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PICTURES

FROM

S T. P E T E R S B U R G.

BY

EDWARD JERRMANN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN

BY

FREDERICK HARDMAN.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

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LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

IN sending to press this English version of a very entertaining German volume, the translator does not feel called upon to prefix other introduction than the expression of his belief in the book's accuracy and impartiality. Mr. Jerrmann's preface explains the principles to which he has striven to adhere whilst writing of a country of which he has evidently brought away a more favourable impression than it has left upon the majority of its recent literary visitors. From his fifteenth chapter we learn what he himself by profession is,—namely, a stage-player, who passed three years in St. Petersburg as manager of a German company. The patronage he there met with was hardly calculated to cast a rose-coloured reflection on his reminiscences of the Russian capital; otherwise we might perhaps be justified in suspecting that the actor's gratitude had swayed the author's pen to undue laudation of the emperor Nicholas, of whom he is manifestly a warm admirer.

In the original German, the word "unpolitical" is prefixed to the title of this book, whose contents hardly justify its use. The political bias, if bias there be, is in a contrary direction to that traceable in most English, French, and German works published of late years, and

relating to Russia. Upon the whole, Mr. Jerrmann rather approves than blames the present order of things in that country, which he considers to be in a transition state of steady but slow improvement—the more satisfactory because slow. He does not, however, dogmatically contend for the soundness of his opinions, but will apparently be well content if his readers credit the facts with which he furnishes them, thereupon to form their own judgment. Thus much can hardly be refused to a writer who, although hitherto unknown in England, is evidently shrewd and intelligent, whose veracity we have no grounds to call in question, and to whom we are certainly indebted for a highly interesting book.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE friendly reception which several of the following sketches from St. Petersburg have already found in various journals, encourages me, in compliance with the gratifying invitation of my publishers, to place them before the public in a collective form, and with considerable augmentations. I do not deceive myself as to the difficulties of my undertaking: I know how much more is justly required from a book than from fugitive newspaper sketches; and on that account I have arranged the present volume in the unassuming form of detached pictures. I do not pretend to pass judgment; I confine myself to depicting that which I have partly seen with my own eyes, and partly derived from trustworthy sources.

The present tone of public opinion in no way discourages me. In a far more agitated time, upon my return from France, I wrote my book on Paris; and although, in many respects, it was directly opposed to the prevailing opinion of the political and social condition of France, it nevertheless met, at the hands of both readers and critics, the indulgent consideration which those may fairly claim who honestly strive after a knowledge of the truth. Now, as then, I address myself to my task in a cheerful and impartial spirit.

Observant by education, by calling, and by inclination,

and weaned, by travel and experience, from many prevalent prejudices, I noted, with careful eye, during three years' sojourn in the Russian capital, all that my social position and relations allowed me opportunity of investigating; and I here add to my observations such remarks only as are their natural and inevitable results. I put myself forward neither as moralist nor as politician. My aim is to display the customs and manners of a foreign land, with that candour and freedom of speech whose consequences certainly darkened some of the best years of my life, but of which I have never been able to divest myself. I must either speak the naked truth or be silent. In speaking of the men and things of Russia, I have exhibited them as I beheld and appreciated them. If I took a false view, it was the fault of my powers of perception, not of my will. I can see only with *my own* eyes; but the consciousness that I have in no way misrepresented what I have seen, gives me courage to present my observations to the world, at risk of running counter to the prevailing opinion of many, and of opening to prejudice a wide field of criticism. I say PREJUDICE, and I repeat the word, for on no subject have I, in enlightened Germany, heard such prejudiced opinions expressed as on the subject of Russia and its Ruler. We are more intimately acquainted with the state of China than with that of a country which commences at our frontier. To the many erroneous views with respect to Russia which have obtained wide currency amongst us, the various books published concerning that country have not a little contributed. For, independently of wilful misrepresentations, French and German writers have con-

templated the social and political circumstances of Russia with the eyes of their own nationality. This is wrong and unjust, for every country and every nation has a right to demand that it should be examined and judged from the point of view of its own peculiar idiocracy. He who refuses to take his observations from that point of view, may achieve sparkling comparisons, witty reasoning, jest and satire, but will never attain to a natural and life-like representation of the people he professes to describe.

It is with heartfelt conviction that I praise in Russia much which in Germany I should bitterly blame. Persons who have blamed those things in Russia have had before their eyes, when forming their judgment, not *Russia*, but *their own* country, *their* nationality, *themselves* in short. I have done my utmost to avoid this subjective manner of viewing things, and have endeavoured, when investigating whatever struck me as strange, to make due allowance for differences of climate and civilisation, and in the temperament and character of the people. As for the rest, I stand upon *facts*, partly historical, partly still existing, and therefore incontrovertible. My views may possibly be refuted, but the facts upon which they are based defy refutation.



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PICTURES

FROM

S T. P E T E R S B U R G.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

ST. PETERSBURG, the capital of an empire which borders on Germany; St. Petersburg, which reckons amongst its inhabitants upwards of forty thousand Germans, of whom a large proportion correspond with friends and relations in their own country; St. Petersburg, which annually receives several hundred German guests, is nevertheless as imperfectly known to us as if it lay beyond the Mountains of the Moon; and the accounts we get of it are so fabulously strange, that when we come to visit it we scarcely dare to trust the evidence of our own eyes. Even according to the sketches given by Messrs. Kohl and Pelz (*Treumund Welp*), who nevertheless abode there long enough to know better, one trembles lest one should encounter a bear on the *Newsky Perspective*, or receive in one's peaceable dwelling the visit of a famished wolf. His mind full of such erroneous anticipations, the traveller fancies himself a stage or two beyond *Christendom*, expects to make acquaintance with a semi-barbarous land, and approaches the City of the Czars with trepidation and anxiety. How startling and agreeable is the contrast, to these gloomy forebodings, of the reality that presents itself on entering the Russian capital, especially if the approach be made from the side of the sea. The beauty of the entrance into St. Petersburg cannot easily be paralleled. First,

magnificent Cronstadt, with its harbour full of countless ships, its docks without end, its remarkable towers and works, rising in wonderful strength and beauty out of the depths of the open sea, strikes us with admiration. A little further we pass the beautiful palace of Peterhof, with its delightful gardens, its pleasant park, its fairy-like buildings. After several hours' sail up stream, and after passing the splendid building appropriated to the mining school, we reach the majestic English quay, where the steamer stops, just opposite to the Exchange.

The delay occasioned by the revision of passports, before which no one is allowed to quit the vessel, and by the subsequent inspection of baggage at the custom-house, is disagreeable, especially as the glimpse one gets of the city excites the strongest desire and most impatient curiosity to examine it more closely. The annoyance of the detention is lessened, however, by the obliging courtesy with which the officials perform their duty, assisting the travellers, after its completion, to repack and arrange their property. If there be any truth in the oft-repeated tales of the horrors of the Russian custom-house, they at least can apply but to the inland frontiers, where, perhaps, Cossack usages still prevail. When entering St. Petersburg by water it is only in cases where information of fraud has been received, that harshness and severity are displayed; otherwise, and as a general rule, the treatment is considerate and humane, and might be substituted with great advantage for the petty annoyance inflicted by the Austrian customs' officers. The customary formalities at an end, it is usually still broad daylight when you reach the interior of the city. Most strangers proceed thither along the quay, across the Isaac Square, by the fine statue of Peter the Great, the imposing building of the Admiralty and the wonderful Isaac Church, to the Newsky Perspective. However much accustomed to Paris and London, the stranger cannot but be struck, impressed and delighted by the spectacle that here presents

itself to him; by the remarkable beauty of this street, its immense width, including a double line of carriage ways floored with wood, and foot paths ten or twelve feet broad—by the magnificent palaces and palatial houses bordering it on either side: by the elegance of the rows of shops, each vying with the other in luxury and richness, fronted with the clearest glass, illumined at night with floods of gaslight, and filled with the most costly objects that luxury and refinement can devise. Still more is he astonished at the constant stream of life which flows along this great artery of the city; at the throng of passengers on foot and on horseback, in carriages drawn by six and by four horses, in smaller vehicles of every kind, *in droschkis* and *istworstschiks*. If the stranger, extricating himself from this noisy bustling scene, succeeds in finding accommodation at the Hotel Coulon or the Hotel Demuth, the only foreign hotels in St. Petersburg, he may live there comfortably enough until he can settle himself in more permanent quarters. But if, through want of room at those houses, or ignorance of the locality, he betakes himself to a Russian hotel, he has speedy opportunity of studying one of the most disgraceful sides of life in St. Petersburg. Short of a forest cavern, a foreigner could hardly meet with anything more uninviting and unpleasant than the aspect of one of these caravanserais, or with anything more dismal than its arrangement and distribution. He is ushered into ill-lighted rooms, betraying a sad want of the careful and cleansing hand of a tidy hostess; and where the elegance of the furniture is by no means so great as to make amends for its extreme scantiness. The absence of anything like a bed particularly strikes him. Russian travellers do not miss this, for they invariably carry their own beds about with them, as Maximilian the First carried his coffin, and thus accustom hotel keepers to dispense with beds in their apartments. At last, after many delays, and at the urgent and agonized entreaty of the weary foreigner, such a bed is provided as the German, accustomed to

the snug eiderdown of the fatherland, shudders to contemplate. The painful impression of this first reception is but very partially surmounted, when he becomes aware of another cause of discomfort and annoyance. The attendance is simply execrable. In these Russian hotels there is seldom a living creature who can speak anything but Russian; and foreigners are at their wit's end to make themselves understood. There is little hope for English, French, and Italians. Only the German, if his good genius suggests to him to visit the kitchen, may chance to discover there a Finland woman. These are skilful cooks, and most of them speak German. He will hardly get a better supper for this, however; and ultimately will be fain to have recourse to the hospitality of his countrymen resident in St. Petersburg, and which assuredly will never fail him. If the stranger has letters, or even only a single letter, of introduction, which it is natural to suppose will in most instances be the case, he is rescued, immediately on presenting them, from the purgatory of his inn, either by the offer of a room in the friend's house to whom he is recommended or by being provided with a furnished apartment, of which there are plenty to let in St. Petersburg, chiefly in German houses, and where he will usually find himself very comfortable.

Should any one who reads these lines ever visit St. Petersburg without introduction or acquaintance, let him go to the first wine-house or *restaurateur* he meets with (there is no lack of them), and inspect the bill of fare, upon which the names of eatables and drinkables are inscribed in German as well as in Russian. In such places, too, there is generally an attendant who can speak German. Let the stranger walk in, seat himself at the first unoccupied table he comes to, and order his breakfast in German, and in rather a loud voice. He may be pretty certain that, before he has half finished his repast,—and provided he be not too entirely engrossed in its discussion—he will observe some one of the persons present call the

waiter, and whisper a few words in his ear. The waiter replies by the same sort of pantomime usually performed by a German court-chamberlain when his royal master asks him why the people do not cheer as he goes by. The *habitué*, having received this shoulder-shrugging answer to his inquiry, seems to consult a moment with his companions, then empties his glass, fills it again, rises from table, approaches the stranger, and greets him as a countryman. Some conversation ensues, and if there be anything in the new comer's mode of speaking, occupation, country, journey, or manner, to inspire the slightest interest, it may safely be wagered that before his interlocutor has emptied his glass, he has invited him to join his party. If, in the intercourse which then follows, he justifies, ever so little, the good opinion which his new acquaintance are well-disposed to entertain of him, he is asked to call upon them, and thenceforward it only depends upon him to consider their houses, if he so pleases, as his own. There is little ceremony used with anybody. A stranger is invited only once to dinner. If he does not please his entertainers, they nevertheless, for that once, endure him with a good and hospitable grace. If, upon the other hand, he makes a favourable impression, on leaving table his host says to him, with a cordial shake of the hand, "Do not wait for another invitation; your knife and fork will be laid here daily, and the oftener you come and use them, the greater the pleasure you will do us." And when this is said, the guest may feel assured that it is meant literally as spoken. Nor need he ever fear to inconvenience his hospitable entertainers; go when he will, he will be welcome. His place is ready for him: if oysters and champagne are upon table, his host smiles, well-pleased that he has come on a day of good cheer. But though beef and potatoes alone be on the board, the lady of the house betrays not a sign of vexation or embarrassment. *Enough* there always is; how it is managed I know not; but the entrance of half a dozen unforeseen guests

neither excites surprise nor occasions inconvenience. On the other hand, however homely the repast, the hostess never deems an apology requisite. What she gives is freely given, and she therefore makes sure that it will be contentedly received. How she would laugh, could she witness, in some German household in Dresden or Berlin, the housewife's deadly agony when her husband unexpectedly brings home from 'Change a friend or two to dinner. Such agony, for such a motive, is unknown in St. Petersburg; unknown, too, there, is the German custom of making trifling presents to servants as often as you take a meal in a friend's house. At Christmas and Easter it is customary to make calls at the houses of your friends, and then money is given to servants, and in handsome amounts; ten or twenty rubles to each, or even more, according to the means and inclination of the donor. If the two customs come much to the same in the end, at any rate that of the Russians is more seemly and convenient.

Conversation at Russian dinner tables is not very striking or diversified. This may be partially accounted for by the separation of the sexes. Be it observed that I here depict the manners of the middle classes. He who desires to learn those of the nobility—not only of Russia, but of the rest of Europe—has only to study the usages of Parisian society, and he then knows those of all other aristocratic societies. In the burgher circles at St. Petersburg, the two sexes usually group themselves very much apart from each other. Even at meals the gentlemen take one half of the table, and the ladies the other. I will not venture exactly to praise such an arrangement, but certainly it spares many an old greybeard, or busy merchant, engrossed with agios and percentages, the trouble of having to entertain a simpering sixteen-year-old neighbour.

The chief subjects of conversation with the ladies of St. Petersburg, at the dinner table, and in the circle they subsequently form round their coffee cups, are music, theatricals,

the gossip of the town, a very little literature, and, above all, the fashions. On this last subject they are inexhaustible, and truth demands the confession that they do not cultivate a barren soil. They do not, as many a distinguished national assembly has done, waste their time in fruitless theories. Every project devised speedily becomes an accomplished fact; plans are no sooner sketched than carried out; theory quickly blossoms into practice; no undertaking is too difficult, no obstacle insurmountable, no sacrifice too great for these devoted priestesses of the Graces.

Amongst the men at St. Petersburg the talk is of their business, of art, science, and politics. Of the latitude of conversation on this latter subject, we, in Germany, have no idea. Our notion is, that politics are a prohibited topic in the Russian capital. Nor is the notion altogether erroneous, for in public one does not hear them discussed. But did any one hear them discussed publicly in Germany until before the events of March? And did not the places of public amusement in Germany offer a thousand opportunities for their discussion? And in all Austria did any man dare, even in his own house—if there were a few persons collected there—to speak his mind freely? And if by chance, between cheese and dessert, he did allow a candid word or two to escape him on political subjects, did he not, on the servant's entrance, even though the man had been ten years under his roof, bite his lip, and quickly hold his peace?

In St. Petersburg people do not live abroad. Public gardens, boulevards, bazaars, and so forth, are there unknown. There everybody minds his business, and stops in his house; and when the cares and toils of the former are at an end, he does his utmost to transform the latter into a paradise. Freedom is an indispensable condition of such transformation, and of freedom the Petersburger enjoys, in his own house, an ample measure; not only in the complete liberty of his social life, not only in his complete abandonment to his individual inclina-

tions, but also in respect of political controversies, which in his domestic circle are often carried on with such keenness and unreserve, that the hearer fancies himself transported into some German republican club. Freedom is far greater in St. Petersburg, in this respect, than is generally supposed. Considering the licence of expression indulged in when conversing on political subjects before strangers and servants, it is quite inconceivable that the vigilant police should never have become aware of, or taken umbrage at it; and that there should be no instance on record of a domiciliary visit in the house of a German resident in St. Petersburg. It is probable enough, however, that the authorities are aware of those conversations, but intentionally take no notice of them, knowing the character of Germans, and that, with them,—words do not lead to deeds.

When politics, into which conversation at St. Petersburg usually ends by gliding, have been fairly exhausted, play is resorted to as a pastime. In this the women are in no way behindhand with the men; but, on the contrary, have usually organised their tables of whist, boston, ombre, or *préférence*, long before the politicians have finished their discussions. *Préférence*, especially, is a favourite game with the St. Petersburg fair ones. With unremitting assiduity they play on from seven or eight in the evening till two in the morning, then sup, and separate at four to get up again at daybreak,—that is to say, according to German time, at nine in the morning; for I here speak of winter parties only, seeing that in summer, at St. Petersburg, there are neither parties nor inhabitants.

When the St. Petersburg resident has thus introduced a stranger into his house and shown him his domestic interior, the chief subject of his pride, he proceeds to display to him the second thing in which he glories, namely, the beauties of the capital. A day is fixed, the droschki is brought to the door,—few Petersburgers in comfortable circumstances are without an equi-

page,—and the foreigner is driven all about the town. First, through the Newsky Perspective, already referred to, to the majestic Newsky Convent, where repose the bones of St. Alexander Newsky, which were miraculously cast ashore, so runs the tradition, on the Neva's bank, by the Baltic's tempestuous billows. In costly silver relievos, the hero's exploits are perpetuated upon his coffin. Returning hence, the stranger's guide points out to him, on the left of the Perspective, the Kasan church, one of the most beautiful ornaments of the city. In its front stand four colossal stone statues of apostles, models for four statues of the like gigantic size, which are to be cast in silver. The metal for this purpose is already stored up in the vaults of the Church, and is a pious present from the Cossacks of the Don. On entering the sacred edifice, the eye is at once fettered and dazzled by the magnificence it meets. Pillars, walls, floor, and ceiling, all of the costliest marble; a great barrier, three feet high, and of wrought silver, in front of the sanctuary, and behind it pictures of saints, partly cut out, according to the Russian fashion, and having head, neck, and breast, as well as the frames, studded with precious stones of great price. Various trophies, conquered in the wars with Turks and French, decorate the Church; amongst others, the marshal's baton of Davoust, the sight of which once incited a Frenchman, fanaticised by false patriotism, to commit a church robbery. He was detected; and although the offence is one of those most severely punished in Russia, the authorities contented themselves, in consideration of the extenuating motive, with sending him out of the country.

