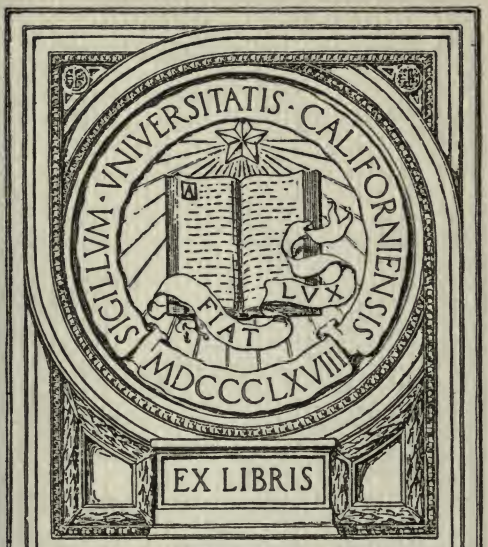
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THINGS SEEN IN RUSSIA

A RUSSIAN PEASANT WOMAN.

Many of the Russian peasant women, if not actually beautiful, are exceedingly pleasant looking. Owing to the constant use of the *banja* (hot steam bath) by the peasants they are very cleanly and have fine white skins.

THINGS SEEN IN RUSSIA

BY

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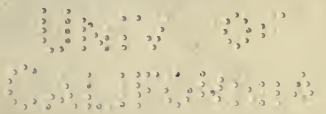
DAILY CHRONICLE" AND OTHER ENGLISH PAPERS

WITH FIFTY ILLUSTRATIONS



NEW YORK
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1913

TO MY BROTHER

OSCAR STEVENI,

OF ST. PETERSBURG AND CRONSTADT

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A RUSSIAN TROIKA

A troika means three horses loosely harnessed to a sledge. In the winter months, when the ground is thickly covered with snow, one of the most delightful and invigorating ways of travelling is in a sledge drawn by three swift horses harnessed in the troika fashion.

Things Seen in Russia

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

DE TOCQUEVILLE, in the early part of the nineteenth century, predicted a future for Russia. "Two great races exist in the world," he said, "which, setting out from different points, clearly strive towards one aim. These two races are the Russians and the Anglo-Americans. Both the one and the other grew up in the dark, at a time when the minds of people were turned to home problems. The Russian and Anglo-American races suddenly emerged in the first rank of nations, and the rest of the world learnt of their birth at one and the same time. However different their points of departure and their historical progress, both of them are

destined by Providence for great *rôles* as world-Powers."

The old culture of Varangian and Byzantine Russia was temporarily swamped after the Oriental invasions. It disappeared for a time, and it is only in recent years that "the Holy Land of Roos" has begun again to advance, with European ideals as her incentive. With armies of Tartar and Mongol horsemen sweeping over the Steppes like so many swarms of locusts, there is little wonder that Russia had to give up to war what might have gone to art and literature—and "civilization!" The incessant attacks by the Tartars had to be repelled before Russia could rise again; the blood which flowed on both sides marks the strenuous periods of early Muscovite history.

Everyone has heard of Cronstadt, the gloomy, forbidding fortress-town or town-fortress, in which the writer resided seven years, and nobody likes it. Indeed, it gives the imaginative "the creeps"! Still, as the port of St. Petersburg, Cronstadt cannot altogether be ignored. The Marine Canal

RUSSIAN COACHMAN INFLATED WITH CUSHIONS.

A Russian cabby, or *isvostchik*. In the large cities of Russia there is an idea current among the rich *kooptzee*, or peasant merchants, that a fat coachman speaks well for the master, and when this ideal cannot be attained by natural means, resource is had to artificial.

connecting it up with Gutaeffsky, an outskirt of the capital, is a beautiful waterway in itself, one which makes some amends for the austere surroundings of the impregnable fortress.

The first thing to strike the new arrival, whether in Petersburg or Cronstadt, is the *isvostchik*, or Russian cabby. New York cabbies, Paris cabbies, London cabbies, dwindle into blurry insignificance alongside of the *isvostchik!* He is a supreme effort on the part of nature! There is no handy taximetre to check his barefaced demands, and only a mythical police tariff to price his mileage. It is a part and parcel of his training as an *isvostchik* to ask for double his due. That he does not get it paid is a mere detail: he does not even expect to succeed in his effrontery! Quite the contrary, in fact; for if he were to succeed, it would give him violent pangs for not having asked for more!—and, moreover, should he succeed in his demands, he regards his fare as a fool (*doorak*).

Our methods and ideas should be cast

aside on reaching Russian soil; it is a country apart—neither East nor West, North nor South. Perhaps it is all combined. I sometimes think so. The national maxim, "Go slowly and you will go further," characterizes the temperament of the people. A shopkeeper and a prospective purchaser will haggle for hours, and argue over a deal which would take five minutes to settle in England or America. It is a Russian failing —the waste of time, or the disregard of haste, or whatever it is! All the same, the Russians are filled with excellent points, too, and not the least of them is their abounding good nature and tolerance. More than half of my life has been spent among them, and to this day I do not regret an instant of the time. In many ways they are large-hearted and kindly. This applies as much to the peer as the peasant. There is a strong and autocratic Government to rule the people; there is no nonsense or meddling with politics allowed; but whether the country is any the better for that I will leave for the traveller to find out for himself. Its enormous size is

rarely appreciated by the English. When it is remembered that the Central Government in St. Petersburg controls an Empire which extends from the Baltic in the West to the Pacific Ocean in the East, to the Arctic Circle in the North, to the Caucasus Mountains, Bokhara, Persia, Turkestan, and Southern Siberia in Asia, there is no room for doubt about the necessity for firm measures. About one hundred and sixty million people claim allegiance to the Tsar, and their number doubles every sixty years. The figures are stupendous, but accurate. There are no less than eight and a half million square miles enclosed within the vast borders of Russian territory. Forests, rivers, and the rich steppes or plains (covered with millions of cattle, horses, sheep, and other animals), go to make up the giant possessions of Nicholas II., "the Little Father," as his loyal subjects affectionately call him.

Even a brief journey in European Russia will take the traveller through a variety of climates and a constant change of scenery. In the North there are the dreary stretches

of tundra, covered in summer with the most beautiful wild flowers, and in winter with an unyielding crust of snow and ice; and in the extreme South vineyards and tobacco fields. In the northern regions, in the neighbourhood of the White Sea, the land abounds in pine forests and birch-trees. Here wolves, bears, foxes, hares, lynx, elk, and small ground game—to say nothing of sporting birds—literally swarm. Again, in the Lake districts, where the lakes, by the way, are the largest in Europe, the fish and wildfowl are more than plentiful. In my wanderings in Russian territory, especially in the Lake regions, I have often been impressed by the sense of breaking new ground. What I mean by this may not at once be clear. There are places in Africa and Canada which supply the sensation to which I refer. It is the imaginative consciousness that no man since the world began has hitherto penetrated to the spot on which one stands, the knowledge that no other human being has beheld the exact surroundings on which one's eyes dwell. It is a strange feeling

A GROUP OF RUSSIAN PEASANT WOMEN.

which leaves a pleasurable memory in its wake.

To obtain a correct idea of the real Russian people and of the national character in its good and unfavourable manifestations, we must not confine our observations to the large towns, where the working classes have, through their contact with Western civilization, lost many of their natural advantages, and acquired the vices of the more cultured nations of Europe.

This remark applies also to its peasantry, who form 87 per cent. of the entire population. Russia is the largest agricultural country in the world, with the exception of China and America. Of the total population, more than one hundred and fifteen million are rooted to the soil. It is among these toiling, hardy, and patient workers that we have to study the Russian people at their best, and also frequently at their worst.

It is largely a question whether the demoralization existing among the poverty-stricken peasants of the interior can be compared to that which obtains in the great

towns among the drunken and improvider
industrial population of Russia and some
the most advanced States in Europe an
America.

Among the millions of people, comprisin
Great Russians, White Russians, Litt
Russians, Finns, Esths, Tartars, Khirgis
Baskirs, Tcherimis, and many strange rac
subject to the Tsar, the very names of whic
are unknown in England, we meet some
the finest specimens of that hardy ra
which in a few hundred years has sprea
from the Baltic to the Pacific, and endure
more hardships and misfortunes than an
other nation in Europe. I refer in pa
ticular to the Great Russians, who inhab
the governments of Petersburg, Novgoro
Pskoff, Vologda, Archangel, Kostroma
Yaroslaff, Olonetz, Tver, and other goverr
ments settled by the Varangian Roos in th
great watershed of the Volga. The languag
spoken by them is probably the most pu
of the many dialects obtaining throughou
the Empire.

As a young man, I spent a considerabl

RUSSIAN PEASANT HAWKER.

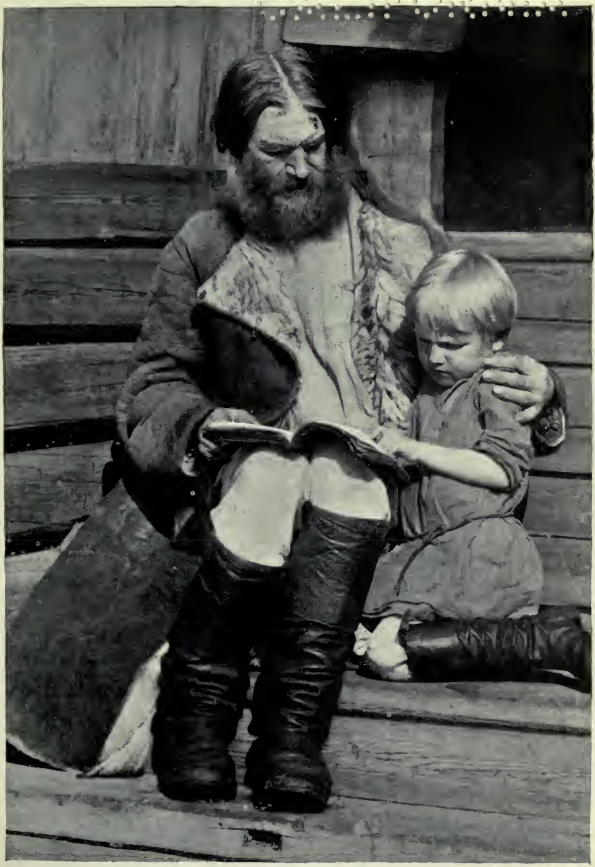
He is selling dried plums and *kvass*, a fermented drink made of sour bread. Many of these hawkers commence with a few roubles and finish by being millionaires

time among the peasantry of the northern governments, especially among the Great Russians of the governments of Tver, Novgorod, and Petersburg. Though much addicted to intoxication, the result of too many holidays, the peasantry of the North are a fine, hardy set of men. Many of them subsist by hunting the bears, foxes, wolves, lynx, and other fur-bearing animals, which are found in great numbers in the forest regions. Here, in these vast forests, some of which have never been disturbed by the hand of man, hundred of thousands of pounds' worth of timber lies rotting away, owing to the want of communication and the scarcity of labour. The felling, floating, and sawing of this timber in the northern governments provides work for a large portion of the population, and a considerable revenue to the State, which owns many millions of timber forests in the North.

The whole Lake region, which abounds in forests, occupies an area of territory equal to England, Holland, France, and Germany

combined. This region, which also includes part of Tver, Olonetz, Pskoff, and Novgorod, might well be designated the cradle of the Russian people, for here the ancient kingdom of Roos had its origin.

Here the Viking Roos, who intermingled with the Slavs of Novgorod and other governments in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, had their first settlements. It is among the governments in the Lake region (*Ozerny Oblast*) that one comes across some of the most typical specimens of the old Russian race. The really pure Roos, or Russians, I have found in many respects like the Englishmen of East Anglia and Northumbria, with whom they have many points of sympathy and resemblance, owing to the strong infusion of Scandinavian blood in both. I frequently think that it is this infusion of Norse blood which makes it so easy for Russians and English people to understand one another. In early times it must have been very considerable, taking into consideration the fact that nearly all the names on the early treaties with the



RUSSIAN PEASANT TEACHING HIS BOY TO READ.

In Russia the vast majority of the peasanty are exceedingly illiterate. A peasant who can read and write is in many villages looked up to with awe and wonder.

Byzantine rulers and the Roos people are Scandinavian, not Slav—the very same old Norse names as one meets in Northumbria and the isles of Scotland. In fact, the word *Roose* in modern Russian is synonymous with our word "fair" (ruddy or flaxen-haired).

I am unable to account for the sympathy between Englishmen and genuine Russians in any other way, for I have not only found many traits in character common to the Great Russians and the English, but points in appearance also. In the northern governments and in the Upper Volga region, settled by the Great Russians, one often comes across fair, blue-eyed, golden-haired, ruddy men and women, like those one sees so frequently among the sea-folk of East Anglia and Scotland.

The impenetrable forests, the countless lakes, the mighty rivers, the severe climate, as well as the poverty of the soil, are among the factors which have contributed to make the Northern Russians a hardy people, exceedingly patient, and religious at heart.

At the same time, it must be added, they are most superstitious. Notwithstanding the centuries they have been under the influence of the Greek Orthodox Christian faith and its teachings, they still profoundly believe in wood-sprites, water-nymphs, hob-goblins, fairies, and a host of other inhabitants of the unseen world. But in South Russia the people are even more inclined to believe in these superstitions. The power of witches and wizards, with their strange practices and customs, is great indeed.

The old pagan religion, too, is a secret institution. The forests, lakes, plains, and morasses are, according to the simple peasants, all frequented by spirits. Amid the dark and sombre trees the wood-sprites have their abode; whilst the lakes, rivers, and water-falls abound in water-sprites, of whom the Roosalka are the most dangerous. The wrath of the water-god Vodjanka, a being with some of the attributes of "Æger" (the Eger of our River Trent), has to be appeased by all kinds of presents and petty sacrifices —cocks, hens, and other domestic animals

are generally chosen. When these do not appear to satisfy the water-god, even children have been secretly sacrificed. The writer remembers how a few years ago a miller in South Russia, who could not get his mill to work, purchased a child from a peasant woman for six roubles, and sank the little victim in the mill-stream close to the mill.

The miller was, however, found out, owing to his forgetting to pay the mother of the unfortunate infant the purchase-money. The mother, tortured by remorse, and burning with revenge towards the faithless miller, informed the police, with the result that both the miller and the avaricious parent were sent to Siberia, where this superstitious custom also exists.

But the victims—as a rule, cocks and hens—are placed in a bag with a piece of red cloth, and then thrown to the water-god.

Whilst offering an oblation to the water-sprite, it is usual to use the following incantations: "Tsar of the earth, Tsaritza of the earth, Tsar of the waters, and Tsar of the

forests, be pleased to accept this little gift of water, not for the sake of cunning, not for the sake of wisdom, but for the good health of such and such a child." The cult of the wood-sprite obtains mostly in the forest region, which practically embraces almost half the entire country ; whilst the water cult (the worship of water sprites) prevails among the thousands of fishermen, raftsmen, boatmen, and sailors of the mighty rivers and lakes, which are so numerous in Russia. The belief in other spirits, such as the Tsar of the winds, who is accredited with all kinds of tricks and spiteful practices, is also very common.

