subjects the most kindly and munificent generosity. They were placed under better conditions than they had enjoyed in Russia, though changed from a pastoral and nomadic people to an agricultural one.

As for Zebek-Dorchi, his attempt on the life of the khan had produced a feud between the two, which grew until it attracted the attention of the emperor. Inquiring into the circumstances of the enmity, he espoused the cause of Oubacha, which so infuriated the foe of the khan that he wove nets of conspiracy even against the emperor himself. In the end Zebek-Dorchi, with his accomplices, was invited to the imperial lodge, and there, at a great banquet, his arts and plots were exposed, and he and all his followers were assassinated at the feast.

As a durable monument to the mighty exodus of the Kalmucks, the most remarkable circumstance of the kind in the whole history of nations, the emperor Keen Lung ordered to be erected on the banks of the Ily, at the margin of the steppes, a great monument of granite and brass, bearing an inscription to the following effect:

By the Will of God,
Here, upon the brink of these Deserts,
Which from this Point begin and stretch away, Pathless, treeless,
waterless,
For thousands of miles, and along the margins of many mighty
Nations,
Rested from their labors and from great afflictions
Under the shadow of the Chinese Wall,

And by the favor of KEEN LUNG, God's Lieutenant upon Earth,
The Ancient Children of the Wilderness, the Torgote Tartars,
Flying before the wrath of the Grecian Czar,
Wandering sheep who had strayed away from the Celestial Empire in
the year 1616,
But are now mercifully gathered again, after infinite sorrow,
Into the fold of their forgiving Shepherd.
Hallowed be the spot forever,
And Hallowed be the day,—September 8, 1771.
Amen.

CHAPTER XXVI

A MAGICAL TRANSFORMATION SCENE

Catharine the great earned her title cheaply, her patent of greatness being due to the fact that she had the judgment to select great generals and a great minister and the wisdom to cling to them. Russia grew powerful during her reign, largely through the able work of her generals, and she forgave Potemkin a thousand insults and unblushing robberies in view of his successful statesmanship. Potemkin possessed, in addition to his ability as a statesman, the faculty of a spectacular artist, and arranged a show for the empress which stands unrivalled amid the triumphs of the stage. It is the tale of this spectacle which we propose to tell.

Catharine had literary aspirations, one of her admirations being Voltaire, with whom she corresponded, and on whom she depended to chronicle the glory of her reign. The poet had his dreams, in which the woman shared, and between them they contrived a scheme of a modern Utopia, a Russo-Grecian city of whose civilization the empress was to be the source, and which a decree was to raise from the desert and an idea make great. This fancy Potemkin, who stood ready to flatter the empress at any price, undertook to realize, and he built her a city in the fashion in which cities were built in the times of the Arabian Nights, and made it flourish in the same unsubstantial fashion. The magnificent Potemkin never hesitated before any question of cost. Russia was rich, and could bleed freely to please the empress's whim. He therefore ordered a city to be built, with dwellings and edifices of every description common to the cities of that date, stores, palaces; public halls, private residences in profusion. The buildings ready, he sought for citizens, and forcibly drove the people from all quarters to take up a temporary residence within its walls. It was his one purpose to make a spectacle of this theatrical city to enchant the eyes of the

empress. So that it had an appearance of prosperity during her visit, he cared not a fig if it fell to pieces and its inhabitants vanished as soon as his supporting hand was removed. He only required that the scenes should be set and the actors in place when the curtain rose.

And the city grew, on the banks of the Dnieper, eighteen million rubles being granted by the empress for its cost,—though much of this clung to the bird-lime of avarice on Potemkin's fingers. It was named Kherson. The desert around it was erected into a province, entitled by the wily minister Catharine's Glory (Slava Ekatarina). Another province, farther north, he named after his imperial mistress Ekatarinoslaf. And thus, by fraud and violence, a city to order was brought into existence. The stage was ready. The next thing to be done was to raise the curtain which hid it from Catharine's eyes.

It was early in the year 1787 that the empress began her journey towards her Utopian city, to receive the homage of its citizens and to exhibit to the world the magnificence of her reign. Great projects were in the air. Poland had just been cut into fragments and distributed among the hungry kingdoms around. The same was to be done with Turkey. Joseph II. of Austria was to meet the empress in Kherson to consult upon this partition of the Turkish empire; while Constantine, grand duke of Russia and grandson of the empress, was to reign at Byzantium, or Constantinople, over the new empire carved from the Turkish realm. Such was the paper programme prepared by Potemkin and the empress, the minister doubtless smiling behind his sleeve, his mistress in solid earnest.

And now we have the story to tell of one of the most marvellous journeys ever undertaken. It was made through a thinly inhabited wilderness, which to the belief of the empress was to be converted into a populous and thriving realm. That the journey might proceed by night as well as by day, great piles of wood were prepared at intervals of fifty perches, whose leaping flames gave to the high-road a brightness like that of day. In six days Smolensk was reached, and in twenty days the old Russian

capital of Kief, where the procession halted for a season before proceeding towards its goal.



THE SCENE OF A RUSSIAN FARM.

As it went on, the whole country became transformed. The deserts were suddenly peopled, palaces awaited the train in the trackless wild, temporary villages hid the nakedness of the plain, and fireworks at night testified to the seeming joy of the populace. Wide roads were opened by the army in advance of the cortege, the mountains were illuminated as it passed, howling wildernesses were made to appear like fertile gardens, and great flocks and herds, gathered from distant pastures, delighted the eyes of the empress with the appearance of thrift and prosperity as her vehicle drove rapidly along the roads. To the charmed eyes of those not "to the manner born" the whole country seemed populous and prosperous, the people joyous, the soil, fertile, the land smiling with abundance. There was no hint to indicate that it was a desert covered for the time being by an enamelled carpet.

The Dnieper reached, the empress and her train passed down that river in fifteen splendid galleys, with the pomp of a triumphal procession. It was now the month of May, and the banks of the river showed the same signs of prosperity as had the

sides of the road. At Kaidack the emperor Joseph met the empress, having reached Kherson in advance and gone north to anticipate her coming. He accompanied her down the stream, looking with her on the show of prosperity and populousness which delighted her inexperienced eyes, and smiling covertly at the delusion which Potemkin's magic had raised, well assured that as soon as she had passed silence and desertion would succeed these busy scenes. At a new projected town on the way, of which Catharine had, with much ceremony, laid the first stone, Joseph was asked to lay the second. He did so, afterwards saying of the farcical proceeding, "The Empress of Russia and I have finished a very important business in a single day: she has laid the first stone of a city, and I have laid the last." He had no doubt that, when they had gone, the buildings in which they had slept, the villages which they had seen, the wayside herders and flocks, would vanish like theatrical scenery, and the country present the dismal aspect of a deserted stage.

At length the new city was reached, the magical Kherson. Catharine entered it in grand state, under a noble triumphal arch inscribed in Greek with the words "The Way to Byzantium." It was a busy city in which she found herself. The houses were all inhabited; shops, filled with goods, lined the principal streets; people thronged the sidewalks, spectators of the entry; luxury of every kind awaited the empress in the capital which had arisen for her as by the rubbing of Aladdin's ring, and entertainments of the most lavish character were prepared by the potent genius to whom all she saw was due. Potemkin hesitated at no expense. The journey had cost the empire no less than seven millions of rubles, fourteen thousand of which were expended on the throne built for the empress in what was named the admiralty of Kherson.

Such was the scenery prepared for one of the most theatrical events the world has ever witnessed. It cost the empire dearly, but Potemkin's purpose was achieved. He had charmed the empress by causing the desert to "blossom like the rose." and after the spectators had passed all sank again into silence and

emptiness. The new empire of Byzantium remained a dream. Turkey had not been consulted in the project, and was not quite ready to consent to be dismembered to gratify the whim of empress and emperor.

As for the city of Kherson, its site was badly chosen, and its seeming prosperity and populousness during the empress's presence quickly passed away. The city has remained, but its actual growth has been gradual, and it has been thrown into the shade by Odessa, a port founded some years later without a single flourish of trumpets, but which has now grown to be the fourth city of Russia in size and importance. Of late years Kherson has shown some signs of increase, but all we need say further of it here is that it has the honor of being the burial-place of the shrewd Potemkin, under whose fostering band it burst into such premature bloom in its early days.

CHAPTER XXVII

KOSCIUSKO AND THE FALL OF POLAND

Of the several nations that made up the Europe of the eighteenth century, one, the kingdom of Poland, vanished before the nineteenth century began. Destitute of a strong central government, the scene of continual anarchy among the turbulent nobles, possessing no national frontiers and no national middle class, its population being made up of nobles, serfs, and foreigners, it lay at the mercy of the ambitious surrounding kingdoms, by which it was finally absorbed. On three successive occasions was the territory of the feeble nation divided between its foes, the first partition being made in 1772, between Russia, Prussia, and Austria; the second in 1793, between Russia and Prussia; and the third and final in 1795, in which Russia, Prussia, and Austria again took part, all that remained of the country being now distributed and the ancient kingdom of Poland effaced from the map of Europe.

Only one vigorous attempt was made to save the imperiled realm, that of the illustrious Kosciusko, who, though he failed in his patriotic purpose, made his name famous as the noblest of the Poles. When he appeared at the head of its armies, Poland was in a desperate strait. Some of its own nobles had been bought by Russian gold, Russian armies had overrun the land, and a Prussian force was marching to their aid. At Grodno the Russian general proudly took his seat on that throne which he was striving to overthrow. The defenders of Poland had been dispersed, their property confiscated, their families reduced to poverty. The Russians, swarming through the kingdom, committed the greatest excesses, while Warsaw, which had fallen into their hands, was governed with arrogant barbarity. Such was the state of affairs when some of the most patriotic of the nobles assembled and sent to Kosciusko, asking him to put himself at their head.

As a young man this valiant Pole had aided in the war for American independence. In 1792 he took part in the war for the defence of his native land. But he declared that there could be no hope of success unless the peasants were given their liberty. Hitherto they had been treated in Poland like slaves. It was with these despised serfs that this effort was made.

In 1794 the insurrection broke out. Kosciusko, finding that the country was ripe for revolt against its oppressors, hastened from Italy, whither he had retired, and appeared at Cracow, where he was hailed as the coming deliverer of the land. The only troops in arms were a small force of about four thousand in all, who were joined by about three hundred peasants armed with scythes. These were soon met by an army of seven thousand Russians, whom they put to flight after a sharp engagement.

The news of this battle stirred the Russian general in command at Warsaw to active measures. All whom he suspected of favoring the insurrection were arrested. The result was different from what he had expected. The city blazed into insurrection, two thousand Russians fell before the onslaught of the incensed patriots, and their general saved himself only by flight.

The outbreak at Warsaw was followed by one at Vilna, the capital of Lithuania, the Russians here being all taken prisoners. Three Polish regiments mustered into the Russian service deserted to the army of their compatriots, and far and wide over the country the flames of insurrection spread.

Kosciusko rapidly increased his forces by recruiting the peasantry, whose dress he wore and whose food he shared in. But these men distrusted the nobles, who had so long oppressed them, while many of the latter, eager to retain their valued prerogatives, worked against the patriot cause, in which they were aided by King Stanislaus, who had been subsidized by Russian gold.

To put down this effort of despair on the part of the Poles, Catharine of Russia sent fresh armies to Poland, led by her ablest generals. Prussians and Austrians also joined in the movement for enslavement, Frederick William of Prussia fighting at the head of his troops against the Polish patriot. Kosciusko had established a provisional government, and faced his foes boldly in the field. Defeated, he fell back on Warsaw, where he valiantly maintained himself until threatened by two new Russian armies, whom he marched out to meet, in the hope of preventing their junction.

The decisive battle took place at Maciejowice, in October, 1794. Kosciusko, though pressed by superior forces, fought with the greatest valor and desperation. His men at length, overpowered by numbers, were in great part cut to pieces or obliged to yield, while their leader, covered with wounds, fell into the hands of his foes. It is said that he exclaimed, on seeing all hopes at an end, "Finis Poloniee!" In the words of the poet Byron, "Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell."

Warsaw still held out. Here all who had escaped from the field took refuge, occupying Praga, the eastern suburb of the city, where twenty-six thousand Poles, with over one hundred cannon and mortars, defended the bridges over the Vistula. Suwarrow, the greatest of the Russian generals, was quickly at the city gates. He was weaker, both in men and in guns, than the defenders of the city; but with his wonted impetuosity he resolved to employ the same tactics which he had more than once used against the Turks, and seek to carry the Polish lines at the bayonet's point.

After a two days' cannonade, he ordered the assault at daybreak of November 4. A desperate conflict continued during the five succeeding hours, ending in the carrying of the trenches and the defeat of the garrison. The Russians now poured into the suburb, where a scene of frightful carnage began. Not only men in arms, but old men, women, and children were ruthlessly slaughtered, the wooden houses set on fire, the bridges broken down, and the throng of helpless people who sought to escape

into the city driven ruthlessly into the waters of the Vistula. In this butchery not only ten thousand soldiers, but twelve thousand citizens of every age and sex were remorselessly slain.

On the following day the city capitulated, and on the 6th the Russian victors marched into its streets. It was, as Kosciusko had said, "the end of Poland." The troops were disarmed, the officers were seized as prisoners, and the feeble king was nominally raised again to the head of the kingdom, so soon to be swept from existence. For a year Suwarrow held a military court in Warsaw, far eclipsing the king in the splendor of his surroundings. By the close of 1795 all was at an end. The small remnant left of the kingdom was parted between the greedy aspirants, and on the 1st of January, 1796, Warsaw was handed over to Prussia, to whose share of the spoils it appertained.

In this arbitrary manner was a kingdom which had an area of nearly three hundred thousand square miles and a population of twelve millions, and whose history dated back to the tenth century, removed from the map of the world, while the heavy hand of oppression fell upon all who dared to speak or act in its behalf. One bold stroke for freedom was afterwards made, but it ended as before, and Poland is now but a name.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SUWARROW THE UNCONQUERABLE

Of men born for battle, to whose ears the roar of cannon and the clash of sabres are the only music, the smoke of conflict their native atmosphere, Suwarrow (Suvarof, to give him his Russian name) stands among the foremost. A little, wrinkled, stooping man, five feet four inches in height and sickly in appearance, he was the last to whom one, would have looked for great deeds in war or mighty exploits in the embattled field. Yet he had the soul of a hero in his diminutive frame, and even as a boy the passion for military glory fired his heart, Caesar and Charles XII. of Sweden (from which country his ancestors came) being the heroes worshipped by his youthful imagination. Born in 1729, he entered the army as a private at seventeen, but rapidly rose from the ranks, made himself famous in the Seven Years' War and in the Polish war of 1768-71, and from that time until death put an end to his career was almost constantly in the field. Napoleon, against whose armies he fought in his later days, was not more enraptured with the breath of battle than was this war-dog of the Russian army.

Diminutive and sickly as he looked, Suwarrow was strong and hardy, and so inured to hardship that the severity of the Russian climate failed to affect his vigorous frame. Disdaining luxury, and ignoring comfort, he lived like the soldiers under his command, preferring to sleep on a truss of hay, and accepting every privation which his men might be called on to endure. He was a man of high intelligence, a clever linguist, and a diligent reader even when on campaign, and religiously seems to have been very devout, being ready to kneel and pray before every wayside image, even when the roads were deep with mud.

In his ordinary manners he carried eccentricity to an extravagant extent, was brusque and curt in speech, often to the verge of insult, laconic in his despatches, and—a soldier in grain—treated with stinging sarcasm all whose lack of activity or of courage invited his contempt. It was by this spirit that he incurred the enmity of the Emperor Paul, when, in his half-mad thirst for change, the latter attempted to change the native dress of the Russian soldier for the ancient attire of Germany. His fair locks, which the Russian was used to wash every morning, he was now bidden to bedaub with grease and flour, while he energetically cursed the black spatter-dashes which it took him an hour to button every morning. Orders to establish these novelties among his men were sent to Suwarrow, then in Italy with the army, the directions being accompanied with little sticks for models of the tails and side curls in which the soldiers' hair was to be arranged. The old warrior's lips curled contemptuously on seeing these absurd devices, and he growled out in his curt fashion, "Hair-powder is not gunpowder; curls are not cannon; and tails are not bayonets." This sarcastic utterance, which forms a sort of rhyming verse in the Russian tongue, got abroad, and spread from mouth to mouth through the army like a choice morsel of wit. The czar, to whose ears it came, heard it with deep offence. Soon after Suwarrow was recalled from the army, on another plea, and on his return to St. Petersburg was not permitted to see the emperor's face. This injustice may have been a cause of his death, which occurred shortly after his return, on May 18, 1800. No courtier of the Russian court, and no diplomatist, except the English ambassador, followed the war-worn veteran to the grave.

Suwarrow was the idol of his mien, whose favorite title for him was "Father Suvarof," and who were ready at command to follow him to the cannon's mouth. In all his long career he never lost a battle, and only once in his life of war acted on the defensive. With a superb faith in his own star, the inspiration of the moment served him for counsel, and rapidity of movement and boldness and dash in the onset brought him many a victory where deliberation might have led to defeat.

A striking instance of this, and of his usual brusque eccentricity, took place in 1799 in Italy, where Suwarrow was placed in command of all the allied troops. This raising of a Russian to the supreme command excited the jealousy of the Austrian generals, and they called a council of war to examine his plans for the campaign. The members of the council, the youngest first, gave their views as to the conduct of the war. Suwarrow listened in grim silence until they had all spoken, and had turned to him for his comment on their views. The wrinkled veteran drew to himself a slate, and made on it two lines.