From the Kasansky you drive through the Morskoy, paved, like the Newsky, with wood, to the *Etât Major**, one of the handsomest buildings in St. Petersburg, opposite to which, on an

* *Generalstab*, military headquarters, offices of the staff: in England, the Horse-Guards is the only analogous establishment.—T.

immense open square, stands the enormous Alexander's Pillar. Thence you proceed to the sumptuous Winter Palae, whence the view over the Neva, Wasili-Ostrow, and the Petersburg bank, is exceedingly fine. Going down the quay, you reach the Champ de Mars, of such vast extent that I once saw the Emperor pass in review there a body of 80,000 men of all arms. Whoever has had the opportunity of seeing the Russian guards manœuvre, will assuredly hesitate before expressing German contempt of those "barbarous hordes." Several days are requisite for even a superficial examination of the principal sculptural and architectural monuments of the city. Then it is the turn of St. Petersburg's charming environs;—Sarskojè-Sélo, Jelagyn, and Peterhof, the summer residence of the Court, whose beauty borders on the fabulous. Thence comes a visit to Apotheary's Island, with its wonderful botanial garden, in whose immense conservatories one fancies oneself transported to the tropics. To the intelligent zeal of the court-gardener, Mr. Tellmann, a German, these hot-houses are indebted for a care and development which renders them probably unsurpassed by similar establishments in any country of the world. At any rate, nothing of the kind that I have seen in Potsdam, Vienna, and Paris, can bear comparison with them. From Apotheary's Island you reach Kamini-Ostrow, thence proceed to Petrowsky, and so from one island to another, each surpassing its neighbour in the beauty of its plantations and elegance of its summer villas. Certainly art alone is to be thanked for all this beauty and bloom in the far north of Europe, where nature does nothing; equally certain is it that the glory of these lovely gardens lasts at most but ten or twelve weeks. Not on that account, however, are we to withhold our recognition of the Beautiful, wheresoever we find it; but rather prize and appreciate it the more, because our enjoyment of it is to be so brief. And assuredly the stranger, crossing for the first time the bridge of Kamini-Ostrow, pausing in its centre, and looking right and left

at the lovely villas, built in the most graceful Italian style, and embedded in luxuriant vegetation and beauteous flowers, may well imagine, as his astonished gaze wanders over the shores of the arm of the Neva, that he has been suddenly transported to the seductive banks of Arno or of Brenta. These islands are the summer abode of the inhabitants of the capital; where no one, whose business will possibly admit his absence, ever remains between the beginning of June and the end of August. The oppressive heat, combined with the intolerable dust, and, above all, the pestiferous exhalations of the canals, drive every one forth. These canals, of great width, and encased in handsome granite quays, are very ornamental to the city; but they render residence there during the hot season perfect torture. Accordingly, towards the end of May, all make their escape; and if I have already had occasion to praise the hospitality of the town, I must now admit it to be surpassed by that exercised in the country. There it is a common practice for whole families to quarter themselves, unexpected and uninvited, upon their friends and acquaintances, bringing with them their servants, horses, and dogs. They are always heartily welcome, kindly received, and hospitably entertained; and their departure is sincerely deplored, though it occur only after many weeks' stay. The rural amusements are walks and rides, bathing, bals champêtres, fire-works, — which are let off almost every evening, especially towards the beginning of autumn, — music, singing, somewhat more conversation than in town, because less time is passed at cards, somewhat less reading, because one is almost constantly out of doors. Gambling, however, is not entirely given up and moreover the abstinence in summer is amply compensated by the winter's excess. With the exception of Mexico, there is assuredly in no place in the world more gambling than here. True, that games of chance are strictly prohibited, and are played neither in public places nor at private clubs; but games of skill, especially *préférence*, are played so abominably high

that scarcely an evening passes, in the winter-time, without a few hundred thousand rubles banco exchanging hands at the card-tables of the English club and other establishments of the kind. These profuse and habitual gamblers play, especially the Russians, with wonderful coolness, and with the utmost apparent indifference as to the result.

A circumstance that comes greatly in aid to the hospitality of the Petersburgers, is the abundance of provisions and their consequent cheapness. One can hardly form an idea of the plenty that prevails. On Twelfth Day, when midnight chimes, the peasants of the whole empire set out upon their sledges, well packed with fish, flesh, game, and preserved fruits, which latter are no where so well prepared and of such good flavour as in Russia, and repair to the towns, especially to St. Petersburg, often performing journeys of 2000 or 3000 versts. There they usually sell their goods at very advantageous prices, and then, in large caravans, in high spirits, and somewhat elevated by drink, retrace their steps homewards. These journeys, however, take place only in what are called fine winters, by which the Russians understand a steady cold of 20° to 24° Reaumur. Then the sledging paths are firm and smooth; the peasants' little horses, not bigger than a bull of a year and a half old, drag them briskly and without fatigue to the capital, where their catables arrive fresh and in good order. If, upon the other hand, a thaw sets in, these poor people are greatly to be pitied. The results of their year's toil are inevitably lost to them. And even when it freezes again directly, so that the provisions reach their journey's end seemingly well preserved, the thaw has nevertheless caused distrust as to the state of the meat, and sale and price are alike diminished. With respect to fish not the slightest deception can take place, for the Russian knows by the very first look at the fish's eye and by pressing it gently with his finger whether the fish has been thawed, and if it has he will not purchase it at any price. In remarkably mild

winters, when there are frequent intermissions of thaw and frost,—as happened, for instance, in the winter of 1841-2,—the police institute a rigid examination of the provisions before they are allowed to enter the city. And so it came to pass that in that unfortunate winter, many hundreds of sledges were excluded from St. Petersburg, their contents were thrown into the water or buried in the earth, and their unhappy owners had no choice but to sell horse, sledge, and harness, and to retrace on foot, sorrowful and a-hungered, the weary journey to their distant homes. Happily such *bad* (mild) winters are of very rare occurrence. The one I have just referred to, during which the Neva twice thawed and twice again was frozen, was unparalleled in the memory of the oldest man in St. Petersburg.

The cheapness of the principal necessaries of life, such as bread, potatoes, meat, and fish, extends also to the more delicate vegetables, to fruit, and to poultry and the smaller sorts of game, (especially a species of partridge, heathcocks, &c.), particularly if one does not run after things which have only just come into season. This explains the abundance observable on the tables of St. Petersburg, even upon those of the middle classes. Fuel is also very cheap, and rents, compared with those demanded in Vienna and other capitals, are by no means high. I lived in the Stalerney-Perulok, one of the most lively streets in St. Petersburg, in a very large handsome house. I had the best floor, which there means the second floor; the first floor of St. Petersburg houses being disagreeable owing to deficiency of light and the noise from the street. My apartments consisted of a large drawing-room with a balcony, and four other highly comfortable rooms, besides corridor, kitchen, loft and cellar. The rent I paid was 1,300 rubles banco (not quite 45*l.* sterling). In Vienna the same accommodation would certainly cost twice as much. My expense for fuel during the whole of the long winter of St. Petersburg—where, as is well known, the stoves are arranged so as to heat, besides the dwelling rooms, kitchen,

passage, hall and staircase—amounted to no more than 200 rubles, or less than 7*l.* sterling; whereas in Vienna, with much less space to heat, I paid the same sum every two months the winter through. And those who are satisfied to burn nothing but coals will hardly be at a third of the expense. Thus we see that rent is certainly not dear, and that the ordinary necessaries of life are decidedly cheap. But very costly, upon the other hand, are all objects of luxury, particularly those manufactured in foreign countries. Men's clothes, and more particularly women's clothes, are made in St. Petersburg even better than in London and Paris; the fashions of course coming from the latter places, and being most conscientiously imitated by the Russian artists. But they are enormously dear, as are all kinds of dress, millinery, and ornaments, and as are also French wines and books. The dealers in these last, for instance, reckon the Prussian dollar as equivalent to the silver ruble, which is at once an addition of six or seven per cent to the price, and moreover, lay on a profit of twenty-five and often thirty-three per cent. By these exorbitant charges the sale of books is much injured. Foreign wines in general are anything but cheap, especially champagne, the regular price of which is three silver rubles a bottle, or more than half as dear again as in Germany; and what makes this expense still more felt is the extravagant use of that wine. The first thing that a Russian places before a stranger is champagne, and as the German is of an imitative nature, and this custom flatters alike his palate and his vanity, the use of the luxury is carried to profusion. An effort has been made to substitute a Russian product for this expensive drink; and a wine is fabricated out of the excellent grapes of the Crimea which is called Russian champagne, and which exactly resembles the original as far as colour and effervescence go. But there the likeness ends. In flavour the difference is so notable that the Russian sets the Crimean wine

only before those guests whom he does not desire again to receive, but the repetition of whose visits the sacred laws of hospitality forbid him to decline.

CHAP. II.

THE EMPEROR NICHOLAS.

THE name of the Emperor Nicholas is at this day as inseparable from that of Russia as is the idea of the sun from that of daylight. The comparison may be carried farther; for, whatever now thrives and ripens in the intellectual and material domain of Russia, is indebted for its growth to the vivifying beams of the imperial sun, imparting warmth and life to dead matter. Hence we get to comprehend the erroneous judgment which attributes to the same influence evil as well as good, and especially the continued duration of a state of things which is undoubtedly, in some respects, deeply to be deplored, and which, measured by the German standard, appears perfectly horrible and revolting. It is but the few who know to what extent the bounteous hand of the Czar pours healing balm into the gaping wounds of his country; and, of those few, but a very few are open to conviction of the fact.

Let me devote a few lines to a brief investigation, founded upon facts.

The rights of man are trampled under foot in Russia! Who denies it? A nation, still semi-barbarous, is subjected to a semi-barbarous rule! Perfectly true. Laws unworthy of the name exist there, as well as classes of men degraded below the proper dignity of man. All this is matter of fact; but the profound genius of the Emperor, who discerns all this, his restless striving to remedy these evils, to reconcile

these incongruities, — *that* stamps him in my eyes, not only as a great sovereign, but also as a true friend of the people.

It is with real gratification that I oppose, in these pages, a true and faithful representation of facts to a prejudice universal in Germany — a prejudice often confirmed and strengthened by Germans who have long resided in Russia. It is not my fault if those Germans either were unable to take a clear-sighted view of what passed around them, or else measured it with a German rule — a mode of measurement of which Russian matters certainly do not admit. The man who rigidly investigates, and takes into due consideration, the character of the people, the confirmed habits of centuries, the perils and material disadvantages of the too-sudden development of free institutions, will not only contemplate with respect and admiration the efforts of the Russian government for the safe and gradual spread of liberty, but will also, like myself, not hesitate to proclaim the Emperor Nicholas — so often denounced as a deadly foe to freedom — the true father of his country, earnestly striving to develop and mature the rights of his subjects.

Proofs strike deeper than assertions, and a few of the former may here with propriety be given. Let us first glance at that institution which most estranges Russia from civilisation — namely, at the institution of serfdom.

For the female members of this class there is but one legal path to emancipation: namely, marriage with a freeman. For male serfs, at all times until recently, military service was the only avenue to freedom. Once under the colours, the soldier is free. The freedom of the Russian soldier is not very comprehensive, and the recruit may in some sort be said only to exchange one kind of slavery for another and a milder one; but when, on the completion of his term of service, or in consequence of wounds or ill-health, he receives his discharge, it is as a free man that he returns to his home. In strict regard

to truth, I must, however, here observe, that, for a long time, this road to citizenship led but few to its enjoyment. The soldier, after completing a period of twenty years' service, was so accustomed to that mode of life, whilst on the other hand, owing to his long disuse of the occupation to which he had been brought up, he saw so little prospect of earning a living, that in most instances he accepted a second bounty, and recommenced his military career, to which he then clung till death or the hospital received him. Seven years ago, however, the Emperor Nicholas shortened the term of service to eight years; a reduction which now annually restores to civil life many thousand free men, who were slaves until they donned the uniform. At the expiration of his eight years' service, the soldier is still a young man; he can still enjoy his freedom, and found a free family. For this first and important step towards the emancipation of the serf, the Russian people have to thank the love of liberty of the Emperor Nicholas.

A not less important disposition, aimed at the same end, and at the same time calculated to avert the total ruin of the Russian nobility, is that which relates to advances made by the Crown on territorial property.

To prevent the partial depopulation of estates, a ukase, dated in 1827, declared the serfs to constitute an integral and inseparable portion of the soil. The immediate consequence of this decree was the cessation, at least in its most repulsive form, of the degrading traffic in human flesh, by sale, barter, or gift. Thenceforward no serf could be transferred to another owner, except by the sale of the land to which he belonged. To secure to itself the refusal of the land and the human beings appertaining to it, and at the same time to avert from the landholder the ruin consequent on dealings with usurers, the government established an imperial loan-bank, which made advances on mortgage of lands to the extent of two-thirds of their value. The borrowers had to pay back each year three

per cent. of the loan, besides three per cent. interest. If they failed to do this, the Crown returned them the instalments already paid, gave them the remaining third of the value of the property, and took possession of the land and its population. This was the first stage of freedom for the serfs. They became Crown-peasants, held their dwellings and bit of land as an hereditary fief from the Crown, and paid annually for the same a sum total of five rubles (about four shillings) for each male person; a rent for which, assuredly, in the whole of Germany, the very poorest farm is not to be had; to say nothing of the consideration that in case of bad harvests, destruction by hail, disease, &c., the Crown is bound to supply the strict necessities of its peasants, and to find them in daily bread, in the indispensable stock of cattle and seed corn, to repair their habitations, and so forth.

By this arrangement, and in a short time, a considerable portion of the lands of the Russian nobility became the property of the State, and with it a large number of serfs became Crown peasants. This was the first and most important step towards opening the road to freedom to that majority of the Russian population which consists of slaves.

When in this manner the first ideas of liberty had been awakened in the people, the emperor, in the exercise of his own unlimited and irresponsible power, took a second step, not less pregnant with consequences than the first. Unable suddenly to grant civil freedom to the serfs, he bestowed upon them, as a transition stage, certain civil rights. A ukase permitted them to enter into contracts. Thereby was accorded to them not only the right of possessing property, but the infinitely higher blessing of a legal recognition of their moral worth as men. Hitherto the serf was recognised by the state only as a sort of beast in human form. He could hold no property, give no legal evidence, take no oath. No matter how eloquent his speech, he was dumb before the law. He might have treasures in his

dwelling, the law knew him only as a pauper. His word and honour were valueless compared to those of the vilest freeman. In short, morally he could not be said to exist. The Emperor Nicholas gave to the serfs, that vast majority of his subjects, the first sensation of moral worth, the first throb of self-respect, the first perception of the rights and dignity and duty of man! What professed friend of the people can boast to have done more, or yet so much, for so many millions of men?

But the Czar did not rest satisfied with this. Having given the serfs power to hold property, he taught them to prize the said property above all in the interest of their freedom. It seems quite like a jest to speak thus of the "tyrant and bloody-minded man;" but I speak in all seriousness, and the facts are there to prove my words. The serf could not buy his own freedom, but he became free by the purchase of the patch of soil to which he was linked. To such purchase the right of contract cleared his road. The lazy Russian, who worked with an ill will towards his master, doing as little as he could for the latter's profit, toiled day and night for his own advantage. Idleness was replaced by the diligent improvement of his farm, brutal drunkenness by frugality and sobriety; the earth, previously neglected, requited the unwonted care with its richest treasures. By the magic of industry, wretched hovels were transformed into comfortable dwellings, wildernesses into blooming fields, desolate steppes and deep morasses into productive land; whole communities, lately sunk in poverty, exhibited unmistakable signs of competence and well-doing. The serfs, now allowed to enter into contracts, lent the lord of the soil the money of which he often stood in need, on the same conditions as the Crown, receiving in security the land they occupied, their own bodies, and the bodies of their wives and children. The nobleman preferred the serfs' loan to the government's loan, because, when pay-day came for the annual interest and instalment, the Crown, if he was not prepared to pay, took

possession of his estate, having funds wherewith to pay him the residue of its value. The parish of serfs, which had lent money to its owner, lacked these funds. Pay-day came; the debtor did not pay, but neither could the serfs produce the one third of the value of the land which they must disburse to him in order to be free. Thus they lost their capital and did not gain their liberty. But Nicholas lived! the father of his subjects.

Between the anxious debtor and the still more anxious creditor now interposed an imperial ukase, which in such cases opened to the parishes of serfs the imperial treasury. Mark this; for it is worthy to be noted: the Russian imperial treasury was opened to the serfs that they might purchase their freedom!

The Government might simply have released the creditors from their embarrassment by paying the debtor the one-third still due to him, and then land and tenants belonged to the state;—one parish the more of *Crown Peasants*. Nicholas did not adopt that course. He lent the serfs the money they needed to buy themselves from their master, and for this loan (a third only of the value) they mortgaged themselves and their lands to the Crown, paid annually three per cent. interest and three per cent. of the capital, and would thus in about thirty years be free, and proprietors of their land! That they would be able to pay off this third was evident, since, to obtain its amount, they had still the same resources which had enabled them to save up the two-thirds already paid. Supposing, however, the very worst,—that through inevitable misfortunes, such as pestilence, disease of cattle, &c., they were prevented satisfying the rightful claims of the Crown, in that case the Crown paid them back the two-thirds value which they had previously disbursed to their former owner, and they became a parish of *Crown Peasants*, whose lot, compared to their earlier one, was still enviable. But not once in a hundred times do such cases occur, whilst, by the above plan, whole parishes

gradually acquire their freedom, not by a sudden and violent change, which could not fail to have some evil consequences, but in course of time, after a probation of labour and frugality, and after thus attaining to the knowledge that without these two great factors of true freedom, no real liberty can possibly be durable.

I cherish a steadfast belief, that the reader, who perhaps took up these pages with a previously formed contrary opinion, will here lay them down in astonishment, if not converted from his views, at least staggered in them; and perhaps will ask why, if the emperor so earnestly desires the freedom of his people, why he does not—he to whom nothing is impossible and who has the right as well as the power—confer it upon them by a stroke of his pen, instead of wearily prolonging his work and spreading it out over so many years, to say nothing of the thousand eventualities which may occur to destroy it before it is complete? The answer is plain. The great man who is carrying out this reformation—no, let us call it by its right name, this peaceful REVOLUTION,—who is pursuing, by carefully prepared roads, his plans for the abolition of existing abuses, has chosen, in his wisdom, which is equal to his love, the longer path, because it is not only the sure one but the *only* sure one. In the first place, he recoils with dismay from the injustice without which so enormous an encroachment on the rights of property could not be accomplished. Not less does he apprehend the abuse of the suddenly bestowed freedom, for which Russia is still less ripe than other civilised countries, which nevertheless have proved themselves unable to withstand its inseparable temptations, and have derived nothing but misery from measures which, wisely applied, would have led them to prosperity and happiness. Fruits can but gradually ripen, and this is also true of freedom, that noblest fruit in the garden of life. The Baltic provinces, where serfdom no longer exists, were liberated by this same process, by which the rest of Russia

will not fail to attain the same desirable object. Every man is ripe for freedom when he is fresh from the hands of nature : after a serfdom of centuries he is *not* ripe for it.

“ Vor dem freien Manne erzittre nicht !

Doch vor dem Sklaven, wenn er die Kette zerbricht ! ”*

So sang the poet of the nineteenth century. In the sixteenth (1586) King Stephen Bathory, of Poland, experienced the truth of the sentiment. Moved by the whining entreaties of the Livonian peasants, he wrote to the nobles to substitute fines for corporal punishment, whereupon the peasants themselves rebelled, *because they were no longer beaten*. Theories are excellent in the study ; the happiness of nations is best secured by measures founded on actual and practical experience.