We must not laugh at the Russians for being so exceedingly superstitious when we remember that the people on the banks of the Trent, near to which I spent my boyhood, still call out "'Ware Eger!" when the tide rushes up the river and meets the outflowing current. In the Severn this strange phenomenon is called "The Boar," from the angry and bristling appearance of the waves.

RUSSIAN NEWSPAPER-SELLER.

The water-sprites have frequently to be propitiated, and it is not uncommon to find on the shores of the lakes and rivers—in the far-distant governments—bent sticks, to which are fastened pieces of children's clothing. This is supposed to induce the sprites to keep the children from sickness. There are also a great many charms against the Evil Eye, the effects of which are very much feared, especially in Little Russia, the home of all kinds of medieval and pagan superstitions, many of which are thousands of years old, and peculiarly like those that obtained in England during the times of Shakespeare.

Many heathen customs are also practised amongst the Finnish peasants, especially among the Votyaks, Tcheremis, Tchuvash, and other tribes along the Volga, who secretly make sacrifices of cattle to their old pagan gods, while openly professing the orthodox faith.

In numerous villages of Northern Russia there is an old woman called a *znacharka* (wise woman), who effects cures by spells

and incantations and the use of herbs. The peasantry have frequently more faith in these old women than in the doctors, of whom they are very suspicious. In some localities this aversion is so strong that the doctors work among the villagers in peril of their lives, for the peasants firmly believe that they are in direct communication with the Evil One. During the cholera riots many doctors and Sisters of Mercy were put to death "for witchcraft and poisoning the people," and many who attempted to carry out vaccinations during the smallpox epidemics dearly paid for their courage.

The Russian peasant in the towns, and frequently in the country also, has a wholesome dread of hospitals, "for there they cut up people," and he often prefers to die rather than enter one, or enter the next world minus a limb or some other valuable member.

In some villages there is not even a *znacharka*, let alone a doctor. The only help in the case of sickness is the *felskär*, an old soldier who has learnt the rudiments of surgery in the army. Like the famous

OFFICER OF THE GENDARMES, OR STATE POLICE.

In Russia the Gendarmes occupy themselves solely with matters of a political nature, whilst the ordinary duties of the police are carried out by the Gorodavois, or town police.

Dr. Sangrado in "Gil Blas," he believes in blood-letting or the *banja* (hot bath). If these two remedies do not help his patient, then there is nothing more to be done. "It is the will of God, and the patient must die."

The bath is a great local institution, and hardly a Saturday passes without nearly every villager attending this favourite exercise. The smallest cottage, as a rule, has its little *banja*, or steam bath-house, where the members of the family get a good steaming once a week. The *banja* is usually built of rough timber, and heated by means of a rough stove, on which the peasants lie down and perspire to their heart's content, "for heat breaks no bones." A Russian bath is a most trying ordeal, and unless one has a good sound heart it is better to leave it severely alone. The heat is terrific, and the process of scrubbing with *matchalka* (a kind of coarse grass) and beating with birch twigs makes one resemble at the finish a boiled lobster or a very red cray-fish. In many of the northern governments the villagers vary

these little excitements by rushing out in a state of nudity and rolling themselves in the snow. When no snow is at hand, the peasants break a hole in the ice in the nearest river or lake and jump into the water. Having thus performed their frigid ablutions, they rush back to the *banja* to continue the process of being "boiled alive."

After the *banja* is complete and the bathers have put on their best Sunday linen, they return to their cottages, heat their huge copper tea-urns (*samovars*), and regale themselves with hot tea until the perspiration again commences to pour from their bodies. Then Ivan Ivanovitch is happy, and thanks God that he was born a Russian and not a weakly foreigner, consoling himself with his national proverb, "What's death to a foreigner is life to a Russian." The *samovar*—lit., self-boiler—which was really invented by the Tartars, is a national institution, for without it life in Russia would for millions be hardly worth living. Good Russians drink tea three and four times a day in enormous quantities. The *samovar*

London.

PEASANT WOMEN OF LITTLE RUSSIA.

Bringing milk to market.

is heated with charcoal, which is placed in a pipe, or furnace, in the centre. Notwithstanding his wonderful capacity to stand extremes of temperature, the Russian peasant, and even his superiors, have a wholesome dread of cold water for daily use. He is, however, passionately fond of washing his body with bucketsful of the scalding liquid. Thanks to this craze, I should say the Russian people are one of the most cleanly in Europe, as regards their persons.

In various southern governments, where it is impossible for every cottage to have its bath-house owing to the scarcity of timber, the men, women, and children all bathe together—as they do in Japan—in one common *banja*. An old priest, who told me of this custom, said he had observed that in the parishes where it obtained the people were not only far more moral and purer-minded than in the governments where men and women bathed separately, but their married life more peaceful and satisfactory.

As regards infractions against morality, the more the Russian people are brought

in contact with the great towns, the more lax their morals become. When they come under the influence of European civilization, they frequently not only abandon all that is good in their own faith, but do not replace it with the moral ethics of any other. They imagine it is "the thing" to scoff at all religion. As a rule, Russians who undergo this transformation generally become out-and-out rogues, and the rough, superstitious, good-natured, ignorant peasant, straight from his native village, is far more to be trusted than they. Bismarck has truly observed that Ivan Ivanovitch, so long as he wears his shirt outside his trousers, is a good fellow, but directly he tucks it in, beware of him. There is a lot of truth in this remark; one should fight shy of the Russian peasant who apes the *gospod* (the gentry) or the foreigner.

As regards sexual morality, the code not only varies with the race, but also with the government or district (*oojezd*); for each race and each religion sets up its own peculiar code. Thus it happens that a

course of conduct which is considered quite the thing in one village or parish is considered highly reprehensible in another. In speaking on the subject of morality, we might rightly say that the Russian peasants are, generally speaking, non-moral and not immoral; for they, like the savages, have frequently but the faintest conception of a strict moral code such as we find in other European countries.

In the government of Olonetz, the inhabitants have kept their old patriarchal customs; the morals are exceedingly strict. Among the peasantry of this government, especially among the Korelians, the practice of common bathing is usual. It has never been known to lead to any ill results.

The Russian peasant, unlike the gloomy Finn, is very fond of merry-making, and seizes every opportunity to have an extra holiday, though he has from 150 to 180 given him by the Church each year. In the long winter evenings the peasants amuse themselves with dances, suppers, and conversations (*besyedi*), during which the young

people sing, or play games at kissing, while their elders look on and regale themselves with *vodki*, tea, or *kvass*, the national beverages. These evenings are frequently arranged by the young spinsters of the village in order to become better acquainted with the bachelors (*paren*). The young women make themselves particularly agreeable on these occasions, and even bring with them cakes, sweetmeats of their own baking, beer, and *vodki*, in order to find prospective suitors.

In some of the far-distant villages the beautiful costumes of ancient Moscow and Novgorod, with which, thanks to the Russian ballet, we have become partially acquainted in England, are still worn by the daughters of the wealthy classes. The national costumes of Russia are as varied as they are attractive. Those of "Little Russia the Bountiful" are perhaps the most beautiful, though this may only be a question of taste. Some of these costumes, which have taken many winters to sew and embroider, are covered with hand-made lace, the making of which gives occupa-

RUSSIAN HAWKER SELLING TOYS MADE IN THE VILLAGES BY THE PEASANTS

The village industries in Russia, which are probably the most remarkable in the world, bring in millions to the peasants, especially in the long winter months, when the soil is frozen and all field-work is at a standstill.

tion to thousands of peasant women all over Northern and Southern Russia.

The village industries of Russia are worthy of special attention. They not only bring millions of pounds to the needy peasants when all their own peculiar work is at a standstill, but they help also to keep them to their homes and villages. An idea of their value may be obtained from the fact that the five governments of Astrachan, Simbirsk, Kazan, Samara, and Saratof alone annually produce goods to the value of £12,000,000! What the industrial output of the other governments is I am unable to state, but it must be very considerable.

Every government and every parish has its own special industry. For example, near Kazan, the Tartar women annually make 300,000 pairs of slippers for the faithful, worth about 5,000,000 roubles. At Romano-Boroseglebsk, on the Volga, and the villages near this picturesque town, there is a very considerable industry—the manufacture of short fur coats (*poloshoobke*). These coats are in great demand all over Russia, and are

made to the value of £1,500,000 annually. Other towns and villages are occupied in making *ikons* (holy pictures), boots, shoes, horn and wooden spoons, furniture, lace, toys, embroidery, velvet, lacquer-work of great beauty, penknives, and a variety of other objects of considerable utility.

Besides these village industries, concerning which volumes might be written, there are the manufacturing industries of the great centres, Moscow, Tver, Yaroslaff, Kostroma, and Petersburg. The cheap and gaudy materials produced by numerous mills scattered throughout Northern and Central Russia have already, in many places near the principal towns, tempted the peasants to abandon their beautiful national costumes, many of which are of great antiquity.

The Great Russian national costume has been adopted by the conservative Korelians and other Finnish tribes, who are gradually becoming Russianized as far as their costume and language are concerned. These innovations cannot, however, hide their Mongolian origin, and neither language nor

WINTER SCENE IN A RUSSIAN VILLAGE.

Peasant girls carrying water from a sleigh.

clothing will make them lose their own peculiarities, which mark them as being so essentially different from the Russians—not only in character, but in race.

The Russian peasants are very fond of music, and compose extempore songs, which they accompany with the concertina or *balalaika.**

All through Russia, wherever the Russian people are settled, the traveller will hear the peasants singing their favourite songs, especially at harvest-time. Many of the songs are very plaintive, and full of the most exquisite melody, although I must confess the words are very banal and poor.

The majority of the Great Russian peasants live in villages, some of which are so large that they might almost be designated small towns. They generally consist of one long street, with rows of substantially-built log-huts on each side, and several *trakters* (public-houses) at convenient distances.

* A kind of banjo, of exceedingly simple construction, capable of producing, in combination with other instruments of the same type, some exceedingly fine effects.

As a rule, I have noticed that the larger the village, the more corrupt and spoilt are the inhabitants; for human beings in this respect appear to be like apples—the more they are crowded together, the sooner they become rotten. The Russian is by nature so sociable in character that he cannot, like the Finn, bear to live alone in some dreary swamp or forest. He must have society, even if he pays very dearly for the privilege, and this is one of the reasons why we find so many large villages in Great Russia.

In the northern governments, where timber is both cheap and plentiful, the houses of the peasants present marked indications of well-being and comfort, especially in Novgorod and Olonetz. The high roofs of the cottages are covered with thin planks; the doorways, balconies, window-frames, and porches are carefully carved, or adorned with beautiful fret-work. Most of these cottages are simply built with an axe, which in the skilful hand of the Russian peasant takes the place of saw, chisel, hammer, plane, and a variety of other tools.

RUSSIAN PEASANT SELLING BROOMS AND BRUSHES.

Introduction

In some of the northern governments, originally settled by the Norsemen — in Russia called "Varangians"—it is not uncommon to come across two-storied cottages of considerable dimensions. These houses, with their balconies and decorations, still show traces of the old Varangian influence, and so do the drinking-vessels and other domestic utensils. Owing to their great distance from the principal centres of European civilization, the people of the North have preserved their own peculiar customs, superstitions, and attire almost as they were a thousand years ago.

In conclusion, it is as well to state that Ivan Ivanovitch, with all his superstition, credulity, and ignorance, is no fool; for was it not the great Tolstoi who said "that the wisest man he ever met was a Russian peasant"? How often, under that rugged exterior, that rough sheepskin coat, one meets a noble and kindly heart, and a character so gifted and pliable that it can be almost made to fit any position. Was not Menchikoff, Peter the Great's Chan-

cellor and adviser, a pie-boy? And how many more Menchikoffs of equal genius have sprung up from the ranks of the simple Russian peasantry! I have myself met many merchants and men of enterprise, well-informed and well-mannered, the owners of large factories, who once were simple, ignorant peasants. They are, however, not ashamed of their origin, and still dress in the peasant costume, although their clothes are of the best quality. It is said there are 112,000,000 peasants in Russia. If this be the case, there is latent in the Russian people a force which will some day, not only affect its destinies, but probably the destinies of Europe, for such a mighty power cannot always be suppressed or ignored.

CHAPTER II

ST. PETERSBURG

"The window which looks on Europe."

THE first view of the Neva, with the beautiful Nicholai Bridge, and the palaces and churches stretched along its shores, impresses one with the magnificence of Peter's "Earthly Paradise" — as the Emperor himself was pleased to call it.

Towering above the palaces and public buildings is the enormous dome of the Cathedral of St. Isaac, one of the most costly and splendid cathedrals in the world.

The territory on which St. Petersburg is built was for centuries an integral part of the ancient Republic of Novgorod the Great. It subsequently came into the possession of the Swedes, from whom it was wrested after many battles and a sanguinary war, which

lasted twenty years. With the aid of the Swedish prisoners and all the convicts and malefactors he could find in his then thinly-populated dominions, Peter, after untold hardships and reverses, managed to lay the foundations of the city, which was destined to become the chief centre of the Russian Court and Administration, and to supplant Moscow, the old capital. It is now about two hundred years since Peter laid the foundation of his "Earthly Paradise" and his Empire. Russia, which then only contained 14,000,000 inhabitants, has now over 160,000,000.

Peter did not stop at the most heroic methods to carry out his pet scheme of making "a window to look on Europe"—from which he did not wish to be debarred any longer by the jealous fear of the Western Powers.

As the Swedish prisoners were insufficient for his requirements, in 1710 he issued a *Ukaz* to the effect that 40,000 workmen should be sent to the "Northern Palmyra." In consequence of this order, 150,000 men

THE WINTER PALACE OF ST. PETERSBURG.

In this palace the Tsar and the Imperial Family *sometimes* reside in the winter-time. This enormous building was commenced by the Empress Elizabeth according to the designs of Rastrelli, and completed by Cathernine II. in 1769.

were despatched to St. Petersburg, of whom a great number perished, however, through marsh fever, cold, and other hardships. All good Russians hated the new capital, and in 1714 Peter issued another *Ukaz*, forbidding anyone to build a stone house except in St. Petersburg, under penalty of exile to Siberia and confiscation of property. Every noblemen was therefore obliged, not only to build a palace or house in St. Petersburg, but also to bring with him a certain quantity of rough stone. By these and similar measures Petersburg was called into being. The Muscovite officials and nobles so thoroughly detested Peter's "Paradise" that the breath was scarcely out of his body when there was a regular stampede back to the old capital, and, for a time at least, Petersburg was wellnigh deserted. Thus the new capital presented a very sad spectacle, for the houses were not only roofless, but in ruins.

In 1732 the Empress Anne removed to St. Petersburg with her entire Court and Administration, and from that time the city

has increased in splendour, size, wealth, and importance.