"Here, gentlemen," he said, pointing to one line, "are the French, and here are the Russians. The latter will march against the former and beat them." This said, he rubbed out the French line. Then, looking up at his surprised auditors, he curtly remarked, "This is all my plan. The council is ended."

In war he is said to have been averse to the shedding of blood, and to have been at heart humane and merciful. Yet this hardly accords with the story of his exploits, it being said that twenty-six thousand Turks were killed in the storming of Ismail, while in that of Praga at Warsaw more than twenty thousand Poles were massacred.

Such was the character of one of the men who aided to make glorious the reign of Catharine of Russia, and whose merit she—unlike her weak son Paul—was fully competent to appreciate. With this estimate of the greatest soldier Russia has ever produced, and one of the ablest generals of modern times, we may briefly describe some of the most striking exploits of Suwarrow's career.

In 1789, during one of the interminable wars against Turkey, in which on this occasion the Austrians took part with the Russians, the Prince of Coburg was at the head of an Austrian force, which he was strikingly incapable of commanding. The prince, advancing with sublime deliberation, found himself suddenly threatened by a considerable Turkish

army. Filled with alarm at the sight of the enemy, he sent a hasty appeal to Suwarrow to come to his aid.

The Russian general had just rejoined his army after recovering from a wound. The news of Coburg's peril reached him at Belat, in Moldavia, between forty and fifty miles away, and these miles of mountains, ravines, and almost impassable wilds. Suwarrow at once broke camp, and with his usual impetuosity led his army over its difficult route, reaching the Austrians in less than thirty-six hours after receiving the news.

It was five o'clock in the evening when he arrived. At eleven he sent his plan of attack to the prince. An assault on the enemy was to be made at two in the morning. Coburg, who had never dreamed of such rapidity of movement and such impetuosity in action, was utterly astounded. In complete bewilderment, he sought Suwarrow at his quarters, going there three times without finding him. The supreme command belonged to him as the older general, but he had the sense not to claim it, and to act as a subordinate to his abler ally. In an hour after the advance began the allied armies were in the Turkish camp, and the Turks, though much outnumbering their assailants, were in full flight. All their stores, a hundred standards, and seventy pieces of artillery fell into the hands of the victors.

Suwarrow returned to Moldavia, and Coburg looked quietly on while the Turks collected a new army. In less than two months he found himself confronted by a hundred thousand men. In new alarm, he hastily sent again to Suwarrow for aid.

In two days the Russian army had reached the Austrian camp, which the enemy was just about to attack. The Turks had neglected to fortify their camp before offering battle. Of this oversight the keen-eyed Russian took instant advantage, attacked them in their unfinished trenches, and, as before, took their camp by storm,—though after a more stubborn defence than in the previous instance. The Turkish army was again dispersed, immense booty was taken, and Suwarrow received for his valor

the title of a count of the Austrian empire, while the empress Catharine gave him in reward the honorable surname of Rimniksky, from the name of the river on which the battle had been fought.

The next great exploit of Suwarrow was performed at Ismail, a Turkish town which Potemkin had been besieging for seven months. The prime minister at length grew impatient at the delay, and determined on more effective measures. Living in a luxury in his camp that contrasted strangely with the sparse conditions of Suwarrow, Potemkin was surrounded by courtiers and ladies, who made strenuous efforts to furnish the great man with amusement. One of the ladies, handling a pack of cards, from which she laughingly pretended to be able to read the secrets of destiny, proclaimed that he would be in possession of the town at the end of three weeks.

"You are not bad at prediction," said Potemkin, with a smile, "but I have a method of divination far more infallible. My prediction is that I will have the town in three days."

He at once sent orders to Suwarrow, who was at Galatz, to come and take the town.

The obedient warrior, who seemed to be always at somebody's beck and call, quickly appeared and surveyed the situation. His first steps seemed to indicate that he proposed to continue the siege, the troops being formed into a besieging army of about forty thousand men, while the Russian fleet was ordered up to the town. But the deliberation of a siege never accorded with Suwarrow's ardent humor. His real purpose was to take the place by storm. He had taken Otchakof in this way the previous year with heavy loss, and with the slaughter of twenty thousand Turks. He now, on the 21st of September, twice summoned the city to surrender, threatening the people with the fate of Otchakof. They refused to yield, and the assault began at four o'clock of the following morning.

Battalion after battalion was hurled against the walls: the slaughter from the Turkish fire was frightful, but the stern

commander hurled ever new hosts into the pit of death, and about eight o'clock the summit of the walls was reached. But the work was yet only begun. The city was defended street by street, house by house. It was noon before the Russians, fighting their way through a desperate resistance, reached the market-place, where were gathered a body of the Tartars of the Crimea. For two hours these fought fiercely for their lives, and after they had all fallen the Turks kept up the conflict with equal desperation in the streets. At length the gates were thrown open and Suwarrow sent his cavalry into the city, who charged through the streets, cutting down all whom they met. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the butchery ended, after which the city was given up for three days to the mercy of the troops. According to the official report, the Turks lost forty-three thousand in killed and prisoners, the Russians forty-five hundred in all; the one estimate probably as much too large as the other was too small.

We may conclude with the story of Suwarrow's career in Italy and Switzerland against the armies of the French republic. The plan which the Russian conqueror had marked out on the slate for the Austrian generals was literally fulfilled. In less than three months he had cleared Lombardy and Piedmont of the troops of France. He forced the passage of the Adda against Moreau and his army, compelling the French to abandon Milan, which he entered in triumph. His next success was at Turin, a depot of French supplies, towards which Moreau was hastily advancing. The Russians took the city by surprise, driving the French garrison into the citadel, and capturing three hundred cannons and enormous quantities of muskets, ammunition, and military stores. The French army was saved from ruin only by the great ability of its commander, who led it to Genoa in four days over a mountain path.

The czar Paul rewarded his victorious general with the honorable designation of Italienski, or the Italian, and, in his grandiloquent fashion, issued a ukase commanding all people to regard Suwarrow as the greatest commander the world had ever known.

We cannot describe the whole course of events. Other victories were won in Italy, but finally Suwarrow was weakened by the jealousy of the Austrians, who withdrew their troops, and subsequently was obliged to go to the relief of his fellow-commander, Korsakof, who, with twenty thousand men, had imprudently allowed himself to be hemmed in by a French army at Zurich. He finally forced his way through the enemy, losing all his artillery and half his host.

Of this Suwarrow knew nothing, as he made his way across the Alps to the aid of the beleaguered general. He attempted to force his way over the St. Gothard pass, meeting with fierce opposition at every point. There was a sharp fight at the Devil's Bridge, which the French blew up, but failed to keep back Suwarrow and his men, who crossed the rocky gorge of the Unerloch, dashed through the foaming Reuss, and drove the French from their post of vantage.

At length, with his men barefoot, his provisions almost exhausted, the Russian general reached Muotta, to find to his chagrin that Korsakof had been defeated and put to flight. He at once began his retreat, followed in force by Massena, who was driven off by the rear-guard. On October 1 Suwarrow reached Glarus. Here he rested till the 4th, then crossed the Panixer Mountains through snow two feet deep to the valley of the Rhine, which he reached on the 10th, having lost two hundred of his men and all his beasts of burden over the precipices. Thus ended this extraordinary march, which had cost Suwarrow all his artillery, nearly all his horses, and a third of his men.

These losses in the Russian armies stirred the czar to immeasurable rage. All the missing officers—who were prisoners in France—were branded as deserters, and Suwarrow was deprived of his command, ostensibly for his failure, but largely for the sarcasm already mentioned. He returned home to die, having experienced what a misfortune it is for a great man to be at the mercy of a fool in authority.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE RETREAT OF NAPOLEON'S GRAND ARMY

In the spring of 1812 Napoleon reached the frontiers of Russia at the head of the greatest army that had ever been under his command, it embracing half a million of men. It was not an army of Frenchmen, however, since much more than half the total force was made up of Germans and soldiers of other nationalities. In addition to the soldiery was a multitude of noncombatants and other incumbrances, which Napoleon, deviating from his usual custom, allowed to follow the troops. These were made up of useless aids to the pomp and luxury of the emperor and his officers, and an incredible number of private vehicles, women, servants, and others, who served but to create confusion, and to consume the army stores, of which provision had been made for only a short campaign.

Thus, dragging its slow length along, the army, on June 24, 1812, crossed the Niemen River and entered upon Russian soil. From emperor to private, all were inspired with exaggerated hopes of victory, and looked soon to see the mighty empire of the north prostrate before the genius of all-conquering France. Had the vision of that army, as it was to recross the Niemen within six months, risen upon their minds, it would have been dismissed as a nightmare of false and monstrous mien.

Onward into Russia wound the vast and hopeful mass, without a battle and without sight of a foe. The Russians were retreating and drawing their foes deeper and deeper into the heart of their desolate land. Battles were not necessary; the country itself fought for Russia. Food was not to be had from the land, which was devastated in their track. Burning cities and villages lit up their path. The carriages and wagons, even many of the cannon, had to be left behind. The forced marches which

Napoleon made in the hope of overtaking the Russians forced him to abandon much of his supplies, while men and horses sank from fatigue and hunger. The decaying carcasses of ten thousand horses already poisoned the air.

At length Moscow was approached. Here the Russian leaders were forced by the sentiment of the army and the people to strike one blow in defence of their ancient capital. A desperate encounter took place at Borodino, two days' march from the city, in which Napoleon triumphed, but at a fearful price. Forty thousand men had fallen, of whom the wounded nearly all died, through want and neglect. When Moscow was reached, it proved to be deserted. Napoleon had won the empty shell of a city, and was as far as ever from the conquest of Russia.

It is not our purpose here to give the startling story of the burning of Moscow, the sacrifice of a city to the god of war. Though this is one of the most thrilling events in the history of Russia, it has already been told in this series. We are concerned at present solely with the retreat of the grand army from the ashes of the Muscovite capital, the most dreadful retreat in the annals of war.

Napoleon lingered amid the ruins of the ancient city until winter was near at hand, hoping still that the emperor Alexander would sue for peace. No suit came. He offered terms himself, and they were not even honored with a reply. A deeply disappointed man, the autocrat of Europe marched out of Moscow on October 19 and began his frightful homeward march. He had waited much too long. The Russian armies, largely increased in numbers, shut him out from every path but the wasted one by which he had come, a highway marked by the ashes of burnt towns and the decaying corpses of men and animals.

On November 6, winter suddenly set in. The supplies had largely been consumed, the land was empty of food, famine alternated with cold to crush the retreating host, and death in frightful forms hovered over their path. The horses, half fed and

worn out, died by thousands. Most of the cavalry had to go afoot; the booty brought from Moscow was abandoned as valueless; even much of the artillery was left behind. The cold grew more intense. A deep snow covered the plain, through whose white peril they had to drag their weary feet. Arms were flung away as useless weights, flight was the only thought, and but a tithe of the army remained in condition to defend the rest.

The retreat of the grand army became one of incredible distress and suffering. Over the seemingly endless Russian steppes, from whose snow-clad level only rose here and there the ruins of a deserted village, the freezing and starving soldiers made their miserable way. Wan, hollow-eyed, gaunt, clad in garments through which the biting cold pierced their flesh, they dragged wearily onward, fighting with one another for the flesh of a dead horse, ready to commit murder for the shadow of food, and finally sinking in death in the snows of that interminable plain. Each morning, some of those who had stretched their limbs round the bivouac fires failed to rise. The victims of the night were often revealed only by the small mounds of fallen snow which had buried them as they slept.

That this picture may not be thought overdrawn, we shall relate an anecdote told of Prince Emilius of Darmstadt. He had fallen asleep in the snow, and in order to protect him from the keen north wind four of his Hessian dragoons screened him during the night with their cloaks. The prince arose from his cold couch in the morning to find his faithful guardians still in the position they had occupied during the night,—frozen to death.

Maddened with famine and frost, men were seen to spring, with wildly exulting cries, into the flames of burning houses. Of those that fell into the hands of the Russian boors, many were stripped of their clothing and chased to death through the snow. Smolensk, which the army had passed in its glory, it now reached in its gloom. The city was deserted and half burned. Most of the cannon had been abandoned, food and ammunition were lacking, and no halt was possible. The despairing army pushed on.

Death followed the fugitives in other forms than those of frost and hunger. The Russians, who had avoided the army in its advance, harassed it continually in its retreat. From all directions Russian troops marched upon the worn-out fugitives, grimly determined that not a man of them should leave Russia if they could prevent. The intrepid Ney, with the men still capable of fight, formed the rear-guard, and kept at bay their foes. This service was one of imminent peril. Cut off at Smolensk from the main body, only Ney's vigilance saved his men from destruction. During the night he led them rapidly along the banks of the Dnieper, repulsing the Russian corps that sought to cut off his retreat, and joined the army again.

The Beresina at length was reached. This river must be crossed. But the frightful chill, which hitherto had pursued the fleeing host, now inopportunately decreased, a thaw broke the frozen surface of the stream, and the fugitives gazed with horror on masses of floating ice where they had dreamed of a solid pathway for their feet. The slippery state of the banks added to the difficulty, while on the opposite side a Russian army commanded the passage with its artillery, and in the rear the roar of cannon signaled the approach of another army. All seemed lost, and only the good fortune which had so often befriended him now saved Napoleon and his host.

For at this critical moment a fresh army corps, which had been left behind in his advance, came to the emperor's aid, and the Russian general who disputed the passage, deceived by the French movements, withdrew to another point on the stream. Taking instant advantage of the opportunity, Napoleon threw two bridges across the river, over which the able-bodied men of the army safely made their way.

After them came the vast host of non-combatants that formed the rear, choking the bridges with their multitude. As they struggled to cross, the pursuing Russian army appeared and opened with artillery upon the helpless mass, ploughing long red lanes of carnage through its midst. One bridge broke down, and all rushed to the other. Multitudes were forced into the stream,

while the Russian cannon played remorselessly upon the struggling and drowning mass. For two days the passage had continued, and on the morning of the third a considerable number of sick and wounded soldiers, sutlers, women, and children still remained behind, when word reached them that the bridges were to be burned. A fearful rush now took place. Some succeeded in crossing, but the fire ran rapidly along the timbers, and the despairing multitude leaped into the icy river or sought to plunge through the mounting flames. When the ice thawed in the spring twelve thousand dead bodies were found on the shores of the stream. Sixteen thousand of the fugitives remained prisoners in Russian hands.

This day of disaster was the climax of the frightful retreat. But as the army pressed onward the temperature again fell, until it reached twenty-seven degrees below zero, and the old story of "frozen to death" was resumed. Napoleon, fearing to be taken prisoner in Germany if the truth should become known, left his army on December 5, and hurried towards Paris with all speed, leaving the news of the disaster behind in his flight. Wilna was soon after reached by the army, but could not be held by the exhausted troops, and, with its crowded magazines and the wealth in its treasury, fell into the hands of the Russians.

During this season of disaster the Austrian and Prussian commanders left behind to guard the route contrived to spare their troops. Schwarzenberg, the Austrian commander, retreated towards Warsaw and left the Russian armies free to act against the French. The Prussians, who had been engaged in the siege of Riga, might have covered the fleeing host; but York, their commander, entered into a truce with the Russians and remained stationary. They had been forced to join the French, and took the first opportunity to abandon their hated allies.

A place of safety was at length reached, but the grand army was represented by a miserable fragment of its mighty host. Of the half-million who crossed the Russian frontier, but eighty thousand returned. Of those who had reached Moscow, the meagre remnant numbered scarcely twenty thousand in all.

CHAPTER XXX

THE DEATH-STRUGGLE OF POLAND

The French revolution of 1830 precipitated a similar one in Poland. The rule of Russia in that country had been one of outrage and oppression. In the words of the Poles, "personal liberty, which had been solemnly guaranteed, was violated; the prisons were crowded; courts-martial were appointed to decide in civil cases, and imposed infamous punishments upon citizens whose only crime was that of having attempted to save from corruption the spirit and the character of the nation."

On the 29th of November the people sprang to arms in Warsaw and the Russians were driven out. Soon after a dictator was chosen, an army collected, and Russian Poland everywhere rose in revolt.

It was a hopeless struggle into which the Polish patriots had entered. In all Europe there was not a hand lifted in their aid. Prussia and Austria stood in a threatening attitude, each with an army of sixty thousand men upon the frontiers, ready to march to the aid of Russia if any disturbance took place in their Polish provinces. Russia invaded the country with an army of one hundred and twenty thousand men, a force more than double that which Poland was able to raise. And the Polish army was commanded by a titled incapable, Prince Radzivil, chosen because he had a great name, regardless of his lack of ability as a soldier. Chlopicki, his aide, was a skilled commander, but he fought with his hands tied.

On the 19th of February, 1831, the two armies met in battle, and began a desperate struggle which lasted with little cessation for six days. Warsaw lay in the rear of the Polish army. Behind it flowed the Vistula, with but a single bridge for escape in case of defeat. Victory or death seemed the alternatives of the patriot force.

The struggle was for the Alder Wood, the key of the position. For the possession of this forest the fight was hand to hand. Again and again it was lost and retaken. On the 25th, the final day of battle, it was held by the Poles. Forty-five thousand in number, they were confronted by a Russian army of one hundred thousand men. Diebitsch, the Russian commander, determined to win the Alder Wood at any cost. Chlopicki gave orders to defend it to the last extremity.



RUSSIAN PEASANTS

The struggle that succeeded was desperate. By sheer force of numbers the Russians made themselves masters of the wood. Then Chlopicki, putting himself at the head of his grenadiers, charged into the forest depths, driving out its holders at the bayonet's point. Their retreat threw the whole Russian line into confusion. Now was the critical moment for a cavalry charge. Chlopicki sent orders to the cavalry chief, but he refused to move. This loss of an opportunity for victory maddened the valiant leader. "Go and ask Radzivil," he said to the aides who asked for orders; "for me, I seek only death." Plunging into the ranks of the enemy, he was wounded by a shell, and borne secretly from the field. But the news of this disaster ran through the ranks and threw the whole army into consternation.