But what would our ardent anti-Russians say, if I took them into the interior of the empire, gave them an insight into the organisation of parishes, and showed them, to their infinite astonishment, what they never yet dreamed of, that the whole of that organisation is based upon republican principles, that there every thing has its origin in election by the people, and that that was already the case at a period when the great mass of German democrats did not so much as know the meaning of popular franchise. Certainly the Russian serfs do not know at the present day what it means ; but without knowing the name of the thing, without having ever heard a word of Lafayette's ill-omened “ *trône monarchique, environné d'institutions républicaines,* ” they choose their own elders, their administrators, their dispensers of justice and finance, and never dream that they, *slaves*, enjoy and benefit by privileges by which some of the most civilised nations have proved themselves incapable of profiting.

Space does not here permit a more extensive sketch of what

* Tremble not before the freeman, but before the slave who has broken his chain !

the Emperor Nicholas has done, and still is daily doing, for the true freedom of his subjects; but what I have here brought forward must surely suffice to place him, in the eyes of every unprejudiced person, in the light of a real lover of his people. That his care has created a paradise—that no highly criminal abuse of power, no shameful neglect prevails in the departments of justice and police—it is hoped no reflecting reader will infer from this exposition of facts. But the still-existing abuses alter nothing in my view of the Emperor's character, of his assiduous efforts to raise his nation out of the deep slough in which it still is partly sunk, of his efficacious endeavours to elevate his people to a knowledge and use of their rights as men—alter nothing in my profound persuasion that Czar Nicholas I. is the true father of his country.

CHAP. III.

THE FESTIVAL AT PETERHOF, AND A MILITARY REVIEW.

THE summer residences of the imperial family are in the highest degree delightful. That of Sarskojé-Sélo is the one to which the court usually first repairs, remaining there from the beginning of spring to the commencement of June. Thence they go to Peterhof, till September, then to Jelagyn, and then back again to Sarskojé-Sélo, returning, most years, to St. Petersburg on the 9th of November. The stately buildings of these summer palaces are surrounded with statues and monuments, and with delightful gardens, shrubberies, and plantations, wandering amongst which one feels suddenly transported from the icy north to some genial southern zone. Peterhof is the palace that most interests strangers. Its situation is peculiarly

charming. Standing northward from St. Petersburg, at the mouth of the Neva, opposite to Cronstadt, which is plainly discernible from its windows through a telescope of moderate power, the view on that side is imposing by reason of the grand scale of the landscape. On the opposite side a different scene presents itself; there the eye reposes upon rich verdure and abundant foliage, or contemplates with delight the thousand hues of the flowers that fill the parterres and overhang the paths. Peterhof is, nevertheless, but little visited by the Petersburgers. Only on the 1st of July (old style) amends are made to this charming summer abode for the neglect to which it is doomed during the rest of the year. On that day—the 13th of July of our style—which is the Empress's birthday, and also her wedding day, the people of St. Petersburg throng in vast and motley multitudes to the renowned Peterhof Festival. It is difficult to give an idea of the immense concourse that flows thither. From the earliest hour of the morning, the Neva is covered with steamboats, skiffs, and gondolas, and the roads with vehicles of every kind, full of eager holiday-makers, fearless of the dust so long as they reach the scene of enjoyment. There the accommodation prepared for them cannot possibly suffice. Enormous tents are pitched to afford rest and refreshment to the weary wayfarers; but so extraordinary is the throng, that it is scarcely possible to keep a place even if obtained; or else the heat drives one from under cover, to mingle and be carried along with the dense stream that fills every avenue. Hurrying from room to room, and from one garden into another, the morning passes away, and at noon the Empress appears on the balcony of the palace, and a military parade ensues. After the troops have defiled before her, the orderlies of the various corps march by, amongst which the Circassians are remarkable for their personal appearance, costume, and skill in military exercises. After the parade, which has been preceded by divine service, a court drawing-room

is usually held ; then comes a drive through the park, and then dinner, succeeded, towards eight in the evening, by a ball in the palace. To this ball every one, without exception, is welcome. The country people, in their ordinary garb, mingle with the wearers of elegant dresses and brilliant uniforms ; a mixture which, however, in no way diminishes the universal enjoyment. Suddenly the musicians strike up ; through the folding doors, thrown wide open, two chamberlains enter, and with the utmost courtesy entreat the assemblage to make room for their Majesties, who are near at hand. Every one draws back, as much as the throng and pressure permit, and the Polonaise is danced, with the Emperor at its head, through all the extensive suite of apartments. All have thus an opportunity of seeing their sovereigns, and all greet them joyfully as they pass, until the royal dancers, retracing their steps, conclude the dance in the same hall wherein they commenced it.

At a signal from the Empress, the whole of the vast garden is now suddenly illuminated. This takes place as by enchantment. With lightning speed the countless flames ascend from the lowest branches to the very topmost sprigs of the trees. In less than a quarter of an hour, park and garden appear in a blaze. The waters of the fountains plash and ripple over steps which seem to burn. Lamps, ingeniously sheltered from extinction, gleam through the falling water, whose every drop glitters, diamond-like, with all the tints of the prism. Eye cannot behold a more striking and beautiful scene. The finest sight of all is the "Golden Staircase," next to the "Hercules," fountains with which even the *Grandes Eaux* at Versailles cannot be compared. And now imagine the effect of the monster illumination, reflected on all sides in the colossal cascades and waterworks, and in the adjacent arm of the sea ; imagine the melodious murmur of music, issuing from the palace, and mingled with the whizzing of rockets, with the

booming of cannon from the vessels at Cronstadt, and with the joyous songs of countless groups, who, having selected spots for their bivouac, lie around the fires in various and picturesque attire. All these things combine to render this one of the most beautiful festivals that can be imagined.

At ten o'clock the ball ends; after which the court usually take a little drive on a sort of long droschkis (jaunting cars). On their return in-doors, the lights in the palace are suddenly extinguished. Gradually the walks are deserted by the promenaders, who establish themselves for the night under tents or beneath waggons, or round great watch-fires; departing with the first dawn, by land and by water, to their respective homes. Thus ends the great holiday at Peterhof, unquestionably one of the grandest and most agreeable of popular festivals.

Next to the Peterhof festival, there are few things better worth visiting than a review at St. Petersburg. One is usually held every spring by the Emperor, before his departure for the country, on the Champ de Mars. This "Field of Mars" is an immense plain situated between the summer garden and the barracks of the foot-guards, towards the north, hard by the Treutzky bridge, and will contain with ease eighty thousand men, who there defile before the Emperor. He who has derived his sole knowledge of the Russian soldier from the sort of accounts usually given in German papers, will be astonished at sight of these pattern troops. More thorough soldiers are not to be found. Their bodies are inured to hardship, their discipline is the strictest and most exact, in the practice of their profession they are zealous and earnest. Uniformity of dress and equipment is carried out in the minutest details; that of the cavalry, especially with respect to the horses, has no parallel in the world. One sees whole regiments of dragoons mounted on great strong black horses, all exactly the same height, without a single white hair, and so much alike as to be scarcely distinguishable from each other. The same is the case with other

regiments, which ride all brown or all chesnut horses ; and I saw the same in a hussar regiment, mounted, to a man, on dapple greys. And then the Circassians, those models of manly beauty—knightly figures, cased in steel, their features bronzed by the sun of their native mountains, their lofty forms lean but muscular, their dark eyes flashing from beneath their iron helmets, their broad chests protected by shirts of mail, mounted upon horses which they cherish and watch over as they might a sister or child ; truly this corps is the very *beau-idéal* of all cavalry. The Circassian does not *ride* his horse to review or parade ; he has him *led* thither, lest his rider's weight should make him sweat. On the parade ground he is again rubbed down, his hoofs are painted black, and every speck of dust is carefully blown off his coat. Then only does the rider spring into his saddle, and easy is it to discern how proud he is of his steed and how proud his steed of him. Now off they set at a headlong gallop, over hedge and over ditch, and the same man who, a minute before, would have feared to injure his steed by too hard a pressure of hand or currycomb, spares him as little, until he again dismounts, as though he were riding the greatest screw under the sun. Yes ! those Circassians *are* the best cavalry in the world. And now behold that artillery, those horses and harness, the elegance and lightness of the gun-carriages and ammunition waggons, the accuracy of the exercises, the endurance and indefatigableness of the men, and their splendid discipline ! In this last particular all the Russian troops are alike, from the Cossacks, who, in obedience to orders, covered Eylau's bridge with their bodies, to the sentries at the burning Winter Palace, who, in defiance of the glowing heat, would not leave their posts until regularly relieved. I am less acquainted with the troops of the line, and here speak only of the guards. These are, indeed, a picked and choice body of men. At the same time, it must be mentioned, they are admirably well cared for. Every man has his three complete

uniforms, gets his meat, bread, and pay, and moreover his share of the *artell*, which greatly improves his diet. This means that, wherever troops are quartered for any length of time, certain tracts of land are allotted to their use. These they cultivate in their leisure hours, and grow potatoes and cabbages. By a very trifling subscription from their pay they get a capital mess. They are also bound to contribute to the mess-fund a certain per-centage of whatever they earn by non-military services, such as appearing on the stage at theatres, in plays when soldiers are required, transporting furniture for people who are changing their houses, cutting wood, and, so forth. These contributions swell the fund considerably, and, conjointly with the produce of the garden, afford them excellent meals. The Russian troops are exceedingly well nourished.

Particular attention is paid to the lodging and cleanliness of the soldier, as well as to his food. The barracks at St. Petersburg are roomy, handsome, palace-like buildings, well suited to promote the health and comfort of their inmates. Almost superior to the barracks are the military hospitals, which combine arrangements admirably adapting them to the purpose for which they are designed, with the most careful nursing and skilful medical treatment of the sick. There is no danger of negligence on the part of any of the officials there employed; for they never know at what time the Emperor may surprise them by a visit, and that apprehension makes them zealous in their duty. Thus in illness, as in health, the soldiers are well cared for; and as the garrison is very strong, the guard-duty is by no means oppressively severe.

CHAP. IV.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND PRIVATE HOUSES.

THE arsenal and docks of Cronstadt must be included amongst the finest public works of St. Petersburg; and after them the attention of the stranger is forcibly arrested by the multitude of splendid churches and public buildings of all kinds, the Winter Palace being prominent amongst the latter. I shall not weary my readers by a dry and detailed account of things which they may find better described in any guide-book. I will but pause a moment at the public hospitals, selecting especially that of Abuchow, which I had special opportunities of inspecting through the kindness of one of its directors, Counsellor Götte, who was distinguished alike as physician, administrator, and man; but who now, unhappily, is no more. These St. Petersburg hospitals strike the visitor so forcibly at a first glance, by their extreme cleanliness and convenience, that he is unavoidably prepossessed with a most favourable idea of the treatment experienced there by the sick. This treatment is, indeed, so excellent, the care and attendance so first-rate, that I do not hesitate earnestly to advise such strangers as may be thrown upon their own resources in St. Petersburg—living at hotels or in furnished apartments—to take refuge, in case of illness, in one of the public hospitals. There, at a very reasonable rate, they may obtain a room and attendance for themselves, such as they assuredly could not obtain—especially the attendance—in any other way. Whilst speaking of hospitals, I must not omit to mention an establishment which, above all others, excited my strong sympathy. This is a private hospital for complaints of the eyes and ears. It belongs to Dr. Charles Frederick Strauch, a physician celebrated for his skill in the treatment of those classes of disease, and who may be styled, with strict justice,

the Kramer of St. Petersburg. Dr. Strauch, a man of property and high reputation, who is frequently sent for to Moscow, and even as far as Kiew, to perform important operations, and who has an immense practice at St. Petersburg, founded this hospital out of his own private means, and devoted two-thirds of the accommodation it contains to poor sick persons, who are there taken care of without charge. If we bear in mind that, at St. Petersburg, most complaints have a tendency, in consequence of the great dust in summer, to fall upon the eyes, and that ear-diseases are nowhere more plentiful than amongst the lower classes of Russians—a consequence of the lavish and imprudent use of vapour-baths,—there is no difficulty in believing that the free places in this hospital are constantly full, and that a host of applicants are always down for the first vacancies. The patients are supplied not only with medical advice and with medicine, but also with attendance, fire and light, food and drink, and even with linen, and with books to read, all gratis. Physicians get very highly paid at St. Petersburg; but though the rooms reserved for patients who pay were constantly full, and though these patients remunerated their doctor at the highest rate, this still would far from suffice to cover even the larger part of the expense which the free places occasion. The hospital is situated in the Wosnischensky, a perfectly healthy part of the city, where there is abundance of light and of fresh air. The cost of the medicines is lightened to the founder of the hospital by his brother, the druggist, Alexander Strauch, vulgarly known as “Moses,” whose pharmacy is at the corner of Balschoi-Mechansky and Garochovoy, and who has an agreement with his brother to supply him with drugs gratis, up to a certain amount, for the free portion of his hospital, he being paid for those consumed in the other portion. All honour to these worthy brothers, who thus nobly and unselfishly devote time, means, and talents, to their suffering fellow men! And double honour is due to them, for they

extend their benevolence, without distinction of nations, to all, from whatsoever land they come, who need their aid. It does the heart good to be able to record such generosity and benevolence on the part of two of one's own countrymen.

The style of building of the St. Petersburg houses is peculiar, very suitable, but expensive. Although building materials—stone, wood, iron,—are there infinitely cheaper than in Germany, houses yet cost much more. In St. Petersburg the owner of a stone house is looked upon as a man well off in the world. The term “stone,” used as a distinction from “wooden,” will soon fall into disuse, for in the heart of the city there are scarcely any wooden houses remaining, and in streets more distant from the centre they will gradually quite disappear, substantial and extensive repairs of such houses being no longer permitted. When these become necessary, the owners are bound to take down the houses and rebuild them of stone. The expensiveness of building arises from high wages, and from the great solidity of the buildings. St. Petersburg is built partly on swampy and partly on sandy ground; houses of any size require, therefore, enormous foundations. When one reflects that, a century ago, a bottomless morass existed where now stands the mighty Kasansky Cathedral, a morass which swallowed whole forests of trees before the erection of so colossal a monument could be ventured upon, one marvels at the boldness of the mind which could plan and carry out the erection of such a city on such a spot. Even as the idea of its foundation originated with Peter the Great, so was he also the animating spirit at the carrying out of the plan. He resolved to found an immense commercial city, a second Amsterdam; he would have his merchantmen, freighted in India, discharge their cargoes in the heart of his capital at the door of his merchants' warehouses. Direct from the vessel's hold should the bales of rich eastern produce be craned up into the store. With this view did he plan the three broad and propor-

tionably deep canals which intersect St. Petersburg in every direction. During their construction the Czar made a journey to Holland; on his return he went, with Menzikoff, to whom the superintendence of the works had been intrusted, to inspect their progress. On reaching the "Blue Bridge," where now stands the Duke of Leuchtenberg's recently-erected magnificent palace, he found himself deceived in his expectations. The whole design of the canals was completely spoiled, all his grand plans knocked upon the head. Foaming with rage, but without a word of reproach, he grasped his inseparable companion, his trusty *dubina*, and vigorously applied the cane to his minister's shoulders until he was fain to give over from pure exhaustion. The minister stood erect and immoveable to receive his thrashing from his angry master. When Peter's fury had cooled down a little, he resigned himself to what could not be helped; embraced Menzikoff and kissed him, in sign of reconciliation, upon both cheeks; after which they got into their carriage and drove away. The gaping populace, who had witnessed this startling although not unprecedented scene, at once gave to the spot upon which it had occurred the name of the "Kiss Bridge," and such is the popular mode of styling the bridge even at the present day.

Although Peter's grand project with respect to the canals was thus frustrated, they nevertheless are a great ornament to the city, and an important assistance to traffic and trade. It is, in point of salubrity however, that they are of the greatest value. They drain off the moisture from the marshy soil, and it is owing to them that St. Petersburg is so healthy a place to live in.

When new houses are built, the authorities exercise the utmost vigilance to see that the foundations are properly laid. If the obligation of deep and massive foundations considerably augments the cost of building in St. Petersburg, a still heavier expense is incurred by the necessity of making the

walls of great thickness. With the thin walls of Germany one could not exist in a St. Petersburg house. Russian walls are at least four times as thick as ours. The same remark applies to the iron work, which in Russia is wrought very elegantly, but also of great strength and durability. The possessors of wooden houses exchange them but unwillingly for stone ones; setting aside the difference of cost, the former are warmer and more comfortable. This seems incredible, but such is the fact. The interstices of the timbers in wooden houses are so tightly stopped with moss, which is also stuffed in behind the well-papered wainscots, that the thickest stone walls cannot compare with them for warmth. For duration, of course, there can be no doubt on which side the advantage is, and the risk of fire constitutes the strongest of all arguments against the wooden houses.

Building being so expensive in St. Petersburg, the government steps in to the aid of private enterprise. If a builder has but the means to get the roof on a house, he may then have an estimate made, according to the plan he has drawn out, of the value of the house when it shall be complete, and may obtain from the crown, as an advance, two thirds of the amount. These two thirds often exceed the sum he has as yet laid out upon the building. He binds himself to pay annually four per cent. interest and four per cent. of the capital until extinction of the debt, the said interest and instalment being all along calculated on the amount of the original loan, so that, if the payments are regularly made, the whole debt is cancelled in about twenty years. In this manner many industrious men, especially Germans, have enriched themselves; for if they have a business or employment sufficient to live upon, and a very small sum wherewith to begin building, they easily obtain sufficient credit to build the walls of the house and get the roof on them. These debts they then pay off by means of the government advance, and, the house once complete, the rent they draw from it enables them to pay interest and instalments, which

together amount only to eight per cent. The taxes are barely one per cent. ; during the first twenty years of a house's existence no important repairs are required ; and it must be a badly-letting house indeed that does not yield, in any moderately good situation, at least ten per cent. on the capital expended.

Amongst the best and richest shops in St. Petersburg are provision shops—somewhat resembling our Italian warehouses—where an immense variety of edibles and potables, the choicest spices and most expensive wines, delicacies of every kind, as well as butter, cheese, and other common articles of consumption, are exposed for sale. Goods, to the amount of many millions of rubles, are heaped up in these shops, most of whose keepers, themselves *millionnaires*, are serfs of Count Scheremetiew, in whose name the business is carried on, since by Russian law no serf can trade. When they began business they were aided by the count's money and credit, and in return they pay an annual poll-tax, in like manner with the serfs who till the ground, and with those who, by their owner's permission, take service or employment in the towns. Five rubles (four or five shillings) was the yearly sum they paid, when they first set up their shops, for each male—women being exempt from the impost. They pay the same and no more now that they roll in wealth, inhabit sumptuous mansions, and drive in elegant carriages.

By the Russian laws every female serf is free as soon as married to a free man ; on the other hand, marriage with a serf entails serfdom on a free woman. On a certain day one of Count Scheremetiew's rich bondsmen appeared before his lord to petition for the freedom of a son. The young man was in love with a poor but free maiden, who returned his affection, but who would not sacrifice her liberty to her love. The father offered eighty thousand rubles as the price of his son's happiness. The count accepted, and desired his vassal to produce the money. In an instant it was paid over. Letters of eman-

cipation were forthwith drawn up, and the count delivered them to the delighted father, with the words, "You must let me be the bridesman." When, in this capacity, the count had conducted the bride from the altar to her husband's house, and had handed her, according to Russian custom, upon a silver waiter, the first glass of champagne, he presented to her, as a bridal gift, a bouquet of fresh flowers, skilfully arranged round a small packet containing the eighty thousand rubles. It was his pride to have wealthy men as serfs, but their wealth had no attractions for him.