Catherine II. and her successors, Paul, Nicholas I., Alexander II., Alexander III., and Nicholas II., have, in their turn, added to its attractions, and what was once a dreary marsh, infested with wolves, bears, foxes, and wildfowl, is now without question one of the finest capitals in Europe, with a population of about 2,000,000. But with all the Imperial *Ukazes*, and all the millions spent, the city is not healthy. In some portions it is built on piles like Amsterdam. Owing to its marshy soil and to the impossibility of obtaining good drinking-water, it is, as a matter of fact, one of the most unhealthy capitals in Europe, with a mortality sometimes exceeding 30 per thousand. The sudden changes in the temperature are very trying, too, and it is unwise to venture out in the evening even in summer without taking an overcoat. One old gentleman, with whom I was acquainted, went so far as to keep half a dozen overcoats, which he put on at different hours

ARCH OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE AT ST. PETERSBURG.

Through this is seen the Royal Winter Palace and the Alexander Column, the largest granite pillar in the world. The Winter Palace is about two-thirds of a mile in circumference.

of the day, according to the temperature. Thanks to these tactics, he managed to reach a good ripe age. But the majority of Petersburgers will not be bothered by such measures of precaution, and prefer "a short life and a merry one." With this object they turn night into day, and believe, with Sheridan, that "the best way to lengthen our days is to take a bit out of the nights." Among the aristocracy and upper classes, many devotees of pleasure hardly ever go to bed at night, but sleep in the daytime instead.

They go to a ball about 9 or 10 p.m., and dance, feast, or play at cards until the small hours of the morning, when they drive home more asleep than awake. If they are officials, with pressing departmental work, they get up about ten or eleven; more privileged individuals (*priveligorveny*) do not make their appearance before twelve or one o'clock. One old *Generalsha* (General's wife) of my acquaintance used, when too old to attend balls and parties, to spend the night at home, smoking enormous quantities

of cigarettes, making sweetmeats, composing poetry, and worrying her servants. With all her strange habits and failings, she was exceedingly charitable, like so many of her compatriots, who are, as a rule, both charitable and hospitable.

Card-playing is a serious and very important pastime in Russia. In a country where the pursuit of politics is not altogether advisable, many people who would otherwise dabble in public affairs throw all their attention into cards and gambling. "Windt," whist, "stukkoko," and "preference," seem to be the favourite games. The various incidents in the contests of the previous night are discussed on 'Change and in the Government offices with all seriousness, where tea-drinking and smoking an enormous quantity of cigarettes apparently make a great inroad into the time of the officials, who, if not well paid, certainly do not seem overburdened with work.

Enormous quantities of cards are sold in Russia, though the duty payable on each pack does not go to the State, as in France

RUSSIAN COACHMAN WITH EQUIPAGE AND TROIKA.

The *troika* is a team of three horses abreast.

and Italy, but to the Institution of the Empress Marie, which has the sole right of manufacturing playing-cards. Thanks to this scheme, a great number of schools and hospitals, which are under the direction of the Institution, are supported, and thousands of poor and unfortunate people are benefited.

Cards thus indirectly contribute to the support of the hospitals, the orphans' homes, etc. A small tax is also levied on each theatre and opera ticket sold. A tax of R.1 (2s.) is also levied on every *moujik's* passport. This goes to the municipal hospitals, which are bound to give the tax-payer the best attendance should he fall ill. This is an excellent way of supporting the hospitals, and it is a wonder it is not adopted in England, where some measure of this nature is urgently needed.

Theatre-going takes up a great deal of the time of the pleasure-loving Petersburgers. Although the Russians are passionately fond of music and the opera, I think the ballet takes the first place in their affections.

The Crown theatres of Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kieff, and other great centres, are usually splendid buildings constructed after the purest classical models. The Mariensky Theatre and the Grand Opera House (which is now the Conservatoire of Music) are the finest buildings of their kind in St. Petersburg. The Mariensky Theatre is not only the home of the ballet, but of the Russian national opera, of which all true Russians are deservedly proud.

In addition to the Opera House and the Mariensky Theatre, there is a fine Government playhouse, where first-class Russian and foreign plays are given during the winter months. As the repertoire is under the supervision of the censors, and as the Government pays for the production and staging of the various pieces, a high standard of excellence is maintained. Thanks to this condition of affairs, the theatre-going public in Russia, though comparatively small, is critical and difficult to please. One remarkable peculiarity of the Russian stage is the popularity of Shakespeare; his works are seldom

THE PAVILION OF ALEXANDRINA IMPERIAL PARK,
TSARSKOE SELO.

off the stage of the Petersburg and Moscow theatres. When the plays of the "Immortal Will" are not being played in the Government houses, owing to the summer closing, you will frequently find them being produced in the open-air theatres which abound in and about St. Petersburg and Moscow. Whenever I compare the repertoire of the English and Russian theatres, it seems to me that Shakespeare is more appreciated in Russia than in the country which produced him. Even Catherine II. was so enraptured by his writings that she herself wrote several plays on the founding of Russia by the Vikings, "after the manner of William Shakespeare—without observing the customary rules of the drama!"

Walter Scott, Byron, Burns, Macaulay, Thackeray, Dickens, Browning, Buckle, and many other great English writers and poets are greatly favoured in Russia. Dickens is very popular; I have myself met Russians who habitually carried his works with them in their pockets, whilst one Russian editor of my acquaintance actually wrote a play on

Mr. Pickwick. Among English poets, Byron is perhaps the favourite in Russia, especially among young ladies (*coursiste*) studying at the high schools, who revel in the pages of the creator of "Don Juan," etc.

Of course, French literature is much appreciated by the Russians. The French Mechail Theatre, where the works of Racine, Voltaire, Molière, and other Gallic authors are produced, attracts exclusive audiences, mostly consisting of aristocrats, officials, and military officers, with whom a perfect knowledge of French is considered a matter of supreme importance. Although French is the principal foreign language among the aristocracy, bureaucracy, and the upper classes generally, English is considered the language of the higher circles of the Court—among the members of the Imperial family, for instance. Members of the very highest nobility, too, display a knowledge of our tongue and literature which often strikes Englishmen with amazement.

Not only English classics are read with eagerness among the upper and bourgeois

A FOUNTAIN IN ONE OF THE POMPEIAN GARDENS AT PETERHOFF.

Far more attractive than the gardens of the capital are the beautiful summer resorts in the environs, where the pleasure-living inhabitants of the capital spend their evenings in these beautiful spots.

classes, but, personally, I have often been astonished to see on the tables in Moscow and Petersburg houses, English, French, and German monthly magazines.

It is the wonderful capacity for acquiring modern languages, and the thorough grounding in the literature of England, France, and Germany, which in some respects make the Russians the most liberally educated people in the world.

In speaking of the public amusements of Petersburg and Moscow, one must not forget the Summer Gardens scattered around the environs of these two gay capitals. Those of St. Petersburg are particularly famous, especially "Krestoffsky," "Pompeii," the "Aquarium," to say nothing of the Zoo. Here the gay young men and women of the capital amuse themselves on holidays and Saints' Days.

Were it not for the damp climate these gardens would be exceedingly enjoyable, especially during June, July, and August, when it is light the whole night long.

But far more attractive than the gardens

are the beautiful summer resorts—Peterhoff, Strelna, Tsarskoe Selo, Oraninbaum, Pavlovsk, Ozerkee, Schoovalofva—where the pleasure-loving inhabitants of the capital make up for the long and trying winter by spending their evenings on these beautiful spots.

All who visit Petersburg must not fail to visit these beautiful environs of the capital, which more than make up for many of its deficiencies and inconveniences.

For those who can afford neither the time nor the money to visit their friends in the country, at some cosy villa, they might do worse than spend the evenings in the attractive gardens of St. Petersburg, listening to the splendid music, and drinking the aromatic tea of Kyachta (to which lemon slices are added instead of milk). But music is not the only diversion. There are all sorts of "turns": troupes of South Russian gipsies and dancers, as well as swarthy gipsies from the Caucasus, Russian peasant comedians, and acrobats. The gipsies are in great demand, especially for their Oriental dancing, and their sentimental and impassioned love-

INTERIOR OF ONE OF THE POMPEIAN VILLAS AT PETERHOFF.

All who visit Petersburg must not fail to see the beautiful environs and palaces, Peterhoff, Strelna, Tsarskoe Selo, Pavlovsk, Krasnoe Selo, and Gatchina.

songs. Many of the gipsy singers amass great fortunes, and are the favourites of the Russian *kooptzee* (peasant merchants), who lavish thousands of roubles on the swarthy Tzigane women. One *koopets*, whom I knew, used to come to the gardens with a pocket-book full of Catherinas (£10 bank-notes), and throw them broadcast among the singers and dancers. Sometimes the performances conclude with a drunken orgie, during which the *kooptzee*, in order to show their generosity and absolute contempt for money, finish off by smashing all the mirrors and wine-glasses, and then coolly calling for the bill! Every class has its own peculiar canons of behaviour; the wealthy *kooptzee* frequently possess more wit and money than good manners or breeding. It must be remembered that the majority of the *kooptzee* spring from the peasant class, and have neither the birth, breeding, or social status of the merchants in England.

Petersburg is a great place for winter sports, and among its inhabitants are some of the finest skaters in Europe. Ice-hilling

and tobogganing are favourite amusements, and in the environs of the city there are some excellent ice-hills. Ice-yachting is popular when the Gulf of Finland is frozen over—usually with beautiful clear ice, from 2 to 3 feet thick. There is no more invigorating sport than a spin in an ice-yacht down or up the Gulf, or ski-ing on the hills of Finland. Sleighing is delightful, too, especially when one is drawn by a *troika*, or three swift horses.

One way or another winter is perhaps the most attractive season in St. Petersburg. It is also a grand time for hunting the bears, elk, wolves, and foxes which swarm in the forests a few hours' journey from the capital. Wolf-hunting, either on horseback or by catching the animal alive with the aid of *bortzee* (Siberian wolf-hounds), is an exciting form of sport.

A great drawback to health and comfort in St. Petersburg is the marshy soil and the inundations. Every autumn since the city was built by Peter the Great (who was once almost drowned himself by the sudden rising

of the Neva) Petersburg has been flooded. I myself witnessed a good many inundations during the twelve years I resided in the capital, and I must confess that I have never seen a more impressive sight than one of the sudden onslaughts of the deep, swift, and mighty river which flows past Tsar Peter's city. The firing of the minute-guns, as the water rises, the howling of the wind, and the steady rush of the advancing tide from the Gulf, are things never to be forgotten.

In the winter months the Neva and the Gulf of Finland are covered over with a coating of ice averaging from 1 to 3 feet in thickness. The sawing, carting, and storing of this ice provides a considerable amount of labour for the *moujiks*, who come to the capital in thousands every summer and winter in search of work. Before the winter sets in navigation between Petersburg and Cronstadt is made possible by means of the ice-breaker, the *Ermak*, which was designed by the unfortunate Admiral Makaroff, of Port Arthur notoriety. It is a grand and inspiring sight to see the

Ermak as she pounds her way through the ice, and makes a channel for the ships and steamers bound for Cronstadt and the other ports of the Baltic. This remarkable vessel, which was built by Messrs. Armstrong and Co., of Newcastle, for the Russian Government, is capable of ploughing her way through ice 18 feet thick at a speed of eight knots. Some of the packs she breaks through are 7 feet above the surface and about 30 feet below. Thanks to the existence of this vessel, it is now possible to keep open some of the Baltic and White Sea ports during the winter months—when absolutely necessary.

As an old resident of St. Petersburg, I do not think it would be fair to omit all reference to some of its most remarkable sights and objects of interest.

First and foremost among them is the glorious Cathedral of St. Isaac (close to the Hotel Angleterre). Its beautiful gilded dome is the first thing to strike the eye on approaching St. Petersburg from the Gulf of Finland. This dome, with its cross, 40 feet higher than St. Paul's, is visible

PEASANTS CARTING AWAY ICE FROM THE NEVA.

In the winter months the Neva and the Gulf of Finland are covered over with a coating of ice averaging from one to three feet in thickness. The sawing, carting, and storing of the ice provides a considerable amount of labour for the *mou'iks*, who come to the capital in thousands every summer and winter in search of work.

for forty miles around. The cathedral itself is of granite and marble; the massive pillars which support the façades are worthy of an ancient Greek temple as regards their size and workmanship. It is said that Catharine II., who was religious *in her own peculiar way*, spent upwards of two million pounds on the building alone. She is also estimated to have spent eighty million pounds on her favourites! The costly mosaics, the holy ikons, studded with pearls and other precious stones, the gold and silver candlesticks, and the exquisite paintings, are valuable beyond estimate. A vague idea of its wealth may be formed from the fact that the gold and silver vessels of this sacred edifice reach three English tons in weight.

One of the great attractions of the Isaac Cathedral is the glorious singing of its choirs. Some of the voices are quite phenomenal, especially the bass voices. It is said that Russia possesses the finest bass voices in the world; the dry climate and remarkable extremes of heat and cold have much to do with their depth and tone. Good

tenors, however, seem to be scarce, and I should say that for every tenor one finds in St. Petersburg it would be possible to find four in any English town of the same size. As organs and other instruments are forbidden in the Russian churches, the choirs have to be highly trained. The old Gregorian chants, some of which are said to date from the fourth century, are wonderfully impressive and effective.

All who are interested in Russian Church music should visit the Isaac Cathedral ; also the wealthy Alexander Nevsky Monastery, outside the city gates, at the end of the Nevsky Prospect.

This monastery, by the way, is said to possess an annual revenue of about half a million sterling ; it was founded by Peter the Great as a last resting-place for the bones of the Grand Duke Alexander Nevsky of Novgorod, who defeated the Swedish army under Birjer-Jarl on the very spot where the monastery now stands. The Swedes were then Catholics, and at the instigation of the Pope headed a crusade against the

ORDINARY RUSSIAN DROSHKI AND DRIVER.

Droshkis in Russia are in great request, for the ordinary Russian, with his semi-oriental proclivities, does not believe in violent exercise or walking whenever it can be avoided.

heretic Grand Duke of Novgorod—with disastrous consequences; for their army was taken by surprise, and routed by the Novgorodians.

The bones of the saint now rest in a shrine of solid silver about two tons in weight. This monastery is full of jewels, pillars of lapus lazuli, relics, sacred vessels, and ikons, encrusted with diamonds, sapphires, pearls, and other valuable stones, costing millions of roubles. The monastery is so rich that during the Crimean War the patriotic monks lent Nicholas several million pounds.

There are other monasteries even richer than that of Alexander Nevsky, and should Russia ever be invaded she always has their wealth to fall back upon as a last resource. So far she has not had her Henry VIII., and the vast treasures stored away in her sacred buildings are still intact. Her rich peasant *kooptzee*, who do not believe in banks, but store their wealth in the cellars of their houses, must also not be forgotten as a source of revenue in time of dire need.

Next to the Isaac Cathedral, the Kazan Cathedral, named after the holy image of the "Kazan Mother of God," is one of the most interesting piles in Russia. It is situated on the Nevsky Prospect, the "Piccadilly" of St. Petersburg. It is supposed to have been built after the model of St. Peter's at Rome, to which its beautiful colonnades certainly bear some resemblance. But the miniature cone surmounting the great building certainly cannot in any way be compared to the magnificent dome of St. Peter's, excepting in shape.

It would take too long to describe the contents of the cathedral in any detail; a part of the treasure recaptured from Napoleon's army, 112 French eagles, as well as the keys of Memel, Berlin, and various other cities, find a resting-place within its walls.