The fall of the gallant Chlopicki changed the tide of battle. Fiercely struggling still, the Poles were driven from the wood and hurled back upon the Vistula. A battalion of recruits crossed the river on the ice and carried terror into Warsaw. Crowds of peasants, heaps of dead and dying, choked the approach to Praga, the outlying suburb. Night fell upon the scene of disorder. The houses of Praga were fired, and flames lit up the frightful scene. Groans of agony and shrieks of despair filled the air. The streets were choked with debris, but workmen from Warsaw rushed out with axes, cleared away the ruin, and left the passages free.

Inspired by this, the infantry formed in line and checked the charge of the Russian horse. The Albert cuirassiers rode through the first Polish line, but soon found their horses floundering in mud, and themselves attacked by lancers and pikemen on all sides. Of the brilliant and daring corps scarce a man escaped.

That day cost the Poles five thousand men. Of the Russians more than ten thousand fell. Radzivil, fearing that the single bridge would be carried away by the broken ice, gave orders to retreat across the stream. Diebitsch withdrew into the wood. And thus the first phase of the struggle for the freedom of Poland came to an end.

This affair was followed by a striking series of Polish victories. The ice in the Vistula was running free, the river overflowed its banks, and for a month the main bodies of the armies were at rest. But General Dwernicki, at the head of three thousand Polish cavalry, signaled the remainder of February by a series of brilliant exploits, attacking and dispersing with his small force twenty thousand of the enemy.

Radzivil, whose incompetency had grown evident, was now removed, and Skrzynecki, a much abler leader, was chosen in his place. He was not long in showing his skill and daring. On the night of March 30 the Praga bridge was covered with straw and the army marched noiselessly across. At daybreak, in the

midst of a thick fog, it fell on a body of sleeping Russians, who had not dreamed of such a movement. Hurling back in disorder and dismay, they were met by a division which had been posted to cut off their retreat. The rout was complete. Half the corps was destroyed or taken, and the remainder fled in terror through the forest depths.

Before the day ended the Poles came upon Rosen's division, fifteen thousand in number, and strongly posted. Yet the impetuous onslaught of the Poles swept the field. The Russians were driven back in utter rout, with the loss of two thousand men, six thousand prisoners, and large quantities of cannon and arms. The Poles lost but three hundred men in this brilliant success. During the next day the pursuit continued, and five thousand more prisoners were taken. So disheartened were the Russian troops by these reverses that when attacked on April 10 at the village of Iganie they scarcely attempted to defend themselves. The flower of the Russian infantry, the lions of Varna, as they had been called since the Turkish war, laid down their arms, tore the eagles from their shakos, and gave themselves up as prisoners of war. Twenty-five hundred were taken.

What immediately followed may be told in a few words. Skrzynecki failed to follow up his remarkable success, and lost valuable time, in which the Russians recovered from their dismay. The brave Dwernicki, after routing a force of nine thousand with two thousand men, crossed the frontier and was taken prisoner by the Austrians, who had made no objection to its being crossed by the Russians. And, as if nature were fighting against Poland, the cholera, which had crossed from India to Russia and infected the Russian troops, was communicated to the Poles at Iganie, and soon spread throughout their ranks.

The climax in this suicidal war came on the 26th of May, when the whole Russian army, led by General Diebitsch, advanced upon the Poles. During the preceding night the Polish army had retreated across the river Narew, but, by some unexplained error, had left Lubinski's corps behind. On this

gallant corps, drawn up in front of the town of Ostrolenka, the host of Russians fell. Flanked by the Cossacks, who spread out in clouds of horsemen on each wing, the cavalry retreated through the town, followed by the infantry, the 4th regiment of the line, which formed the rear-guard, fighting step by step as it slowly fell back.

Across the bridges poured the retreating Poles. The Russians followed the rear-guard hotly into the town. Soon the houses were in flames. Disorder reigned in the streets. The fight continued in the midst of the conflagration. Russian infantry took possession of the houses adjoining the river and fired on the retreating mass. Artillery corps rushed to the river bank and planted their batteries to sweep the bridges. All the avenues of escape were choked by the columns of the invading force.

The 4th regiment, which had been left alone in the town, was in imminent peril of capture, but at this moment of danger it displayed an indomitable spirit. With closed ranks it charged with the bayonet on the crowded mass before it, rent a crimson avenue through its midst, and cleared a passage to the bridges over heaps of the dead. Over the quaking timbers rushed the gallant Poles, followed closely by the Russian grenadiers. The Polish cannon swept the bridge, but the gunners were picked off by sharp-shooters and stretched in death beside their guns. On the curving left bank eighty Russian cannon were planted, whose fire protected the crossing troops.

Meanwhile the bulk of the Polish army lay unsuspecting in its camp. Skrzynecki, the commander, resting easy in the belief that all his men were across, heard the distant firing with unconcern. Suddenly the imminence of the peril was brought to his attention. Rushing from his tent, and springing upon his horse, he galloped madly through the ranks, shouting wildly, as he passed from column to column, "Ho! Rybinski! Ho! Malachowski! Forward! forward, all!"

The troops sprang to their feet; the forming battalions rushed forward in disorder; from end to end of the line rushed

the generalissimo, the other officers hurrying to his aid. Charge after charge was made on the Russians who had crossed the stream. As if driven by frenzy, the Poles fell on their foes with swords and pikes. Singing the Warsaw hymn, the officers rushed to the front. The lancers charged boldly, but their horses sank in the marshy soil, and they fell helpless before the Russian fire.

The day passed; night fell; the field of battle was strewn thick with the dead and dying. Only a part of the Russian army had succeeded in crossing. Skrzynecki held the field, but he had lost seven thousand men. The Russians, of whom more than ten thousand had fallen, recrossed the river during the night. But they commanded the passage of the stream, and the Polish commander gave orders for a retreat on Warsaw, sadly repeating, as he entered his carriage, Kosciusko's famous words, "Finis Polonice."

The end indeed was approaching. The resources of Poland were limited, those of Russia were immense. New armies trebly replaced all Russian losses. Field-Marshal Paskievitch, the new commander, at the head of new forces, determined to cross the Vistula and assail Warsaw on the left bank of the stream, instead of attacking its suburb of Praga and seeking to force a passage across the river at that point, as on former occasions.

The march of the Russians was a difficult and dangerous one. Heavy rains had made the roads almost impassable, while streams everywhere intersected the country. To transport a heavy park of artillery and the immense supply and baggage train for an army of seventy thousand men, through such a country, was an almost impossible task, particularly in view of the fact that the cholera pursued it on its march, and the sick and dying proved an almost fatal encumbrance.

Had it been attacked under such circumstances by the Polish army, it might have been annihilated. But Skrzynecki remained immovable, although his troops cried hotly for "battle! battle!" whenever he appeared. The favorable moment was lost.

The Russians crossed the Vistula on floating bridges, and marched in compact array upon the Polish capital.

And now clamor broke out everywhere. Riots in Warsaw proclaimed the popular discontent. A dictator was appointed, and preparations to defend the city to the last extremity were made. But at the last moment twenty thousand men were sent out to collect supplies for the threatened city, leaving only thirty-five thousand for its defence. The Russians, meanwhile, had been reinforced by thirty thousand men, making their army one hundred and twenty thousand strong, while in cannon they outnumbered the Poles three to one.

Such was the state of affairs in beleaguered Warsaw on that fatal 6th of September when the Russian general, taking advantage of the weakening of the patriot army, ordered a general assault.

At daybreak the attack began with a concentrated fire from two hundred guns. The troops, who had been well plied with brandy, rushed in a torrent upon the battered walls, and swarmed into the suburb of Wola, driving its garrison into the church, where the carnage continued until none were left to resist.

From Wola the attack was directed, about noon, upon the suburb of Czyste. This was defended by forty guns, which made havoc in the Russian ranks, while two battalions of the 4th regiment, rushing upon them in their disorder, strove to drive them back and wrest Wola from their hands. The effort was fruitless, strong reinforcements coming to the Russian aid.

Through the blood-strewn streets of the city the struggle continued, success favoring now the Poles, now the Russians. About five in the afternoon the tide of battle turned decisively in favor of the Russians. A shower of shells from the Russian batteries had fired the houses of Czyste, within whose flame-lit streets a hand-to-hand struggle went on. The famous 4th regiment, intrenched in the cemetery, defended itself valiantly, but was driven back by the spread of the flames. Night fell, but

the conflict continued. The dawn of the following day saw the city at the mercy of the Russian host. The twenty thousand men sent out to forage were still absent. Nothing remained but surrender, and at nine in the evening the news of the capitulation was brought to the army, to whom orders to retire on Praga were given.

Thus ended the final struggle for the freedom of Poland. The story of what followed it is not our purpose to tell. The mild Alexander was no longer on the Russian throne. The stern Nicholas had replaced him, and fearful was his revenge. For the crime of patriotism Poland was decimated, thousands of its noblest citizens being transported to the Caucasus and Siberia. The remnant of separate existence possessed by Poland was overthrown, and it was made a province of the Russian empire. Even the teaching of the Polish language was forbidden, the youth of the nation being commanded to learn and speak the Russian tongue. As for the persecution and suffering which fell upon the Poles as a nation, it is too sad a story to be here told. There is still a Polish people, but a Poland no more.

CHAPTER XXXI

SCHAMYL THE HERO OF CIRCASSIA

In the region lying between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea rise the rugged Caucasian Mountains, a mighty wall of rock which there divides the continents of Europe and Asia. Monarch of those lofty hills towers the tall peak of Elbrus, called by the natives "the great spirit of the mountains." Farther east Kasbek lifts its lofty summit, and at a lower level the whole jagged line, "the thousand-peaked Caucasus," rises into view. Below these a lower range, dark with forests, marks its outline on the snowy summits beyond. Fruitful clearings appear to the height of five thousand feet on the western slopes; garden terraces mount the eastward face, and the valleys, green with meadows or golden with grain, are dotted with clusters of cottages. Sheep and goats browse in great numbers on the hillsides; lower down the camel and buffalo feed; herds of horses roam half wild through the glades, and from the higher rocks the chamois looks boldly down on the inhabited realms below.

In these mountain fastnesses dwells a race of bold and liberty-loving mountaineers who have preserved their freedom through all the historic eras, yielding only at last, after years of valiant resistance, when the whole power of the Russian empire was brought to bear upon them in their wilds. For years the heroic Schamyl, their unconquerable chief, braved his foes, again and again he escaped from their toils or hurled them back in defeat, and for a quarter of a century he defied all the power of Russia, yielding only when driven to his final lair.

In the *aoul* or village of Himri, perched like an eagle's nest high on a projecting rock, this famous chief was born in the year 1797. The only access to this high-seated stronghold was by a narrow path winding several hundred feet up the slope, while a

triple wall, flanked by high towers, further defended it, and the overhanging brow of the mountain guarded it above. Such is the character of one of the strongholds of this mountain land, and such an example of the difficulties its foes had to overcome.

There are no finer horsemen than the daring Circassian mountaineers, who are ready to dash at full speed up or down precipitous steeps, to leap chasms, or to swim raging torrents. In an instant, also, they can discharge their weapons, unslinging the gun when at full gallop, firing upon the foe, and as quickly returning it to its place. They can rest suspended on the side of the horse, leap to the ground to pick up a fallen weapon, and bound into the saddle again without a halt. And such is the precision of their aim that they are able to strike the smallest mark while riding at full speed.

Such were some of the arts in which Schamyl was trained, and in which he became signally expert. In the hunt, the trial of skill, all the labors and sports of the youthful mountaineers, he was an adept, and so valiant and resourceful that his admiring countrymen at length chose him as their Iman, or governor, during the defence of their country against the Russian invaders.

The first battle in which Schamyl engaged was behind the walls of his native village. Himri, well situated as it was, was hurled into ruin by the artillery of the foe, and among its prostrate defenders lay Schamyl, with two balls through his body. He was left by the enemy as dead, and in after-years the mountaineers looked upon his escape and recovery as due to miracle.

Schamyl was thirty-seven years of age when he became leader of the tribes. Of middle stature, with fair hair, gray eyes shadowed with thick brows, a Grecian nose, small mouth, and unusually fair complexion, he was one of the handsomest and most distinguished in appearance of the mountaineers. He was erect in carriage, light and active in tread, and had a natural nobility of air and aspect. His manner was calmly commanding,

while his eloquence was at once fiery and persuasive. "Flames sparkle from his eyes," says one, "and flowers are scattered from his lips."

In 1839 the Russians made one of their most determined efforts to crush the resistance of the mountaineers. Schamyl's headquarters were then at Akhulgo, a stronghold perched upon the top of an isolated conical peak around whose foot a river wound. Strong by nature, it was well fortified, trenches, earthworks, and covered ways now taking the place of those stone walls which the Russian cannon had so easily overturned at Himri.

Other fortified works were built on the road to Akhulgo, which was retained as a last resort, behind whose defences the mountaineers were resolved to conquer or die. Its garrison was composed of the flower of the Circassian warriors, while some fifteen thousand men beside stood ready to take part in the fight.

In the month of May the Russians advanced, with such energy and in such force that the anterior works were soon taken, and the mountaineers found themselves obliged to take refuge in their final fortress of defence. The fight here was fierce and persistent. Step by step the Russians made their way, pushing their parallels against the intrenched works of their foes. Point after point was gained, and at length, in late August, the crisis came. A sudden charge carried them into the fort, and the defenders died where they stood, leaving only women and children to fall as prisoners into the Russians' hands.

But Schamyl had disappeared. Seek as they would, the chief was not to be found. The fortress, the approaches, every nook and corner, were explored, but the famous warrior, for whom his foes would have given half their wealth, had utterly vanished, no one knew how. To make sure of his death they had scarcely left a fighting man alive, yet to their chagrin the redoubtable Schamyl was soon again in the field.

How the brave mountaineer escaped is not known. Of the stories afloat, one is that he lay concealed until night in a rock

refuge, and then managed to swim the river while some of his friends attracted the attention and drew the fire of the guards. All that can be said is that in September he reappeared, ready for new feats of arms, and was seen again at the head of a gallant body of mountain warriors.

His headquarters were now fixed at Dargo, a village in the heart of the mountains and in the midst of the primeval forest. But the chief had learned a lesson from his late experience. The Circassians were no match for the Russians behind fortifications. He resolved in the future to fight in a manner better suited to the habits of his followers, and to wear out the foe by a guerilla warfare.

Three years passed before the Russians again sought to penetrate the mountains in force. Then General Grabbe, the victor at Akhulgo, attempted to repeat his success at Dargo. But the experience he gained proved to be of a less agreeable type. At the close of the first day's march, when the soldiers had eaten their evening meal and stretched their limbs to rest after a hard day's march, they were suddenly brought to their feet by a rattling volley of musketry from the surrounding woods. All night long the firing continued, no great damage being done in the darkness, but the soldiers being effectually deprived of their rest. When 'day dawned there was not a Circassian to be seen.

Near noon, as the column wound through a ravine in the forest, the firing sharply recommenced, a murderous volley pouring upon the vanguard from behind the trees. The number of wounded became so great that there were not wagons enough for their transportation. Still General Grabbe kept on, despite the advice of his officers, only to be attacked again at night as his weary men lay in a small open meadow among the hills. All night long the whiz of bullets drove away repose, and at every step of the next day's march the woods belched forth the leaden messengers of death.

The goal of the march was near at hand. The little village of Dargo could be seen on a distant hill-top. But it was to be

reached only by a path of death, and the Russian commander was at length forced to give the order to retreat. On seeing the column wheel and begin its backward march the Circassians grew wild with excitement and triumph. Slinging their rifles behind their backs, they rushed, sabre in hand, upon the enemy's centre, breaking through it again and again, while a deadly hail of rifle-shots still came from the woods. In the end, of the column of six thousand, two thousand were left dead, the remainder reaching the fortress from which they had set out in sorry plight.

For several years Schamyl made Dargo his headquarters. Not until 1845 did the Russians succeed in taking it, their army now being ten thousand strong. But it was a village in flames they captured. Schamyl had fired it before leaving, and the Russians were so beset in coming and going that their empty conquest was made at the cost of three thousand of their men.

In the spring of the following year the valiant chief repaid the enemy in part for these invasions of his country. He had now under his command no less than twenty thousand warriors, largely horsemen, and in the leafy month of May, taking advantage of a weakening of the Russian line, he dashed suddenly from the highlands for a raid in the neighboring country of the Kabardians.

Two rivers flowed between the mountain ranges and the Kabardas, and two lines of hostile fortresses guarded the frontier, containing in all no less than seventy thousand men. Between the forts lay Cossack settlements, and beyond them the Kabardians, an armed and warlike race. Schamyl had no artillery, no fortresses, no depots of provisions and ammunition. All he could do was to make a quick dash and a hasty return.

Down upon the Cossacks he rode, followed by his thousands of daring riders. Plundering their villages, he halted to take no forts except those that went down in the whirl of his coming. Before the garrisons in the strongholds fairly knew that he was among them he was gone; and while the Kabardians

believed that he was lurking in the mountain depths, he suddenly dashed into their midst. Sixty populous Kabardian villages were plundered, and the mountaineers proudly refused to turn till they had watered their horses in the Kuban and even reached the more distant banks of the Laba.