In warm weather, refuge from the noise, and dust, and from the exhalations of the canals, is sought in the numerous villas that surround St. Petersburg on all sides. It is rather remarkable that the finest of these country residences and gardens are all to the north of the city. This, however, is explicable by the situation of the numerous islands formed by the various arms of the Neva as it flows northwards from St. Petersburg. The nearest agreeable summer abode is Apothecary's Island, not far from and on the way to Kammenoje-Ostrow, and at a distance of about three versts from the Isaac's Bridge. A vast number of delightful gardens and villas, and of admirably arranged hot-houses, give an enchanting aspect to this island. Separated from it by an arm of the Neva is Kammenoje-Ostrow, the most magnificent of all the islands, in respect both of parks and buildings. Here, close upon the river's bank, stands the summer palace of the Grand Duchess Helena, widow of the lamented Grand Duke Michael. It is surrounded by a fine garden, which, however, like her garden in St. Petersburg, is not open to the public. Kammenoje-Ostrow also boasts of a very pretty theatre, in which, during the residence of the court, the French company give frequent performances, an honour which is not accorded to any other theatrical company.

Quitting Kammenoje-Ostrow, one reaches, — the road lying

partly through a very agreeable park, — the property of the Countess Stroganoff, which bears her name. Two fine buildings, in the Gothic style of architecture, stand in the midst of a garden, at no great distance from the high road, whence they have a very beautiful appearance. Before my journey to St. Petersburg, I heard a great deal of the celebrated Stroganoff gardens, but with the exception of this one, I was never able to discover any.

The Stroganoffs are not only one of the most illustrious of Russian noble families, but they are also enormously rich, have vast estates and a very considerable number of serfs, with which latter they are extremely fortunate. True it is, that this family have the custom to treat their serfs with particular care, to educate them well and to foster every indication of talent that manifests itself amongst them. One of the consequences of this is that almost all the inspectors, accountants, overseers, &c. of the surrounding estates are their serfs, and are such faithful and trustworthy servants that the property under their care is distinguished before most others for prosperity and good management. The most careful education cannot confer genius, but it may sometimes assist its development; and for at least one man of genius, the world is indebted to the serfs of the Stroganoff family. The architect who drew the plan of one of the most remarkable buildings in St. Petersburg was a serf of Count Stroganoff's, who gave him his liberty as a recognition of his rare talent.

The edifice in question is no other than the Kasansky, the cathedral of the Holy Virgin of Kasan. It is a very astonishing, and indeed one of the most imposing, buildings of its class. Two circular colonnades, similar to those in front of St. Peter's at Rome, lead to the entrance of the church, which is adorned with colossal statues. In the interior of the cathedral are fifty-six columns, each one of which is hewn out of a single block of dark marble, and beautifully polished. They are fifty-two feet

high, and the Corinthian capitals surmounting them are beautifully carved and richly gilt. In corresponding taste are all the other ornaments of the church. Walls and flooring are of polished marble, and the various pictures are adorned with a profusion of precious stones really dazzling to the eyes. Prominent amongst them is the picture of the Virgin and Child, which is literally covered with diamonds, sapphires, and emeralds of the rarest beauty. This picture, to which the church is indebted for its name, was brought from Kasan to Moscow by command of Ivan Vasiliewitsch. Peter the Great carried it away from Moscow to adorn his new capital, which he placed under its guardianship and protection. The treasures of this church would alone suffice to cover the cost of six Hungarian campaigns.

If we seriously contemplate and minutely examine this sublime piece of architecture, and call to mind that not only all its materials are extracted from the soil of Russia, but also that it is pure Russian art and industry, unaided by foreign hands, which have executed the great work, we shall feel disposed to judge, more justly than is often done, both the country and its people, and to abate somewhat of any preconceived notions we may have formed of their barbarous condition.

At no great distance from the Kasansky, at the end of the Perspective, upon a vast open square which derives its name from the church in its centre, stands another still more imposing, really gigantic monument, one of the greatest and most spacious upon the face of the earth, namely, the Isaac's Church. I abstain from repeating, with respect to this building, details which hundreds of travellers have already published; the object of these pages is to sketch manners and customs; I refer to monuments only when they have some bearing upon these, and in reference to the impression they made upon me. I cannot, however, abstain from a few brief remarks on this architectural wonder. It owes its existence to a flash of light-

ning, which laid in ashes a church that Peter the Great had built upon the very spot now adorned by the holy synod. To replace the loss, Catherine II. laid, at a short distance from the burned building, the foundation-stone of the Isaac's Church. The first plans for it were drawn out by the Italian architect Rinaldi : the mere foundation and preparatory labours consumed an immense time and many millions. After Catherine's death, the Emperor Paul hit upon an ingenious idea. That it might be the sooner and more cheaply finished, he proposed to complete it with bricks. Rapidly now did the building proceed ; but not nearly so rapidly as it was pulled down to the very foundation when, on the eve of its completion, the deficiencies and want of harmony of the structure were at last discerned. A committee was then formed for the express purpose of managing the matter, and consumed several years in deliberation, without coming to any agreement as to the mode in which the building should be carried out. At last, in 1819, the Emperor Alexander sent for Montferrand, the architect ; who, to my own knowledge, was still busily engaged upon the building in the year 1845. True it is that the Emperor Nicholas pressed hard for all possible acceleration of the work ; but even his energy and influence failed to bring to a conclusion this fat architectural job ; which was, doubtless, too lucrative to those engaged in it not to be by them protracted to the utmost.

CHAP. V.

THE WINTER PALACE.

FROM the sacred to the profane is but a step ; let us take it, and we find ourselves in the Winter Palace, which, in its own particular style, is not a bit less magnificent than the imposing

cathedral. An English author has declared his opinion that the trouble of a journey to St. Petersburg is well repaid by the sight of this palace, with which scarcely any other in Europe will bear comparison. And I cannot do otherwise than coincide in this opinion;—so long, that is to say, as the person undertaking the journey resides at no immoderate distance from the Russian capital.

This palace, of extraordinary extent, was built by Count Rastrelli for the Empress Elizabeth. In 1754 she laid the foundation stone of the colossal fabric. Eight years later, in the year of her death, it was completed.

Rising majestically upon the bank of the Neva, the building gives its name to the quay in its front, which, however, is more commonly known as the Court Quay. The principal façade of the enormous palace has fifty-three windows, is 470 feet long, 380 feet deep, and 76 feet high. It consists of three stories, is of the form of a long square, and its imposing aspect is not a little heightened by ten superb pillars rising above the portal, and by finely formed statues, which, however, are only of plaster of Paris, whereas the balustrades are of beautiful marble.

Surprising is the spectacle that presents itself on entering from the side of the Neva this residence of the czars. Here is the great entrance, including a marble staircase, whose like might in vain be sought. It leads to the first story, devoted entirely to court ceremonies. Here saloon succeeds saloon, each vaster and more magnificent than its predecessor. I will confine myself to naming the Golden Saloon (the Empress's reception-room), the White Saloon, reached through a gallery containing a series of excellent portraits of the imperial marshals, from Roumiantzoff to Paskewitsch, and connected with the Throne Saloon, or St. George's Hall, which for grandeur and beauty surpasses everything that Europe's palaces can show.

Whoever has enjoyed an opportunity of seeing these apartments lighted up, and of witnessing one of the sumptuous festivals occasionally held in them, will assuredly acquit me of exaggeration when I say that the sight carried me back to the fairy-tale days of my boyhood, and that I fancied myself transported into one of the enchanted scenes of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

I have already given a detailed account of the Peterhof festival; how it ends with a ball, to which all the world, without distinction of persons or ranks, finds admission. In like manner, on every New Year's day, a popular ball takes place in the Winter Palace, and is graced by the presence of the whole court. The Emperor and Empress mingle freely with the motley and heaving throng, and are lost in the vast assemblage. Only with difficulty do they make their way to the dance through the densely crowded saloons. Had Nicholas anything to fear from his subjects, here were the place where he would be in real danger, for so great is the crush around him that it was only by the utmost efforts I avoided being squeezed bodily against him. In such a moment of close proximity I gazed hard at the Emperor, seeking to read upon his countenance the dominant emotions of his mind. None others could I trace than the perfect tranquillity and cheerful contentment of a father of a family, when surrounded by his children, in full enjoyment of a festival of his preparation. And heartily have I since laughed — less, however, at the absurd story than at the utter ignorance it showed of the real feelings of the Russian people — when reading in certain German papers how, on the occasion of the Silver Wedding* of the illustrious pair, the Emperor was just about to seat himself upon the throne at the Peterhof ball, when Prince Wolkonsky fortunately pulled him back, only just in time, for the very next moment hundreds of

* "Silver Wedding." — The twenty-fifth anniversary of marriage, celebrated by rejoicings and entertainments. — T.

dagger blades, moved by hidden mechanism, would have been propelled from the seat, back, and arms of the chair, and have sheathed themselves in the body of Nicholas. It so happened that I was present at that joyous feast at Peterhof. There was no throne in the room at all, and the daggers existed only in the diseased imaginations of the inventors of the tale.

If the interior of the Winter Palace combines all that it be possible to conceive of magnificence, taste, luxury, and splendour, it yet is perhaps surpassed by the view from the windows on three of its sides.

The principal front faces the south, and commands a view over the Kaiser-Platz, or Emperor's Square, in whose centre rises the glorious Alexander Column. This colossal memorial reminds one of the most stupendous monuments of antiquity; probably it is hitherto unsurpassed; at any rate, it is a higher pillar than either Pompey's or Trajan's. It consists of a single granite block, and weighs 17,640 cwt. The pedestal, in due proportion to the height and circumference of the column, is also a solid block of granite, and both were hewn out of the quarries of Pytterlaxe, a village on the Gulf of Finland, one and twenty German miles from St. Petersburg. On the apex of the column hovers an angel of extraordinary beauty, with head depressed, the cross in one hand, and the other pointing to heaven. Pity it is that on two sides, when you contemplate this lovely statue from a distance, the head can hardly be seen at all; only on a near approach does the beholder discern all the beauty and perfection of the work. The story goes that Louis Philippe of France, in the days of his greatest power and prosperity, applied to the Emperor Nicholas for a similar column out of his Finland quarries. The Emperor begged to be excused. "He would not," he said, "send him a smaller one; a similar one he could not send him; and a greater was not to be obtained."

It is much to be regretted that this splendid monolith is already cracked.

Opposite to the pillar stands the fine building, with beautiful arcades, and bronze decorations, occupied by the military staff. To the west, one looks across the great parade ground to the Admiralty, the Isaac's Square, and its lofty church. The view to the north I never saw but in winter, from Prince Wolkon-sky's reception-room; but never did any sight more surprise and powerfully impress me. That immeasurable field of ice, with islands sharply defined upon its level surface; Wasili-Ostrow, with its magnificent Exchange; the Academy, with its sphinxes, pillars, and statues; the citadel, the Petersburg and the Wiburg shores, with their snow-covered towers and roofs; the whole vast landscape wrapped in winter's garment; the innumerable columns of smoke rising on all sides, and telling of the dense population of the seemingly solitary plain; and then the swift sledges, darting to and fro, and suddenly disappearing like the figures in a dream;—altogether the winter landscape was the most beautiful that could well be seen.

His Excellency kept me waiting a tolerably long time for the honour of an interview; but truly I could have waited much longer without finding the time hang heavy. I have never been a haunter of the ante-chambers of the great; but if all commanded so agreeable a view, I should cease to wonder that such dancing of attendance is so much in vogue.

From the eastern side of the palace, only the Hermitage is to be seen, to which a close, covered gallery leads.

The crown and sceptre, and other state jewels, are kept in the Winter Palace.

If this imperial residence combines all that can be imagined of brilliancy, splendour, wealth, taste, and elegance, on the other hand, the conveniences it affords to its inmates, except in the case of the very highest personages, are extremely limited. The whole first story of the immense pile is unoccupied,—consisting entirely of the vast apartments reserved for court festivals and ceremonies. The basement floor contains the kitchen

and the lodgings of the innumerable servants. The entresol is for the higher officials. The second floor is inhabited by the imperial family, including the ladies of the court and great officers of the palace. Altogether, the roof covers more than twelve hundred persons. As far as height goes, there is plenty of room, but the breadth is scanty enough. And what makes it scantier still is that, in the centre of the second floor, one steps out of one of the apartments into a tolerably spacious garden! This is certainly an agreeable surprise. Pleasant is it, whilst a northern winter frowns around, to wander in an artificial climate, and in the shadow of tropical plants. But the luxury infringes terribly on the area of the house; so that even the minister Wolkonsky possesses, besides a very handsome reception-room, only a few very small chambers. It is a usual characteristic of the Russian style of building—a characteristic which pointedly indicates the national quality of vanity,—that in all houses, even in those occupied by the inferior classes of citizens, the principal, most agreeable, and important apartment is appropriated to the purposes of a drawing-room. So long as this is spacious and handsome, the Russian attaches little importance to the degree of comfort, or to the habitable condition, of the inferior apartments in which he passes his life. Thus does Prince Wolkonsky content himself, the whole year through, with his narrow little rooms, in which he also receives all visitors, except on grand reception-days; although he has, at no greater distance than the thickness of a wall, a splendid saloon, adorned with a piece of Gobelin tapestry of marvellous magnificence, a present from Charles X. Six or eight times in the year, this saloon is thrown open to a distinguished company; that is all the use made of it.

Through the covered gallery of the Winter Palace already mentioned, we reach the “*Sans-Souci*” of the great Catherine, the Hermitage, of her own building; on entering which the Empress was wont to lay aside crown and sceptre, and appear as

the witty and charming woman. Here, in her boudoir, she enjoyed her leisure, surrounded by a circle of men and women of sympathetic tastes and accomplishments. Here she held her *soirées spirituelles*, conversazioni, and reading-parties; here was her studio and workshop, where she drew, engraved, and exercised the turner's craft. I will not weary the reader with a description of the gallery of two thousand pictures, including many master-pieces of almost every school down to our own day, nor with a detail of the collections of medals and engravings; and I will but briefly mention the library, which contains upwards of a hundred thousand volumes; amongst them many unpublished manuscripts, and especially a copy of Voltaire's works, proceeding from his own library, and enriched with marginal notes in his own writing—many of them exceedingly witty, and which have not found their way into any subsequent editions of his writings. Here also are preserved a quantity of turnery-ware, very skilfully wrought by Catherine's own hand. These mechanical occupations seem to have been her favourite pastime. She turned a great deal, and engraved on cornelian, and frequently made presents of these imperial productions to courtiers and learned men. King Stanislaus of Poland speaks in his memoirs with enthusiasm of the zeal with which the great woman pursued these trifling occupations, and mentions, amongst other things, a capital copy of a picture by Greuze, executed with such talent and artistic skill that it possessed every quality and perfection of the original.

The Hermitage has had repeated additions made to it, and at the present time they are busy enlarging it. The present emperor's well-known love of art is a guarantee that its contents also will be increased. He has already enriched it by various contributions, and especially by the addition of many admirable pictures to the gallery.

Such was the aspect of the Winter Palæe in December, 1837. On a certain evening of that month, the court was witnessing

a performance of the French company at the Michael's Theatre, when an aide-de-camp entered the imperial box and whispered to Prince Wolkonsky, one of the ministers there present. The prince gave him orders, and continued to look quietly on at the performance. Half-an-hour later the aide-de-camp returned, and this time the Prince, after listening to him, spoke to the Emperor, who rose, gave his arm to his wife, and conducted her to her carriage. The coachman received orders to drive to the Anitchkoff Palace instead of to the Winter Palace. The Emperor mounted a horse that was in waiting for him, and galloped to the Winter Palace. There was a terrible crowd and crushing in the streets; half St. Petersburg was on foot; it was as light as day, and flames roared up into the sky: the Winter Palace was on fire.

A terrible sight awaited the Emperor. The cradle of his childhood stood in a sea of fire. From every window of the façade the flames flared furiously upwards; from that side nothing could be distinguished of the whole upper portion of the building; but high, high in the air, glimpses were occasionally caught of gigantic figures towering above the flames and rocking on their lofty pinnacles. These were the allegorical figures which decorated the summit of the roof, and which the flames actually spared; blackened, but otherwise uninjured, they passed through that terrible conflagration.

The Emperor galloped round the building to look after his sentries. The precaution was not superfluous; on the western side two soldiers were near falling victims to the fire; in the general confusion those whose duty it was had forgotten to relieve them, and there they stood, notwithstanding the frightful heat, musket on shoulder and resigned to their fate. The Emperor relieved them himself, and pressed forward into the palace; at a glance he saw that the whole must soon fall in, and he hastened into the rooms where the danger seemed greatest, to call out the men who were saving the furniture. At his

command everybody fled from the building, with the exception of four workmen who had received orders to save an enormous mirror, and who would not leave the place without it. The Emperor drew his sword, and with one blow of the hilt shivered the glass. Scarcely had the last man passed the threshold, when the roof fell in with a terrible crash. Having satisfied himself that no more lives were in danger, Nicholas hurried to the Empress at the Anitchkoff Palace.

The Empress had recovered from her first alarm. She was tired, and when she had seen her husband, she asked, with some uneasiness, where she was to pass the night. Her secretary, the privy-councillor Chambeau, begged permission to conduct her to the sleeping-room that had been hastily prepared for her. There she found, to her great astonishment, through the delicate attention of an attached servant—her sleeping apartment out of the Winter Palace, with its thousand little comforts and conveniences; everything in the same place and order as if it had remained untouched since she last dressed herself. When the fire had reached that wing of the palace (and it spread with tremendous rapidity), Chambeau hastened to the boudoir with a dozen servants and muschiks. "All here belongs to the Empress!" he cried, "not a thing must be broken!" and in aprons, baskets, pockets, were carried away all those thousand-and-one costly nicknacks—clocks, vases, boxes, and ornaments—without which such a boudoir could not be complete. Without the slightest injury they were carried out of the burning palace and for half-a-league through the heaving throng that filled the streets; and when Chambeau had arranged everything as it was in its former place, the locality alone was changed; all things seemed to stand where they had been left—not a riband was crumpled nor a sheet of paper soiled. I doubt there being many masters in Germany who are so well and so quickly served.

The next day the Emperor returned to the scene of destruc-

tion. Within the walls the fire still raged. It had been allowed to burn on, whilst all efforts were directed to saving the Hermitage, fortunately with complete success.

Long gazed Nicholas in deep sorrow at the grave of one of the prime ornaments of his beautiful city. At last he raised his head, passed his hand over his brow, and said, quite cheerfully, "This day year will I again sleep in my room in the Winter Palace. Who undertakes the building?"