The three principal thoroughfares of St. Petersburg are the Nevsky Prospect, the Grande Morskaja, and the Letennija, all splendid streets, full of beautiful shops. Here the gay Petersburgers drive up and

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THE NEVSKY PROSPECT.

The three principal thoroughfares of St. Petersburg are the Nevsky Prospect, the Grande Morskaja, and the Letennija, all splendid streets, full of beautiful shops. Here the gay Petersburgers drive up and down to show off their fine black Orloff horses and beautiful equipages.

down to show off their fine black Orloff horses and beautiful equipages. Many smart people go on foot, be it added; walking is, in fact, a favourite occupation which obtains in almost every town and village in Russia. They call it *goolyania* (from *goolyatj*, to walk). Only Russians or people with Oriental proclivities could find such pleasure in solemnly walking about the streets.

One of the favourite places for these *goolyanies* is the Summer Garden, which was laid out by Peter the Great; it is adorned with hideous (almost indecent) statues taken by Souvoroff from one of the palaces of the Kings of Poland. Here, on summer afternoons, the amorous promenade about, casting eyes at one another, until some old *svacha* (matchmaker) brings the different couples together. The Summer Garden in also a favourite rendezvous for those whose intentions are not so serious that they require a *svacha*.

In order to gain a good idea of Russian art and life, the stranger should not fail to visit the museum of Alexander III.,

located in the beautiful Mechailoff Palace. This museum, or, rather, gallery of paintings, was founded by Alexander III., to encourage native art. The sturdy, manly Emperor was a great believer in things Russian, and even insisted on his courtiers and friends speaking to him in his native tongue, and not in French, the language of the Court. Thanks to his patriotic spirit, the craze for everything foreign has a good deal abated in Russia. To be "Roosky" is now the main idea; it is no longer considered good form for an educated Russian to be ignorant of his own language—which was the case a couple of generations ago, especially among the nobility. In Moscow the craze for being Russian is particularly severe, and it is not uncommon to see men and women of position walking about in genuine Russian costumes, and discarding everything foreign. In some of the more fanatical circles only the Russian tongue is tolerated, and the writer has more than once been called to account for daring to speak German in a real Russian house!

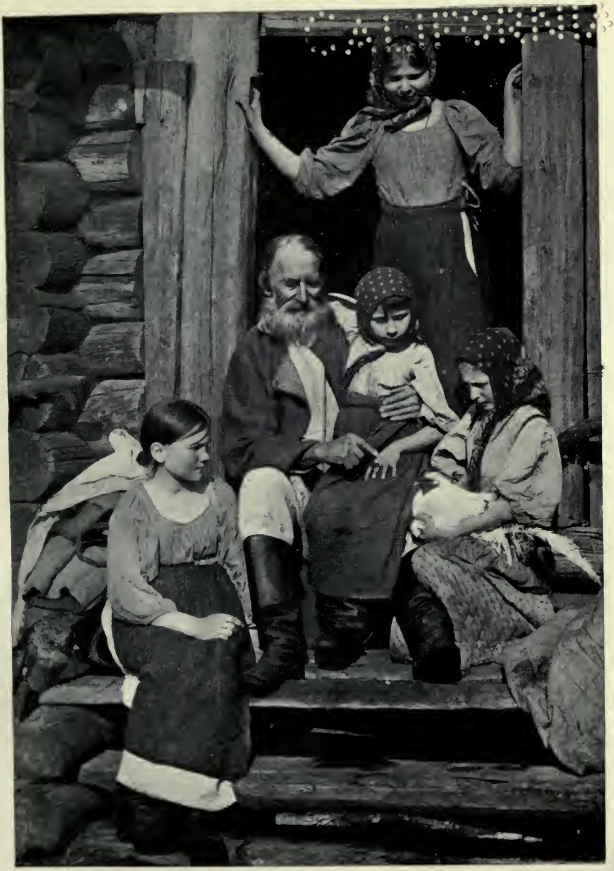
CHAPTER III

HOW THE GREAT RUSSIANS LIVE

THE peasantry of Northern Russia, especially those of the governments of St. Petersburg, Novgorod, Tver, Pskoff, Vologda, and of the Lake Region—which, as previously stated, constituted an integral part of the old kingdom of Roos ("Staraja Roos")—live in comfortable log-huts, generally only one story in height. In the Valdai Hills, and in the other governments where timber is plentiful, the traveller not infrequently comes across handsome buildings erected by the peasants themselves, without even the assistance of an architect. For, as a rule, every Russian peasant is not only his own carpenter and joiner, but an architect and shipwright also on a modest scale. The floor of these two-story cottages is generally raised about 6 to 9 feet above the ground,

and the intermediate space forms a cellar, which is used for storing agricultural implements, furniture, fishing-tackle, hunting-gear, and other useful articles.

Some of the poorer peasants also use this floor as a kind of cattle-shed in which their cows and other domestic animals are kept during the long and severe winters. Whether this contributes towards the health and comfort of the inhabitants above I will not venture to say; but I must add that the Russian peasant's ideas of hygiene are so primitive that, were it not for the plentiful and regular use of the *banya* (steam bath), he would contract so many diseases that the race would rapidly die out. The peasantry not only keep cattle beneath the floors of their houses, but poultry in *their rooms!* In many cottages which I visited in the government of Novgorod the peasants had a special receptacle for the poultry under the great stove or in a corner of the room. The roosters were special favourites, and seemed to supply the place of alarum clocks, for at stated intervals in the early morning, at noon,



RUSSIAN PEASANT AND HIS FAMILY, INCLUDING THE FAVOURITE ROOSTER.

The roosters are special favourites, and seem to supply the place of alarum clocks, for it is the only time-piece they have.

and night, they informed their owners of the approximate time, much to the annoyance of strangers and visitors who were not accustomed to this novel kind of time-keeper!

As a rule the cottages in Northern Russia are spacious and lofty, and lighted with the aid of several small windows. They usually boast a chimney and a great stove *on* which the whole family passes a great portion of the winter, endeavouring to counteract the cold. During the winter months, of course, they have no work, owing to the intense frost. Only a Russian peasant could pass weeks and months on a stove, living on a minimum of food, practically hibernating like a bear until the genial warmth of the spring sun loosens the frost-bound earth and makes field work again possible.

In some villages, where the inhabitants, through residing in the large towns or by coming in contact with West Europeans, have acquired vague ideas of propriety, the various members of the family sleep in different corners of the cottage, called *oogol*. I have myself, when passing a

night amongst the peasants of the Valdai Hills, seen the grandparents in one corner, the married son and his wife in a second, the children in a third, and the maidens and women-folk in a fourth; whilst I, their *gost* (guest) have been given a big square space on a fur coat in the centre. What with the cackling of the hens, the crowing of the roosters, the snoring of the old folks, the whispering of the girls and squalling of the children, as well as the attentions of innumerable lively company—without which no Russian peasant's cottage is complete—my slumbers have been far from peaceful. The moss with which the interstices of the logs and boards are stuffed is responsible for the appearance of these insects, but they do not seem to trouble the peasantry, who allege that they give you something to think about during the long winter nights, and are also healthy, since they abstract the bad blood from the system. "What cannot be cured must be endured," and, fortified with this philosophy, I soon got accustomed to the attentions of these unbidden guests.

GREAT RUSSIAN PEASANTS RETURNING FROM WORK IN THE FIELDS.

How the Great Russians Live

On entering a Russian village one immediately becomes conscious of the semi-Oriental views regarding the alleged inferiority of the fair sex, for the first object that meets the eye is a post on which is written the name of the place, together with the number of souls and horses contained within it. By souls, of course, only men and boys are intended; women, having so souls, are left out of the reckoning entirely! Every seven years the communal lands are divided amongst the peasantry according to the number of families and the number of males in each family, but in those families where women preponderate the division is a very unsatisfactory one, for the women receive no portion.

But this is not so unjust as it appears to be on the surface, since the majority of Russian women marry—excepting the old and very plain ones, many of whom hide their faces in nunneries and religious houses. The position of the women, owing to the absence of the men in the towns, is frequently in Russia more important than it is

in any other country, notwithstanding that they are supposed to be deficient in a soul; for when their lords and masters are away they are entrusted with all the rights and privileges of the men. Then the poor and despised wife not only becomes the head of the household, but even looks after the farming and attends the village parliaments (*schodke*). In some villages, where the soil is very poor and the men cannot possibly earn a living from their farms or plots of land, the women do practically all the agricultural work, but I regret to say that, owing to their lack of physical strength and the impossibility of being in two places at once, this practice of shifting so much responsibility on the shoulders of the weaker sex often leads to disastrous consequences. It not infrequently happens that while the women are busy ploughing or reaping in the fields, sometimes several miles away from their villages, some of the little urchins or mites that have been left behind, all alone, set fire to the house or outbuildings. As most of the houses are built of wood and

WOMEN HAYMAKING.

In some villages, where the soil is very poor and the men cannot possibly earn a living from their farms or plots of land, the women do practically all the agricultural work.

thatched with straw, the entire village before long is ablaze, and the old and infirm and young are burnt to death before they can be rescued from the flames.

Should a village, however, catch fire from being struck by lightning, the villagers will seldom attempt to extinguish the flames, since they regard the accident as the will of God. Even worse misfortunes than fire and lightning sometimes take place; for whilst the women are away in the fields the children are frequently killed or maimed, or, still worse, the baby devoured by the gaunt hairy pigs which run wild in most of the villages. What is still more unfortunate, the women grow prematurely old and wrinkled through all the labour and responsibility being imposed upon them. Agriculture also suffers, and frequent famines are the result of this unnatural system; for the women, through lack of strength and want of time, are unable to plough and till the land sufficiently, especially when they have large families at home to attend to as well.

As a rule the Russian *baba* — peasant

women, as they are ungallantly called by the peasants—have very large families. On an average in Central Russia they have from four to twelve children, but as 50 per cent. of them usually die, owing to the severe climatic conditions, ignorance, and superstition, the increase of the population is not so large as it otherwise would be. Notwithstanding the loss of several hundred thousand children a year through cold, neglect, and hunger, the population is rapidly increasing. In spite of all drawbacks, about two to three millions are added to the Empire every year. But as there is room for 600,000,000 people in the Russian Empire, this enormous increase of the population does not disturb Russian statesmen, who are even now aiding and encouraging thousands of the peasants to settle in Siberia. As the population doubles every fifty to fifty-five years, the population in 1985—without counting probable annexations of more territory—will amount to 400,000,000 souls.

In Great Russia, where the habits and customs of the people have been less in-

fluenced by their Tartar conquerors, a girl on marrying receives a dowry or portion in the shape of clothes, cutlery, cooking utensils, and cattle, but no real estate—the dowry, with the exception of the wearing apparel, becomes the common property of husband and wife, but in the case of the death of the latter the dowry is not infrequently returned to her parents. In the event of the husband dying without issue the wife receives as her portion only his wearing apparel and fur coat as a soul reminder, whilst all his remaining property reverts to his parents or near relations. There is, however, reason to believe that this is a Finnish and not a Russian custom. It so happens that if a couple have been long married it is customary to acknowledge the wife as the sole legatee of the husband's property, especially when there are no children.

If the peasant, owing to his poverty and his Spartan nature, cannot offer you a good, clean bed, at least there is little doubt that he is one of the most hospitable men in Europe—so far as his scanty means will

allow him. If he is unable to give you a hearty meal, the cheering *tchai* (tea made with the help of a *samovar* "tea-urn") is always at hand and ready for the passing stranger. With home-made rusks, biscuits, white bread (a great delicacy among the peasants), preserves (*varèn*) and the genial chat of the simple but good-natured hosts of these northern governments, one can pass many a pleasant hour. In Sweden and Norway the peasantry used to be equally hospitable, but I fear that the struggle for life and the commercial spirit has much weakened this particular virtue.

I shall never forget how bravely the unselfish peasantry behaved during the great famine of 1891-92, when Count Leo Ljevitch Tolstoi, Count Bobrinsky and I visited the stricken governments of Rjazan and Toula. Though they were perishing in thousands from hunger and disease—caused by insufficient nourishment—they brought out their last few pieces of sugar to offer to my exalted companions, for with the Russian

PEASANT WOMEN.

As a rule, the Russian *babee*, or peasant women, have very large families: on an average from four to twelve children; but as fifty per cent. of them usually die, owing to the severe climatic conditions, etc., the increase of the population is not so large as it otherwise would be.

peasants hospitality is not only a social obligation, but a religious duty.

On these occasions, before partaking of their frugal fare, our simple host would reverently stand up and cross himself before the holy ikons, before which a small lamp is always burning. As a rule the ikon is placed on a small bracket in one corner of the room. Around the ikon of the Saviour or the Virgin Mary there are generally grouped several smaller ikons, or a number of highly-coloured pictures showing the rapid descent of the evil man to the nether regions, or the slow journey of the righteous to the mansions of the blest in the world beyond. All these pictures bring forcibly to one's mind the fact that the Russian peasant, though living with his body in the nineteenth century, is, as far as his mental and spiritual nature go, a child of the Middle Ages. The pictures of wicked devils roasting, boiling, and torturing the wicked in the nether world fills his mind with reverence and fear, and undoubtedly keeps him from much mischief, since this is

the only way that appeals to his crude and simple nature.

On fête days and holidays, "when it is a great sin to work," the ikons are hung with embroidered towels, paper flowers, tinsel, and other ornaments, and lighted by wax candles, which are usually brought from the nearest church or monastery—after being blessed by the priest or the monks. Frequently, when a peasant becomes well-to-do, he shows his gratitude by spending hundreds and thousands of roubles in adorning his cottage or house with beautiful ikons, studded with pearls or precious stones. If he is of a mundane turn of mind, he uses costly mirrors instead, which inspire the simple villagers with awe and admiration for their fortunate possessor. The owner of a gramophone or a piano is, however, regarded with an equal degree of respèct. The rich merchants (*kooptzee*), generally of peasant origin, often have their own votive chapels attached to their houses, and hire the services of a priest to officiate on fête days and holidays. These private chapels,

RETURNING FROM HAYMAKING.

The lot of the Russian peasant woman, or *baba*, is frequently a very hard one, for, owing to the enforced absence of the men in the towns, she has not only to look after her numerous offspring, but to see to the farming and attend the village parliaments.

with their beautiful ikons, silver candlesticks, crucifixes, and wax candles of all sizes and shapes, are invariably most picturesque.

In Central Russia, where timber is extremely scarce, many of the *izbe* (cottages inhabited by the peasantry) are wretched hovels, hardly good enough for cattle. Some which I visited with Count Demetrius Bobrinsky—who, by the way, through his unselfish generosity, saved many hundreds of peasants from starvation and disease—were even unprovided with chimneys. The smoke escaped through crevices in the roof or cracks over the door. How any European could live under such vile and insanitary conditions, in such a terrible climate, passed my comprehension. What with the stuffy, foul atmosphere, the damp floor made of beaten clay, the poor food (rye-bread, cabbage, mushrooms and salt), and the foul atmosphere, the mortality, even in ordinary years, is very high. But these terrible conditions do not apply to the whole of the country, and there are millions of peasants

who live under conditions which our own people of the manufacturing towns might well envy. This especially refers to Little Russia and the Kuban Province, where the soil is extremely fertile.