But how were they to return? Thousands of horsemen had gathered in the way. Long battalions of infantry had hurried to cut off the raiders on their retreat. Schamyl knew that he could not get back by the way he had come; but, turning southward, he galloped at headlong speed through the Cossack settlements in that quarter, and, with his cruppers laden with booty and his saddle-bows well furnished with food, evaded his foes and reached the mountains again. May seemed to bloom more richly than ever as the wild riders dashed proudly back to the doors of their homes and heard the glad shouts of joy that greeted their safe return.

The whole story of the exploits of the famous Circassian chief is too extended and too full of stirring incidents to be here given even in epitome. It must suffice to say, in conclusion, that ten years after his escape from Akhulgo that stronghold was again attacked and taken by the Russians, and as before Schamyl mysteriously escaped. Completely baffled, nothing was left for the Russians but to wear out the chief and his people by continued invasions of their mountain land. Again and again their armies were beaten by their indomitable foe, but the continuance of the struggle slowly exhausted the land and its powers of resistance.

The Circassians were helped during the Crimean War by the foes of Russia, who supplied them with arms and money, but after that war the Russians kept up the struggle with more energy than ever, and, by opening a road over the mountains, cut off a part of the country and compelled its submission. At length, in April, 1859, twenty-five years after the struggle began, Weden, Schamyl's stronghold at that time, was taken, after a seven weeks' siege. As before, the chief escaped, but the country was virtually subdued, and he had only a small band of followers left.

For months afterwards his foes pursued him actively from fastness to fastness, determined to run him down, and at length, on September 6, 1859, surprised him on the plateau of Gounib. Here the devoted band made a desperate resistance, not yielding until of the original four hundred only forty-seven remained alive. Schamyl, the lion of the Caucasus, was at length taken, after having cost the Russians uncounted losses in life and money.

With his capture the independence of Circassia came to an end. It has since formed an integral part of the Russian empire, and its subjugation has opened the gateway to that vast expansion of Russia in Central Asia which since then has taken place. The captive chief had won the respect of his foes, and was honorably treated, being assigned a residence at Kaluga, in Central Russia, with an annual pension of five thousand dollars. He, like his countrymen, was a Mohammedan in faith, and removed to Mecca, in Arabia, in 1870, dying at Medina in the following year.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

The Crimean War, brief as was the interval it occupied in the annals of time, was one replete with exciting events. And of these much the most brilliant was that which took place on the 25th of October, 1854, the famous "Charge of the Light Brigade," which Tennyson has immortalized in song, and which stands among the most dramatic incidents in the history of war. It was truthfully said by one of the French generals who witnessed it, "It is magnificent, but it is not war." We give it for its magnificence alone.

First let us depict the scene of that memorable event. The British and French armies lay in front of Balaklava, their base of supplies, facing towards Sebastopol. They occupied a mountain slope, which was strongly intrenched. A valley lay before them, and some two miles distant rose another mountain range, rocky and picturesque. In the valley between were four rounded hillocks, each crowned by an earthwork defended by a few hundred Turks. These outlying redoubts formed the central points of the famous battle of October 25.

In the early morning of that day the Russians appeared in force, debouching from the mountain passes in front of the allied army. Six compact masses of infantry were seen, with a line of artillery in front, and on each flank a powerful cavalry force, while a cloud of mounted skirmishers filled the space between. Fronting the line of the allies were the Zouaves, crouching behind low earthworks, on the right the 93rd Highlanders, and in front the British cavalry, composed of the Heavy Brigade, under General Scarlett, and, more in advance, the Light Brigade, under Lord Cardigan. Such were, in broad outline, the formation of the ground and the position of the actors in the drama of battle about to be played.

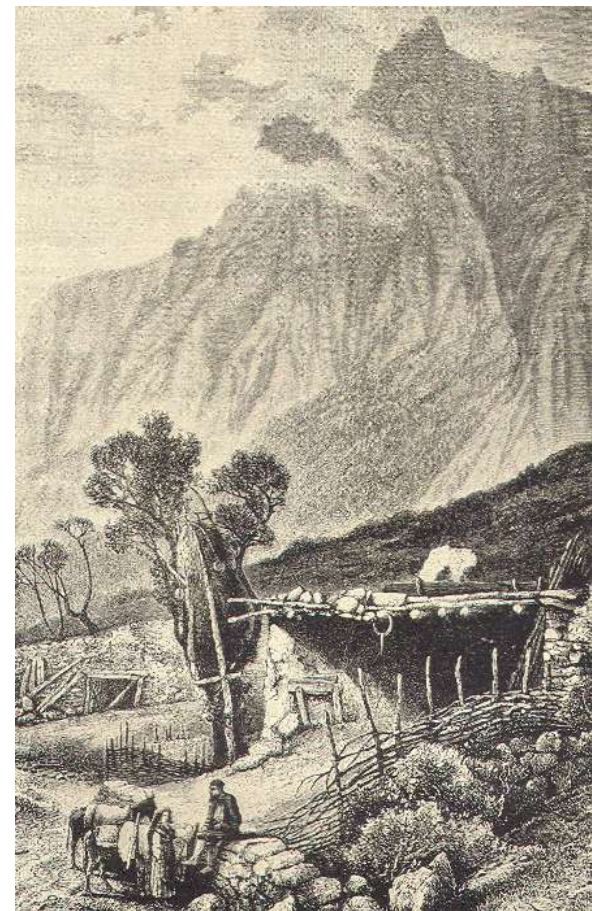
The scene opened with an attack on the advanced redoubts. No. 1 was quickly taken, the Turks flying in haste before the fire of the Russian guns. No. 2 was evacuated in similar panic haste, the Cossack skirmishers riding among the fleeing Turks and cutting them mercilessly down. The guns of No. 2 were at once turned upon No. 3, whose garrison of Turks fired a few shots in return, and then, as in the previous cases, broke into open flight. After them dashed the Cossack light horsemen, flanking them to right and left, and many of the turbaned fugitives paid for their panic with their lives. The Russians had won in the first move of the game. They had taken three of the redoubts before a movement could be made for their support.

Next a squadron of the Russian cavalry charged vigorously upon the Highlanders. But a deadly rifle fire met them as they came, volley after volley tearing gaps through their compact ranks, and in a moment more they had wheeled, opened their files, and were in full flight. "Bravo, Highlanders!" came up an exulting shout from the thousands of spectators behind.

It was evident that Balaklava was the goal of the Russian movement, and the heavy cavalry were ordered into position to protect the approaches. As they moved towards the post indicated, a large body of the enemy's cavalry appeared over the ridge in front. These were corps d'elite, evidently, their jackets of light blue, embroidered with silver lace, giving them a holiday appearance. Behind them, as they galloped at an easy pace to the brow of the bill, appeared the keen glitter of lance-tips, and in the rear of the lancers came several squadrons of gray-coated dragoons as supports. As the serried ranks of horsemen advanced, their pace declined from a gallop to an easy trot, and from that almost to a halt. Their first line was double the length of the British, and three times as deep. Behind it came a second line, equally strong. They greatly outnumbered their foe.

It was evident that the shock of a cavalry battle was at hand. The hearts of the spectators throbbed with excitement as they saw the Heavy Brigade suddenly break into a full gallop

and rush headlong upon the enemy, making straight for the centre of the Russian line. On they went, Grays and Enniskilleners, in serried array, while their cheers and shouts rent the air as they struck the Russian line with an impetus which carried them through the close-drawn ranks. For a moment there was a glittering flash of sword-blades and a sharp clash of steel, and then, in thinned numbers, the charging dragoons appeared in the rear of the line, heading with unchecked speed towards the second Russian rank.



MOUNT ST. PETER, CRIMEA

The gallant horsemen seemed buried amid the multitude of the enemy. "God help them! they are lost!" came from more than one trembling lip and was echoed in many a fearful heart. The onset was terrific: the second line was broken like the first, and in its rear the red-coated riders appeared. But the first line of Russians, which had been rolled back upon its flanks by the impetuous rush, was closing up again, and the much smaller force in their midst was in serious peril of being swallowed up and crushed by sheer force of numbers.

The crisis was a terrible one. But at the moment when the danger seemed greatest, two regiments of dragoons, the 4th and 5th, who had closely followed their fellows in the charge, broke furiously upon the enemy, dashing through and rending to fragments the already broken line. In a moment all was over. Less than five minutes had passed since the first shock, and already the Russian horse was in full flight, beaten by half its force. Wild cheers burst from the whole army as the victors drew back with almost intact ranks, their loss having been very small.

Thus ended the famous "Charge of the Heavy Brigade." Its glory was to be eclipsed by that memorable "Charge of the Light Brigade" which became the theme of Tennyson's stirring ode, and the recital of which still causes many a heart to throb. We are indebted for our story of it to the thrilling account of W. H. Russell, the Times correspondent, and a spectator of the event.

As the Russian cavalry retired, their infantry fell back, leaving men in three of the captured redoubts, but abandoning the other points gained. They also had guns on the heights overlooking their position. About the hour of eleven, while the two armies thus faced each other, resting for an interval from the rush of conflict, there came to Lord Cardigan that fatal order which caused him to hurl his men into "the jaws of death." How it came to be given, how the misapprehension occurred, who was at fault in the error, has never been made clear. Captain Nolan, who brought the order, was one of the first to fall, and his story of the event died with him. All we know is that he handed

Lord Lucan a written command to advance, and when asked, "Where are we to advance to?" he pointed to the Russian line, and said, "There are the enemy, and there are the guns," or words of similar meaning.

It is a maxim in war that "cavalry shall never act without a support," that "infantry should be close at hand when cavalry carry guns," and that a line of cavalry should have some squadrons in column on its flanks, to guard it against a flank attack. None of these rules was carried out here, and Lord Lucan reluctantly gave the order to advance upon the guns, which Lord Cardigan as reluctantly accepted, for to any eye it was evident that it was an order to advance upon death. "Some one had blundered," and wisdom would have dictated the demand for a confirmation of the order. Valor suggested that it should be obeyed in all its blank enormity. Dismissing wisdom and yielding to valor, Lord Cardigan gave the word to advance, the brigade, scarcely a regiment in total strength, broke into a sudden gallop, and within a minute the devoted line was flying over the plain towards the enemy.

The movement struck Lord Raglan, from whom the order was supposed to have emanated, with consternation. It struck the Russians with surprise. Surely that handful of men was not going to attack an army in position? Yet so it seemed as the Light Brigade dashed onward, the uplifted sabres glittering in the morning sun, the horses galloping at full speed towards the Russian guns, over a plain a mile and a half in width.

Not far had they gone when a hot fire of cannon, musketry, and rifles belched from the Russian line. A flood of smoke and flame hid the opposing ranks, and shot and shell tore through the charging troops. Gaps were rent in their ranks, men and horses went down in rapid succession, and riderless horses were seen rushing wildly across the plain. The first line was broken. It was joined by the second. On went the brigade in a single line with unchecked speed. Though torn by the deadly fire of thirty guns, the brave riders rode steadily on into the smoke of

the batteries, with cheers which too often changed in a breath to the cry of death.

Through the clouds of smoke the horsemen could be seen dashing up to and between the guns, cutting down the gunners as they stood. Then, wheeling, they broke through a line of Russian infantry which sought to stay their advance, and scattered it to right and left. In a moment more, to the relief of those who had watched their career in an agony of emotion, they were seen riding back from the captured redoubt.

Scattered and broken they came, some mounted, some on foot, all hastening towards the British lines. As they wheeled to retreat, a regiment of lancers was hurled upon their flank. Colonel Shewell, of the 8th Hussars, saw the danger, and rushed at the foe, cutting a passage through with great loss. The others had similarly to break their way through the columns that sought to envelop them. As they emerged from the cavalry fight, the gunners opened upon them again, cutting new lines of carnage through their decimated ranks. The Heavy Brigade had ridden to their relief, but could only cover the retreat of the slender remnant of the gallant band. In twenty-five minutes from the start not a British soldier, except the dead and dying, was left on the scene of this daring but mad exploit.

Captain Nolan fell among the first; Lord Lucan was slightly wounded; Lord Cardigan had his clothes pierced by a lance; Lord Fitzgibbon received a fatal wound. Of the total brigade, some six hundred strong, the killed, wounded, and missing numbered four hundred and twenty-six.

While this event was taking place, a body of French cavalry made a brilliant charge on a battery at the left, which was firing upon the devoted brigade, and cut down the gunners. But they could not get the guns off without support, and fell back with a loss of one-fourth their number. Thus ended that eventful day, in which the British cavalry had covered itself with glory, though it had only glory to show in return for its heavy loss.

Such is the story as it stands in prose. Here is Tennyson's poetic version, which is full of the dash and daring of the wild ride.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Some one had blundered:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die,
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them,
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well;
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell,
Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabres bare,

Flashed as they turned in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre-stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them,
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.
When can their glory fade?
Oh, the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FALL OF SEBASTOPOL

The history of Russia has been largely a history of wars,—which indeed might be said with equal justice of most of the nations of Europe. In truth, history as written gives such prominence to warlike deeds, and glosses over so hastily the events of peace, that we seem to hear the roll of the drum rising from the written page itself, and to see the hue of blood crimsoning the printed sheets. This dominance of war in history is a striking instance of false perspective. Nations have not spent all or most of their lives in fighting, but the clash of the sword rings so loudly through the historic atmosphere that we scarcely hear the milder sounds of peace.

So far as Russia is concerned, the torrent of war has rolled mainly towards the south. From those early days in which the Scythians drove back the Persian host and the early Varangians fiercely assailed the Greek empire, the relations of the north and the south have been strained, and a rapid succession of wars has been waged between the Russians and their varying foes, the Greeks, the Tartars, and the Turks. For ten centuries these wars have continued, with Constantinople for their ultimate goal, yet in all these ten centuries of conflict no Russian foot has ever been set in hostility within that ancient city's walls.

Of these many wars, that which looms largest on the historic page is the fierce conflict of 1854-55, in which England and France came to Turkey's aid and Russia met with defeat on the soil of the Crimea. We have already given the most striking and dramatic incident of this famous Crimean war. It may be aptly followed by the final scene of all, the assault upon and capture of Sebastopol.

The city of this name (Russian Sevastopol) is a seaport and fortress on the site of an old Tartar village near the southwest extremity of the Crimea, built by Russia as her naval station on the Black Sea. It possesses one of the finest natural harbors of the world, and formed the central scene of the Crimean War, the English and French armies besieging it with all the resources at their command. For nearly a year this stronghold of Russia was subjected to bombardment. Battles were fought in front of it, vigorous efforts for its capture and its relief were made, but in early September, 1855, it still remained in Russian hands, though frightfully torn and rent by the torrent of iron balls which had been poured into it with little cessation. But now the climax of the struggle was at hand, and all Europe stood in breathless anxiety awaiting the result.

On September 5 the fiercest cannonade the city had yet felt was begun by the French, the English batteries quickly joining in. All that night and during the night of the 6th the bombardment was unceasingly continued, and during the 7th the cannons still belched their fiery hail upon the town. Everywhere the streets showed the terrible effect of this vigorous assault. Nearly every house in sight was rent asunder by the balls. Towards evening the great dock-yard shears caught fire, and burned fiercely in the high wind then prevailing. A large vessel in the harbor was next seen in flames, and burned to the water's edge. This bombardment was preliminary to a general assault, fixed for the 8th, and on the morning of that day it was resumed, as a mask to the coming charge upon the works.

The Malakoff fort, the key to the Russian position, was to be assaulted by the French, who gathered in great force in its front during the night. The Redan, another strong fortification, was reserved for the British attack. In the trenches, facing the works, men were gathered as closely as they could be packed, with their nerves strung to an intense pitch as they awaited the decisive word. The hour of noon was fixed for the French assault, and as it approached a lull in the cannonade told that the critical moment was at hand.

At five minutes to twelve the word was given, and like a swarm of angry bees the French sprang from their trenches and rushed in mad haste across the narrow space dividing them from the Malakoff. The place, a moment before quiet and apparently deserted, seemed suddenly alive. A few bounds took the active line of stormers across the perilous interval, and within a minute's time they were scrambling up the face and slipping through the embrasures of the long-defiant fort. On they came, stream after stream, battalion succeeding battalion, each dashing for the embrasures, and before the last of the stormers had left the trenches the flag of the foremost was waving in triumph above a bastion of the fort.

The Russians had been taken by surprise. Very few of them were in the fort. The destructive cannonade had driven them to shelter. It was in the hands of the French by the time their foes were fully aware of what had occurred. Then a determined attempt was made to recapture it, and the Russian general hurled his men in successive storming columns upon the work, vainly endeavoring to drive out its captors. From noon until seven in the evening these furious efforts continued, thousands of the Russians falling in the attempt. In the end the exhausted legions were withdrawn, the French being left in possession of the work they had so ably won and so valiantly held.

Meanwhile the British were engaged in their share of the assault. The moment the French tricolor was seen waving from the parapet of the Malakoff four signal rockets were sent up, and the dash on the Redan began. It was made in less force than the French had used, and with a very different result. The Russians were better prepared, and the space to be crossed was wider, the assaulting column being rent with musketry as it dashed over the interval between the trenches and the fort. On dashed the assailants, through the abatis, which had been torn to fragments by the artillery fire, into the ditch, and up the face of the work. The parapet was scaled almost without opposition, the few

Russians there taking shelter behind their breastworks in the rear, whence they opened fire on the assailing force.

At this point, instead of continuing the charge, as their officers implored them to do, the men halted and began loading and firing, a work in which they were greatly at a disadvantage, since the Russians returned the fire briskly from behind their shelters. Every moment reinforcements rushed in from the town and added to the weight of the enemy's fire. The assailants were falling rapidly, particularly the officers, who were singled out by their foes.

For an hour and a half the struggle continued. By that time the Russians had cleared the Redan, but the British still held the parapets. Then a rush from within was made, and the assailants were swept back and driven through the embrasures or down the face of the parapet into the ditch, where their foes followed them with the bayonet.