All present recoiled from the challenge. There stood around the Emperor many competent judges in such matters, but not one had the courage to undertake that which seemed impossible. There was a brief pause, and then General Kleinmichael, an aide-de-camp of the Emperor's, stepped forward and said, like the Duke of Alba to Don Philip, "I will!"

"And the building is to be complete in a year?" asked the Emperor.

"Yes, Sire!"

"'Tis good! Set to work!"

An hour later the still burning ruins were being cleared away. The destruction of the building had occurred in December, 1837; by December, 1838, it was rebuilt. Three months later it was occupied by the court.

Kleinmichael had kept his word: the building was completed, completed in the time specified! but—at what a price!! Only in Russia was such a wonderful work possible; only in Russia, where the will of the "Master" is a decree of Providence; only in Russia, where they spare nothing, recoil from nothing, to fulfil his commands.

Under the Empress Elizabeth the palace had taken eight years to build; Kleinmichael completed it in one. True it is that almost the whole of the masonry resisted the fire, but the whole of the interior had to be reconstructed; and what a task that was! The work went on literally day and night; there was no pause for meals; the gangs of workmen relieved

each other. Festivals were unheeded; the seasons themselves were overcome. To accelerate the work, the building was kept, the winter through, artificially heated to the excessive temperature of twenty-four to twenty-six degrees Reaumur. Many workmen sank under the heat, and were carried out dead or dying; a painter, who was decorating a ceiling, fell from his ladder struck with apoplexy. Neither money, health, nor life, was spared. The Emperor, who, at the time of the conflagration, had risked his own life by penetrating into the innermost apartments to save the lives of others, knew nothing of the means employed to carry out his will. In the December of the following year, and in proud consciousness of his power, he entered the resuscitated palace and rejoiced over his work. The whole was constructed on the previous plan, but with some improvements and many embellishments. With the Empress on his arm, and followed by his whole family, he traversed the apartments of this immense building, completed, in one year's time, by the labour of thousands of men. He reached the saloon of St. George, the largest and most beautiful of all, and the royal family remained there longer than anywhere else, examining the costly gold mouldings of the ceiling, the five colossal bronze chandeliers, and the beautiful relievo over the throne, which represents St. George slaying the dragon. The Empress was tired, and would have sat down;—*the patron spirit of Russia prevented her*: as yet there was no furniture in the hall, so she leaned upon the Emperor's arm and walked into the next room, followed by the entire retinue. The last of these had scarcely passed through the door when a thundering crash resounded through the palace, which trembled to its very foundations, and the air was darkened by clouds of dust. The timbers of the ceiling of the saloon of St. George had yielded to the weight of the chandeliers; and the whole had fallen in, crushing everything beneath its enormous mass. The saloon, a moment before so brilliant, was a heap of ruins.

The splendid palace was again partly destroyed, but the genius of Russia had watched over her destiny—the imperial family were saved.

CHAP. VI.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

AMONGST the numerous and magnificent public buildings which constitute so striking a feature of the Russian capital, there is one class, to which I have not yet referred, which must not be forgotten. Besides the imperial palaces, the churches, the buildings appropriated to the use of the admiralty, the military staff, and the senates; besides the theatres, barracks, and so forth, the educational establishments deserve especial mention. Their annual cost to the State amounts to a sum such as Russia only could afford for such a purpose. The immense expense can be understood only by calling to mind that Louis XIV.'s saying, "*L'Etat c'est moi!*" is also that of the Emperor, who takes as much care of the State as he could do of his own person. Besides the various civil and military schools, those of the Mining and Forest Corps are excellent educational institutions for youth. These two remarkable and palace-like buildings are provided with everything that can contribute to the health and comfort of their inmates; and the treatment of the scholars completely fulfils the high expectations which the imposing exterior of the edifices is calculated to awaken. There is no great difficulty in obtaining the admission of lads. The interest of the State is the main object kept in view; and the State, it is considered, cannot have too many able servants. From the day of his entrance into these corps, every material and moral want of the pupil is fully supplied, not only until his education is com-

pleted, but in some sort for his whole life. By the fact of his entrance into one of these schools, he becomes bound to serve the State a certain number of years. This includes a reciprocal obligation on the part of government to provide the young man, when his term of service is expired, with a suitable position. The system of education in these corps is, as in the Polytechnic School at Paris, entirely military. It is usual in Russia for every government servant to hold military rank. From this arrangement springs an official aristocracy, which, in social estimation and value, is far superior to the aristocracy of birth. The official aristocracy occupy an important middle station between the nobles by birth and the burgher classes. In addition to the imperial educational establishments already existing, the Duke of Oldenburg founded, some twelve or fourteen years ago*, a school of law, which, under his auspices, has had the happiest results. It has sent forth a large number of legal officials, who enjoy, especially by reason of their incorruptibility, the high respect of the nation. There can be no higher recommendation of such an official, nor one tending to inspire greater confidence in him, than to have been educated at the Oldenburg legal school. Stimulated by the success of this undertaking, in the year 1840 the noble duke founded, at Kalomeja, nine versts from St. Petersburg, a school of agriculture, which has also been signally successful. The young men who there receive theoretical and practical instruction in the various branches of farming are sent, after completing the course, to distant provinces of the empire. There, installed as teachers or government officers, they exercise an advantageous influence on the progress of agriculture. Of such institutions there are several in the country; but that which advantageously distinguishes those of the Duke of Oldenburg above them, is

* It may here be proper to remind the reader that, although Mr. Jermann's book was first published in the year 1851, some of its chapters had been written several years earlier. — T.

their superior moral standing, and the circumstance that they annually send forth a number of young officials whose incorruptibility has become proverbial ; assuredly a great benefit for a country where there is by no means a superfluity of that virtue.

The public schools—called corps in Russia—are under the special protection, and indeed, it may be said, under the personal superintendence, of the Emperor. By day and by night, they are never safe from his domiciliary visits. Often does Nicholas rise in the middle of the night from the iron camp bed upon which he invariably reposes, get into his one-horse droschki, and make a solitary tour of inspection of the various public schools. Not unfrequently he goes forth on foot, and takes the first vehicle he finds plying for hire in the street. Thus it was that upon a certain snowy night an Istworstschik drove him in his sledge to a remote quarter of the city. The sledge had long to wait for him, and when the Emperor returned and, before getting in, would have paid the driver, he found that he had no money about him. The grinning Istworstschik declared that was not of the least consequence, and when the czar, throwing himself into the sledge, absently called out “*Nadomo!*” (*Home!*), the man drove his little Finland horse full trot to the Winter Palace, in whose immediate neighbourhood he suddenly stopped, and looked inquiringly round at his fare. The Emperor got out, rather surprised, ordered him to come to the same place on the following evening, and asked him, as he walked away: “Do you know me?” A sly “No” was the reply, and the next evening the sledge-driver received princely payment—less, assuredly, for his readiness to give credit than for his cunning discretion.

At these nocturnal visits to the schools, rigid investigations take place. The Emperor’s first glance on entering the corridor is at the thermometer; and woe betide those who are responsible, if it does not stand at the prescribed fourteen degrees. Then he visits all the rooms, to see if there

be everywhere light, and if the officers on duty be vigilant. The beds of the scholars are next examined; the Emperor pulls off the bed-clothes, and, holding a light in one hand, with the other he turns the children from side to side, strictly investigating the cleanliness of the linen, and of their persons. Often, in order to try their bodily strength, he challenges them to wrestle with him, and, for a stranger who should suddenly enter, it would certainly be no uninteresting sight to behold the despot of all the Russias, with five or six lads clinging to his gigantic form, and exerting their utmost strength to throw the ruler of forty millions of men upon the floor. Henry IV.'s reply to the Spanish ambassador: "You are a father? Then I can continue my game!" has helped to fill all sorts of grammars and vademecums down to the present day; of the paternal sports of the mightiest of European potentates with lads who are total strangers to him, nothing is known but the wildest and most ridiculous tales that idleness and a rage for gossip ever engendered. In the intimate family circle of the Russian court these offspring of corrupt imaginations are often the subject of jest and laughter. In proof that these absurd and nonsensical fabrications have reached the ears of Nicholas himself, he one day said to the Viscount de Custine, when showing him the pupils of the public schools, whose healthy happy appearance struck every one: "Here are some of the youths of whom I devour a few every week;" and Count Orloff, who just then came up and was presented to Custine, announced himself as "the famous poisoner."

This casual mention of Viscount de Custine reminds me of his deplorable book, which, by its three editions, and by the nonsense they contained, achieved a momentary celebrity. I will not here dwell upon the contradictions and inconsistencies, or upon the personal views and passionate prejudices with which the book abounds. I will limit myself to the simple and incontrovertible fact that M. de Custine undertook to place

before the reading public a description, in two thick octavo volumes, founded upon personal observation, of the political and social condition of a country whose language and customs were totally unknown to him, which he had never before visited, and in which he sojourned for the long period of nearly three months. This was the whole time he had to get together the materials of his work; and this time was taken up with visits, balls, concerts, theatres, parades, court festivals, and with trips to Moscow, Charkow, and, if I do not mistake, also to Kasan. Had the noble viscount, who, in the first volume of his bad book—written in St. Petersburg—fawned upon the Emperor like any lapdog, in hopes of obtaining the much desired amnesty for his Polish *protégé*, and who, when these hopes were destroyed, filled his second volume with falsehoods and impure gossip concerning the very same sovereign—had the noble viscount, I say, passed his days in the streets and squares, in the public buildings, markets, taverns, and coffee-houses; and had he, in the evening, instead of visiting brilliant *soirées*, sat down with his *dwornik* (an upper servant), and made him talk about the mode of life, the joys and sufferings of the Russian people, he would have learned much more that was true and worth knowing than in the *côteries* he frequented, and which took advantage of his thoroughly French love of gossip to impose upon him all sorts of ridiculous fables, such as it suited their purpose to propagate. Having once told them to the credulous viscount, their object was attained, and the inventions were sure of wide circulation. At that period it must have been a man of greater discernment and more decided character than M. de Custine not to be carried away by the stream of popular prejudice with regard to Russia, a prejudice then so strong that it led to the greatest personal injustice. This was the case not less in Germany—always imitative and eager to follow the fashion—than in France. Not long after the appearance of the work now referred to I returned to Germany from Russia, and met, on an

October day, under the Linden at Berlin, a man honoured and esteemed by all who knew him, by reason of his rare talents, his learning, and his manly character, — namely, Counsellor Gretsch. I cannot describe his lamentations when he saw me. ‘Good heavens!’ he exclaimed, “you here and I knew it not! How unfortunate! What wretched days I have passed here!” And he was eloquent in his complaints of the contemptuous, mistrustful treatment he had encountered on all sides, and which he had been compelled to endure the whole time that his business, entirely of a literary and scientific nature, had detained him in Berlin. He had brought it to a close, and was going away the next day. In reply to my entreaty that he would remain a day longer, he assured me that nothing would induce him to delay his departure a single hour more than was absolutely necessary. He only wished, he said, that he might have the opportunity of welcoming many Berlin people at St. Petersburg, that they might form some faint idea of the way in which hospitality was understood and practised by the rude barbarians of the North.

It was during the existence of this state of popular feeling that M. de Custine’s book appeared, and excited a fleeting but for the time great and general interest. The work reached the Emperor’s hands, and accident threw a copy in my way in which he had made red marks against the most striking passages. Whether the malice of some of these vexed him I know not; but I think I can answer, of my own knowledge, for his having often heartily laughed at the nonsense and many absurdities the book contains.

CHAP. VII.

FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.

THE richest and most considerable of the public institutions of St. Petersburg is the Foundling Hospital. Well endowed from its very first establishment, it owes its colossal wealth to the bounty and particular care of the late Empress Maria. Amongst other favours accorded to the hospital, she gave it the monopoly of playing-cards. The duty on these is very high; if I am not mistaken it amounts to fifty silver kopecks (more than eighteen pence) a pack. Now I do not think I make too bold an assertion, when I say that in all the other countries of Europe put together there is not so great a consumption of cards as in Russia. Not only the long winter evenings,—that is to say, the long evenings of nine months out of the twelve,—and the Russians' innate love for play, make the sale of cards something almost incredible; but luxury and waste further stimulate the demand. In the higher circles, a pack of cards serves but for one game of ombre, whist, &c.; and even in the better sort of clubs new cards are taken after every third game. In Germany such extravagance would astonish; it gives but a faint idea of the luxury prevailing in Russia, although this is but a pale shadow of that which formerly reigned. About eight years ago the charming Countess Woronzow Daschkow took into her head to give a grand fête in the old French style. For that evening the whole house and its appurtenances were transformed, by the magic of her command, into a mansion of Louis XIV.'s time; corridors, staircases, saloons, boudoirs, all wore the character of that period; walls and ceilings, floors and windows, the furniture, the services, even the liveries of the laced footmen, with their long powdered perukes—all was rococo. The entertainment lasted four hours, cost many hun-

dred thousand rubles, and early the next morning everything was destroyed and torn down, in order to restore the house as quickly as possible to its former condition. The houses of all persons of quality are annually thoroughly new-furnished, that they may not be a single season behind the latest Paris fashions; and yet what is all this compared to the mad prodigality of an earlier period? Previously to the accession of Alexander, a high-born Russian would have thought it a profanation of hospitality to use the same service for two feasts. The guests gone, the servants took everything that had been used at the repast—bottles, glasses, covers, plates, candlesticks, linen—the whole furniture of the table, in short—and tossed it all out upon the heads of the rejoicing mob assembled in the street below. What would now be deemed madness, was then good taste. May posterity pass a milder judgment on *our* fashionable follies and extravagances!

The enormous capital belonging to the St. Petersburg Foundling Hospital, affords it abundant means to maintain itself on a level in every respect with the first philanthropic institutions in the world. The institution is under the immediate protection of the present empress, who frequently visits it, often in company with the Duchess of Leuchtenberg, watches over all its arrangements with true womanly care, and strengthens and improves it by her powerful patronage. The orphan who enters this charitable house is cared for not only in its tender infancy, but for its whole life. Unseeing and unseen, the woman on duty in the interior of the chamber receives the little helpless being whom the world and its own parents abandon. At the ring of the door-bell she turns the exterior half of the coffer inwards, her ear scarcely catching the last murmured blessing with which many a heartbroken mother commits to the care of strangers that which she holds dearest in the world. As soon as received, the infant undergoes a medical examination; and an exact record is made of every

mark and sign upon its body and linen, — of everything, in short, which came with it. Then it is washed, dressed in new clothes, a number is allotted to it, and it is given over to one of the nurses, who are always there in readiness. It is an affecting sight, on bright spring mornings, to see long strings of well-closed carriages driving slowly through the streets, conveying the nurses and their innocent charges into the country. There the children remain for some years, under the care and superintendence of physicians and officers of the institution, who regularly and strictly inspect the foster mothers. The first years of infancy happily passed, the children are brought back to the Foundling Hospital, and their education begins. The nature of this education depends entirely on the capacity and inclinations they betray. This establishment sends forth stout blacksmiths and ploughmen, just as it has also produced distinguished officers, sculptors, and musicians. Cooks from the Foundling Hospital are much sought after; governesses that have been educated there are preferred to all others. When the lad has completed his education in the house which received him as a helpless infant, the choice of a calling is allowed him, — more or less limited, of course, by the degree of ability and conduct he has manifested. He may devote himself to science or art, to the military or naval profession, to some trade or handicraft—just as he pleases; and the expense of his education, previously borne by the hospital, thenceforward falls upon the government. To requite this he is bound to devote his acquirements to the service of the state for a certain time. This, however, is not a very hard condition, since it ultimately leads to that which so many thousands sigh after for years in vain, namely, an appointment as soon as he is quite fit for one. Formerly these foundlings could be at any time claimed by their parents; but lately a ukase has put many difficulties in the way of such claims, if it has not, indeed, totally disallowed them. This

decree was rendered necessary by the great abuses that arose from the facilities afforded to heartless and unscrupulous parents of getting rid of the care of their offspring's childhood without urgent necessity. In this manner, children born in wedlock were often temporarily committed to the care of the state, and taken back when their age and education rendered them profitable, instead of burthensome, to their families.

Startling contrasts abound in St. Petersburg. One morning, before four o'clock, I was driving to the Neva baths, when, on the Camino-Most, the stone bridge, my progress was impeded by a long procession of these little emigrants, proceeding into the country in their carriages. Still under the influence of the impression this scene had made upon me, and meditating on the temptations and perils to which the children, and especially the daughters, of the poor are exposed in this age of luxury and corruption, I drove past the magnificent Kasansky, and reached the Newsky Prospect, stretching away, in its vast length, beyond my range of vision, and, at that hour of the morning, hushed in a stillness which was not without a certain solemnity. Suddenly, to my astonished eyes, the strangest scene presented itself. I beheld before me an *al-fresco* ball. A number of elegantly attired ladies, some in handsome shawls, and with feathers in their hats, were performing the strangest sort of dance, which they accompanied with a sort of bowing motion, incessantly repeated. I could recognise no French or German dance in their singular evolutions. Could it be some Russian national dance? I thought. What kind of dance could it be that was thus danced in broad daylight on the public highway, and without male dancers? A few men were certainly there, but merely as lookers-on. I touched the arm of my Isworstschik, called his attention to the group, and made an interrogative gesture. The explanation he gave me was doubtless very lucid and circumstantial, and would have been highly satisfactory, had it only been intelligible to me. Unable

to understand a word he said, I ordered him, by the vigorous articulation of "Pachol," to drive up to the strange ball before the weary dancers should seek repose upon the stones at the street corners. Drawing nearer and nearer, I yet heard no sound of music; at last we reached the Anitschkow Palace, and found ourselves close to the scene of this untimely activity. A repulsive and horrible sight met my eyes. A number of young women, apparently still fresh and blooming, with ruddy cheeks,—but whether of artificial or natural colours their incessant monotonous bowing movement prevented my distinguishing—elegantly dressed in silks, jewels, and feathers, were sweeping the Newsky Street under the superintendence of policemen. Some of them appeared overwhelmed with shame, others stared at me, at the Isworstschik and horse, with perfect indifference, and seemed rejoiced at our passage, which suspended for a moment their painful and disgraceful occupation. They were a detachment of nocturnal wanderers, who, when returning too tardily to their homes from pursuing their wretched calling, had fallen into the hands of the patrol, had passed the remainder of the night in the watch house, and were now atoning, broom in hand, their untimely rambles. I hurried off to the bath, glad to escape from this degrading and deplorable spectacle.

CHAP. VIII.

CURIOSA.

EAGER to admire a building which enjoys no small fame in Germany, I hastened to the celebrated Marble Palace. One who, expecting to enter an orangery, falls into an ice-cellar, cannot experience a more bitter deception, or a severer chill,

than I did. This famous palace is the most repulsive building in all St. Petersburg. Cold and gloomy in its aspect, at the mere sight of it the beholder experiences an icy shivering. Catherine II. built it for Orloff, after whose death it was purchased by the Crown, and was occupied for a time by the deceased Grand-duke Constantine. It is now empty. Besides the sentries, no one approaches it : the Petersburgers hold it in special antipathy.