Notwithstanding the terrible poverty of a great number of the Russian agricultural classes, they are exceedingly particular in what they eat, especially during the fasts, which are both numerous and trying. Many of the peasants whom I have met would die, and indeed have died, rather than break their fast or eat anything forbidden or unclean. I remember only too well that during the famine of 1891-92, when about 250,000 peasants perished in twenty-seven governments, many of these simple but God-fearing people died from hunger rather than eat horse-flesh, which is forbidden in the Bible. The Tartars, however, who had no such scruples, bought up the horses from the starving Russians for five or ten shillings each, and waxed fat on their food, while the superstitious peasants died like flies around them. The little money the peasants re-

RUSSIAN ERRAND-BOY AND KNIFE-GRINDER.

Russian boys are very precocious. One frequently sees them when quite small earning their living as knife-grinders, pedlars, droshki-drivers, and errand-boys.

ceived for their starved horses did not last long. It was mostly spent in purchasing rye, which they turned into food by mixing it with a weed called *lebeda*.

Black rye-bread is the staple diet of the Russian peasants, and if they can be sure of this necessity of life, together with a little cabbage and tea, they are quite satisfied, for they are so constituted that they can subsist and keep in good health on next to nothing. The Russian peasant is so hardy and so frugal that in times of famine he can very well subsist on a penny or two per day, with which he buys rye-bread, the staff of life. The peasants are so fond of this kind of bread that I have actually seen them cry when they have been forced to eat white bread, which they say does not satisfy their hunger or maintain their strength.

The majority of the Russian peasants think themselves well off if they can always be certain of getting black bread, cabbage, salt, brick tea, mushrooms and *kvass* (a fermented liquor made of stale bread). But those who are prosperous have a more varied

diet, consisting of fish, cabbage, milk, eggs, porridge, barley, buckwheat, honey, and wild berries. Meat is a luxury which they seldom taste, or even require, so long as they can obtain plenty of fish, fruit, vegetables and bread.

There are some kinds of meat which, on principle, the peasants will never touch. For instance, they consider it a very great sin to eat bear's meat, "for the bear was once a human being, but he was turned into an animal for his sins." It is also looked upon as sinful to eat reindeer, because this animal is of semi-divine origin. It is also uncleanly to eat hares, "for rabbits and hares are vermin." Swans must not be eaten, and to kill one is a great sin, "because a swan resembles a beautiful woman and is near to God." Then, too, "the complaint of the relict of the defunct swan will always be heard." *Par consequence*, it is a lesser sin to kill a pair of swans. It is also reprehensible to eat pig, although this is not always the case, for among the Little Russians fat pork is one of the favourite articles of diet.

Pigeons and doves are also sacred, and woe betide the unbelieving foreigner or German who touches a feather of these sacred birds, "for did not the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove?" Whether sacred or not, I am pretty certain that many of these holy birds find their way into the pies of the unbelieving foreigner in the large towns, where they are sold as *rapchiks* (wood-grouse).

The marriage, birth, and burial customs among the Great Russians are both interesting and exceedingly curious. Some of them are derived from the old days of the free Republic of Novgorod the Great—"My Lord Novgorod," as it was quaintly called. Others are clearly of Finnish origin, for similar customs and usages prevail among the Finnish tribes of the Volga.

As a rule, in old-fashioned Russian families the father's will is law, and he wields within the confines of his narrow sphere patriarchal, if not autocratic, power. The new-fashioned ideas about the freedom and independence of young people do not appeal to him.

What he wills is law to his immediate family. No son or daughter is allowed to marry without his or her parents' permission, and, in choosing a wife for his son or daughter, physical gifts, and a capacity for hard work, are the principal considerations affecting the father's choice. In most Russian villages the work of bringing together the young couples is managed, for a consideration, by an old woman (*svacha*), who makes it her chief business in life to learn all about eligible candidates. Whether the young couples are happy or rightly mated is quite a secondary question to the fathers.

On remonstrating with an old Russian peasant who had married his son off in a summary fashion without consulting his inclination, the old fellow turned upon me with wrath and indignation, exclaiming, "*Kakoe emoo za dyelo?*" ("What has that to do with him? He has nothing to say in the matter. It is my business!")

To be a good workwoman is the main thing. However ugly a prospective bride

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A RUSSIAN MARKET

may be, it will not concern her husband, a drunken lout very probably. These marriages of convenience generally end well, and will continue so to do until the peasants are more cultured, for both man and wife are fully occupied in earning a bare livelihood. But when the husband is a drunkard and the wife a shrew, which, alas! is too frequently the case, these enforced unions lead to years of misery, frequently terminating in tragedy. Thus it happens that the husband, maddened and embittered by his shrewish mate, takes to drink, and ends in either cleaving her head with an axe—the favourite weapon of the Russian peasant—or half kicking her to death with his heavy top-boots. Should the partner of his bliss by chance happen to survive this brutal treatment, she not infrequently rounds on her lord and master by mixing a little white powder in his tea when he is too intoxicated to notice it. The husband dies in consequence, and the wife is deported to the mines of Siberia, or to the frozen Tundras, there to work in chains until a

merciful death relieves her of her life's burden.

Husband-poisoning is so common among the Russian peasantry that I have known as many as a hundred women deported from Odessa at a time for this awful offence, which, unfortunately, will continue so long as the Holy Orthodox Church has the power to bind men and women together in fetters more strong than are for the supposed good of the State and Church. Divorce is practically unobtainable among the peasantry, and as this is the case, we cannot well be surprised at the frequency of conjugal murders.

As soon as a son leaves the parental roof and sets up for himself, the paternal jurisdiction is at an end. Should he, however, leave his home without his father's permission, his future inheritance will entirely depend on the will or caprice of his father, a condition which would not otherwise apply. In the event of the death of the latter, the sons ordinarily divide the property in equal shares. This is probably a survival of the

old Norse law of *Oodel* (the introduction of which by the Varangian Grand Dukes split up Russia, and ultimately caused its downfall and ruin by the Tartars, who took full advantage of the discord arising from the division).

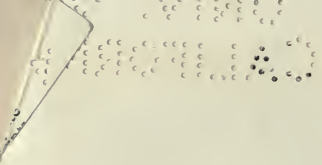
On the cutting up of an estate the women fare very badly, for they usually receive no portion of the inheritance. They can only claim a share when all the male heirs have become extinct. The Russian peasant is no believer in women's rights, and, according to his old-fashioned ideas, the man, who is usually physically and mentally stronger than the woman, should take the first place in the household. This feeling is so firmly engrafted in his mind that he is continually quoting a number of proverbs to support his authority. According to his opinion, woman does not possess a soul, only steam. Another proverb concerning her says, "Long hair, short wit." The proverbs concerning women are so uncomplimentary that in order not to wound the feeling of my readers I will not quote them.

COSSACKS PRACTISING THE "DSHIGITOFFKA"

The "Dshigitoffka" are esquestrian exercises practised by the Cossacks, who are probably the most expert horsemen in the world. There are about 160,000 Cossacks, and the majority of them are freeholders or small yeomen.

THE HERMITAGE.

The Hermitage, which adjoins the Winter Palace, contains one of the finest collections of pictures and other works of art in Europe. It was commenced by order of Catharine II. in 1767. This was her favourite retreat, where she received her most intimate friends. Here she collected a valuable collection of many



CHAPTER IV

WHITE-STONED MOSCOW

The Heart of Russia.

THE central industrial region, which includes the manufacturing governments of Moscow, Tver, Jaroslaff, Kostroma, Nishni-Novgorod, Ryazan and Toola, possesses a poor soil, which naturally compels the inhabitants to turn their attentions to commerce. This is perhaps the reason why Moscow has always been famed for the enterprising spirit of its merchants, who, owing to the grant of monopolies and the protective system, make tremendous profits at the expense of the people. The cotton, cloth, silk, and wool industries, to say nothing of boiler-works, breweries, printing plants, and iron foundries, all tend to increase the wealth of this ancient

and interesting city. An idea of its prosperity may be obtained from the fact that its mills annually produce goods valued at over £20,000,000, while the total trade turnover exceeds £200,000,000.

"Ach, Moskva, Moskva! byelaja kamennaja Moskva!"
("Oh, Moscow, Moscow! white-stoned Moscow!")

the Muscovites sing of their beloved and beautiful city—beloved not only on account of its wealth and picturesqueness, but also on account of the great *rôle* it has played in the history of Russia. Well may the people call it "Little Mother Moscow," for of all the cities it has been in the past a refuge and a source of strength and consolation to the Russians in their tragic and terrible struggles.

Moscow, which occupies an area of about forty square miles, is charmingly situated on seven hills and on the banks of the little River Moscow, called in Russian "Moskva." Although this stream is only about fifty miles in length, there are few rivers in the world, with the exception of the Tiber,

which have drained such torrents of human blood. When one thinks of the countless thousands who have fallen along the banks of the Moskva and around the white and red walls of the Kremlin, this beautiful city involuntarily reminds one of a whitened sepulchre, full to the brim of human bones. But those who enter the busy streets, teeming with life and movement, and all the outward signs of prosperity, quickly forget the sombre and sanguinary picture of a long past.

There are many cities in Russia older and perhaps more interesting historically than "Mother Moscow," but she is, as it were, the heart and centre of the Russian people. Moscow was first heard of in 1147 as the meeting-place of Prince Svyatoslaff of Tchernigoff, Prince Andrew Bogolubsky, and Jury Dolgorouki—the son of the Grand Duke Vladimir of Kieff and of Guida, daughter of the brave but unfortunate Harold, King of England.

In 1237 we again hear of Moscow—as a little wooden town, surrounded by wooden palisades. In this helpless state, it was

attacked by the terrible Tartar General, Batir, who had previously taken Kieff and many other Russian towns, after butchering their inhabitants without mercy. Nor did Moscow escape a similar fate, though she rose again out of blood and ashes to become a place of considerable importance. Soon her prosperity excited the envy of the Princes of Tver, who soon became involved in civil war with the rising city. The long and desperate struggle between the two rival centres ended in the destruction of Tver and the slaughter of about 90,000 citizens by Ivan the Terrible, who wished to unite all the Russian Grand-Duchies under his sceptre and crush out their independence and freedom.

In 1353 Moscow was devastated by the Black Death, which not only carried off Simeon the Proud, the Grand Duke of Moscow, but also two-thirds of the population.

In 1386 the city, together with the entire government, already terribly weakened by the Battle of Kulekoff, was attacked by

WHITE-STONED MOSCOW.

The great tower of Ivan the Great, and the walls of the Kremlin, seen from the river Moskva. The tower of Ivan Veliky, which was erected in 1600, rises to a height of 318 feet. It contains many large bells.

the Tartar Khan Tochtamish, and captured after an heroic defence.

What with the attacks of the Tartars, the different plagues, pestilence, revolts, fires, invasions and other misfortunes, it is indeed remarkable that such a city as Moscow exists! But, phoenix-like, it rose out of its own ashes, after each succeeding catastrophe, more beautiful and vigorous than before.

Excepting the Kremlin and a few old churches and monasteries, there is very little left of the Moscow of Ivan the Terrible.

What we have before us is practically a new city, dating from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

A more beautiful sight than White-stoned Moscow, as seen from the Sparrow Hills, one could hardly imagine! Notwithstanding that the majority of the houses are of European design, a strong Oriental impression is supplied by innumerable mosque-like churches, towers and minarets situated at every point of the compass. The influence of the Tartar conquests has not only left

its mark on the architecture and outward features of Moscow, but also to some extent on the character of the people.

The first sight of "Mother Moscow" fills one with admiration and astonishment. It is really so Oriental in appearance that it reminds one of Delhi, Agra, or some Indian city. The embattled walls of the Kremlin, surmounted by lofty towers and bastions; the historic gate of the Saviour; the great belfry built by Boris Godounoff, the Tartar usurper; the Cathedral of the Saviour, with its gilded dome glittering against an azure sky; the Church of Ivan the Terrible, and the numerous monasteries and churches, bright with silver and gold—all help to make a picture, which once seen will never be forgotten.

Although Moscow is "a pure Russian and Orthodox city," as it is described by its citizens, one must not lose sight of the fact that it is one of the largest industrial centres in the world. Its mills, factories, and workshops, mostly situated on the outskirts and in the environs, not only manu-

VIEW OF THE KREMLIN AND THE TOWER OF IVAN THE GREAT FROM THE RIVER MOSKVA.

The first sight of "Mother Moscow" fills one with admiration and astonishment. It is really so Oriental in appearance that it reminds one of Delhi, Agra, or some Indian city.

facture goods for the hundred and sixty million subjects of the Tsar, but for millions of the inhabitants of Siberia, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Central Asia. The English have been called a "nation of shopkeepers" by Napoleon; but this term of reproach or praise is far more applicable to the Muscovites, for in Moscow, almost everyone, from the highest to the lowest, seems to be, directly or indirectly, interested in commerce. From the wealthy merchant, who counts his capital in millions of pounds, and lives in a *corner* of his sumptuous mansion, to the poor pedlar, whose whole stock-in-trade could be bought up for a rouble, everyone buys and sells. This peculiar trait of the Muscovite seems to be of far from recent origin. The foreign traveller, De Rodes, who visited Moscow in 1653, mentions it: "It is sufficiently well known that all the enactments of this country are directed towards commerce and trade, something one confirms by daily experience. Here everyone, from the highest to the lowest, thinks only of earning something."

In this respect the Russian nation is more active than all the others taken together. Kelburger, another foreign traveller, writes: "All the inhabitants of Moscow, from the most powerful to the most insignificant, love trade. The city contains many more shops than Amsterdam. What is most remarkable—and also most commendable—in Moscow is, that there are special streets and markets for every kind of goods, commencing with the dearest and descending to the cheapest. The traders in silk have their especial rooms, just as the traders in lacquer, boots, cloth, and leather, have theirs."

The character of the city and its citizens has not changed, and in Moscow the visitor will see some of the finest bazaars in the world, with thousands of shops like the Passages and Arcades, containing every variety of goods imaginable, both Russian and foreign. The finest bazaar is the New Commercial Bazaar, fronting the Red Square, a former scene of bloodshed, executions and torture during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. But the sad and terrible past

GATEWAY TO THE "KETAI-GOROD."

The *Ketai-Gorod* (the Chinese Town) is the principal commercial quarter, containing the Exchange, the Rows, or Bazaars, etc.

is now forgotten in the busy buzz of merchants from all parts of Asia and Russia buying and selling goods, or rushing backwards and forwards to carry out their orders.

A visit to the New Commercial Rows, built in the old Russian style of architecture, gives one a good idea of the enormous trade carried on by the merchant-princes of the city.