A short, sharp, and bloody struggle here took place. Step by step the band of Britons was forced back by the enemy, those who fled for the trenches having to run the gauntlet of a hot fire, those who remained having to defend themselves against four times their force. The attempt had hopelessly failed, and of those in the assailing column comparatively few escaped. The day's work had been partly a success and partly a failure. The French had succeeded in their assault. The English had failed in theirs, and lost heavily in the attempt.

What the final result was to be no one could tell. Silence followed the day's struggle, and night fell upon a comparatively quiet scene. About eleven o'clock a new act in the drama began, with a terrific explosion that shook the ground like an earthquake. By midnight several other explosions vibrated through the air. Here and there flames were seen, half hidden by the cloud of dust which rose before the strong wind. As the night waned, the fires grew and spread, while tremendous explosions from time to time told of startling events taking place in the town. What was going on under the shroud of night? The early

dawn solved the mystery. The Russians were abandoning the city they had so long and so gallantly held.

The Malakoff was the key of their position. Its loss had made the city untenable. The failure of the attempt to recover it was followed by immediate preparations for evacuation. The gray light of the coming day showed a stream of soldiers marching across the bridge to the north side. The fleet had disappeared. It lay sunk in the harbor's depths.

The retreat had begun at eight o'clock of the evening before, soon after the failure to retake the Malakoff. But it was a Moscow the Russian general proposed to leave his foes. Combustibles had been stored in the principal houses. About two o'clock flames began to rise from these, and at the same hour all the vessels of the fleet except the steamers were scuttled and sunk. The steamers were retained to aid in carrying off the stores. A terrific explosion behind the Redan at four o'clock shook the whole camp. Four others equally startling followed. Battery after battery was hurled into the air by the explosion of the magazines. Before seven o'clock the last of the Russians had crossed the bridge to the north side, which was uninvested by the allies, and the hillsides opposite the city were alive with troops. Smaller explosions followed. From a steamer in the harbor clouds of dense smoke arose. Flames spread rapidly, and by ten o'clock the whole city was in a blaze, while vast columns of smoke rose far into the skies, lurid in the glare of the flames below. The sounds of battle had ceased. Those of conflagration and ruin succeeded. The final flames were those sent up from the steamers, which were set on fire when the work of transporting stores had ceased.

Great was the surprise throughout the camp that Sunday morning when the news spread that Sebastopol was on fire and the enemy in full retreat. Most of the soldiers, worn out with their desperate day's work, slept through the explosions and woke to learn that the city so long fought for was at last theirs—or so much of it as the flames were likely to leave.

About midnight, attracted by the dead silence, some volunteers had crept into an embrasure of the Redan and found the place deserted by the foe. As soon as dawn appeared, the French Zouaves began to steal from their trenches into the burning town, heedless of the flames, the explosions, and the danger of being shot by some lurking foe, the desire for plunder being stronger in their minds than dread of danger. Soon the red uniforms of these daring marauders could be seen in the streets, revealed by the flames, and the day had but fairly dawned when men came staggering back laden with spoils, Russian relics being offered for sale in the camps while the Russian columns were still marching from the deserted city. The sailors were equally alert, and could soon be seen bearing more or less worthless lumber from the streets, often useless stuff which they had risked their lives to gain.

The allies had won a city in ruins; but they had defeated the Russians at every encounter, in field and in fort, and the Muscovite resources were exhausted. The war must soon cease. What followed was to complete the destruction which the torch had begun. The splendid docks which Russia had constructed at immense cost were mined and blown up. The houses which had escaped the fire were robbed of doors, windows, and furniture to add to the comfort of the huts which were built for winter quarters by the troops. As for the scene of ruin, disaster, and death within the city, it was frightful, and it was evident that the Russians had clung to it with a death-grip until it was impossible to remain. It was an absolute ruin from which the Sebastopol of to-day began its growth.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AT THE GATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE

From the days of Rurik down, a single desire—a single passion, we may say—has had a strong hold upon the Russian heart, the desire to possess Constantinople, that grand gate-city between Europe and Asia, with its control of the avenue to the southern seas. While it continued the capital of the Greek empire it was more than once assailed by Russian armies. After it became the metropolis of the Turkish dominion renewed attempts were made. But Greek and Turk alike valiantly held their own, and the city of the straits defied its northern foes. Through the centuries war after war with Turkey was fought, the possession of Constantinople their main purpose, but the Moslem clung to his capital with fierce pertinacity, and not until the year 1878 did he give way and a Russian army set eyes on the city so long desired.

In 1875 an insurrection broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, two Christian provinces under Turkish rule. The rebellious sentiment spread to Bulgaria, and in 1876 Turkey began a policy of repression so cruel as to make all Europe quiver with horror. Thousands of its most savage soldiery were let loose upon the Christian populations south of the Balkans, with full license to murder and burn, and a frightful carnival of torture and massacre began. More than a hundred towns were destroyed, and their inhabitants treated with revolting inhumanity. In the month of June, 1876, about forty thousand Bulgarians, of all ages and sexes, were put to death, many of the children being sold as slaves in the Turkish cities.

Of all the powers of Europe, Russia was the only one that took arms to avenge these slaughtered populations. England stood impassive, the other nations held aloof, but Alexander II. called out his troops, and once more the Russian battalions were

set en route for the Danube, with Constantinople as their ultimate goal.

In June, 1877, the Danube was crossed and the Russian host entered Bulgaria, the Turks retiring as they advanced. But the march of invasion was soon arrested. The Balkan Mountains, nature's line of defence for Turkey, lay before the Russian troops, and on the high-road to its passes stood the town of Plevna, a fortress which must be taken before the mountains could safely be crossed. The works were very strong, and behind them lay Osman Pacha, one of the boldest and bravest of the Turkish soldiers, with a gallant little army under his command. The defence of this city was the central event of the war. From July to September the Russians sought its capture, making three desperate assaults, all of which were repulsed. In October the city was invested with an army of forty thousand men, under the intrepid General Skobelev, with a determination to win. But Osman held out with all his old stubbornness, and continued his unflinching defence until starvation forced him to yield. He had lost his city, but had held back the Russian army for nearly half a year and won the admiration of the world.

The fall of Plevna set free the large Russian army that had been tied up by its siege. What should be done with these troops, more than one hundred thousand strong? The Balkans, whose gateways Plevna had closed, now lay open before them, but winter was at hand, winter with its frosts and snows. An attempt to cross the mountains at this time, even if successful, would bring them before strong Turkish fortresses in midwinter, with a chain of mountains in the rear, over which it would be impossible to maintain a line of supplies. The prudent course would have been to put the men into winter quarters at the foot of the Balkans on the north and wait for spring before venturing upon the mountain passes.

The Grand Duke Nicholas, however, was not governed by such considerations of prudence, but determined, at all hazards, to strike the Turks before they had time to reorganize and recuperate. The army was, therefore, at once set in motion,

General Gourko marching upon the Araba-Konak, Radetzky upon the Shipka Pass. The story of these movements is a long one, but must be given here in a few words. The bitter cold, the deep snow, the natural difficulties of the passes, the efforts of the enemy, all failed to check the Russian advance. Gourko forced his way through all opposition, took the powerful fortress of Sophia without a blow, and routed an army of fifty thousand men on his march to Philippopolis. Radetzky did even better, since he captured the Turkish army defending the Shipka Pass, thirty-six thousand strong. The whole Turkish defence of the Balkans had gone down with a crash, and the Russians found themselves on the south side of the mountains with the enemy everywhere on the retreat, a broken and demoralized host.

Meanwhile what had become of the Turkish population of the Balkans and Roumelia? There were none of them to be seen; no fugitives were passed; not a Turk was visible in Sophia; the whole region traversed up to Philippopolis seemed to have only a Christian population. But on leaving the last-named city the situation changed, and a terrible scene of bloodshed, death, and misery met the eyes of the marching hosts. It was now easy to see what had become of the Turks: they were here in multitudes in full flight for their lives. The Bulgarians had avenged themselves bitterly on their late oppressors. Dead bodies of men and animals, broken carts, heaps of abandoned household goods, and tatters of clothing seemed to mark every step of the way. Fierce and terrible had been the struggle, dreadful the result, Turks and Bulgarians lying thickly side by side in death. Here appeared the bodies of Bulgarian peasants horrible with gaping wounds and mutilations, the marks of Turkish vengeance; there beside them lay corpses of dignified old Turks, their white beards stained with their blood.

While the men had died from violence, the women and children had perished from cold and hunger, many of them being frozen to death, the faces and tiny hands of dead children visible through the shrouding snows. The living were dragging their slow way onward through this ghastly array of the dead, in a

seemingly endless procession of wagons, drawn by half-starved oxen, and bearing sick and feeble human beings and loads of household goods. Beside the laden vehicles the wretched, famine-stricken, worn-out fugitives walked, pushing forward in unceasing fear of their merciless Bulgarian foes.

Farther on the scene grew even more terrible. The road was strewn with discarded bedding, carpets, and other household goods. In one village were visible the bodies of some Turkish soldiers whom the Bulgarians had stoned to death, the corpses half covered with the heaps of stones and bricks which had been hurled at them.

Beyond this was reached a vast mass of closely packed wagons extending widely over roads and fields, not fewer than twenty thousand in all. The oxen were still in the yokes, but the people had vanished, and Bulgarian plunderers were helping themselves unresisted to the spoil. The great company, numbering fully two hundred thousand, had fled in terror to the mountains from some Russian cavalry who had been fired upon by the escort of the fugitives and were about to fire in return. Abandoning their property, the able-bodied had fled in panic fear, leaving the old, the sick, and the infants to perish in the snow, and their cherished effects to the hands of Bulgarian pilferers.

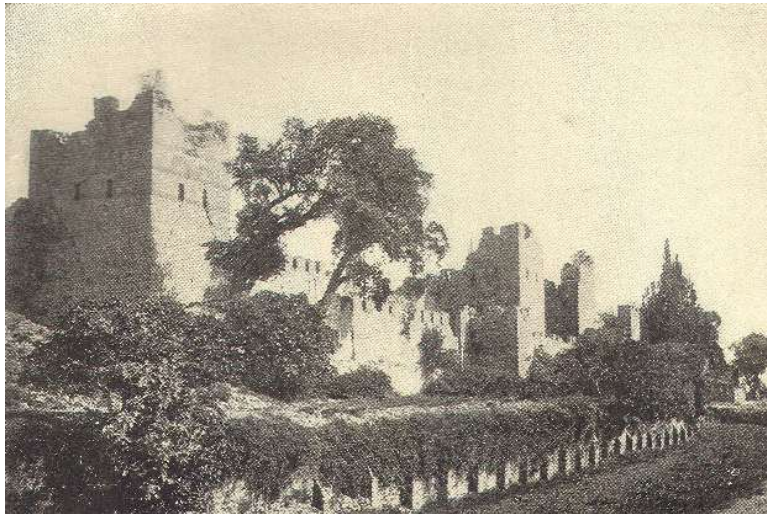
In advance lay Adrianople, the ancient capital of Turkey and the second city in the empire. Here, if anywhere, the Turks should have made a stand. But news came that this stronghold had been abandoned by its garrison, that the wildest panic prevailed, and that the Turkish population of the city and the surrounding villages was in full flight. At daylight of the 20th of January the city was entered by the cavalry, and on the 22nd Skobelev marched in with his infantry, at once despatching the cavalry in pursuit of the retreating enemy. The defence of Adrianople had been well provided for by an extensive system of earthworks, but not an effort was made to hold it, and an incredible panic seemed everywhere to have seized the Turks.

Russia had almost accomplished the task for which it had been striving during ten centuries. Constantinople at last lay at its mercy. The Turks still had an army, still had strong positions for defence, but every shred of courage seemed to have fled from their hearts, and their powers of resistance to be at an end. They were in a state of utter demoralization and ready to give way to Russia at all points and accept almost any terms they could obtain. Had they decided to continue the fight, they still possessed a position famous for its adaptation to defence, behind which it was possible to hold at bay all the power of Russia.

This was the celebrated position of Buyuk-Tchekmedje, a defensive line twenty-five miles from Constantinople and of remarkable military strength. The peninsula between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmora is at this point only twenty miles wide, and twelve of these miles are occupied by broad lakes which extend inland from either shore. Of the remaining distance, about half is made up of swamps which are almost or quite impassable, while dense and difficult thickets occupy the rest of the line. Behind this stretch of lake, swamp, and thicket there extends from sea to sea a ridge from four hundred to seven hundred feet in height, the whole forming a most admirable position for defence. This ridge had been fortified by the Turks with redoubts, trenches, and rifle-pits, which, fully garrisoned and mounted with guns, might have proved impregnable to the strongest force. The thirty thousand men within them could have given great trouble to the whole Russian army, and double that number might have completely arrested its march. Yet this great natural stronghold was given up without a blow, signed away with a stroke of the pen.

On January 31 an armistice was signed, one of whose terms was that this formidable defensive line should be evacuated by the Turks, who were to retire to an inner line, while the Russians were to occupy a position about ten miles distant. It was no consideration for Turkey that now kept the Russians outside the great capital, but dread of the powers of Europe, which jealously distrusted an increase of the power of

Russia, and were bent on saving Turkey from the hands of the czar.



THE WALLS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

On February 12 an event took place that threatened ominous results. The British fleet forced the passage of the Dardanelles and moved upon Constantinople, on the pretence of protecting the lives of British subjects in that city. As soon as news of this movement reached St. Petersburg the emperor telegraphed to the Grand Duke Nicholas, giving him authority to march a part of his army into Constantinople, on the same plea that the British had made. In response the grand duke demanded of the sultan the right to occupy a part of the environs of his capital with Russian soldiers, the negotiations ending with the permission to occupy the village of San Stefano, on the Sea of Marmora, about six miles from the walls of the threatened city.

What would be the end of it all was difficult to foresee. On the waters of the city floated the English iron-clads, with their mute threat of war; around the walls Turkish troops were rapidly throwing up earthworks; leading officers in the Russian army chafed at the thought of stopping so near their longed-for

goal, and burned with the desire to make a final end of the empire of the Turks and add Constantinople to the dominions of the czar. Yet though thus, as it were, on the edge of a volcano, their ordinary policy of delay and hesitation was shown by the Turkish diplomats, and the treaty of peace was not concluded and signed until the 3rd of March. The Russians had used their controlling position with effect, and the treaty largely put an end to Turkish dominion in Europe.

The news of the signing was received with cheers of enthusiasm by the Russian army, drawn up on the shores of the inland sea, the Preobrajensky, the famous regiment of Peter the Great, holding the post of honor. Scarce a rifle-shot distant, crowding in groups the crests of the neighboring hills, and deeply interested spectators of the scene, appeared numbers of their late opponents. The news received, the cheering battalions wheeled into column, and past the grand duke went the army in rapid review, the march still continuing after darkness had descended on the scene.

And thus ended the war, with the Russians within sight of the walls of that city which for so many centuries they had longed and struggled to possess. Only for the threatening aspect of the powers of Europe the Ottoman empire would have ended then and there, and the Turk, "encamped in Europe," would have ended forever his rule over Christian realms.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE NIHILISTS AND THEIR WORK

In 1861 Alexander II., Emperor of Russia, signed a proclamation for the emancipation of the Russian serfs, giving freedom by a stroke of the pen to over fifty millions of human beings. In 1881, twenty years afterwards, when, as there is some reason to believe, he was about to grant a constitution and summon a parliament for the political emancipation of the Russian people, he fell victim to a band of revolutionists, and the thought of granting liberty to his people perished with him.

This assassination was the work of the secret society known as the Nihilists. To say that their association was secret is equivalent to saying that we know nothing of their purposes other than their name and their deeds indicate. Nihilism signifies nothingness. It comes from the same root as annihilate, and annihilation of despots appears to have been the Nihilist theory of obtaining political rights. This society reached its culmination in the reign of Alexander II., and, despite the fact that he proved himself one of the mildest and most public-spirited of the czars, he was chosen as the victim of the theory of obtaining political regeneration by terror.

Threats preceded deeds. The final years of the emperor's life were made wretched through fear and anxiety. His ministers were killed by the revolutionists. Some of the guards placed about his person became victims of the secret band. Letters bordered with black and threatening the emperor's life were found among his papers or his clothes. An explosive powder placed in his handkerchief injured his sight for a time; a box of asthma pills sent him proved to contain a small but dangerous infernal machine. He grew haggard through this constant peril; his hair whitened, his form shrank, his nerves were unstrung.

In February, 1879, Prince Krapotkin, governor-general of Kharkoff, was killed by a pistol-shot fired into his carriage window. In April a Nihilist fired five pistol-shots at the czar. In June the Nihilists resolved to use dynamite with the purpose of destroying the governors-general of several provinces and the czar and heir-apparent. Among their victims was the chief of police, while two of his successors barely escaped death.

The first attempt to kill the czar by dynamite took the form of excavating mines under three rail-roads on one of which he was expected to travel. Of these mines only one was exploded. A house on the Moscow railroad, not far from that city, was purchased by the conspirators, and an underground passage excavated from its cellar to the roadway. Here auger-holes were bored upward in which were inserted iron pipes communicating with dynamite stored below. On the day when the emperor was expected to pass, a woman Nihilist named Sophia Perovskya stood within view of the track, with instructions to wave her handkerchief to the conspirators in the house at the proper moment. The pilot train which always preceded the imperial train was allowed to pass. The other train drew up to take water, and was wrecked by the explosion of the mine. Fortunately for the emperor, he was in the pilot train and out of danger.