The only remarkable point about the palace is the enormous sum it cost. A handsome building it decidedly is not. Its shape is a long quadrangle, whose two longest sides face south and north. The chief façade, towards the north, looks disproportionately small when compared with the whole building. Two wings are adorned with handsome pillars, but they are of unequal height, which makes an unpleasant impression on the beholder. The ground floor of the palace is of granite, whilst its two upper stories are of grey-veined marble, embellished with pilasters and pillars of red marble, whose capitals, by way of farther variety, are of white marble. The first floor is ornamented with balconies and balustrades of gilt bronze ; the panes of glass in the windows are three feet high, and of wonderful purity.

Far superior in beauty is the Tauris Palace. It belonged to Potemkin. After his death Catherine II. bought it, and bestowed upon it, in commemoration of her favourite's campaign in the Crimea, the name that it still bears. The greatest ornament of this palace is its magnificent winter-garden, which, in extent and beauty, far surpasses that of the Winter Palace. The grandeur of the whole building defies description. After Catharine's death, Paul converted a part of it into a barrack, and the great hall immediately adjoining the garden was turned into a reading-room for the officers of the guard. In this hall were the tables laid out for the celebrated banquet given by Potemkin to the Empress. So vast are its dimensions, that, according to the memoirs of King Stanislaus, a whole battalion

of soldiers was once manœuvred in it. The Emperor Alexander had it put in repair, and the original old furniture replaced in it.

I must not leave entirely unnoticed a palace which stands on the south side of the Summer Garden, and is known by the name of the Red Palace,—a name for which it is indebted to one of the many strange whims of the Emperor Paul. At a court ball, a lady made her appearance in red gloves, which so enchanted Paul, that the next day he proclaimed red his favourite colour, and ordered that the palace should forthwith receive that showy tint. In the same palace, his monogram, P.I., is so constantly repeated on every side, and in every corner, that an Englishman, who undertook the thankless task of counting them, got as far as 8000, and then, through weariness, left off without having nearly completed his undertaking. Paul had many such crotchets. So fond was he of the gaudy and the motley, that one of his ukases was to the effect that, on one and the same day, all the gates, bridges, palaces, guardhouses, &c. in the whole vast empire should be painted in variegated colours;—a piece of childish folly, the results of which were, in time, of course, obliterated.

More interesting to me than all these palaces, whose attractions are for the most part limited to the splendour, taste, and luxury which are their general characteristics, was the modest little house on the St. Petersburg side of the Neva, which Russian veneration for a great sovereign has covered with a wooden casket to protect it from decay. It is the same little house in which the greatest Russian who ever lived used to rest after his hard day's work; the house whence he directed the building of the great capital, whose foundation-stone he laid. With religious scrupulousness his rooms are preserved in precisely the same order as when he occupied them. There stands his bedstead; there are his tools, his architect's rule, his inkstand, and some old fragments of his clothing. Everything

he touched, all that belonged to him, is held sacred by his descendants; and even a foreigner cannot but feel a pious emotion at the sight of these relics—mementos of the thoughts, deeds, and mode of life of the greatest man of his time. The respect and piety of those who have come after him, their grateful memory of his labours for the happiness of his people, and of the benefits he conferred on his country, have found expression in the conversion of his sleeping-room into a chapel. At an altar, whose plainness accords with the simplicity of the apartment, two masses are daily said. In the neighbourhood an old inn is shown to strangers, built upon the same spot where formerly stood the little tavern at which Peter made an appointment, when his “day’s work” was over, with the Dutch ambassador, who was trying to persuade him into a commercial treaty disadvantageous to Russia. There, with Menzikoff to back him, the czar drank so stoutly and repeatedly to his guest, that the Hollander got drunk in replying to the challenge, and at last fell under the table, where he was left by his two entertainers until the cool morning air should restore his senses.

Upon the island nearest to the St. Petersburg side of the river stands the citadel, there always spoken of as “the fortress.” It is almost entirely of granite, and was built by Peter the Great after a plan of his own drawing. In the interior of the church pertaining to it, in the imperial vaults, are preserved the banners and keys of conquered towns, those of Warsaw, Oczakoff, Ismael, and Derbent occupying the first places; and there are also kept the bread and salt which the chief magistrate of Warsaw presented, with the city keys, to Suwarrow, in token of the complete subjection of Poland. The tower of the church is lofty and covered with gold, like almost all the church towers of St. Petersburg.

In a casemate of the fortress, converted into a state prison, Prince Alexis, son of Peter I., ended his days, after his condemnation as a rebel. And there, in 1771, perished the

princess Tarakanoff, and all the other state prisoners there confined, in consequence of an overflow of the Neva. Since those days the state of morals in Russia has greatly improved, even amongst the very lowest classes, and manners and habits have become milder and more humane. In the year 1776, out of 4369 deaths in St. Petersburg, 133 persons were *found dead*—murdered, there could be no doubt. What a difference between then and now! Modern writers certainly warn us of the insecurity of the streets in the long winter evenings; even Kohl, who wrote only eleven years ago about St. Petersburg, sees a candidate for the cemetery in every sledge that crosses the Neva after nightfall; but such expressions are the mere results of preconceived notions or exaggerated apprehensions. It has happened to me to return home from Wassilije-Ostrow at every hour of the night, and in every season of the year, and I never found cause for the least uneasiness.

From time to time a robbery or murderous assault certainly occurs, from time to time a corpse is found upon or under the ice; but amongst ourselves, in our own Prussian capital, robberies and even murders are sometimes committed, without Berlin being set down on that account as an “uncivilised” or “unsafe” city.

Moreover one must not overlook the fact, that many dead bodies, found in the street, on hard winter nights, are quite erroneously supposed to have been left there by murderers. How often has it happened to myself, driving through St. Petersburg in bright summer nights, to pass the bodies of men lying in the middle of the street in a perfectly unconscious condition! They had been neither knocked down nor wounded, but were simply dead drunk. On a December night a tipsy nap of this kind inevitably entails death. And frozen to death many undoubtedly are. At Cronstadt, every year, sentries perish in that manner, although, when the cold is severe, they wear thick furs and are relieved every half hour. Occasionally,

too, they are attacked by wolves, which is perhaps what has given occasion to Mr. Kohl to describe Russian country houses in a manner which might lead one to suppose that, in every villa round St. Petersburg, the bears and wolves run about as plentifully as puppies and poodles in German country places. All this belongs to the class of exceptions—nay, so great is the scarcity of wolves at St. Petersburg, that when the court on one occasion, to pleasure a foreign prince, got up a wolf-hunt, the witty prince, when the chase was ended, expressed great surprise at the singular breed of the slain savage, round whose neck the hair was rubbed off, *exactly as if he had worn a collar*. If, in Russia, the poor are more exposed than the rich to death from frost, this is only an indirect consequence of the cold—a more direct one of their love of brandy. If the *wodka* has not been previously indulged in, there is little cause for apprehension in the streets and immediate vicinity of St. Petersburg—especially as even the very poorest has there at least a sheepskin wherein to wrap himself. A good raccoon-skin (Schuppenpelz-Waschbär) will resist a cold of twenty or more degrees in the open country.

These raccoon furs form the customary winter clothing of the Petersburgers. Foreigners, on their road to Russia, are often advised to provide themselves with such furs at Hamburg or Leipzig, because they are infinitely cheaper in Germany. That they *are* cheaper is true enough, and he who buys one in Germany, with a view to selling it to a furrier at St. Petersburg, may find his account in the purchase. Not so he who buys it for his own wear, for in that case he is obliged to have it dressed over again in Russia, which is expensive and troublesome. In Germany they dress these skins so badly that in Russia they are scarcely wearable. I travelled to St. Petersburg with an acquaintance who had bought one of these raccoon-fur coats at Hamburg for eighty dollars, Prussian currency. It was bad and heavy, and in two months it became hard. Its owner wore

it for three years, with great discomfort, then left the country, and was fain to give it away, because he would not be troubled to drag it about with him in summer, and nobody would buy it. Thus, in three years, his furs cost him eighty dollars. On reaching St. Petersburg, I purchased, from Michael, the German currier on the *Newsy*, a fur coat for 1000 rubles, or about 300 dollars, Prussian currency, wore it three winters, then went away, and returned it to the seller, who, the fur having been taken good care of, willingly took it back and returned me my money, deducting only fifteen Prussian dollars for the use of the garment. So that, for three years, and for fifteen dollars, I had had the wear of a fur which was light, ample, soft, and moreover remarkably handsome.

A sort of fur that is much prized in Russia, but not very universally worn, perhaps on account of its great costliness, is called *baranken*, and is composed of the skins of unborn lambs. The mother has to be killed shortly before lambing time, to obtain the lamb, whose wool should then be silky, and have a silvery lustre. Thus it often happens that a great many ewes are sacrificed before enough lamb skins are got together (of sufficiently fine quality) to make a fur coat. This explains the high price. These skins come from Persia, Bucharest, and the land of the Calmuck. Formerly they were believed to be a vegetable product — the *Scythian sheep*, as it was called, concerning which so many fables were current. The Tartars, who deal in these skins, still vouch for the story, and demand enormous prices on account of the scarcity of their growth. The legend of this *plant* is current all over Russia. Its origin may be traced to Bell Von Antermony, who discovered, in the steppes of Astrakan, certain dry shrubs, with stems eighteen inches high, surmounted by a cluster of sharp thorny leaves, *in whose shade neither plants nor grass would grow*. Hereupon was founded the legend of an animal-plant, with seeds like those of a melon, and with fruit in the likeness of a lamb, growing upon a stem five spans from

the ground. The taste of this lamb's flesh was like that of a crab. It was fixed firmly to the stem at the navel or middle of the belly; it had head, eyes, and all the other parts of a lamb, and lived until the root had *consumed all the surrounding grass and plants*, when it dried up for want of nourishment. Wolves and other beasts of prey sought it as a great delicacy. From its skin were made costly turbans, caps, muffs, &c.

That such fabulous legends as these should obtain popular currency is not surprising, but it is worthy of remark that they have been adopted by science, and credited by its votaries. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Herberstein heard of the existence of this plant, and collected the above particulars concerning it. A similar account is to be found in the works of the most celebrated writers who succeeded him, and was still credited as recently as the middle of the eighteenth century. He himself was informed by a learned Russian, the ambassador Demetrius at Venice, that his father had obtained, in Astrakan, the seeds which produced this extraordinary plant. He also affirmed to have heard, from a learned Oriental and interpreter, that in Samarcand and its neighbourhood grew plants bearing delicate fleeces, which were worn and much prized as furs.

All writers of travels in Russia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries relate these fables; even botanists, like Reutenfels, Struys, and others. Kämpfer and Bruce first discovered, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, that the *baranken* are the skins of unborn lambs, and were not a little surprised to find, at that date, the belief in the "Lamb Plant" general throughout Russia, a belief which even at the present day is not quite extinct in many parts of the empire. The pretended plant was called Baranez (a lamb), whence the name of the fur, *baranken*.

A similar legend is current in Russia respecting the great fish *morff*, or *mors*. The naturalist Mihow first related that

this fish was wont to leave the Northern Ocean and ascend the mountains in the neighbourhood of the Arctic, working his way up by digging his great teeth into the earth. When he reached the top of the mountains, he rolled down the other side. Of the teeth of this pretended fish were made knife and dagger hafts, sword hilts, &c., which were sold at very high prices to the Turks and Tartars. The belief in this fable was supported in Russia by writers till the middle of the seventeenth century. Negebauer describes the sea-monster *mors* in such a manner, that, notwithstanding the walk up the mountains, there is no difficulty in recognising the sea-horse of the Icy Ocean.

CHAP. IX.

KITCHEN AND CELLAR.

VIENNA is celebrated for its epicurism, but in this respect it is far behind St. Petersburg. In the Russian capital people eat much and live well, and, owing to the cheapness of provisions, good living is become a habit. Nothing that the country produces is dear; and what does not that country produce? From potatoes up to the finest grapes, all the products of Southern Germany are, with few exceptions, to be had. Amongst the exceptions are cherries and plums, which do not grow in northern Russia, and will not bear carriage from the southern provinces of the empire. They are to be found in hothouses, and there exceed in size and beauty any that I ever saw in Germany. But one must content one's self with their handsome appearance; they are for show, not for use. In Countess Samailow's hothouses near Pawlowsky, three

versts from Sarskoje-Sélo, I saw whiteheart cherries of such wonderful size and beauty, that I thought I never before had seen fruit deserving of the name. I gathered a few; they were perfectly soft and ripe; but their flavour!—truly appearances were in their case deceitful. They were a watery fruit, without flavour or perfume; mere counterfeit cherries. On the other hand, they have beautiful melons at St. Petersburg—in Hungary I never saw them larger and finer; pomegranates of extraordinary beauty, and Crimean grapes, resembling the Cape grapes in form and size, but with some difference in flavour, the Black Sea grapes having a harshness, which doubtless proceeds from their being gathered too early. In order that they may travel without being crushed by their own weight, they are taken from the vine before they are ripe. This is certainly also the case with the grapes from the Cape; but these have so much natural heat in them, that they ripen in the sawdust in which they are packed, whereas the Crimean grapes cannot do without the sun's rays, and never attain a proper ripeness, but get only soft by keeping. As regards oranges—and these of excellent quality—they are so abundant in St. Petersburg, that they are actually squandered. The purchaser of a whole case, taking his chance of some being spoiled, gets one—of the size usual in Germany—for six bank rubles, or about four shillings and sixpence. By retail, you pay, in the orange season, sixty to ninety kopecks for ten, or about a halfpenny a-piece. Their cheapness and profusion are, however, surpassed by those of fish and game. Of deer and roebuck there are none, but wild boars and hares are in extraordinary abundance, and one is literally crammed with partridges, heathcocks, capereailzies, and birds of every kind.

The imperial kitchen is good, very delicate, but extraordinarily *meagre*; for eating goes on so constantly that it is necessary the diet should be easy of digestion, and especially not fat or rich. I had my dinner at Petershof from the

imperial table, and frequently dined with one of the officers of the court, whose meals were supplied from the "second station;" the dessert was always magnificent, but as to the dinner, I confess that the style of cooking at St. George's, a celebrated Petersburg restaurateur, pleased me far better.

I must explain what I mean by "Stations." Their establishment had its origin in the following incident. The Empress once took it into her head to examine the state of her house-keeping, and found the expense of the palace *ménage* rather considerable. Ordering the daily reports of expenditure to be brought to her, she proceeded to examine them, and noticed, in the very first she took up, the following rather singular item:— "A bottle of rum for the Naslednik" (heir to the crown). This struck her as strange, and excited her curiosity to look further back; but what was her astonishment when, for years past, she found a bottle of rum set down every day to the account of the Naslednik! A bottle of rum daily! Shocked to find her son such a confirmed drinker, she continued her investigations, and found that, even in his infancy, he had made the same enormous consumption of spirits—that in his cradle, and on the very day of his birth, he was still charged with the daily bottle. And on referring back to before his birth, the bottle was still put down. This was inexplicable. Continuing her researches, however, the Empress at last got to the first bottle. It was set down in some year of the last century, and the following note was on the margin:—"On account of violent toothache, a teaspoonful with sugar to be given; by order of the physician of the imperial court." So, because the Emperor Alexander, when heir-apparent, had taken a teaspoonful of rum for a toothache, a bottle had ever since been daily drawn from the imperial cellar, and nominally consumed by him and his successors. This was rather too strong, and led to further investigations; and the Empress informed her husband of the discoveries she had made. He read, and calculated, and cyphered,

and thought long over the matter. At last he exclaimed, "If this goes on, I shall have to pledge my lands in order to pay for my table. There must be an end to this — *I will put myself out to board.*" And no sooner said than done. Next day the imperial kitchen existed no longer.

The Emperor made a contract for himself and his court. An enterprising purveyor undertook the supply of the whole Winter Palace, from the St. George's saloon down to the stable, and divided it into "stations." The Emperor and Empress were each to pay fifty rubles a day for their food; for the archdukes and archduchesses and all who ate at their table, twenty-five rubles per head; for the ladies and gentlemen of the court twenty rubles was the charge, for lower grades respectively fifteen and ten rubles, for the servants five, for the grooms three. A wonderful change ensued in the whole Winter Palace; the Emperor declared he had never dined so well before; the court, tempted by the more numerous courses, sat far longer at table; the maids of honour got fresh bloom upon their cheeks and the chamberlains and equerries rounder faces, and most flourishing of all was the state of the household expenses, although these diminished by one half. In short every one, save cook and butler, was content, and all this was the result of a bottle of rum, from which the Emperor Alexander, when heir to the crown, had been ordered by the physician to take a spoonful for the tooth-ache.

As already mentioned, I frequently dined at the table of the "second station," which was provided with six dishes and a most capital dessert. The drinkables consisted of one bottle of red and one of white wine, two bottles of beer, one of kislitschi, and quass *ad libitum*. The wine was a light Burgundy; the beer, on the other hand, was particularly heavy; the kislitschi is a sour-sweet drink, prepared from honey, water, lemon-juice, and a decoction of herbs; quass is the plainest and cheapest sort of drink, extracted from malt, sometimes from

bread-crusts—and is commonly drank by the people; at first its taste is quite insupportable, but one soon gets accustomed to it and prefers it to any other beverage, especially in summer, on account of its cooling properties. It is very wholesome, not intoxicating, and constitutes the chief drink of the Russian people.

In no city in the world is there a greater consumption of ice than in St. Petersburg; not only of natural but also of artificially prepared ice.

In bad (mild) winters there is often a great deficiency of natural ice, for enough is wanted to fill all the cellars not only of the city, but of the surrounding country villas.

When the Neva is frozen to the thickness of a foot and a half or two feet, great slabs, five feet long and three feet wide, are hewn out of its icy covering, and with these the cellars are filled. The ice, however, is not stowed away in these great blocks, but is first crushed into small pieces, which are stamped down into a compact mass in the cellars. This mass again freezes into solid layers of ice, the lowest or ground-tier of which is never taken out, when the cellars are well constructed, but remains perpetually there, a frozen foundation two or three feet deep, upon which, each successive winter, fresh ice is piled up to a height of five or six feet. Ice is deemed such a necessary of life in St. Petersburg, that the finest house would obtain no tenant if its ice-cellar were bad. People literally cannot exist there without ice. It is in constant use. In the first place, all kinds of eatables, — meat, milk, butter, &c., — are kept in the ice-cellar. Then it is mixed with water, beer, quass, and with almost all cold drinks. When there is a superfluity of it, the Petersburgers place it on the stoves and under the beds, to cool the apartments. In short, they never can have too much ice.

Vast quantities of artificial ice are also consumed; not only at parties, at the theatres, and for family use, but even in the

public streets. Men perambulate the city, bearing great tubs upon their backs, the tubs enveloped and covered with wet cloths to protect them from the heat of the sun, and crying their ice for sale, just as formerly at Berlin pickled gherkins were hawked through the streets, and as lampreys are at the present day. This ice, which I never tasted but once, has no very agreeable flavour; I was told, however, that I should soon get used to it and like it, which I am the more disposed to believe because the same thing had occurred to me with respect to quass.