Their methods of doing business and their commercial ethics are peculiarly Oriental, and show more than anything else the Tartar strain in the Russian race. Merchants, unless they have come much in contact with West European men of business, have no fixed price for their wares. *They get all they can!* The unsuspecting foreigner, believing himself in Europe, sometimes comes off very badly in these transactions. Like our friend the *droski* driver, or *isvostchik*, the Muscovite merchant generally asks about twice the price he expects to receive. Should he by chance gain his demand, it will cause him, also like the

isvostchik, the greatest chagrin he did not ask more! The best plan is to offer a typical Muscovite trader half what he asks, and then gradually bargain until you have got him to accept a fair price.

But if you wish to rise high in the favour of the Muscovite (*Kooptze*), who, despite his peasant exterior, may be exceedingly wealthy, you would do wisely to invite him to the nearest *tracter* (tea-shop), and there talk shop and business until you come to terms.

Moscow is a city of millionaires! It must be remembered, however, that their millions are generally counted in roubles, and not *in pounds!* Among the wealthy manufacturers and capitalists may be mentioned Mamontoff, Cloodoff, Savve Morozoff, Von Dervis, and many others. Morozoff alone employs 60,000 workmen in his numerous cotton-mills in Moscow, Tver, and other manufacturing centres.

It is a remarkable fact that many of these *kooptzee*, or peasant merchants, are unable to write, but notwithstanding this drawback

they manage to carry their enormous business transactions in their heads. There is little doubt that many of the real Russian peasants are exceedingly intelligent, and, given the opportunity, they can soon become merchants, manufacturers, bankers, or even occupy civic and high official positions with ability.

If St. Petersburg is a city of appearances, Moscow is one of realities. The good orthodox Muscovites in their hearts despise Petersburg and its natives. They say that the capital is neither fish, flesh, nor fowl—not a foreign city and not a Russian one, like Holy Mother Moscow. There is some ground for this feeling of superiority; for, as a rule, the Muscovite is richer than he appears to be, while the Petersburger has such expensive tastes that he is usually poorer than he looks. Petersburg is, in fact, a city of appearances, and just before the monthly "pay-day" comes round the Government official—who is as conspicuous in the capital as the merchant is in Moscow—generally finds himself "on the rocks." Were it not

for that friendly institution, "The Lombard," which is practically a pawn-shop on a large scale, it would be almost impossible for him to survive; for generally on the 20th, the Government pay-day, he is "on the rocks."

The genuine Muscovite, or native of Moscow in this sense, does not believe in an ostentatious display. The people even pride themselves, when well-to-do, in going about in clothes of peasant cut, although, perhaps, of somewhat better material. How frequently it happens that the simple peasant-merchant, attired in his long blue *kaftan* and top-boots—he who invites you to the nearest *tracter* for a cup of tea—is worth millions, while the gilded *frant*, who dashes about the town in a costly equipage, dines at the best hotels, and drinks champagne *ad lib.*, would not be worth a *sou* if sold up! Such is life, everywhere, perhaps!

The Russian peasant-merchant, who, owing to his ignorance and low origin, is not overscrupulous in business, has, nevertheless, many excellent qualities.

THE NOVOE DEVITCH, OR VIRGINS' NUNNERY, NEAR MOSCOW.

Founded in 1524 by the Grand Duke Vaseli Ivanovitch in commemoration of the union of Smolensk with the Grand Duchy of Moscow. In 1610 it was attacked by the Poles, and in 1611 by the Cossacks, who stripped the nuns, and burnt and plundered the nunnery.

Should he by chance take a personal liking to a customer, especially if he is what he terms "a sympathetic person," that customer is a made man. Russian commercial men, unlike those of other nations, take a pride in doing business from sympathy—and antipathy! Once they are rich, they frequently prefer to take a very small profit, rather than do business with men they dislike, even though the latter offer them a better price than the "sympathetic" customers. It pays in Russia to assume this virtue—"sympathy"—even if one possesses it not! The peasant-merchants will undoubtedly often give a man a good order, or a chance to make a fortune, simply because he is what they call *sympateechno!* I myself knew an Englishman who amassed a large fortune in Russia on account of his "sympathy." He suffered himself to drink tea all day long in the stuffy *tracters* (tea-houses), while his merchant friends talked incessantly about goods, shares, and houses. Many of these *tracters*, be it said, are fitted up luxuriously, and possess large organs or musical-boxes

worked by clock-work. These musical-boxes, or organs, which usually play the sweet and plaintive Russian national airs, are frequently remarkable instruments, and cost as much as £300 each.

As a rule Russian merchants of the lower classes make great fortunes, not so much through their enterprise as through their remarkable capacity for saving. A peasant who makes only 1 rouble (2s.) a day often sets aside 1s. 6d., for he is able to live comfortably on 6d. a day. During the great famines which periodically scourge the country, I have myself known peasants to keep life in their bodies on 5 copeks (1d.) a day. As rye-bread, their principal diet, only costs about a halfpenny a pound, and as each man can subsist on 2 pounds of rye bread in bad times, there is little fear of the Russian peasant starving—if he will only work and cultivate his land in a rational manner. But what with Saints' days, holidays, vodki, cigarette-smoking, music, the love of pleasures, and gross ignorance and superstition to which poor Ivan Ivanovitch is un-

usually prone, it is not surprising that millions of improvident, ignorant, and drunken agriculturists come to want whenever there is a failure of the crops.

When they are thrifty, saving, and industrious, they frequently amass enormous fortunes. I myself was intimately acquainted with one who was worth about £3,000,000. On festive occasions I used to meet at his house many far richer men, accompanied by their buxom wives and comely daughters, bedecked in diamonds and jewels and lace worth thousands of pounds. The worthy merchant of my acquaintance, who was also a well-known manufacturer, was the happy father of twenty-one children, each of whom had a settlement of a million roubles (£100,000). Besides the capital mentioned, he possesses a large cotton-mill with 3,000 workmen, and numerous estates and villas in the government of Tver. In private life he was an exemplary father and husband. His spacious and beautiful house in Moscow, which was really a palace, was managed with the order

and punctuality of a large business or factory. Everyone had his appointed duty, and it had to be done, without fail, or the delinquent took his departure. The peasant-merchant in question, who was a great Churchman, had enormous faith in the efficiency of prayer and fasting. Although he would not scruple to tell a hundred lies in a business transaction, he would almost sooner die than eat anything forbidden during Lent, or during the principal fasts ordained by the Orthodox Church.

Attached to his house was a miniature church or chapel, which was a perfect blaze of costly ikons and silver candlesticks. On Sundays, high-days, and holidays, the whole family, attired in long black stoles, would adjourn to this beautiful chapel and pass a large part of the day in praying, chanting, and making deep obeisances to the Saints, while, at the same time, they kept repeating the prayer, *Gospodin Pomeelee Nas!* (The Lord have mercy upon us!). It is almost unnecessary to add that these were "old believers"—a Russian sect which is fanatically attached

THE INTERIOR OF THE CATHEDRAL OF THE SAVIOUR.

The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was erected between 1837 and 1883, in memory of the deliverance of Moscow from the French in 1812. This enormous cathedral is one of the most costly and beautiful edifices in Europe.

to the old rites and observances of the Greek Church.

When not engaged in fasting and praying, they appeared to pass their time in paying visits, sledging, dancing, and tea-drinking; for tea-drinking in Russia seems to be almost as important as church-going. In the richer merchant families, which have become Europeanized, I noticed there was very little faith, religion, or superstition. They made money rapidly, and spent it on "wine, women, and song"; they evidently believed in the adage, "A short life and a merry one." One family with which I stayed actually spent several million roubles on dinners, and in luxury and extravagance of every possible kind. Champagne flowed like water, and not infrequently dinners and suppers were given which cost as much as £300 each. On these occasions the guests ate, drank, and smoked as much as they were able, while the costly wine was served in beautiful silver and gold enamelled cups—for which the Muscovite craftsmen are so famous. The life led in this semi-aristocratic mer-

chant family was comparatively loose and disorderly.

Among the upper merchant classes, some members of which have been ennobled, they endeavour to ape the vices and extravagance of the old Russian nobility, but I regret to say they do not succeed so well in copying their virtues and refinement.

There is still in Moscow a small exclusive class of Russian nobles, who in the quiet of their old homes—built during the days of Alexander I.—or in the seclusion offered by their vast estates, which they have possessed for hundreds of years, pass their days in refined and ennobling pursuits : in reading, study, music, painting, literature, horticulture, and also in attending to their agricultural interests. It is from this rich, refined, and leisured class that such men as Pushkin, Tolstoi, Dershavin, Lermontoff and Turgenieff have come.

The merchant and professional classes are now producing many eminent men in every field of art, learning and literature, but it is chiefly in the aristocratic class that men like

Tolstoi and Turgenieff have found their origin. Dostoyeffsky and Gogol, however, who are equally great in literature, did not belong to the nobility, and though they may not possess the culture and refinement of the nobles, there is little doubt that they equal them in genius. According to many leading authorities, the Russian novelists are the greatest in the world. In painting, by the way, the Russians do not appear to hold their own, considering their gigantic population, and their long-established school of art, which dates from the days of Catherine II. Some of the greatest painters Russia has produced are Riepin, Vereschagin, Avazoffsky, Bruloff, Samokesh, Benois, Klever, Voznosensky and Semeradsky, etc.

It is not in the province of this little work to describe the sights of Moscow. To do this thoroughly a single volume would not suffice. For Moscow, despite the ravages of plague, pestilence, invasions, fire and famine, abounds in buildings of historic interest and tragic association.

The most interesting of all, perhaps, is the

Kremlin, with its churches, palaces, monasteries, theatre, mint and arsenal. The Kremlin is a "Tower of London" on a gigantic scale, and is in itself practically the heart of Russia. Around it Russia has gradually grown and increased until it now stretches from the Baltic to the Pacific.

The Kremlin is not only a citadel, but a treasure-house, full of enormous wealth and relics of priceless value. Its possessions have been slowly accumulated during many generations. The churches and towers of the Kremlin are the work of famous Italian architects who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were invited to Moscow from Florence and Venice by the Tsar, to beautify his favourite city. The Cathedral of the Assumption—which was first erected by Ivan Kolita, the clever Tsar, who outwitted the Tartars—owes its present existence to Aristotle of Florence. The same architect also built the beautiful castellated walls of the Kremlin, which have withstood many terrible sieges by Tartars, Mongols, and Poles.

The famous Cathedral of the Assumption

THE ANCIENT WALLS OF THE KREMLIN.

The most interesting portion of Moscow perhaps is the Kremlin, with its churches, palaces, monasteries, theatre, mint, and arsenal. It was in a circular space (called the "Lobnœ mjesto") opposite the red gate of the Kremlin, where Ivan the Terrible roasted, burned, boiled alive, and tortured his supposed enemies.

(Oospenija) was twice plundered, first by the Poles and then by the French. In 1812 the French carried off 325 poods of silver and 18 poods of gold ornaments and valuable treasure (*i.e.*, 105 hundredweights of silver and 720 pounds of gold). Part of this plunder was recovered by the hardy and fanatical Cossacks, who harried Napoleon's army night and day until it was utterly destroyed. A large portion of the silver and gold is now in the Kazan Cathedral of St. Petersburg, where it has been converted into a beautiful reredos of many tons in weight. Another portion of the plunder, including the great gilded cross of the Tower of Ivan the Great, according to the memoirs of Count de Ségur, was abandoned by the retreating French and thrown with other booty into a small lake on the line of march. This treasure is still said to be at the bottom of the lake, and sooner or later attempts will be made to recover it.

Among the holy treasures preserved in the Church of the Assumption is a very ancient ikon taken from Byzantium and believed to

be the work of the Apostle Luke, who, according to tradition, was not only a physician, but also a painter.

It would need a whole library to enumerate all the wonderful miracles and cures that have been effected by ikons. It is sufficient to say that the Russian peasant and peasant-merchant have as great a faith in the miraculous powers of ikons, relics, and crucifixes as our ancestors had in the Middle Ages, prior to the Reformation. If one wishes to understand the mind of the Russian peasants, his ideals and outlook on life, we must not turn to books of travel or to the works of modern novelists, but instead study the works of William Langland and Chaucer. There, in the description of the pious monks, hermits, nuns, priests, holy friars, the miracles and the pilgrimages, you have a true picture of the rural Russia of to-day.

Human nature is human nature everywhere, and it does not change—the coarse, brutal minds worship brute force ; the refined and cultured, refinement and gentleness.

CATHEDRAL OF BASIL THE BLESSED.

This remarkable church was built by an Italian architect, about 1554, whose eyes Ivan the Terrible is alleged to have put out, so that he should not erect another building similar. It did not please Napoleon, who ordered it to be blown up.

A remarkable church, full of terrible memories, is the Cathedral of Vasilii (Basil) the Blessed, built by an Italian architect to please that awful monster of iniquity, Ivan the Terrible. But strange to say, this terrible man, like our own King John—"Merry King John," or "Good King John"—was admired if not loved by the common people, who seem to love that which inspires them with fear.

It is said that Ivan the Terrible was so pleased with the Italian architect who built the Cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed, that he first embraced him for erecting it after his fancy; but fearing he might build another such atrocity for some rival monarch, coolly ordered his executioners to burn out his eyes! This was a mild punishment compared with others he inflicted on his own favoured subjects, whom he frequently hanged, quartered, and impaled in the great Red Square before the Red Gate.

Tastes differ in architecture as in other things. Napoleon, with his fine classic instincts, when he first saw Ivan the Terrible's

"nightmare," as I have heard it called, gave the laconic order: "Blow up that mosque!"

His sappers did attempt to blow up the Gate of the Saviour, overlooking the Red Square. The fuse, however, would not burn, and thus this beautiful specimen of Florentine architecture was saved, as well as the spire and clock surmounting it. This clock was the work of an Englishman named Galloway or Halloway.

On entering the Holy Gate, which leads direct into the Kremlin, everyone is expected to take off his hat in deference to the holy and miraculous ikon of the Saviour over the archway. If you should fail in this act of reverence, then woe betide you! For some zealous champion of the true faith, or the superstitious sentry on guard, will knock it off for you, or perhaps you may fare even worse.

On beholding the massive battlements and walls of the Kremlin, one cannot refrain from thinking how often their bases have been drenched with torrents of human blood,

THE BEAUTIFUL GARDENS AND WALLS OF THE KREMLIN.

With a view of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, erected between 1837- and 1883 in memory of the delivery of Moscow from the French in 1812. The Cathedral of the Saviour is considered one of the finest examples of Byzantine architecture in Europe.

and how the now peaceful and sunlit air has been rent by the shrieks of the wounded and the dying. When one remembers that the Kremlin has been taken three times, and once by the dreaded Tartar, Khan Tochtamish, one can picture to oneself what its white-stoned walls have witnessed. On this occasion the fear inspired by the Tartars was so great that the terrified Muscovites thronged madly into the Kremlin through the Gate of the Saviour in three separate tiers, walking over the heads of one another in their eagerness to escape death.

Who would have thought that these beautiful churches and monasteries, now full of devout worshippers and venerable priests, were converted by the unbelieving French into stables in 1812! But according to the Russian Chronicles: "God soon put an end to all this! In the night of the 3rd September, a flame arose over Moscow!" We know the sequel, and the heroic and terrible fate of the Grand Army, with its 600,000 soldiers.

It is now a hundred years since Napoleon

quitted Moscow, but that great event still lives in the minds of thinking men.