Some of the participants in this affair were arrested, but their chief, a German named Hartmann, escaped. Despite the utmost efforts of the police, he made his way safely out of Russia, aided by Nihilists at every step, sometimes travelling on foot, at other times in peasants' carts, finally crossing the frontier and reaching the nest of conspirators at Geneva. Here he is supposed to have taken part with others in devising a new and what proved a fatal plot. Meanwhile a fresh attempt was made on the life of the czar.

On February 5, 1880, Alexander II. was to entertain at dinner in the Winter Palace a royal visitor, Prince Alexander of Hesse. Fortunately, the czar was detained for a short time, and the hour fixed for the dinner had passed when the party

proceeded along the corridor to the dining-hall. The brief delay probably saved their lives, for at that moment a tremendous explosion took place, wrecking the dining-hall and completely demolishing the guard-room, which was filled with dead and dying victims, sixty-seven in all. It proved that a Nihilist had obtained employment among some carpenters engaged in repairs within the palace, and had succeeded in storing dynamite in a tool-chest in his room. He escaped, and was never seen in St. Petersburg again. Two days later the corpse of a murdered policeman was found on the frozen surface of the Neva, a paper pinned to his breast threatening with death every governor-general except Melikoff, the successor of the murdered Krapotkin.

Their failures had proved so nearly successes that the Nihilists were rather encouraged than depressed. New plans followed the failure of old ones. It was proposed to poison the emperor and his son, the murder to be followed by a revolt of the disaffected in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the seizure of the palaces, and the establishment of a constitutional government. This plan, however, was given up as not likely to have the "great moral effect" which the Nihilists hoped to produce.

A Nihilist student in St. Petersburg had sent to the Paris committee of the society a recipe for a formidable explosive of his invention. A quantity of this dangerous substance was manufactured in France and secretly conveyed to St. Petersburg, where bombs to contain it had been prepared. The plans of the conspirators were now very carefully laid. They did not propose to fail again, if care could insure success. A cheese-monger's shop was opened on a street leading to the palace, under which a mine was laid to the centre of the carriage-way, it being proposed to kill the czar when out driving. If his carriage should take another route and follow the street leading from the Catharine Canal, it was arranged to wreck it with bombs flung by hand. The death of the czar was the sole thing in view. The conspirators seemed willing freely to sacrifice their own lives to that object. As regards the mine, it was so heavily charged with

dynamite that its explosion would have wrecked a great part of the Anitchkoff Palace while killing the czar.



THE ARREST OF A NIHILIST

How the explosive material was conveyed from Paris to Russia is a mystery which was never successfully traced by the police. The utmost care was taken at the frontiers to prevent the entrance of any suspicious substance. For a year or two even the tea that came on the backs of camels from China was carefully searched, while all travellers were closely examined, and all

articles coming from Western Europe were almost pulled to pieces in the minuteness of the scrutiny. The explosive is said to have looked like golden syrup, and to have been sweet to the taste, though acrid in its after-effects. A drop or two let fall on a hot stove flashed up in a brilliant sheet of flame, though without smell or noise.

Among the conspirators, one of the most useful was Sophia Perovskya, the woman already named. She was young, of noble family, handsome, educated, and fascinating in manner. Her beauty and high connections gave her opportunities which none of her fellow-conspirators enjoyed, and by her influence over men of rank and position she was enabled to learn many of the secrets of the court and to become familiar with all the precautions taken by the police to insure the safety of the czar. There was another woman in the plot, a Jewish girl named Besse Helfman. Eight men constituted the remainder of the party.

The fatal day came in March, 1881, On the morning of the 12th Melikoff, minister of the interior, told the czar that a man connected with the railroad explosion had just been arrested, on whose person were found papers indicating a new plot. He earnestly entreated Alexander to avoid exposing himself. On the next morning the czar went early to mass, and subsequently accompanied his brother, the Grand Duke Michael, to inspect his body-guard. Sophia Perovskya had been apprised of these intended movements, and informed the chief conspirators, who at once determined that the deed should be done that day. The lover of Hesse Helfman had been arrested and had at once shot himself. Papers of an incriminating character had been found in her house, and it was feared that further delay might frustrate the plot, so that the purpose of waiting until the czar and his son might be slain together was abandoned. It was not known which street the czar would take. If he took the one, the mine was to be exploded; if the other, the bombs were to be thrown.

Two men, Resikoff and Elnikoff, the latter a young man completely under Sophia's influence, were to throw the bombs.

She took a position from which she might signal the approach of the carriage. As it proved, the Catharine Canal route was taken. The carriage approached. Everything wore its usual aspect. There was nothing to excite suspicion. Suddenly a dark object was hurled from the sidewalk through the air and a tremendous report was heard. Resikoff had flung his bomb. A baker's boy and the Cossack footman of the czar were instantly killed, but the intended victim was unhurt and the horses were only slightly wounded. The coachman, who had escaped injury, wished to drive onward at speed out of the quickly gathering crowd, but Alexander, who had seen his footman fall, insisted on getting out of the carriage to assist him. It was a fatal resolve. As his feet touched the ground, Elnikoff flung his bomb. It exploded at the feet of the czar with such force as to throw men many yards distant to the ground, but proved fatal to only two, Elnikoff, who was instantly killed, and Alexander, who was mortally wounded, his lower limbs and the lower part of his body being frightfully shattered. He survived for a few hours in dreadful pain.

Terrible as was the crime, it was worse than useless. The proposed rising did not take place. A new czar immediately succeeded the dead one. The hoped-for constitution perished with him upon whom it depended. The Nihilists, instead of gaining liberal institutions, had set back the clock of reform for a generation, and perhaps much longer. Of the conspirators, one of the men was killed, one shot himself, and two escaped; the other four were executed. Of the women, Sophia was executed. She knew too much, and those who had betrayed to her the secrets of the court, fearing that she might implicate them, privately urged the new czar to sign her death-warrant. She held her peace, and died without a word.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE ADVANCE OF RUSSIA IN ASIA

The Emperor of Russia, lord of his people, absolute autocrat over some one hundred and twenty-five millions of the human race, to-day stands master not only of half the soil of Europe but of more than a third of the far greater continent of Asia. To gain some definite idea of the total extent of this vast empire it may suffice to say that it is considerably more than double the size of Europe, and nearly as large as the whole of North America. The tales already given will serve to show how the European empire of Russia gradually spread outward from its early home in the city and state of Novgorod until it covered half the continent. How Russia made its way into Asia has been described in part in the story of the conquest of Siberia. The remainder needs to be told.

It is now more than three hundred years since the Cossack robber Yermak invaded Siberia, and more than two centuries since that vast section of Northern Asia was added to the Russian empire. The great river Amur, flowing far through Eastern Siberia to the Pacific, was discovered in 1643 by a party of Cossack hunters, who launched their boats on this magnificent stream and sailed down it to the sea. It was Chinese soil through which it ran, its waters flowing through the province of Manchuria, the native land of the emperors of China.

But to this the Russian pioneers paid little heed. They invaded Chinese soil, built forts on the Amur, and for forty years war went on. In the end they were driven out, and China came to her own again.

Thus matters stood until the year 1854. Six years before, an officer with four Cossacks had been sent down the river to spy out the land. They never returned, and not a word could be had from China as to their fate. In the year named the Russians

explored the river in force. China protested, but did not act, and the whole vast territory north of the stream was proclaimed as Russian soil. Forts were built to make good the claim, and China helplessly yielded to the gigantic steal. Since then Russia has laid hands on an extensive slice of Chinese territory which lies on the Pacific coast far to the south of the Amur, and has forcibly taken possession of the Japanese island of Saghalien. Her avaricious eyes are fixed on the kingdom of Corea, and the whole of Manchuria may yet become Russian soil.



DOWAGER CZARINA OF RUSSIA

Siberia is by no means the inhospitable land of ice which the name suggests to our minds. That designation applies well to

its northern half, but not to the Siberia of the south. Here are vast fertile plains, prolific in grain, which need only the coming railroad facilities to make this region the granary of the Russian empire. The great rivers and the numerous lakes of the country abound in valuable fish; large forests of useful timber are everywhere found; fur-bearing animals yield a rich harvest in the icy regions of the north; the mineral wealth is immense, including iron, gold, silver, platinum, copper, and lead; precious stones are widely found, among them the diamond, emerald, topaz, and amethyst; and of ornamental stones may be named malachite, jasper, and porphyry, from which magnificent vases, tables, and other articles of ornament are made. The region on the Amur and its tributaries is particularly valuable and rich, and a great population is destined in the future to find an abiding-place in this vast domain.

South of Siberia lies another immense extent of territory, stretching across the continent, and comprising the great upland plain known as the steppes. On this broad expanse rain rarely falls, and its surface is half a desert, unfit for agriculture, but yielding pasturage to vast herds of cattle, horses, and sheep, the property of wandering tribes. Here is the great home of the nomad, and from these broad plains conquering hordes have poured again and again over the civilized world. From here came the Huns, who devastated Europe in Roman days; the Turks, who later overthrew the Eastern Empire; and the Mongols, who, led by Genghis and Tamerlane, committed frightful ravages in Asia and for centuries lorded it over Russia.

To-day the greater part of this vast territory belongs to China. But westward from Chinese Mongolia extends a broad region of the steppes, bordering upon Europe on the west, and traversed by numerous wandering tribes known by the name of the Kirghis hordes. For many years Russia, the great annexer, has been quietly extending her power over the domain of the hordes, until her rule has become supreme in the land of the Kirghis, which in all maps of Europe is now given as part of Siberia.

One by one military posts have been established in this semi-desert realm, the wandering tribes being at first cajoled and in the end defied. The glove of silk has been at first extended to the tribes, but within it the hand of iron has always held fast its grasp. The simple-minded chiefs have easily been brought over to the Russian schemes. Some of them have been won by money and soft words; others by some mark of distinction, such as a medal, a handsome sabre, a cocked bat or a gold-laced coat. Rather than give these up some of them would have sold half the steppes. They have signed papers of which they did not understand a word, and given away rights of whose value they were utterly ignorant.

Thus insidiously has the power of the emperor made its way into the steppes, fort after fort being built, those in the rear being abandoned as the country became subdued and new forts arose in the south. Cities have risen around some of these forts, of which may be mentioned Kopal and Vernoe, which to-day have thousands of inhabitants.

"Russia is thus surrounding the Kirgheez hordes with civilization," says the traveller Atkinson, "which will ultimately bring about a moral revolution in this country. Agriculture and other branches of industry will be introduced by the Russian peasantry, than whom no man can better adapt himself to circumstances."

Michie, another traveller, gives in brief the general method of the Russian advance.. It will be seen to be similar to that by which the Indian lands of the western United States were gained. "The Cossacks at Russian stations make raids on their own account on the Kirgheez, and subject them to rough treatment. An outbreak occurs which it requires a military force to subdue. An expedition for this purpose is sent every year to the Kirgheez steppes. The Russian outposts are pushed farther and farther south, more disturbances occur, and so the front is year by year extended, on pretence of keeping peace. This has been the system pursued by the Russian government in all its aggressions in Asia."

But this does not tell the whole story of the Russian advance in Asia. South of the Kirghis steppes lies another great and important territory, known as Central Asia, or Turkestan. Much of this region is absolute desert, wide expanses of sand, waterless and lifeless, on which to halt is to court death. Only swift-moving troops of horsemen, or caravans carrying their own supplies, dare venture upon these arid plains. But within this realm of sand lie a number of oases whose soil is well watered and of the highest fertility. Two mighty rivers traverse these lands, the Amu-Daria—once known as the Oxus—and the Syr-Daria—formerly the Jaxartes,—both of which flow into the Sea of Aral. It is to the waters of these streams that the fertility of the oases is due, they being diverted from their course to irrigate the land.

Three of the oases are of large size. Of these Shiva has the Caspian Sea as its western boundary, Bokhara lies more to the east, while northeast of the latter extends Khokand. The deserts surrounding these oases have long been the lurking-places of the Turkoman nomads, a race of wild and warlike horsemen, to whom plunder is as the breath of life, and who for centuries kept Persia in alarm, carrying off hosts of captives to be sold as slaves.

The religion of Arabia long since made its way into this land, whose people are fanatical Mohammedans. Its leading cities, Khiva, Bokhara, and Samarcand, have for many centuries been centres of bigotry. For ages Turkestan remained a land of mystery. No European was sure for a moment of life if he ventured to cross its borders. Vambéry, the traveller, penetrated it disguised as a dervish, after years of study of the language and habits of the Mohammedans, yet he barely escaped with life. It is pleasant to be able to say that this state of affairs has ceased. Russia has curbed the violence of the fanatics and the nomads, and the once silent and mysterious land is now traversed by the iron horse.

The first step of Russian invasion in this quarter was made in 1602. In that year a Russian force captured the city of

Khiva, but was not able to hold its prize. In 1703, during the reign of Peter the Great, the Khan of Khiva placed his dominions under Russian rule, and during the century Khiva continued friendly, but after the opening of the nineteenth century it became bitterly hostile.

Meanwhile Russia was making its way towards the Caspian and Aral seas. In 1835 a fort was built on the eastern shore of the Caspian and several armed steamers were placed on its waters. Four years later war broke out with Khiva, and the khan was forced to give up some Russian prisoners he had seized. In 1847 a fort was built on the Sea of Aral, at the mouth of the Syr-Daria, whose waters formed the only safe avenue to the desert-girdled khanate of Khokand. Steamers were brought in sections from Sweden, being carried with great labor across the desert to the inland sea, on whose banks they were put together and launched. Armed with cannon, they quickly made their appearance on the navigable waters of the Syr.

The Amu-Daria is not navigable, so that the Syr at that time formed the only ready channel of approach to Khokand, and from this to the other khanates, none of which could be otherwise reached without a long and dangerous desert march. Russia thus, by planting herself at the mouth of the Syr, had gained the most available position from which to begin a career of conquest in Central Asia.

War necessarily followed these steps of invasion. In 1853 the Russians besieged and captured the fort of Ak Mechet, on the Syr, thought by its holders to be impregnable. Up the river, bordered on each side by a narrow band of vegetation from which a desert spread away, the Russians gradually advanced, finally planting a military post within thirty-two miles of Tashkend, the military key of Central Asia.

Such was the state of affairs in 1862, when, war arose between the khanates themselves, and the Emir of Bokhara invaded and conquered Khokand. Russia looked on, awaiting its opportunity. It came at length in an appeal from the merchants of

Tashkend for protection. The protection came in true Russian style, a Cossack force marching into and occupying the town, which has since then remained in Russian hands. The movement of invasion went on until a large portion of Khokand was seized.

This audacious procedure of the Muscovites, as the Emir of Bokhara regarded it, roused that ruler to a high pitch of fury and fanaticism. He imprisoned Colonel Struve, an eminent Russian astronomer who was on a mission to his capital, and declared a holy war against the invading infidels.

The emir had little fear of his foes, having what he considered two impassable lines of defence. Of these the first was the desert, which enclosed his land as within a wall of sand. The second, and in his view the more impregnable, was the large number of saints that lay buried in Bokharan soil, before whose graves the infidel host would surely be stayed.

He probably soon lost faith in the saints, for the Russians quickly drove his troops out of Khokand and then invaded Bokhara itself, defeating his troops near the venerable and famous city of Samarcand, of which they immediately afterwards took possession. These infidel assaults soon brought the holy war to an end, the emir being forced to cede Samarcand and three other places to Russia, the four being so chosen as to give the invaders full military control of the country.

This disaster, which fell upon Bokhara in 1868, was repeated in Khiva in 1873. Bokharan troops aided the Russians, and Bokhara was rewarded with a generous slice of the conquered territory. Khiva was overthrown as quickly as the other oases had been, and the whole of Central Asia became Russian soil. It is true that a shadow of the old government is maintained, the khans of Bokhara and Khiva still occupying their thrones. But they are mere puppets to move as the Czar of Russia pulls the strings. As for Khokand, it has disappeared from the map of Asia, being replaced by the Russian province of Ferghana.

We have thus in few words told a long and vital story, that of the steps by which Russia gained its strong foothold in Asia, and extended its boundaries from the Ural Mountains and Caspian Sea to the Pacific Ocean and the boundaries of China, Persia, and India, all of which may yet become part of the vast Russian empire, if what some consider the secret purpose of Russia be carried out.

Asia has been won by the sword; it is being held by other influences. Schools have been founded among the Kirghis, and a newspaper is printed in their language. Their plundering habits have been suppressed, agriculture is encouraged, and luxuries are being introduced into the steppes, with the result of changing the ideas and habits of the nomads. Thriving Cossack colonies have grown up on the plains, and the wandering barbarians behold with wonder the ways and means of civilization in their midst.

The same may be said of Turkestan, in which violence has been suppressed and industry encouraged, while the Russian population, alike of the steppes and of the oases, is rapidly increasing. A railroad penetrates the formerly mysterious land, trains roll daily over its soil, carrying great numbers of Asiatic passengers, and an undreamed-of activity of commerce has taken the place of the old-time plundering raids of the half-savage Turkoman horsemen.

The Russian is thoroughly adapted to deal with the Asiatic. Half an Asiatic himself, in spite of his fair complexion, he knows how to bade the arts and overcome the prejudices of his new subjects. The Russian diplomatist has all the softness and suavity of his Asiatic congeners. He conforms to their customs and allows them to delay and prevaricate to their hearts' content. He is an adept in the art of bribery, has emissaries everywhere, and is much too deeply imbued with this Asiatic spirit for the bluntness of European methods. "You must beat about the bush with a Russian," we are told. "You must flatter them and humbug them. You must talk about everything but the

thing. If you want to buy a horse you must pretend you want to sell a cow, and so work gradually round to the point in view."