Fresh fruit is never eaten by the Russians until it has been blessed by the priest; a highly judicious sanitary measure, inasmuch as it never obtains the blessing until it is perfectly ripe; then it is taken to the church, where the ceremony is performed with great solemnity. The Russian elings uncommonly to all ecclesiastical usages: on no account would he transgress this precept. On foot or horseback, or in a carriage, he never passes a church without making the sign of the cross; before the image of his patron saint, he dismounts to perform this devotional ceremony. He has another practice, to appearance less reverential; he never meets one of his popes (priests) without spitting. This he does neither from contempt nor from hatred; it is simply a custom, with whose meaning and origin I do not believe that he himself is acquainted. At any rate, I took the utmost pains to discover them, but without the least success.

CHAP. X.

OFFICIAL PENSIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

PROMINENT amongst the numerous absurdities current concerning Russia, is the tale of the enormous pensions enjoyed by

government officers, and of the still more monstrous frauds and embezzlements of which such officials render themselves guilty.

With respect to the first of these two points, it is perfectly true that every government officer has a right, after twenty-two years' service, to a *full* pension; that is to say, to a pension equal in amount to the salary of the office he has held. This, however, cannot be considered an excessive allowance, when we bear in mind that in Russia the largest pay or salary (I except the very highest civil and military employments, such as field-m Marshals, ministers, or ambassadors) does not exceed four thousand rubles, or something more than one hundred and fifty pounds sterling. In Prussia or Austria, would not a general or counsellor of state, after twenty-two years' service, receive at least as large a pension? This elucidated, I proceed to the second point, which is linked with and explained by the first. With a view to limit the pensions, nobody receives a higher salary than four thousand rubles. But as it is manifest that many state officers, merely as a consequence of their official rank and position,—could not possibly exist on such pay, a number of temporary advantages and emoluments are conceded to them, which expire on their becoming pensioners. Only a small portion of these allowances, such as table money, contingent expenses, &c., are paid to them in cash.

Independently of the above-named consideration with respect to pensions, the imperial government here proceeds upon the principle of personally interesting the chiefs of the various branches of the administration by giving them a share in their advantages, thus making them more free and independent, and thereby acquiring a right to lay upon them a so much the stricter responsibility. As regards this principle of responsibility, it is certainly at times carried out to an absurd extent; reasons are not listened to when proffered by the chief of a department; a misfortune is imputed as a crime to him under whose administration it has occurred. A revolt in a company

dishonours a commander ; a nail in a horse's foot may easily lose an equerry his place ; the defalcation of a clerk is the ruin of the chief of his division. Hence the rigid and severe responsibility which every official, from the highest downwards, lays upon his immediate subordinates ; and as this responsibility cannot possibly be a reality without a certain freedom of action, the result is a sort of official despotism, which one must have seen and studied in Russia before comprehending to its full extent the meaning of the word bureaucracy. Upon this principle of responsibility is erected the entire edifice of the public service.

Every official is an absolute lord and master so far as his responsibility extends. The same principle is applied to the financial portion of the administration. Those government servants to whom money is confided for the use of their departments, are at perfect liberty to manage it in the way that seems good to them, and even to their own best advantage, so long as they strictly fulfil their duty as far as their responsibility extends. A groom in Germany, no matter in how good condition were his horses, would be severely blamed or punished if convicted of having made away with even the smallest portion of their corn, or of having neglected to litter them well down ; on the other hand, he is not answerable for their sickness or death if he can show that it has not arisen from neglect of his. In Russia it is very different : there he may give his horses brick-bats for straw, and May-flies instead of oats, so long as they look and work well ; on the other hand, their sickness or death is *his* fault, though twenty physicians certified the contrary. How far this principle is a good one I will not investigate ; what is certain is, that it leads to the desired end ; the means by which this is attained may not always be the most delicate, but the system and circumstances I have just displayed are to a great extent an extenuation. Thus, for instance, in the case of an officer of my acquaintance, who was travelling in charge

of horses belonging to the Emperor. The man has one of the best and kindest hearts under the sun, and yet he confessed to me that often, in bad weather, when he took up his night's quarters in a village, and no straw was to be obtained, he had the thatch taken off the peasants' cottages. "It grieved me," he said, "to see the rain pouring into the people's beds, but my horses must have dry litter; my *responsibility* was at stake." I was glad the houses were covered with straw instead of tiles, for I firmly believe that, in the latter case, he would have taken the villagers' bedding to lay under his horses. Yet, I repeat it, this was an excellent man; but he was a Russian, and the Russian knows nothing superior to the word "SERVICE." It must be admitted that from this word he often deduces very singular consequences.* The same officer assured me that, during his whole journey, so long as he was on Russian ground, he never paid a kopeck for any thing. Every morning the mayor or burgomaster of the place brought him a receipt for what he had consumed, but steadfastly refused the money. This was assuredly out of no love for either the Emperor's horses or the officer; *it was out of fear of the consequences of accepting payment.* In like manner, in all Russia, no post-master will take money from a cabinet courier. He prefers losing the posting to risking having his horses driven to death. The government will never think of calling officer or courier to account for such non-payment; their responsibility extends only to the safe and punctual delivery of horses and dispatches.

The same state of things exists in the army. Commanders of all grades have their *obligations*. These they must fulfil, but the *manner* of their fulfilment concerns them alone. It is the colonel's business to purvey everything required by his regiment. Every necessary is specified and calculated, and he receives the sum total in the lump, or the difference by monthly payments. He has a right, let us suppose for example's sake, to a hundred bushels of oats and five hundredweight of hay;

but instead of taking those quantities, he takes twenty hundred-weight of hay, and only fifty bushels of oats; the difference in value is allowed, credited, and paid to him, openly and without concealment, as his own private and legitimate profit. The technical expression for this practice is "*to economise.*"

One of the most curious exemplifications of the workings of this system is to be found in the mode of remounting the cavalry. This is more easily managed in the provinces than in the capital, the requirements being less rigorous in country garrisons with line regiments than at St. Petersburg with the guards, not one of whose horses must differ from the others a hair in colour, or a half inch in height. And splendid horses they are, and the task a hard one to discover and supply them.

The imperial government exacts much and pays little. For a hussar horse I believe the allowance to be four hundred rubles banco, and for a dragoon horse five hundred; but I am not sure of these figures, nor are they of the least importance, for whatever is paid is notoriously not a third of the real value. Colonels of regiments set their pride upon their troop horses, and yet do not contribute a doit from their own pockets towards purveying good ones. The way the thing is done is this: the richest and most ambitious of the young officers are sent upon remount-duty. These young men make it a point of honour to execute this duty in a brilliant manner, and to earn the favour and good opinion of their chiefs; and so it often happens that a young subaltern expends, out of his pocket, a sum equivalent to a small fortune, paying 1500, instead of 500, rubles for every horse—sacrificing 40,000 or 50,000 rubles, and half ruining himself to enjoy the fame of having brought a good remount. If he be so rich that he can afford to despise the government allowance, he throws the helve after the hatchet, and pays the whole price himself; the colonel recompenses him with his esteem, and has made an "economy."

In this system of responsibility, as in almost all Russian laws and regulations, the fundamental idea has much to recommend it; but the advantages of the best possible idea may often be counteracted by the manner in which it is carried out. All I have endeavoured to prove is, that, if there be much that is objectionable in the manner in which is applied the system I have here exhibited, on the other hand, that manner of application is not literally an infraction of the law, and consequently does not deserve the hard names often applied to it in Germany.

CHAP. XI.

THE RUSSIAN POLICE.

THE position of the police in this singular country is very peculiar. Russia is a "police-state," in the strictest sense of the word; and as everything in the country is subjected to their superintendence, so also is their responsibility enormous. To save this as much as possible, they (especially the subaltern officials) keep themselves within the very letter of their orders, from which literal observance the grossest absurdities often arise. There is a standing order of the police that, on the breaking up of the Neva, as soon as the thaw is announced to the police, agents are to be stationed on both banks to prevent the accidents which would arise from persons attempting to cross. It has not unfrequently happened that the Budschniks (policemen acting as street guardians), to whom the execution of this order has been entrusted, have taken it too literally, and have not only prevented persons crossing from the side of the river on which they were stationed, but also would not suffer those to land who, when the river began to break up, were already upon the

ice, and with peril of life had reached the shore. These were forcibly repulsed by the Budschniks, because the letter of their instructions was to let no one cross the ice. A similar too-literal interpretation of the regulations in case of fire caused a terrible calamity at the burning of the Lehmann Theatre, as I shall presently have occasion to relate.

Who has not heard tell of the great trouble and difficulty occasioned to foreigners by the Russian passport system? And yet, to those who choose to ascertain the simple routine of the business, the trouble is very trifling. On his arrival in St. Petersburg, the stranger receives a *carte de séjour*, or permission of residence, in exchange for which he delivers up his passport, which is deposited in the archives of the Alien Office until his departure. Once a week, for the three weeks preceding his departure from Russia (journeys in the interior of the country do not require this formality), he must advertise his intention in the Petersburg Journal. In cases of pressing haste, the three advertisements may succeed each other at shorter intervals. The day after the appearance of the third, he lays the advertisement before the Schasneprice, or police commissary of the quarter. If, during the period of advertisement, no one has applied to this officer, and made opposition to the delivery of the passport, — on account of debts, or the like, — the commissary delivers to him a formal certificate to that effect. With this, the foreigner betakes himself to the Passport Office, addresses himself to the official charged with the despatch of strangers, and hands him his card of residence, the three advertisements, the Schasneprice's certificate, and a twenty-ruble note. The official takes charge of all these things, and courteously requests the person from whom he receives them to return at three in the afternoon, when he may reckon on being most politely received and speedily expedited. If this is *not* the case, the fault is that of the foreigner alone, who assuredly has forgotten to give in one of the four *documents* above enumerated, and of

which the official asks only for the *first three*, leaving the fourth to be thought of by the applicant, who has, consequently, only his bad memory to blame if he does not get his passport until a little reflection indicates to him the sure means of accelerating its delivery.*

One of the principal duties of the police is to display great activity in the event of fires. The arrangements for the extinction of fires are excellent in St. Petersburg. Cries of "fire" are unknown there. On elevated points, towers, and columns, disposed for the purpose, watchmen are stationed both by night and by day; who, at the first signs of fire, pass telegraphic signals, and thus warn the authorities in the surest and quickest manner. The measures taken in such cases are so rapid and well organised, that a fire is usually got under within a very short time of its first outbreak. With rare exceptions, — as, for instance, that of the conflagration of the Winter Palace, — damage by fire is seldom of much extent. The third story may be in a light flame; but not on that account does it occur to the occupants of the second floor to remove their furniture. The exertions of firemen and engines are certainly greatly aided by the solid style of building.

As soon as the authorities reach the scene of the fire, all other labour is suspended. The regular firemen set to work, and with so much zeal and judgment, that the raging element is seldom allowed to make much head. One thing that strikes the eye especially, on these occasions, is the great beauty of the horses that drag the engines. Many of them are animals of the noblest breeds, of the most beautiful colour and form, and, what

* In this, as in some other passages of Mr. Jerrmann's book, a doubt remains upon the reader's mind, whether he speaks earnestly or ironically. Notwithstanding, however, his evident disposition to look favourably on Russian institutions, we can hardly suppose him seriously to uphold, or even to palliate, so annoying, expensive, and corrupt a system as is exemplified in the above paragraph. — T.

is yet stranger, they cost the authorities not a single kopeck. Here is the solution of the enigma. We will suppose you, a foreigner, in company with a friend, to be making your way through the throng that fills the principal streets of St. Petersburg, looking anxiously and carefully about you, in order to effect a passage unharmed through the dense lines of carriages that fill the Newsky, the Morskoy, &c., and getting cautiously out of the way of the brilliant and swiftly-rolling equipages. See how differently the Russian behaves. Calm, careless, and undismayed, he goes to and fro through the mob of vehicles; and, in reply to your apprehension lest he should be driven over, his word is, "*They dare not.*" Acting upon the principle, no fallacious one either, that most accidents from being run over occur in consequence of the driver's carelessness, the Russian government passed a law, which briefly says:—"Whoever runs over a person shall be forthwith arrested, his hair shall be cropped, and he be sent to serve as a soldier: the carriage and horses shall be confiscated and given over to the police, who will appropriate the latter to the use of the fire-engines. If the person run over be killed, or badly hurt, the owner of the carriage shall support the charges of interment or cure, and further shall compensate the family of the person killed." The first of the penalties included in this decree can be bought off; and instances have been known of masters paying 1000 rubles, and more, for the redemption of a coachman who had rendered himself liable to it. The law is somewhat severe; but it is also wholesome and necessary, to protect the public from mishap.

Notwithstanding the protective severity of this enactment, many persons are run over; and, notwithstanding the excellent arrangements for the extinction of fires, great conflagrations occasionally occur, whose grievous extent and fatal results are sometimes attributable to the too literal observation of beneficial

regulations. Of this, the following case is a melancholy instance.

The greatest, and also the most completely national, festival of the Russians is the Maslinizza. This is the close of the carnival; or, rather, the people's own carnival. It lasts for the entire week immediately preceding Lent, and extraordinary preparations are made for it. The centre and chief scene of this grand festival is the square of the Admiralty; upon which, for fully a fortnight beforehand, are erected booths and temporary theatres,—most various in form, size, and description. Next to the humble stalls of dealers in chesnuts and gingerbread, stands the extensive circus of a De Bach or Lejars; hard by the booth where marionettes dance and juggle, rises the colossal stage of an Italian pantomime; here a temporary tavern props itself against the walls of a menagerie. The seemingly-confused medley of buildings is, however, arranged on a fixed plan, and intersected by streets for carriages and horsemen, and by innumerable footpaths. Early on the morning of the first day of the Maslinizza, the vast place is crowded with people;—all Petersburg is on its legs, hastening to and from the fair. All business is suspended; for these eight days are exclusively devoted to uproarious popular diversions. So long as they last, there reigns pure and unlimited social democracy; no drunkenness is punished; no nocturnal rovers are taken up; even detected thieves are rarely given up to the police, but, instead, often receive upon the spot some slight punishment, according to Lynch-law—although the heavy fists, which, on such occasions, are seen clenched and uplifted, make it probable that the culprits would prefer the grasp of justice to such summary chastisement. From early dawn, the greater portion of the immense fair is crammed with the lower classes of the people; compared with the tumult, pressure, and congregation of men, what are the fairs of Leipzig, Frankfort, or Beaucaire? Foreigners are wanting, whose presence is certainly the most characteristic

feature of the French and German mercantile fairs ; but, in respect of crowd and noise, the latter are far below the Petersburg Maslinizza. Towards two or three o'clock, the whole of the theatres, which, during those eight days, give two performances daily, disgorge the vast mass of their spectators, who flow down, in long, compact streams, to the Admiralty Square, and take a sort of wandering possession of it. Soon afterwards, the equipages of the wealthy classes, also coming from the theatres, fill the carriage-roads through the fair, and drive to and fro, slowly and in long lines, through the temporary streets of the markets and the dense throng of foot-passengers. The royal family seldom fail to make their appearance in this brilliant procession, which the populace greet with joyous acclamations. After an hour's drive in sledges and carriages, the richest and most elegant of these usually proceed to the Newsky Perspective, where their occupants alight, and form the most brilliant promenade it is possible to behold. What colossal wealth and exquisite taste are there displayed ! In costly equipages alone, millions are there accumulated. The value of many a four-horse team there pacing up and down, would be an independent fortune for a German burgher of modest pretensions. And then the furs ! what countless sums have been expended upon those beautiful furs, light as Persian shawls, but of a warmth that defies all the rigours of a Russian winter ! After the promenade on the Newsky comes dinner, followed by fresh visits to theatres and concerts. And till far on in the night, the streets are filled with a giddy, half-drunken multitude. At last, those who are in a condition to find their houses return home : those who, after much reeling, and staggering, and running to and fro, fail in discovering their domicile, and lie or fall down in the kennel, or at the street-corner, are gathered up by the police and patrols, and conveyed to the guard-house. In ordinary times they would not be released next morning without some slight memento of the hospitality accorded them : but

during the Maslinizza, it is different; and after sleeping off their liquor on a camp-bed, in a warm room, they are suffered to depart unpunished, to recommence the coarse sensuality of the previous day.

Twelve or fourteen years ago, the most successful and popular of all the entertainments assembled on the Admiralty Square during the Maslinizza, was that given by the celebrated pantomime company of the German manager, Lehmann. There was a perfect rage for these pantomimes; all Petersburg flocked to see them; and, although they were repeated every two hours, the temporary theatre in which they were played was continually filled to suffocation. During one of the morning performances, whilst the pit was in full glee and uproar of delight, the harlequin suddenly rushed upon the stage, and exclaimed, "Fire! *sauve qui peut!*" The announcement was received with a general burst of laughter at what was taken for a stupid joke. The misapprehension was fatal, for it shortened the brief space during which escape was possible; in a few moments the flames burst out from behind the scenes; the wooden building was in a blaze. The audience, wild with terror, rushed to the doors; unfortunately these opened *inwards*, and the pressure of the frantic throng closed them as effectually as iron bars and bolts. Exit was impossible. Outside, a workman, who had assisted in the building of the theatre, stepped forth from the crowd and called for an axe, declaring that he knew every joint of the boards and beams, and could quickly open a passage for the imprisoned audience. But the *budschnik* or policeman on duty would not permit this to be done till his superiors came to decide upon the matter. At last, urgent necessity overcoming every other consideration, the punctilious police agent was pushed aside, several men seized axes, and soon a large opening was made in the side of the building. A dense cloud of smoke made the crowd recoil, and, when it had cleared away, a horrible spectacle presented itself. In closely-

packed masses sat men, women, and children, apparently still gazing at the stage, which was a sheet of flame. Rescue had come too late; the sudden smoke, filling the crowded building, had stifled the entire audience: not one was saved.

CHAP. XII.

RUSSIAN JUSTICE.

THERE is much analogy in Russia between the administration of justice and that of the police. Most of the Russian laws are excellent; unfortunately the intentions of the law-givers are but too often neutralised by the conduct of those appointed to administer them. It is evident that in every country the right working of the laws depends entirely on their administrators, and here is the weak point where Russia's imperfect state of civilisation is most plainly manifested. The administration of justice is also rendered doubly difficult by the circumstance that the whole Russian legal code consists of a mass of ukases, which in the progress of centuries has assumed such enormous proportions, that hundreds of waggons would hardly suffice to transport it. Amongst these ukases are naturally found many which contradict each other. And (especially of late years) a new ukase has not always contained a clause expressly annulling those in a contrary sense and of earlier date. Hence the most important branch of Russian jurisprudence became a knowledge of all these numerous ukases, since the production of one of remote date often caused the decision of a tribunal to be diametrically opposed to what it would have been according to the decrees more generally known and commonly acted upon. The Emperor Nicholas, discerning this great evil, appointed, immediately after he ascended the throne, a special commission of revision, whose task it was to sort all these

various ukases, to arrange them and bring them into keeping with each other, and finally, out of the heterogeneous and discordant mass, to form one appropriate and harmonious code of laws. The work was completed several years ago, and the result was more than twenty folio volumes. A second commission was then appointed, and has ever since been toiling, to reduce these compendious tomes to dimensions more compact and practically useful. Thus, step by step advancing, Russia may hope, in due time, to possess a regular code, remedying the evils and supplying the wants that the country so long has felt.