The Russians will never forget October 12, when they were finally delivered from the "Twelve Tongues," the strange name they give for the twelve nationalities comprising the Grand Army.

A remarkable and historic building, which the traveller must not forget, is the Church of the Archangels, the burial-place of the Muscovite Tsars from Ivan Kalita (Ivan the Purse) to Ivan Alexsevitch, the brother of Peter the Great.

The Church of the Annunciation (Blagovschensky Sobor), with its nineteen gilded cupolas often blazing in the sunlight, is also worth a visit, especially as all the Muscovite Tsars from time immemorial have been married in this quaint and ancient edifice.

The smaller Church of the Saviour-on-the-Hill (Spas-na-Gora) is the oldest and archæologically the most interesting sacred building in the Kremlin; while the highest, and probably the most unique, is the enormous tower, or belfry, of Ivan the Great

(Ivan Veleike). It was erected by Boris Goodunoff, the murderer of the Tsarevitch Dmitry, and the Tartar usurper of the throne of Ivan the Terrible. It reaches a height of 260 feet, and formerly contained a bell which weighed 200 tons. During a great fire this enormous bell fell from the belfry and was broken. No attempts have since been made to recast it; it was found to be far too heavy for the purpose for which it was originally intended.

The Russians are inordinately fond of bells and bell-ringing. Some of the finest bells in the world are cast in Russia, especially at Jaroslaff. If one delights in bell-ringing, one need only go and spend a week in Moscow during the great festivals of the Church. There are bells of every kind and description, both big and little, banging and clanging, ringing and singing, without rhythm or harmony. A perfect pandemonium is produced when, in addition to the bells, the great cannon of the Kremlin are fired; one is reminded of Tchaikoffsky's symphony "1812," which was inspired by the remark-

able scene that takes place every Easter at the Kremlin, when the long and severe Lenten fast comes to an end. Then Moscow, tired of sackcloth and ashes, fasting and prayer, awakes with new animation. Life again is sweet and enjoyable, and no longer a vale of tears, but a pleasant banqueting-hall, or valley of delight, for the time being. The strict diet prescribed during the fast is forgotten, and the flesh-pots of Egypt, including pastry, curds, and cakes, are washed down with strong drink or refreshing glasses of tea and lemon. Hot pancakes, swimming in melting butter, and inlaid with fresh caviare from Astrachan, are devoured in piles, accompanied with plentiful libations of wine, *vodka*, and *kvass*. Everyone eats his fill, for if you do not stuff yourself like a Strasburg goose, with pancakes, *zakooska*, and various other delicacies, your hosts are offended, and think you wish to slight them. These are grand times for those lucky mortals favoured with the digestion of an ostrich. But for ordinary beings they are extremely trying. The doctors and apothe-

THE BELL-MARKET AT NISHNI-NOVGOROD.

The Russians are very proud of their bells. Some of the largest and finest bells in the world are to be found in Russia.

caries, however, bless the happy Easter holidays; for directly they are over they are crowded with patients and customers, all begging to be freed from the maladies of their own creation. Many die; but what is to be done? They have but obeyed a good old custom, and it is the will of God they should die, and that is all!

In addition to the churches, the monasteries and palaces deserve visiting; but there are so many that it is impossible to describe them. The Tchoodoff Monastery, founded in 1365, was sacked by the "ungodly French," to whom, in Russia, nothing was sacred. It is a picturesque pile.

One of the most interesting palaces in the Kremlin is the Ooroosheny Palat (Palace of Arms). The Imperial Regalia, the Cap of Vladimir Monomach, presented by the Emperor of Byzantium in the tenth century, the orb, the sceptre, the sword, the Imperial standard, and all the Imperial crowns and robes, are lodged here, together with one of the finest collections of arms and armour in the world.

Outside of this palace, ranged along the walls, stand the 1,400 brass and iron cannon taken from the Grand Army during its fearful retreat from Moscow.

Napoleon failed, but the ideas of freedom, equity, and justice which he spread broadcast over Europe have borne fruit. When Napoleon entered Moscow and declared the Russian people free, men and women were then being sold at 6 roubles apiece, the price of a stuffed fox. Half a century passed before this great injustice to humanity was done away with by the noble and humane Alexander II. His temerity cost him his life; those who had been embittered and ruined by his great reforms never forgave him. But he did not live in vain, and the beautiful monument erected in the Kremlin to his memory recalls the great work of the Tsar Emancipator.

In fifty years a nation cannot break off the fetters which have bound it for centuries; not only the body must be emancipated, but the soul also. The soul of the Russian people is gradually being emanci-

pated and springing into life. The great nation of 112,000,000 peasants is slowly, but surely, finding a voice, and, when it does, the astonished people of Europe will be conscious of a new force whose very existence they never dreamed of. We have heard much about aristocratic, autocratic, and military Russia; but the greatest Russia of all—peasant Russia—has still to play its part in history.

Railway Travelling in Russia.

There is probably no country in Europe where railway travelling is so cheap as in Russia. For about £7 10s. one can travel about 4,000 miles, first-class; for £4 10s. the same distance second-class, and for £3 as far third-class. In fact, as an Irishman might put it, "The further you travel the less it costs you," and so it does, in a sense; but I might as well add that third-class travelling in Russia is *dear at any price*, on account of the stifling atmosphere of the carriages and the undesirable and lively

company of all kinds frequently to be met there, especially those that never pay their fare!

Thanks to the introduction of the Zone Tariff by a brilliant and accomplished statesman, Count Witte, it is extremely easy to travel the length and breadth of Russia for a small outlay. Owing to the existence of this system, the Siberian farmers are able to pour their produce into the English markets and compete with our farmers on better terms than they can make with our own railway companies. As a rule, railway travelling in Russia is exceedingly slow; the Russians are great believers in the national proverb, *Techa jedish dalshe boodesh.* (Go slowly and you will get further.) They object to being rushed, on principle, and it is a fact that the merchants in a South Russian town actually sent in a complaint to the railway authorities, "because the trains suddenly and unexpectedly, to their great disgust and surprise, commenced to run too punctually, causing them inconvenience!" Before starting on a railway

WINTER "KIBITKA," OR COVERED SLEDGE.

It is drawn by two horses, harnessed in tandem fashion. In Russia sleighing is delightful, especially when drawn by a *troika*, three swift horses harnessed abreast.

journey, they love to meet at the beautiful buffets for which the Russian stations are noted, to gossip and regale the inner man with Pekoe tea flavoured with lemon, and eat caviare, meat pies, and other delicacies. As a rule, Russian buffets on the principal railways surpass anything I have seen in England as regards cheapness and variety of food. This being the case, the passenger embraces every opportunity to get out of the train and enjoy the good things of the land as he passes through it on his journey. Most of these buffets are in the hands of Tartars, who, when uncontaminated with orthodox Christian weaknesses, are very honest, reliable, and temperate.

In order to obtain a good idea of the enormous extent, agricultural wealth, and resources of Russia, one could not do better than travel from Moscow to Rostoff on the Don, one of the principal ports of Southern Russia.

The further you travel southward from Moscow you observe that the country is extremely fertile and productive, quite

unlike the barren and rocky governments of the North, with their poor soil and long and dreary winters. The large fields, covering many thousands of acres of territory, are a striking feature of the landscape. The whole of this southern region appears to be extremely sparingly supplied with forests, which have evidently long ago been cut down by the ignorant and improvident peasantry.

After a while this scenery becomes very monotonous and exceedingly uninteresting, and apparently as flat as a billiard table. The traveller passes a great number of Russian churches, with their cream-white walls and green cupolas. From the railway carriage the peasants are distinctly seen in the fields dressed in their red blouses, busy ploughing the land or leading the cattle home.

Shortly after leaving Moscow for the South, the traveller reaches the thriving industrial town of Toula, famous for its manufacture of *samovars*, small-arm factories and cutlery. It is frequently called the "Birmingham of Russia," but I must confess

I have no very high opinion of the quality of its small-arms, judging from the wretched specimen of a revolver I purchased when last passing through this town. It was cheaply and carelessly made, and did not possess that finish one finds in English and American weapons.

The Russian workman is generally very intelligent and works cheaply ; but he is so extremely careless that he has to be carefully watched at his work. With him everything is *netchevo*, and this quality of *netchevoism*—if I may so term it—is too often seen in his work. *Netchevo* is a favourite Russian expression, and means "nothing," "never," "all the same," "good, bad, wretched," according to the stress and intonation one puts on the word. It is on this account one of the most convenient words in any language.

The traveller in Russia is lost in astonishment at the perfect English spoken by many members of the Russian aristocracy. I have frequently met Russian Princes and noblemen who speak our language as well as many

English, and far better than the majority. There is not the least doubt that the Russians have peculiar aptitude for languages ; but I believe their proficiency is more due to their system of teaching than to any special talent ; for I have observed that Englishmen, when brought up in Russia under the same educational methods obtaining among Russian upper and middle classes, are equally proficient at languages. As the English are such a very mixed race, they ought to be good linguists, and I believe they would be if they would give languages the same serious thought and application as they do on the Continent.

The further one travels south from Moscow, the country becomes more and more undulating. The people are almost as different as the scenery. The majority of the men and women one meets at the railway stations south of Moscow are extremely dark—almost as swarthy as Italians. Fair types are rare, and the blue-eyed, fair-skinned Russians of the northern government are conspicuous by their absence. In passing through this part

A PRIMITIVE PLOUGH.

The further one travels southward from Moscow the more one observes the extreme fertility and productiveness of the country. The large fields, covering many thousands of acres of territory, are a striking feature of the landscape.

of Russia one's eyes are gladdened by the sight of vast plains covering thousands and thousands of acres of corn, or as far as the eyes can reach fertile plains, on which great herds of cattle are browsing. This is Little Russia the Blessed, the beautiful Ukraine, the famous land of the Little Russians and Cossacks.

If the Russian mechanic cannot make a first-class revolver, he is quite a genius as regards the manufacture of *samovars* (tea-urns). Toula alone turns out from its workshops 200,000 *samovars*, probably worth above £350,000.

But the government of Toula is of more interest to humanity at large as being the scene of the life and work of that great and good man Count Leo Tolstoi, with whom the writer lived and laboured during the great famine of 1901-2, when, owing to successive droughts and the consequent failure of the crops, about 300,000 peasants perished.

Yasnaja Poljana, the ancestral home of the Tolstois, is situated a few miles from Toula; but since the death of this greatest

writer and philanthropist, its name is gradually commencing to be heard less and less on the lips of men. In a few years the only interest it will possess in the minds of men will be that it was here that one of the greatest, bravest, and most gifted men of the twentieth century was laid to rest—Count Leo Nikolaiëvitch Tolstoi, the Russian *moujik's* friend and benefactor.

Count Tolstoi was not only the foremost novelist of his time, but, like so many Russians of birth and education, an accomplished linguist.

INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY OF THE HOLY VIRGIN AT NISHNI-NOVGOROD.

The screen, or *ikonostate*, is elaborately carved and gilded, and on it the holy pictures are arranged in three tiers. The doors in the centre called the Royal Doors, are heavily gilt, and for the most part are kept closed, but are opened at one part of the religious ceremony, revealing the sanctuary.

CHAPTER V

LITTLE RUSSIA THE BLESSED

WHAT would Russia be without Little Russia? It would be England shorn of all that beautiful land south of the Thames, for Little Russia, the Crimea, and the Caucasus are the garden of the Tsar's dominions. The climate of this portion of Russia proper is, comparatively speaking, soft and temperate, while the black soil (*tchernyzem*), which gives its name to the whole belt of land south of the Volga to the Carpathians, is fertile beyond belief. All that is wanted to make this vast territory "blossom like the rose" is water and the labour of man; for there, thanks to the mysterious agency of air, soil, and the hot summer sun, everything grows in plenty; birds, game, cattle, and fish are also found in abundance.

Unlike Great Russia, with its sombre pine forests and its villages of log-huts, often destitute of any foliage to beautify them, the villages in Little Russia, with their clean white thatched cottages, surrounded by fruit gardens and stately poplars, present a beautiful and idyllic picture. These villages are generally dotted along the banks of the great rivers—the Dnieper, the Don, the Dniester, and their many tributaries—or glistening at night like miniature lighthouses on the steep sides of the Steppes.

In the autumn, wherever one wanders in this much-favoured region, the air seems filled with the odour of hay, wheat, and other cereals, which grow in abundance. The fields of sunflowers are a peculiar feature of Little Russian scenery. The sunflower seed in Russia has numerous uses. It is not only used for feeding chickens, but the rich oil—squeezed from the seed—is used for food, and also for illuminating purposes. Again, the seeds are used as nuts, and when the Little Russian has nothing better to do, he spends his time chewing them. But, as a

TYPICAL RUSSIAN CHURCH AT OOGLITCH, ON THE VOLGA.

Erected on the spot where the Tsarevitch Dmitry, the son of Ivan the Terrible and the last Prince of the Rurik Dynasty, was assassinated by order of Boris Goodunoff, the Tartar Usurper.

rule, his favourite pipe is his main diversion; for the Little Russians are inveterate smokers. It was, in fact, a Little Russian Hetman, who, while in Turkey, became so infatuated with Lady Nicotine that he exchanged his turbulent wife for a pipe and a leaf of tobacco.

It was another Hetman, Taras Bulba, described in the glowing pages of Gogol, who lost his life for the sake of his pipe — when the angry Poles were in hot pursuit.

Who can forget—if he "hath music in his soul"—those wonderful and weird moonlight nights, the songs of the nightingale among the woods and copses surrounding the peaceful villages of Little Russia the Blessed, or the healthy, dark, sunburnt peasant girls in their beautiful embroidered costumes, and their thick dark hair decorated with wild flowers and gay ribbons. The sweet and plaintive songs sung by these *dirchat* (maidens) and their *paroobok* (swains) in the villages and in the fields are heard from early morn till eve, for the robust vitality

and joy of living which fill the deep breasts of the *chocol* (Little Russians) can only find an outlet in song and dance. In the songs, which are singularly sweet and quaint, the peasants not only recall the ancient and stirring history of the "Good Old Cossack Days," but each phase of ordinary everyday life. Some of the songs remind one of old English madrigals, and were probably influenced by the culture of the old Court of Poland, which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was in close touch with the Courts of Italy, England, and France.

There are others, however, which are distinctly original and written in a major key, like those of other nations. This particularly applies to some of the Cossack songs, for the Cossacks, never having been oppressed and crushed like the Great Russians, have in consequence far livelier music than their cousins in the North.

Little Russia is a great place for holidays, and forms an ideal retreat for those who do not believe in too much work. In some parts of Southern Russia there are as many

as 180 holidays a year, "when it is a sin to work." In North Russia, where the soil is frequently very poor and the climate severe, this zeal for the worship of the Saints leads to a great deal of poverty, and the same would be the case with Little Russia were it not for the extreme richness of the black earth which produces everything in abundance.

How many Saints' days and holidays there are in Little Russia I am unable to say with accuracy, for they vary according to each government, and the piety, or, rather, superstition, of its inhabitants. But they are very numerous, and so long as this is the case, the Little Russian peasant, in company with his compatriot in the northern governments, will never be blessed with too much of this world's goods.