Thus the shrewd Russian has gained point after point from his Oriental neighbors, and has succeeded in annexing a vast territory while keeping on the friendliest of terms with his new subjects. He has respected their prejudices, left their religions untouched, dealt with them in their own ways, and is rapidly planting the Muscovite type of civilization where Asiatic barbarism had for untold ages prevailed.

No man can predict the final result of these movements. Asia has been in all ages the field of great invasions and of the sudden building up of immense empires. But the movements of the Muscovite conquerors have none of the torrent rush of those great invasions of the past. The Russian advances with extreme caution, takes no risks, and makes sure of his game before he shows his hand. He prepares the ground in front before taking a step forward, and all that he leaves in his rear falls into the strong folds of the imperial net. Gold and diplomacy are his weapons equally with the sword, and in the progress of his arms we seem to see Europe marching into Asia with a solid and unyielding front.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE RAILROAD IN TURKESTAN

On the 24th of January, 1881, Edward O'Donovan, a daring traveller who had journeyed far through the wastes and wilds of Turkestan, found himself on a mountain summit not far removed from the northern boundary of Persia, from which his startled eyes beheld a spectacle of fearful import. Below him the desert stretched in a broad level far away to the distant horizon. Near the foot of the range rose a great fortress, within which at that moment a frightful struggle was taking place. Bringing his field-glass to bear upon the scene, the traveller saw a host of terror-stricken fugitives streaming across the plain, and hot upon their steps a throng of merciless pursuers, who slaughtered them in multitudes as they fled. Even from where he stood the white face of the desert seemed changing to a crimson hue.

What the astounded traveller beheld was the death-struggle of the desert Turkomans, the hand of retribution smiting those savage brigands who for centuries had carried death and misery wherever they rode. These were the Tekke Turkomans, the tribes who haunted the Persian frontier, and whose annual raids swept hundreds of captives from that peaceful land to spend the remainder of their days in the most woeful form of slavery. For a month previous General Skobeleff, the most daring and merciless of the Russian leaders, had besieged them in their great fort of Geop Tepe, an earthwork nearly three miles in circuit, and containing within its ample walls a desert nation, more than forty thousand in all, men, women, and children.

On that day, fatal to the Turkoman power, Skobeleff had taken the fort by storm, dealing death wherever he moved, until not a man was left alive within its walls except some hundreds of fettered Persian slaves. Through its gateways a trembling multitude had fled, and upon these miserable fugitives the

Russian had let loose his soldiers horse, foot, and artillery, with the savage order to hunt them to the death and give no quarter.

Only too well was the brutal order obeyed. Not men alone, but women and children as well, fell victims to the sword, and only when night put an end to the pursuit did that terrible massacre cease. By that time eight thousand persons, of both sexes and all ages, lay stretched in death upon the plain. Within the fort thousands more had fallen, the women and children here being spared. Skobelev's report said that twenty thousand in all had been slain.

Such was the frightful scene which lay before O'Donovan's eyes when he reached the mountain top, on his way to the Russian camp, a spectacle of horrible carnage which only a man of the most savage instincts could have ordered. "Bloody Eyes" the Turkomans named Skobelev, and the title fairly indicated his ruthless lust for blood. It was his theory of war to strike hard when he struck at all, and to make each battle a lesson that would not soon be forgotten. The Turkoman nomads have been taught their lesson well. They have given no trouble since that day of slaughter and revenge.

Such was one of the weapons with which the Russians conquered the desert,—the sword. It was succeeded by another,—the iron rail. It is now some twenty years since the idea of a railroad from the Caspian Sea eastward was first advanced. In 1880 a narrow-gauge road was begun to aid Skobelev, but that daring and impetuous chief had made his march and finished his work before the rails had crept far on their way. Soon it was determined to change the narrow-gauge for a broad-gauge road, and General Annenkoff, a skilful engineer, was placed in charge in 1885, with orders to push it forward with all speed.

It was a new and bold project which the Russians had in view. Never before had a railroad been built across so bleak a plain, a treeless and waterless expanse, stretching for hundreds of miles in a dead level, over which the winds drove at will the

shifting sands, constantly threatening to bury any work which man ventured to lay upon the desert's broad breast. West of Bokhara and south of Khiva stretched the great desert of Kara-Kum, touching the Caspian Sea on the west, the Amu-Daria River on the east, the home of the wandering Turkomans, the born foes of the settled races, but from whom all thought of disputing the Russian rule had for the time been driven by Skobelev's death-dealing blade.

The total length of the road thus ordered to be built—extending from the shores of the Caspian Sea, the outpost of European Russia, to the far-away city of Samarcand, the ancient capital of Timur the Tartar, and the very stronghold of Asiatic barbarism—was little short of a thousand miles, of which several hundred were bleak and barren desert. Two immense steppes, waterless, and scorching hot in summer, lay on the route, while it traversed the oases of Kizil-Arvat, Merv, Charjui, and Bokhara. In the northern section of the last lay the famous city of Samarcand, the eastern terminus of the road. The western terminus was at Usun-ada, on the Caspian, and opposite the petroleum region of Baku, perhaps the richest oil-yielding district in the world. General Annenkoff had special difficulties to overcome in the building of this road, of a kind never met with by railroad engineers before. Chief among these were the lack of water and the instability of the roadway, the wind at times manifesting an awkward disposition to blow out the foundation from under the ties, at other times to bury the whole road under acres of flying sand.

These difficulties were got rid of in various ways. Fresh water, made by boiling the salt water of the Caspian and condensing the steam, was carried in vats or tuns over the road to the working parties. At a later date water was conveyed in pipes from the mountains to fill cisterns at the stations, whence it was carried in canals or underground conduits along the line, every well and spring on the route being utilized.

To overcome the shifting of the sand, near the Caspian it was thoroughly soaked with salt water, and at other places was

covered with a layer of clay. But there are long distances where no such means could be employed, at least two hundred miles of utter wilderness, where the surface resembles a billowy sea, the sand being raised in loose hillocks and swept from the troughs between, flying in such clouds before every wind that an incessant battle with nature is necessary to keep the road from burial. To prevent this, tamarisk, wild oats, and desert shrubs are planted along the line, and in particular that strange plant of the wilderness, the *saxaoul*, whose branches are scraggly and scant, but whose sturdy roots sink deep into the sand, seeking moisture in the depths. Fascines of the branches of this plant were laid along the track and covered with sand, and in places palisades were built, of which only the tops are now visible.

Yet despite all these efforts the sands creep insidiously on, and in certain localities workmen have to be kept employed, shovelling it back as it comes, and fighting without cessation against the forces of the desert and the winds. In the building of the road, and in this battling with the sands, Turkomans have been largely employed, having given up brigandage for honest labor, in which they have proved the most efficient of the various workmen engaged upon the road.

Aside from the peculiar difficulties above outlined, the Transcaspian Railway was remarkably favored by nature. For nearly the whole distance the country is as flat as a billiard-table, and the road so straight that at times it runs for twenty or thirty miles without the shadow of a curve. In the entire distance there is not a tunnel, and only some small cuttings have been made through hills of sand. Of bridges, other than mere culverts, there are but three in the whole length of the road, the only large one being that over the Amu-Daria. This is a hastily built, rickety affair of timber, put up only as a make-shift, and at the mercy of the stream if a serious rise should take place.

The whole road, indeed, was hastily made, with a single track, the rails simply spiked down, and the work done at the rate of from a mile to a mile and a half a day. Before the Bokharans fairly realized what was afoot, the iron horse was

careering over their level plains, and the shrill scream of the locomotive whistle was startling the saints in their graves.

Over such a road no great speed can be attained. Thirty miles an hour is the maximum, and from ten to twenty miles the average speed, while the stops at stations are exasperatingly long to travellers from the impatient West. To the Asiatics they are of no concern, time being with them not worth a moment's thought.

In the operation of this road petroleum waste is used as fuel, the refining works at Baku yielding an inexhaustible supply. The carriages are of mixed classes, some being two stories in height, each story of different class. There are very few first-class carriages on the road. As for the stations, some of them are miles from the road, that of Bokhara being ten miles away. This method was adopted to avoid exciting the prejudices of the Asiatics, who at first were not in favor of the road, regarding it as a device of Shaitan, the spirit of evil. Yet the "fire-cart," as they call it, is proving very convenient, and they have no objection to let this fiery Satan haul their grain and cotton to market and carry themselves across the waterless plains. The camel is being thrown out of business by this shrill-voiced prince of evil. The road is being extended over the oases, and will in the end bring all Turkestan under its control.

It almost takes away one's breath to think of railway stations and time-tables in connection with the old-time abiding-place of the terrible Tartar, and of the iron horse careering across the empire of barbarism, rushing into the metropolis of superstition, and waking with the scream of the steam whistle the silent centuries of the Orient. Nothing of greater promise than this planting of the railroad in Central Asia has been performed of recent years. The soul of the desert is to be civilized despite himself, and to be taught the arts and ideas of the West by the irresistible logic of steel and steam.

But this enterprise is a minor one compared with that which Russia has recently completed, that of a railway extending across the whole width of Siberia, being, with its branches, more

than five thousand miles long—much the longest railway in the world. Work on this was begun in 1890, and it is now completed to Vladivostok, the chief Russian port on the Pacific, a traveller being able to ride from St. Petersburg to the shores of the Pacific Ocean without change of cars. A branch of this road runs southward through Manchuria to Port Arthur, but as a result of the war with Japan this has been transferred to China, Manchuria being wrested from the controlling grasp of Russia. It is a single-track road, but it is proposed to double-track it throughout its entire length, thus greatly increasing its availability as a channel of transport alike in war and peace.

All this is of the deepest significance. The railroad in Asia has come to stay; and with its coming the barbarism of the past is nearing its end. The sleeping giant of Orientalism is stirring uneasily in its bed, its drowsy senses stirred by the shrill alarum of the locomotive whistle. New ideas and new habits must follow in the track of the iron horse. The West is forcing itself into the East, with all its restless activity. In the time to come this whole broad continent is destined to be covered with railroads as with a vast spider-web; new industries will be established, machinery introduced, and the great region of the steppes, famous in the past only as the starting-point of conquering migrations, must in the end become an active centre of industry, the home of peace and prosperity, a new-found abiding-place of civilization and human progress.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AN ESCAPE FROM THE MINES OF SIBERIA

The name Siberia calls up to our minds the vision of a stupendous prison, a vast open penitentiary larger than the whole United States, a continental place of captivity which for three centuries past has been the seat of more wretchedness and misery than any other land inhabited by the human race. To that far, frozen land a stream of the best and worst of the people of Russia has steadily flowed, including prisoners of state, religious dissenters, rebels, Polish patriots, convicts, vagabonds, and all others who in any way gave offence to the authorities or stood in the way of persons in power.

Not freedom of action alone, but even freedom of thought, is a crime in Russia. It is a land of innumerable spies, of secret arrest and rapid condemnation, in which the captive may find himself on the road to Siberia without knowing with what crime he is charged, while his friends, even his wife and family, may remain in ignorance of his fate. Every year a convoy of some twenty thousand wretched prisoners is sent off to that dismal land, including the ignorant and the educated, the debased and the refined, men and women, young and old, the horror of exile being added to indescribably by this mingling of delicate and refined men and women with the rudest and most brutal of the convict class, all under the charge of mounted Cossacks, well armed, and bearing long whips as their most effective arguments of control.

It may be said here that the misery of this long journey on foot has been somewhat mitigated since the introduction of railroads and steamboats, and will very likely be done away with when the Transsiberian Railway is finished; but for centuries the horrors of the convict train have piteously appealed to the charity of the world, while the sufferings and brutalities which

the exiles have had to endure stand almost without parallel in the story of convict life. The exiles are divided into two classes, those who lose all and those who lose part of their rights. Of a convict of the former class neither the word nor the bond has any value: his wife is released from all duty to him, he cannot possess any property or hold any office. In prison he wears convict clothes, has his head half shaved, and may be cruelly flogged at the will of the officials, or murdered almost with impunity. Those deprived of partial rights are usually sent to Western Siberia; those deprived of total rights are sent to Eastern Siberia, where their life, as workers in the mines, is so miserable and monotonous that death is far more of a relief than something to be feared.



GROUPS OF SIBERIANS

Many of the exiles escape,—some from the districts where they live free, with privilege of getting a living in any manner available, others from the prisons or mines. The mere feat of running away is in many cases not difficult, but to get out of the country is a very different matter. The officers do not make any serious efforts to prevent escapes, and can be easily bribed to allow them, since they are enabled then to turn in the name of the prisoner as still on hand and charge the government

for his support. In the gold-mines the convicts work in gangs, and here one will lie in a ditch and be covered with rubbish by his comrades. When his absence is discovered he is not to be found, and at nightfall he slips from the trench and makes for the forest.

To spend the summer in the woods is the joy of many convicts. They have no hope of getting out of the country, which is of such vast extent that winter is sure to descend upon them before they can approach the border, but the freedom of life in the woods has for them an undefinable charm. Then as the frigid season approaches they permit themselves to be caught, and go back to their labor or confinement with hearts lightened by the enjoyment of their vagrant summer wanderings. There is in some cases another advantage to be gained. A twenty years' convict who has escaped and lets himself be caught again may give a false name, and avoid all incriminating answers through a convenient failure of memory. If not detected, he may in this way get off with a five years' sentence as a vagrant. But if detected his last lot is worse than his first, since the time he has already served goes for nothing.

There is another peril to which escaping prisoners are exposed. The native tribes are apt to look upon them as game and shoot them down at sight.

It is said that they receive three roubles for each convict they bring to the police, dead or alive. "If you shoot a squirrel," they say, "you get only his skin; but if you shoot a varnak [convict] you get his skin and his clothing too."

Atkinson, the Siberian traveller, tells a remarkable story of an escape of prisoners, which may be given in illustration of the above remarks. One night in September, 1850, the people of Barnaoul, a town in Western Siberia, were roused from their slumbers by the clatter of a party of mounted Cossacks galloping up the quiet street. The story they brought was an alarming one. Siberia had been invaded by three thousand Tartars of the desert, who were marching towards the town. Nearly all the gold from

the Siberian gold-mines lay in Barnaoul, waiting to be smelted into bars and sent to St. Petersburg. There was much silver also, with abundance of other valuable government stores. All this would form a rich booty for an army of nomad plunderers, could they obtain it, and the news filled the town with excitement and alarm.

As the night passed and the day came on, other Cossacks arrived with still more alarming news. The three thousand had grown to seven thousand, many of them armed with rifles, who were burning the Kalmuck villages as they advanced, and murdering every man, woman, and child who fell into their hands. Some thought that the wild hordes of Asia were breaking loose again, as in the time of Genghis Khan, and the terror of many of the people grew intense.

By noon the enemy had increased to ten thousand, and the people everywhere were flying before their advance. Hasty steps were taken for defence and for the safety of the gold and silver, while orders were despatched in all directions to gather a force to meet them on their way. But as the days passed on the alarm began to subside. The number of the invaders declined almost as rapidly as it had grown. They were not advancing upon the town. No army was needed to oppose them, and Cossacks were sent to stop the march of the troops. In the course of two days more the truth was sifted from the mass of wild rumors and reports. The ten thousand invaders dwindled to forty Circassian prisoners who had escaped from the gold-mines on the Birioussa.

These fugitives had not a thought of invading the Russian dominions. They were prisoners of war who, with heartless cruelty, had been condemned to the mines of Siberia for the crime of a patriotic effort to save their country, and their sole purpose was to return to their far-distant homes.

By the aid of small quantities of gold, which they had managed to hide from their guards, they succeeded in purchasing a sufficient supply of rifles and ammunition from the

neighboring tribesmen, which they hid in a mountain cavern about seven miles away. There was no fear of the Tartars betraying them, as they had received for the arms ten times their value, and would have been severely punished if found with gold in their possession.

On a Saturday afternoon near the end of July, 1850, after completing the day's labors, the Circassians left the mine in small parties, going in different directions. This excited no suspicion, as they were free to hunt or otherwise amuse themselves after their work. They gradually came together in a mountain ravine about six miles south of the mines. Not far from this locality a stud of spare horses were kept at pasture, and hither some of the fugitives made their way, reaching the spot just as the animals were being driven into the enclosure for the night. The three horse-keepers suddenly found themselves covered with rifles and forced to yield themselves prisoners, while their captors began to select the best horses from the herd.

The Circassians deemed it necessary to take the herdsmen with them to prevent them from giving the alarm. Two of these also were skilful bunters and well acquainted with the surrounding mountain regions, and were likely to prove useful as guides. In all fifty-five horses were chosen, out of the three or four hundred in the herd. The remainder were turned out of the enclosure and driven into the forest, as if they had broken loose and their keepers were absent in search of them. This done, the captors sought their friends in the glen, by whom they were received with cheers, and before midnight, the moon having risen, the fugitives began their long and dangerous journey.

Sunrise found them on a high summit, which commanded a view of the gold-mine they had left, marked by the curling smoke which rose from fires kept constantly alive to drive away the mosquitoes, the pests of the region. Taking a last look at their place of exile, they moved on into a grassy valley, where they breakfasted and fed their horses. On they went, keeping a sharp watch upon their guides, day by day, until the evening of the fourth day found them past the crest of the range

and descending into a narrow valley, where they decided to spend the night.

Thus far all had gone well. They were now beyond the Russian frontier and in Chinese territory, and as their guides knew the country no farther, they were set free and their rifles restored to them. Venison had been obtained plentifully on the march, and fugitives and captives alike passed the evening in feasting and enjoyment. With daybreak the Siberians left to return to the mine and the Circassians resumed their route.