The Little Russians are also noted for their great faith in Christ and the Saints, although it must be confessed that their religion is mixed with a very plentiful admixture of superstition of the darkest kind, similar to that which obtained in England

and France during the Middle Ages. The following anecdote gives one a better idea of the confused religious ideas of the Cossacks and Little Russian peasantry than anything I know:

A Cossack once, whilst riding alone in the country, was suddenly overtaken by a violent thunderstorm. The lightning flashed around him, whilst his ears were deafened by the violent crashes of thunder, which thrilled him with superstitious terror. "Holy St. Nicholas, great, holy, *dear* St. Nicholas!" he prayed, "my beloved patron, save me in my dire need, and I will give you as many candles as I can get for this horse I am now riding on!"

The patron Saint, influenced by this generous offer, protected the Cossack from the dangers that encircled him.

On the following day our friend the Cossack was seen busy in the market-place. He was leading a horse by the bridle, and carrying a cock under his arm.

"What are you selling, Cossack?" inquired the people.

"A cock and a horse," he replied. "But I will not sell one without the other."

"How much do you want for them?" inquired a would-be purchaser.

"I want 200 roubles for the cock, but you shall have the horse for 30 copecks (6d.).

The Cossack soon found a buyer, and, faithful to his promise, he went and purchased wax tapers for 30 copecks, which, with the greatest reverence, he lighted before the ikon of the holy St. Nicholas. It thus appears that a Cossack will not only endeavour to cheat the devil, but even his patron Saint, should he have the chance!

On holidays and Saints' days in Little Russia everyone is astir early, either going to church or returning from the sacred edifice. The men and women dress in their beautiful embroidered costumes, and make the most of the occasion.

The young men are not to be outdone by the maidens, and are to be seen in groups, swaggering about in their black velvet trousers, tucked into their polished top-boots. They also wear beautiful linen shirts

or blouses, gaily decorated with flowers, stars, and other designs, embroidered in cross-stitch work. On their heads the men usually don a high sheepskin cap made of Astrachan or Karikool wool. A red silk or cotton sash encircles the waists of these South Russian dandies, and with the tassels of their sashes gaily hanging from the side, they look both attractive and rakish.

In appearance the Little Russians, who number about 12,000,000 souls, are entirely unlike the Great Russians. They are usually much taller, averaging about from 5 feet 8 inches to 6 feet. They have mostly round heads, dark complexions, brown eyes, and long straight noses, whilst the typical Great Russian, the man who has made the Russian Empire what it is, is of medium stature, fair-haired and blue-eyed, with ruddy or fair complexion. The Little Russians delight in shaving their beards, and love to wear a long, heavy moustache pointing downwards. Shefshenko, the poet, and the late Prince Bismarck—who was probably of Vendish or Slavonic origin, like so many Prussians—were

typical Little Russians in appearance. It is on these bullet-headed, bull-necked Little Russians, who have for centuries supplied the main contingent to the Cossack legions of the Tsar, and who have now spread from the banks of the peaceful Don to the Pacific, that the task of maintaining order in the Tsar's dominions devolves.

According to the Great Russians, the Little Russian is remarkable for his laziness and inertness. One of their proverbs states that the *Khochol* (Little Russian) and the ox are two brothers. But this comparison is hardly fair, for when we think of the great extremes of the climate of Little Russia—the intense cold of their winters and the fearful heat of their summer months—we can hardly call the *Khochol* lazy.

As soon as the weather permits, the Little Russian is seen at his work, ploughing the heavy fields with his three pairs of oxen, for the black earth of Little Russia is so heavy that it requires a deep and heavy plough to work it. But the soil, though so hard to till, is exceedingly productive, and amply

repays the farmer for the labour he puts into it.

As soon as the snow melts in the spring, which is a month earlier than in Northern Russia, you will see the Little Russian, from dawn till eve, busy sowing his fields with peas, beans, clover, garlic, barley, oats, wheat, rye, tobacco, and many other plants, which in Little Russia grow in the greatest abundance. All the above-mentioned plants and cereals have to be sown on certain Saints' days, and often in conjunction with various heathen ceremonies and incantations: "otherwise the yield will not be plentiful."

Although the Little Russians may appear heavy in their movements, like oxen, they are, nevertheless, exceedingly industrious, when once they make up their minds *to work*. From sunrise to sunset in the summer you can see them busy labouring in the fields, and in the autumn busy reaping with heavy scythes, almost without rest or interruption. In order to wield a scythe from sunrise to sunset, with only a few short intervals for rest, when they drink *vodki* and

"TSAR-KOLOKOL" (THE TSAR OF BELLS) AT THE FOOT OF THE TOWER OF IVAN THE GREAT.

The "Tsar Kolokol" weighs about 12,000 poods (*circ.* 200 tons). It was cast in 1735, but broken during a fire in 1737, when the tower on which it was hung was seriously damaged. In falling from the tower it was broken, and never recast.

eat some rye bread with garlic or cucumber, they must indeed be like oxen as regards strength and endurance.

During the harvest-time the yield is so plentiful and labour so scarce that almost every man, woman, or child who can be made use of is summoned to assist in gathering the rich yield of rye, wheat, oats, buckwheat, barley, millet, and other cereals, which forms the reward of the agriculturist.

It frequently happens, however, that the harvest is so abundant and the labourers so few that it has to rot in the fields. In order to remedy this evil, about 150,000 to 200,000 reapers (*kosare*) go south from the northern governments every year to help to gather in the rich harvest of Little Russia the Bountiful.

These workmen travel enormous distances in special trains at ridiculously low fares, probably cheaper than in any country in Europe; for the Russian working classes cannot afford the luxury of such high fares as in England and France. In fact, the fares in Russia are so very low, since the introduc-

tion of the zone tariffs, that it is ahead of the rest of Europe as regards cheapness of railway travelling.

But to return to Little Russia. The field work generally continues throughout June, July, and August, when it is time to gather in the enormous crops of water-melons and pumpkins which grow in this favoured country in the open air with the same profusion as turnips and mangel-wurzels do in England. Melons and water-melons are so cheap that they can be purchased for 2d. a couple, and grapes at a 1d. a pound. Thousands of tons of tobacco of every quality, ranging from the cheapest *machorka* to the finest Turkish, is also grown in South Russia and the Caucasus.

The crops of Indian corn and beetroot must also not be forgotten, without speaking of the acres upon acres of grapes, which, after being pressed, are converted into wine, and ultimately find their way to England in the form of French claret and Burgundy. (South Russia, the Crimea, and the Caucasus are great wine-producing centres.)

From the above it is evident that agriculture in Little Russia is everything—in fact, the life and soul of this marvellous country, which, if properly cultivated, might feed the half of Europe.

The life of the farmer means contentment, joy, health, strength, and sustenance to the Little Russian, just as work in the vast forests and on the mighty rivers and lakes is the ideal of the Great Russians of the North. Agriculture gives the Little Russian all that he desires in life.

If one should happen to enter a log-hut of a hardy and half-starved peasant of Northern Russia, one would probably be only able to obtain black bread, cabbage soup (*tche*), tea, sugar, and sometimes, on rare occasions, meat, butter, and eggs. But in Little Russia, in this land of plenty, you will find in the huts of the peasants many kinds of bread, wholesome porridge, milk, bacon, poultry, fish, vegetables, fruit, cream, eggs, and many other edibles which are considered luxuries in the cold and bleak governments of the North.

The Little Russian peasants are almost self-supporting, not only as regards the necessities of life, but also its luxuries. In the gardens surrounding their white-walled cottages they not only grow fruit and vegetables, but tobacco, and all the herbs they require either for culinary purposes or for medicine. Their handy and industrious housewives, who keep their cottages scrupulously clean, make their own cloth and linen, whilst the men manufacture excellent leather out of the skins of the sheep, cattle, and goats on their farms. With the aid of cochineal and various dyes made from plants which grow in their fields and gardens, they colour the red, yellow and blue leather they use for their boots and harness.

When one takes into consideration the peculiar climate of Little Russia and the variety and quantity of the work carried out by the Little Russian peasantry, one can hardly call them idle—except when faced by circumstances over which they have no control. As regards cleanliness, they, as well as their cottages, are scrupulously clean.

THE TSAR CANNON IN THE KREMLIN.

Little Russia the Blessed

One reads in the pages of Gogol how the Cossacks of the past delighted in wearing clothes of rich material and arms of the finest workmanship. This love of fine clothes and display is a peculiar feature in the character of the Little Russians.

They are also very fond of *good* living, and, during the holidays, which are so numerous, their tables groan with all kinds of meat, poultry, soup, meat pies, pancakes, pastries, curds, cream, fruit, preserves, honey, and many other luxuries.

Throughout the Holy Land of Roos, which is perhaps the most hospitable country in Europe, the liberality and hospitality of the Little Russians, especially during their numerous holidays, stands pre-eminent.

As soon as the heavy field work is over, the young people prepare to make merry. The young swains and maidens, attired in their brilliant costumes, collect every evening in the various cottages of their friends in turns, and spend the fleeting hours in dance, song, and merriment. On these occasions the warm-blooded youth of the Ukrain indulge

in their wild Cossack dances, frequently until the dawn of the early morn, when it is time to retire to rest.

Before the holidays, the old women, as well as the young housewives, busy themselves cleaning the cottages, washing and polishing the dishes, and cooking, baking, smoking, and getting everything ready for the approaching fête.

Christmas is a season of special rejoicing, and the preparations that are made for that holiday, which is also called the "Holy Eve," are astonishing to many of us lukewarm Christians of the West, for whom the feast days of the Church are but conventional observances, and not a religious necessity. On these occasions, all the members of a South Russian household attire themselves in their finest linen apparel, whilst the holy ikons (*obrazee*) are gaily dressed with ribbons, roses, and beautifully embroidered towels with lace edges. Candles and tapers of various colours are also placed before the ikons, before which everyone entering a cottage makes a deep obeisance, and crosses himself devoutly.

BRIDGE OF BOATS OVER THE OKA AT NISHNI-NOVGOROD.

The scene of the largest mediæval fair in Europe. The fair begins at the end of July and finishes about the middle of September, and occupies the low-lying land between the Volga and the Oka.

It would take too long to discuss the numerous and quaint customs which are observed on this most sacred occasion, but to those who are interested in the life of the Little Russians, the study of Gogol, or of Shefshenko, the poet, would be instructive and entertaining. Of these two great geniuses, Gogol may well be compared to Dickens and Shefshenko to Robert Burns. Shefshenko's sad but beautiful poems describing his beloved Ukraine are now being published in our tongue.

The Little Russians are still living in the days of the sixteenth century, and if one takes up the pages of Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream," with their descriptions of fairies, wood sprites, elves, witches, and hobgoblins, one gets a better idea of life among the peasants of Little Russia than in pages of modern descriptive matter; for in Shakespeare's remarkable play all the weird atmosphere, the poetry, and superstition of that remarkable period of national life are faithfully reflected as in a mirror.

Although the South Russians are Orthodox

Christians, a stranger, on studying their quaint superstitions and beliefs, must admit that they are still pagans in many respects; for they observe most of the old customs that obtained in Russia among their Scythian, Sarmatian and Gothic forebears. They greet the approaching spring with songs of surpassing beauty and interest, with games, ring-dances, and various quaint ceremonies, which may have been introduced among them by the ancient Greeks, whose commercial relations and intercourse with South Russia before the Christian era were probably far more intimate than they are now. It must be remembered that Little Russia in those early days was the granary of Athens, and the old Greeks, in return for their produce, furnished the races that then inhabited South Russia with beautiful works of art, which are continually being dug up in the countless tumuli that add such a weird charm to this strange but little-known country, the home of forgotten races. It is astonishing that the strict observance of holidays and feasts in Little Russia goes hand

A BEAUTIFUL SPECIMEN OF OLD RUSSIAN ARCHITECTURE.

The house of the Abbot (*Igumen*) of Moscow, built by Pozdjeff, a celebrated Russian architect. The interior of this house is as striking and original as its exterior.

in hand with the wildest and most strange superstitions, many of which are remarkably like those that still exist in some parts of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

They are also firm believers in the existence of treasure trove, which sometimes can only be found with the aid of the devil, or one of his satellites. The constant attempts of the Little Russian peasant to outwit the Evil One and get the better of his wicked machinations is a perpetual feature of interest in Little Russian stories.

In Little Russia there is a whole week when the devil and his *entourage* play high jinks with men and animals. There is also a week when the beautiful Roosalke (water-nymphs) lure men and women to their destruction. Then woe betide the unfortunate swain who, in the soft moonlight, approaches too near the rivers and ponds, where these dangerous maidens abound! Without more ado they drag him beneath the waves into their subterranean caves and palaces, and there "tickle him to death," which is really more than a joke.

The Roosalke, according to the Little Russians, are either the souls of those who have committed suicide, or of unbaptized infants. They are always extremely beautiful, possessing voluptuous physical charms, and long dishevelled hair, decorated with jewels, leaves, and flowers. Those who have committed suicide have green locks reaching below their knees!

On Trinity Sunday these interesting but dangerous maidens emerge from the rivers and lakes, and shamelessly sit on the banks, or linger in the forest glades, and there for a whole week pass their time swinging on the branches of trees, combing their long hair, singing doleful and seductive songs.

On the above-mentioned day all the witches of Little Russia—and they are legion—assemble on the top of the Lisoi Hill at Kieff, and carry on in a most diabolical manner, just as they did on Valpurgis Night on the Brocken, in the presence of Faust and that arch-deceiver, Mephistopheles.

Not content with these shameful proceed-

ings, they turn themselves sometimes into a cat, and at others into a dog, pig, kettle, or any other thing they find handy. Every now and then in South Russian villages the report goes round that some damsel, who does not get married in time, has been bewitched, and then there is a wild hunt for the evil-doer in the village in question; for surely if a maiden does not marry, when that blissful times comes, she has been bewitched by some rival, who, with the aid of the Evil One, has cast a spell on her. The culprit on these occasions is surely a witch, and as witches have tails, many a maiden—old and young—suffer considerable personal inconvenience and indignity before the villagers are quite satisfied that she is not the offending party, and does not carry on her person the sign of her profession.

More terrible than the witches, who bewitch unfortunate maidens, and prevent them marrying, are the cruel vampires (*oopere*), their offspring, who devour the corpses of the dead, and suck the blood of the living! All these fearsome creatures—

witches, devils, wood-sprites, Roosalke, hob-goblins, etc.—meet together in the forests on the night of St. John, and then, with shrieks, yells, and laughter, amid unearthly noises, hold "high revelry by night." On this terrible eve, such mortals as have the temerity to risk their souls and bodies amongst such unholy company may find untold treasure hidden in the forest; but how few there are who dare run such awful risks!

The marriage and other customs of the Little Russians are as interesting as their quaint superstitions. As a rule, young married couples in Little Russia do not live with their parents, but each couple in their own little cottage, which, I am told, does not cost more than ten or fifteen pounds to build. Land in this favoured territory is also as cheap as the houses, and thanks to the comparative plenty of all the necessaries of life, it does not take much for a Little Russian peasant to start housekeeping.