From this time onward difficulties confronted them. They were in a region of mountains, precipices, ravines, and torrents. One dangerous river they swam, but, instead of keeping on due south, the difficulties of the way induced them to change their course to the west, alarmed, probably, by the vast snowy peaks of the Tangnou Mountains in the distance, though if they had passed these all danger from Siberia would have been at an end. As it was, after more than three weeks of wandering, the nature of the country forced them towards the northwest, until they came upon the eastern shore of the Altin Kool Lake.

Here was their final chance. Had they followed the lake southerly they might still have reached a place of safety. But ill fortune brought them upon it at a point where it seemed easiest to round it on the north, and they passed on, hoping soon to reach its western shores. But the Bëa, the impassable torrent that flows from the lake, forced them again many miles northward in search of a ford, and into a locality from which their chance of escape was greatly reduced.

More than two months had passed since they left the mines, and the poor wanderers were still in the vast Siberian prison, from which, if they had known the country, they might now have been far away. The region they had reached was thinly inhabited by Kalmuck Tartars, and they finally entered a village of this people, with whose inhabitants they unluckily got into a broil, ending in a battle, in which several Kalmucks were killed and the village burned.

To this event was due the terrifying news that reached Barnaoul, the alarm being carried to a Cossack fort whose commandant was drunk at the time and sent out a series of exaggerated reports. As for the fugitives, they had in effect signed their death-warrant by their conflict with the Kalmucks. The news spread from tribe to tribe, and when the real number of the fugitives was learned the tribesmen entered savagely into pursuit, determined to obtain revenge for their slain kinsmen. The Circassians were wandering in an unknown country. The Kalmucks knew every inch of the ground. Scouts followed the fugitives, and after them came well-mounted hunters, who rapidly closed upon the trail, being on the evening of the third day but three miles away.

The Circassians had crossed the Bëa and turned to the south, but here they found themselves in an almost impassable group of snow-clad mountains. On they pushed, deeper and deeper into the chain, still closely pursued, the Kalmucks so managing the pursuit as to drive them into a pathless region of the hills. This accomplished, they came on leisurely, knowing that they had their prey safe.

At length the hungry and weary warriors were driven into a mountain pass, where the pursuers, who had hitherto saved their bullets, began a savage attack, rifle-balls dropping fast into the glen. The fugitives sought shelter behind some fallen rocks, and returned the fire with effect. But they were at a serious disadvantage, the hunters, who far out-numbered them, and knew every crag in the ravines, picking them off in safety from behind places of shelter. From point to point the Circassians fell back, defending their successive stations desperately, answering every call to surrender with shouts of defiance, and holding each spot until the fall of their comrades warned them that the place was no longer tenable.

Night fell during the struggle, and under its cover the remaining fifteen of the brave fugitives made their way on foot deeper into the mountains, abandoning their horses to the merciless foe. At day-break they resumed their march, scaling

the rocky heights in front. Here, scanning the country in search of their pursuers, not one of whom was to be seen, they turned to the west, a range of snow-clad peaks closing the way in front. A forest of cedars before them seemed to present their only chance of escape, and they hurried towards it, but when within two hundred yards of the wood a puff of white smoke rose from a thicket, and one of the fugitives fell. The hunters had ambushed them on this spot, and as they rushed for the shelter of some rocks near by five more fell before the bullets of their foes.

The fire was returned with some effect, and then a last desperate rush was made for the forest shelter. Only four of the poor fellows reached it, and of these some were wounded. The thick underwood now screened them from the volley that whistled after them, and they were soon safe from the effects of rifle-shots in the tangled forest depths.

Meanwhile the clouds had been gathering black and dense, and soon rain and sleet began to fall, accompanied by a fierce gale. Two small parties of Kalmucks were sent in pursuit, while the others began to prepare an encampment under the cedars. The storm rapidly grew into a hurricane, snow falling thick and whirling into eddies, while the pursuers were soon forced to return without having seen the small remnant of the gallant band. For three days the storm continued, and then was followed by a sharp frost. The winter had set in.

No further pursuit was attempted. It was not needed. Nothing more was ever seen of the four Circassians, nor any trace of them found. They undoubtedly found their last resting-place under the snows of that mountain storm.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE SEA FIGHT IN THE WATERS OF JAPAN

On the memorable Saturday of May 27, 1905, in far eastern waters in which the guns of war-ships had rarely thundered before, took place an event that opened eyes of the world as if a new planet had swept o its ken or a great comet had suddenly blazed out in the eastern skies. It was that of one of the most stupendous naval victories in history, won by a people who fifty years before had just begun to emerge from the dim twilight of mediaeval barbarism.

Japan, the Nemesis of the East, had won her maiden spurs on the field of warfare in her brief conflict with China in 1894, but that was looked upon as a fight between a young game-cock and a decrepit barn-yard fowl, and the Western world looked with a half-pitying indulgence upon the spectacle of the long-slumbering Orient serving its apprenticeship in modern war. Yet the rapid and complete triumph of the island empire over the leviathan of the Asiatic continent was much of a revelation of the latent power that dwelt in that newly-aroused archipelago, and when in 1903 Japan began to speak in tones of menace to a second leviathan, that of Eastern Europe and Northern Asia, the world's interest was deeply stirred again.

Would little Japan dare attack a European power and one so great and populous as Russia, with half Asia already in its clasp, with strong fortresses and fleets within striking distance, and with a continental railway over which it could pour thousands of armed battalions? The idea seemed preposterous, many looked upon the attitude of Japan as the madness of temerity, and when on February 6, 1904, the echo of the guns at Port Arthur was heard the world gave a gasp of astonishment and alarm.

Were there any among us then who believed it possible for little Japan to triumph over the colossus it had so daringly attacked? If any, they were very few. It is doubtful if there was a man in Russia itself who dreamed of anything but eventual victory, with probably the adding of the islands of Japan to its chaplet of orient pearls. True, the success of the attack on their fleet was a painful surprise, and when they saw their great ironclads locked up in Port Arthur harbor it was cause for annoyance. But if the fleet had been taken by surprise, the fortress was claimed to be impregnable, the army was powerful and accustomed to victory over its foes in Asia, and it was with an amused contempt of their half-barbarian foes and confidence in rapid and brilliant triumph that the Muscovite cohorts streamed across Asia with arms in hand and hope in heart.

We do not propose to tell here what followed. The world knows it. Men read with an interest they had rarely taken in foreign affairs of the rapid and stupendous successes of the little soldiers of Nippon, the indomitable valor of the troops, the striking skill of their leaders, the breadth and completeness of their tactics, the training and discipline of the men, the rare hygienic condition of the camps, their impetuosity in attack, their persistence in pursuit; in short, the sudden advent of an army with all the requisites of a victorious career, as pitted against the ill-handled myriads of Russia, not wanting in brute courage, but sadly lacking in efficient leadership and strategical skill in their commanders.

Back went the Russian hosts, mile by mile, league by league, steadily pressed northward by the unrelenting persistence of the island warriors; while on the Liao-tung peninsula the besieging forces crept on foot by foot, caring apparently nothing for wounds or death, caring only for the possession of the fortress which they had been sent to win.

We should like to record some victories for the Russians, but the annals of the war tell us of none. Out-generalled and driven back from their strong position on the Yalu River; decisively beaten in the great battle of Liao-yang; checked in

their offensive movement on the Shakhe River, with immense loss; and finally utterly defeated in the desperate two weeks' struggle around Mukden; the field warfare ended in the two great armies facing each other at Harbin, with months of manoeuvring before them.

Meanwhile the campaign in the peninsula had gone on with like desperate efforts and final success of the Japanese, Port Arthur surrendering to its irresistible besiegers on the opening day of 1905. With it fell the Russian fleet which had been cooped up in its harbor for nearly a year; defeated and driven back in its every attempt to escape; its flag-ship, the "Petrovsk," sunk by a mine on April 13, 1904, carrying down Admiral Makaroff and nearly all its crew; the remnant of the fleet being finally sunk or otherwise disabled to save them from capture on the surrender of Port Arthur to the besieging forces.

Such, in very brief epitome, were the leading features of the conflict on land and its earlier events on the sea. We must now return to the great naval battle spoken of above, which calls for detailed description alike from its being the closing struggle of the contest and from its extraordinary character as a phenomenal event in maritime war.

The loss of the naval strength of Russia in eastern waters led to a desperate effort to retrieve the disaster, by sending from the Baltic every war-ship that could be got ready, with the hope that a strong fleet on the open waters of the east would enable Russia to regain its prestige as a naval power and deal a deadly blow at its foe, by closing the waters upon the possession of which the islanders depended for the support of their armies in Manchuria.

This supplementary fleet, under Admiral Rojestvensky, set sail from the port of Libau on October 16, 1904, beginning its career inauspiciously by firing impulsively on some English fishing-boats on the 21st, with the impression that these were Japanese scouts. This hasty act threatened to embroil Russia

with another foe, the ally of Japan, but it passed off with no serious results.

Entering the Mediterranean and passing through the Suez Canal, the fine fleet under Rojestvensky, nearly sixty vessels strong, loitered on its way with wearisome deliberation, dallying for a protracted interval in the waters of the Indian Ocean and not passing Singapore on its journey north till April 12. It looked almost as if its commander feared the task before him, six months having now passed since it left the Baltic on its very deliberate cruise.

The second Russian squadron, under Admiral Nebogatoff, did not pass Singapore until May 5, it being the 13th before the two squadrons met and combined. On the 22nd they were seen in the waters of the Philippines heading northward. The news of this, flashed by cable from the far east to the far west, put Europe and America on the *qui vive*, in eager anticipation of startling events quickly to follow.

Meanwhile where was Admiral Togo and his fleet? For months he had been engaged in the work of bottling up the Russian squadron at Port Arthur. Since the fall of the latter place and the destruction of the war-ships in its harbor he had been lying in wait for the slow-coming Baltic fleet, doubtless making every preparation for the desperate struggle before him, but doing this in so silent and secret a method that the world outside knew next to nothing of what was going on. The astute authorities of Japan had no fancy for heralding their work to the world, and not a hint of the movements or whereabouts of the fleet reached men's ears.

As the days passed on and the Russian ships steamed still northward, the anxious curiosity as to the location of the Japanese fleet grew painfully intense. The expected intention to waylay Rojestvensky in the southern straits had not been realized, and as the Russians left the Philippines in their rear, the question, Where is Togo? grew more insistent still. With extraordinary skill he had lain long in ambush, not a whisper as

to the location of his fleet being permitted to make its way to the western world; and when Rojestvensky ventured into the yawning jaws of the Korean Strait he was in utter ignorance of the lurking-place of his grimly waiting foes.

Before Rojestvensky lay two routes to choose between, the more direct one to Vladivostok through the narrow Korean Strait, or the longer one eastward of the great island of Honshu. Which he would take was in doubt and in which Togo awaited him no one knew. The skilled admiral of Japan kept his counsel well, doubtless satisfied in his own mind that the Russians would follow the more direct route, and quietly but watchfully awaiting their approach.

It was on May 22, as we have said, that the Russian fleet appeared off the Philippines, the greatest naval force that the mighty Muscovite empire had ever sent to sea, the utmost it could muster after its terrible losses at Port Arthur. Five days afterwards, on the morning of Saturday, May 27, this proud array of men-of-war steamed into the open throat of the Straits of Korea, steering for victory and Vladivostok. On the morning of Monday, the 29th, a few battered fragments of this grand fleet were fleeing for life from their swift pursuers. The remainder lay, with their drowned crews, on the sea-bottom, or were being taken into the ports of victorious Japan. In those two days had been fought to a finish the greatest naval battle of recent times, and Japan had won the position of one of the leading naval powers of the world.

On that Saturday morning no dream of such a destiny troubled the souls of those in the Russian fleet. They were passing into the throat of the channel between Japan and Korea, but as yet no sign of a foeman had appeared, and it may be that numbers on board the fleet were disappointed, for doubtless the hope of battle and victory filled many ardent souls on the Russian ships. The sun rose on the new day and sent its level beams across the seas, on which as yet no hostile ship had appeared. The billowing waters spread broad and open before them and it began to look as if those who hoped for a fight

would be disappointed, those who desired a clear sea and an open passage would be gratified.

No sails were visible on the waters except those of small craft, which scudded hastily for shore on seeing the great array of war-ships on the horizon. Fishing-craft most of these, though doubtless among them were the scout-boats which the watchful Togo had on patrol with orders to signal the approach of the enemy's fleet. But as the day moved on the scene changed. A great ship loomed up, steering into the channel, then another and another, the vanguard of a battle-fleet, steaming straight southward. All doubt vanished. Togo had sprung from his ambush and the battle was at hand.

It was a rough sea; and the coming vessels dashed through heavy waves as they drove onward to the fray. From the flag-ship of the fleet of Japan streamed the admiral's signal, not unlike the famous signal of Nelson at Trafalgar, "The defense of our empire depends upon this action. You are expected to do your utmost."

Northward drove the Russians, drawn up in double column. The day moved on until noon was passed and the hour of two was reached. A few minutes later the first shots came from the foremost Russian ships. They fell short and the Japanese waited until they came nearer before replying. Then the roar of artillery began and from both sides came a hail of shot and shell, thundering on opposing hulls or rending the water into foam. From two o'clock on Saturday afternoon until two o'clock on Sunday morning that iron storm kept on with little intermission, the huge twelve-inch guns sending their monstrous shells hurtling through the air, the smaller guns raining projectiles on battle-ships and cruisers, until it seemed as if nothing that floated could live through that terrible storm.

Never in the history of naval warfare had so frightful a cannonade been seen. Its effect on the opposing fleets was very different. For months Togo had kept his gunners in training and their shell-fire was accurate and deadly, hundreds of their

projectiles hitting the mark and working dire havoc to the Russian ships and crews; while to judge from the little damage done, the return fire would seem to have been wild and at random. Either the work of training his gunners had been neglected by the Russian admiral, or they were demoralized by the projectiles from the rapid-fire guns of the Japanese, which swept their decks and mowed down the gunners at their posts.

This fierce and telling fire soon had its effect. Ninety minutes after it began, the Russian armored cruiser "Admiral Nakhimoff" went reeling to the bottom with the greater part of her crew of six hundred men. Next to succumb was the repair-ship "Kamchatka." Badly hurt early in the battle, her steering-gear was later disabled, then a shell put her engines out of service, and shortly after her bow rose in the air and her stern sank, and with a tremendous roar she followed the "Nakhimoff" to the depths.

Around the "Borodino," one of the largest of the Russian battle-ships, clustered five of the Japanese, pouring in their fire so fiercely that flames soon rose from her deck and the wounded monster seemed in sore distress. This was Rojestvensky's flag-ship, and the enemy made it one of their chief targets, sweeping its decks until the great ship became a veritable shambles. Admiral Rojestvensky, wounded and his ship slowly settling under him, was transferred in haste to a torpedo-boat destroyer, and as evening came on the huge ship, still fighting desperately, turned turtle and vanished beneath the waves. As for the admiral, the destroyer which bore him was taken and he fell a prisoner into Japanese hands.

Previous to this three other battle-ships, the "Lessoi," the "Veliky," and the "Oslabya," had met with a similar fate, and shortly after sundown the "Navarin" followed its sister ships to the yawning depths. The fiery assault had quickly thrown the whole Russian array into disorder, while the Japanese skillfully manoeuvred to press the Russians from side and rear, forcing them towards the coast, where they were attacked by the Japanese column there advancing. In this way the fleet was

nearly surrounded, the torpedo-boat flotilla being thrown out to intercept those vessels that sought to break through the deadly net.

With the coming on of darkness the firing from the great guns ceased, the Russian fleet being by this time hopelessly beaten. But the torpedo-boats now came actively into action, keeping up their fire through most of the night. When Sunday morning dawned the shattered remnants of the Russian fleet were in full flight for safety, hotly pursued by the Japanese, who were bent on pre-venting the escape of a single ship. The roar of guns began again about nine o'clock and was kept up at intervals during the day, new ships' being bagged from time to time by Togo's victorious fleet, while others, shot through and through, followed their brothers of the day before to the ocean depths.

The most notable event of this day's fight was the bringing to bay off Liancourt Island of a squadron of five battle-ships, comprising the division of Admiral Nebogatoff. Togo, in the battle-ship "Mikasa," commanded the pursuing squadron, which overtook and surrounded the Russian ships, pouring in a terrible fire which soon threw them into hopeless confusion. Not a shot came back in reply and Togo, seeing their helpless plight, signalled a demand for their surrender. In response the Japanese flag was run up over the Russian standard, and these five ships fell into the hands of the islanders without an effort at defense. The confusion and dismay on board was such that an attempt to fight could have led only to their being sent to the bottom with their crews.

It was a miserable remnant of the proud Russian fleet that escaped, including only the cruiser "Almez" and a few torpedo-boats that came limping into the harbor of Vladivostok with the news of the disaster, and the cruisers "Oleg," "Aurora," and "Jemchug," under Rear-admiral Enquist, that straggled in a damaged condition into Manila harbor a week after the great fight. Aside from these the Russian fleet was annihilated, its ships destroyed or captured; the total loss, according to Admiral Togo's report, being eight battle-ships, three armored cruisers,

three coast-defense ships, and an unenumerated multitude of smaller vessels, while the loss in men was four thousand prisoners and probably twice that number slain or drowned.

The most astonishing part of the report was that the total losses of the Japanese were three torpedo-boats, no other ships being seriously damaged, while the loss in killed and wounded was not over eight hundred men. It was a fight that paralleled, in all respects except that of dimensions of the battling fleets, the naval fights at Manila and Santiago in the Spanish-American war.

What followed this stupendous victory needs not many words to tell. On land and sea the Russians had been fought to a finish. To protract the war would have been but to add to their disasters. Peace was imperative and it came in the following September, the chief result being that the Russian career of conquest in Eastern Asia was stayed and Japan became the master spirit in that region of the globe.