Yet, even in their present state, the Russian laws are not only adapted to the spirit and character of the people, but are also for the most part humane, far more so than accords with popular notions of Russia. Justice is cheap, and fees exist not. Stamps excepted, a lawsuit may be carried through and decided without costing a kopeck to either of the parties concerned. So the law ordains. But how is this carried out? At the very first step taken by the plaintiff in a cause, the clerk or secretary finds that the paper handed in is totally incorrect in its form, and politely requests that it may be drawn up a second time in a more regular manner. This is neither more nor less than an indirect demand for twenty rubles banco. The uninitiated in such matters, who finds his petition (in Russia everything is a "petition") perfectly regular, and insists upon its reception, may rest assured that it will be duly shelved and so remain; on the other hand, persons initiated in the mysteries of Russian justice, rectify the imperfections of their "petition" by handing in the twenty rubles, by virtue of which they may rest assured that no exception will be taken to its form, and that their suit will be advanced one stage. But it unfortunately happens that the smallest lawsuit necessitates some twenty or more such "petitions," each one of which must be weighted with the stimulative *douceur* of twenty rubles, so that, although exempt from legal charges, the gainer of a suit often finds himself out of pocket to

twice the amount he has recovered. Whether or not the Russian officials adopt this mode of proceeding with the friendly and highly moral view of disgusting people of lawsuits, and of inducing them to resort as much as possible to amicable compromise, there can be no doubt that that is the end they attain.

It is a proverb in Russia, that "every man gets his rights — who lives long enough;" and the fact is, that it is often less difficult to establish one's right than to obtain its official recognition. Thus it happened that a certain person had duly won his lawsuit, but his utmost endeavours were insufficient to get possession of the judgment. At last he had recourse to stratagem. He went to the magistrate who had had the decision of his affair, exposed to him the nature of his solicitation, and after hearing, in reply, an exposition of the numerous difficulties which opposed themselves to the fulfilment of his wish, the pressure of business, &c. &c., he took out his pocket-book, and extracted from it a packet of bank-notes, which he tore in half. One of the halves he handed to the man of law, and replaced the other in his pocket. "These halves," he said, "are valueless apart, and useless to both of us. I consider mine as lost; it depends upon yourself to restore their full value to those in your possession." On the morrow this ingenious person had a call from a very friendly and gentlemanly man, who made him the benevolent offer to exchange the much desired judgment, which he had with him duly and legally drawn up, against the valueless halves of the bank notes.

As a striking example of the singular action of the "responsibility" system upon the minds and moral perceptions even of upright and highly respectable men, and of the manner in which, upon occasion, they are found to limit their views to the material advantage of the state, even at the cost of private individuals, I take an anecdote of the official life of Cancrin, the famous Russian finance-minister. One of his spies — no branch of the Russian administration is without these — brought him

intelligence that a receiver-general of the revenue had misappropriated large sums of money. In most countries the natural consequence of such a denunciation would be an immediate investigation of the accused person's accounts. Cancrin did nothing of the sort. He went into his office, and called out aloud to a secretary, who sat at the further end of the hall, "to give notice to those officials whom it concerned, that upon that day week there would be a general inspection of all the public money-chests of the metropolis." Of course the defaulter was informed of this within the hour. Off he ran to Jew and Turk, and borrowed for a few days the amount of his deficiencies. The week elapsed, and the inspection began. The finance-minister himself came to the accused person; his books were checked, and the balance they exhibited was compared with the state of the treasury. Thanks to his money-lending friends, the amounts coincided to a kopeck. With a well-pleased glance Cancrin had the money restored to its iron coffer, locked it with his own hand, and—put the key into his pocket.

An hour afterwards the receiver-general received his dismissal. Thus he escaped Siberia, justice was cheated, and several innocent persons—perhaps honest men, who had been eager to oblige and serve him—were defrauded of their money. But the State lost nothing, and the minister saved his "responsibility." Thus are the laws evaded in Russia, but not in all cases with so much apparent lenity.

The humanity of Russian legislation has long since abolished capital punishment, with the sole exception of cases of high treason. Even after the great military conspiracy of 1825, only seven of the chiefs atoned for their crime with life: surely a small number of executions for a plot whose ramifications were so extensive. The knout, which replaces capital punishment, is certainly a terrible infliction; but here also do the widely spread popular notions on the subject demand rectification. With us "Russia" and "knout" have become such identical ideas, that

one is inclined to believe that the slightest infraction of the law may bring the most honest of men under the frightful thong, which every police subaltern is supposed to be at liberty to inflict by the warrant of his own will. The fact is, that in Russia a criminal can be sentenced to the knout for no other offences but those which in Germany would be punished by death, and such sentences are never executed without an authorisation from the Emperor himself, signed with his own hand. The number of blows seldom exceeds six; it is certainly a fact that the first often suffices to kill a man; nevertheless, instances have been known where criminals received ten, and yet survived to make a long atonement of their fault by labour in the Siberian mines. The most frightful circumstance relating to the knout, and that upon which its mournful celebrity is doubtless founded, is the abuse that was formerly made of it. As recently as in the time of the Emperor Paul, the sentence to punishment by this fearful instrument often emanated purely and directly from the sovereign's arbitrary will. By such order and authority was a pope, who kept a reading club, condemned to the knout and to banishment for life to Siberia, for having circulated a prohibited book. Thus also did the sense of justice (coupled with extreme severity) of that Czar pronounce an equally terrible sentence upon the person guilty of a certain offence which had been committed in the garrison. The affair was of a delicate nature, and very probably had reached the ears of the Czar in a distorted form. Meanwhile, in his first anger, he had pledged his word for the carrying out of the penalty, and had named a committee of investigation, whose researches it would have been difficult, indeed impossible, for the real culprit to escape. To avert the horrible misfortune that must have ensued, a non-commissioned officer of the Preobressentschy grenadiers generously sacrificed himself for his young chief, and gave himself up as the guilty person. The committee, who already had their misgivings, felt themselves relieved from an oppressive

burthen and responsibility. Examination and execution were accelerated to the utmost; influential intervention converted the corporal punishment into a mere ghastly mockery, and the devoted grenadier departed for Siberia, where he lived in abundance, until a cabinet-courier, despatched by a new Emperor, recalled him to receive his reward. The signature of his recall is said to have been the very first act of the young Czar.

Such arbitrary sentences are no longer passed, and the present Emperor might be blamed rather for his too great lenity than for his severity. To this day, as regards the bureaucracy, the celebrated "dubina" of Peter the Great would frequently find very appropriate employment. It is undeniable that justice and police are the *partie honteuse*, the shame and scandal, of the Russian empire. The Emperor, who knows everything, but who cannot remedy everything, does his utmost to abate the evil, and made an important step towards abolishing the most crying abuses, by the appointment, some seven years ago, of the excellent Perowsky to the post of minister of the interior. Yet it is a question whether even this man of rare ability will succeed in opposing an effectual and permanent barrier to the flood of official corruption. Admirably qualified though he be for his Augean task, it may still be doubted whether he will escape the countless intrigues and cabals organised against him by the thousand-headed monster he has to combat, and which he threatens in its innermost intrenchments. In the army of officials he finds his bitterest enemies, against whose malice he is upheld only by the Emperor's favour, and by the hearty good wishes of the people, who adore him, and who see their great gain in his steadfast exertions.

To prove to the administration of the police what venal officers were to be found in its ranks, he once sent for its chief, and communicated to him information he had received, that every night, in a particular house, prohibited games of chance were played. He asked for two of the most trustworthy officers,

and sent them at night to the house in question. It was surrounded, and the two agents went up stairs to the apartment that had been indicated to them. There they found a party of six or eight gentlemen, seated at a round table, in the full enjoyment of a game at *faro*, and with heaps of gold before them. Caught *in flagranti*, the disconcerted gamblers were about to be conveyed to the guard-house, when one of them managed to make the two police tyrants understand that “*écarté*,” which they had just been playing, was a very harmless amusement; that the pile of gold upon the table was no evidence against them; that they were in the habit of playing this game—which was one of skill, not of chance—for very high sums; and, to prove this assertion, he offered to play a game at *écarté* with each of the police agents, at 1000 rubles a game. The agents accepted the offer, as well as the 1000 rubles, took themselves off, and next morning the chief of the district reported to the minister that the visit to the suspected house had produced no other result than the discovery of a party of gentlemen harmlessly amusing themselves with a friendly game at cards. Perowsky sent for the two police agents, heard their report from their own mouths, and then, turning to their chief, who was present, “Learn,” he said, “what dependence you can place on the men in whom you confide, and who should be the guardians of the public welfare.” And, opening a side door, he disclosed to the astonished officials the gamblers of the night before, sitting round a green table, in the same order, and engaged in the same prohibited game. Disguised, and with a long false beard, Perowsky went about to shops and stalls, purchasing sugar, meat, and butter, and checking the weight of his purchases. Many shops were closed, but the housewives of St. Petersburg rejoiced at the augmentation of weight and measure.

CHAP XIII.

A SHOW OF BRIDES.

I HAVE already spoken of the public buildings of St. Petersburg, and I ought not to have omitted mentioning amongst them the Michaelow Palace, of tragical fame. This palace, once so brilliant, with its ditch, drawbridges, and palisades, and with the bronze equestrian statue of Peter the Great in its court-yard, is now transformed into a school for cadets; and the apartments in which imperial pomp and melancholy once reigned are now occupied by young, light-hearted, and industrious scholars. With the exception, it must be remarked, of *one room*, whose floor, doubtless, yet bears traces of a terrible event, for immediately after the fearful deed its doors and windows were walled up. At the present cheerful day the darkened casements look dismally forth upon the court-yard—gloomy memorials of sad days gone by. In that room the Emperor Paul met his death, “*struck by apoplexy.*”

At no great distance from this old palace lies the delightful Summer Garden, one of the pleasantest places of resort in St. Petersburg. Peter the Great laid it out, and in a room of the house which he built in it, is shown a piece of leather, the first that was tanned in St. Petersburg, and which still bears marks of the teeth with which the great Czar bit into it in his wild extravagant joy at this new step of the civilization he had promoted. At the present day there are nowhere such good tanners as in Russia, and nowhere are furs so well dressed and prepared for use. This is proved by what I have elsewhere mentioned with respect to the raccoon-skin coats (*Schuppenpelze*), which may be bought at much lower prices in Germany but which, on arrival in Russia, require to be thoroughly dressed again before they become soft, durable, and agreeable to wear.

One of the boundaries of this Summer Garden is towards the quay, and is separated from the Neva only by a carriage road. The charm of the finely grown trees, of the enchanting walks and alleys, of the fine statues and pleasant resting places, is enhanced by the proximity of the colossal barrier of wrought iron, which is probably unequalled in its style, and whose beauty and renown furnished occasion for a thoroughly English piece of folly. A son of Albion, who had long cherished a wish to see the City of the Czars, chanced to hear or read of the rare elegance of this railing. The next day he embarked for St. Petersburg. On arriving at Cronstadt, the search of the vessel by the custom-house officers was martyrdom to his impatience; he threw himself into a skiff and sailed up the Neva as far as the Summer Garden,—the great object of his dreams and aspirations. His guide book in his hand, he lay for hours stretched out in the boat, his eyes immovably fixed upon the wonderful railing. At last, by a violent effort, he detached them from the object of his admiration, and turning to the boatman, "What," exclaimed he, "can the city possess that is worth looking at after this? Take me back to Cronstadt!" And without having set foot in St. Petersburg, he betook himself once more to his foggy native land.

This Summer Garden possesses another attraction, which it shares with no other that I am aware of, save with the garden of the Tuileries at Paris. Like the chestnut-shaded avenues of the Tuileries, this garden is the afternoon resort of crowds of the most charming children, who repair thither, escorted by their mothers and nurses, to people the solitary walks, and make the shrubberies resound with their innocent mirth.

Fifteen or sixteen years later these children reappear upon the same scene, but this time with less artless intentions, and to play a more perilous game. On Whitsuntide afternoon are there to be seen, ranged in long rows, dressed in their best, and often bedecked with costly jewels, the daughters of the middle

class of Petersburgers. Matrimony is the object of the display. It is a Show of Brides.

Young bachelors, disposed to marry, now walk up and down the line of damsels, critically inspecting them as they pass. Should their eye indicate that they have made a choice, a matchmaking friend of the young lady's steps out of the rear rank, joins the would-be wooer, and takes a stroll with him through the garden, informing him of the girl's circumstances, of her family, dowry, housewifely qualities, &c., and obtaining from him similar information concerning himself. Should they so far come to an understanding that the consent of the lady and her parents alone remains to be obtained, the matchmaker conducts her candidate to the mother, who introduces him to her daughter, invites him to her house, and a wedding is the most usual result of the acquaintance thus singularly commenced. Odd as it may seem, experience daily proves that these marriages, originating entirely in the pleasing impression and sympathy awakened by a first glance, are for the most part productive of much happiness. This is, certainly, attributable in great measure to the fact that a Russian of the middle class expects very little from his wife; and the richer he is the less he expects. About the qualities and accomplishments which a German of the same class takes into consideration when selecting a wife, such as education, economy, and the like, the Russian troubles not his head. A rich Russian of the middle class requires nothing from his wife but that she should be handsome, dress with taste, appear elegantly attired the first thing in the morning, and sit all day long upon the sofa, doing nothing, or, at most, reading a novel or netting a purse. He detests to see his wife busied with domestic matters. These are occupations for servants, and should the mistress of the house make them hers, she would lower herself not only in her husband's eyes but in those of all around her. To sit in state and receive company is the Russian lady's sole business. Under this state

of things the education of children is of course much less attended to than were desirable. The boys, however, regularly attend the schools, or are sent to board at educational institutions; and as to the girls, that which is required from them as women, is, as we have already seen, so very little, that how small soever the care bestowed upon their bringing up, it nevertheless is found sufficient. But I certainly do not advise any German to seek a wife at a St. Petersburg Whitsuntide Festival.

Wedding presents are not customary in Russia. On the other hand, there is a long-standing patriarchal custom, which has been preserved, with some variations, to the present day. I one morning met an acquaintance, who hurried by me with unusual precipitation.

“Whither away in such haste?” I asked.

“I have no time to spare,” was the reply, “I have bread and salt to buy.”

“Bread and salt! Have you not both at home?”

“I will tell you another time.”

At our next meeting I received an explanation. From time immemorial there has existed amongst the Russians a custom that a person changing his house should receive from each one of his acquaintances a loaf and some salt. The meaning of the usage may possibly be the kindly wish,—May you never in your new dwelling be in want at least of these two things. As the people became more polished and refined, they brought the salt in a little barrel, and the bread on a plate or in a basket. Later still, when civilization led to luxury, these unadorned receptacles were exchanged for costly ones. The simple gift of bread and salt was presented in boxes and baskets of silver and gold. And at the present day the bread and salt are wholly omitted, and the casket stands for the contents. To avoid monotony the salt-box is replaced by a costly vase, the bread-basket by a service of plate or some other rich present.

There is no change, however, in the formula of presentation. As though to excuse by verbal humility the exaggeration and extravagance of the gift, the donor never fails to beg kindly acceptance of "Bread and Salt."

CHAP. XIV.

COACHMEN AND COURIERS.

IF the most striking view of St. Petersburg is certainly that which is obtained on approaching it by water, the entrance by the high road is not less interesting, although on a less grandiose scale. Particularly imposing is the first appearance of the city as it presents itself to the sight of the traveller advancing towards it from the south. The Moscow Sastawa is a triumphal arch, erected in honour of the troops who made the last campaigns in the East. It is very lofty, proportionably broad, composed entirely of cast iron, with bronze ornaments, and its simple grandeur has a striking effect. Through this gate of honour one passes immediately within the boundary of the city, the gilt cupolas of whose countless churches, rising like flaming signs at the horizon, seem to greet and welcome the visitor.

Those things which, in many large cities, so unpleasingly impress strangers on their first arrival—such as the dirt of artisans, the smell of tan-yards, the noise of forges, &c., are all banished from the vicinity of St. Petersburg. On the banks of the Neva, or on the quays, the traveller is greeted by the joyous songs and merry gossip of troops of young washerwomen, who there pursue their cleanly toils all the year round, braving the ardent heat of summer, and the iron frosts of a Russian winter. When the river is hard bound with ice, holes are cut in its frozen surface, and still the hardy laundresses follow their chilly

avocation; and still by song and jest they strive to beguile its pains. Certainly there are no people in the world so cheerful at their work as is the Russian at his. He must sing, or he could not work. He sings at the plough as in the harvest-field; whilst tugging at ropes on ship-board, and over his glass in the tavern; on the box of the post-chaise, and on the top of the hay-cart. Singing, he accomplishes the most wearisome marches; singing, he goes into action, and singing he comes out of it—if he comes out at all, and with his due complement of legs and arms. Give him but his song and his wodka, and he needs nothing else to be perfectly happy. It is this innate cheerfulness of disposition that enables him gaily to support the most painful hardships. True it is, that by nature the Russian is lazy; he would gladly pass his life singing, drinking, and sleeping, and then again awake to a similar round of sensual enjoyment. But when spurred to labour by necessity, nothing can exceed his fortitude and powers of endurance.

Observe yonder stately, six-foot high, comfortably full-bodied man, with his round face and still rounder beard, in the kaftan of fine green cloth, and the square cap of red velvet trimmed with fur. The man's habitual mode of life is the most comfortable imaginable; the *dolce far niente* is his profession, and only from time to time has he to make certain superhuman exertions. That is the Emperor's *body-coachman*! Off duty, he lives like a lord of the land. You probably imagine that the coachman's natural residence is the stable! but—to err is human!—our charioteer has never seen the stable since he received his last appointment. Whether the carriages be in good condition, the horses fat or lean, the harness suitable, he troubles not his head. Even as a chamberlain approaches the Emperor with the words, "Sire, the carriage is at the door!" so does a coachman of the second class present himself before the great chief of the stable department and say, "Alexei Iwanowitsch, the horses are put to!" Then the comely man with the beard rises

from his chair, empties his glass, and descends deliberately into the court-yard; there a groom offers him his arm, leaning upon which he gently attains the coach-box, settles himself comfortably, and nods. At that nod the reins are handed to him, he winds them round his hands, stretches out both arms straight before him, settles himself firmly against the box—he neither can nor will sit—and, proud as the Emperor on his throne, he drives off. It might really be said that he does his work without moving hands or feet; the latter he hardly *can* move, for he is firmly planted upon them, and of the motion of the former you are not aware, for he guides the fiery horses with the pressure of the little finger. It is only out of affectation that, when he suddenly pulls up, he throws his body backwards, clasping both arms to his breast, like a person swimming. After a half-hour's drive, he returns home; the Emperor alights, and he drives to the court-yard. A groom runs to the horses' heads, another helps him off the box, he throws the reins to a coachman, and walks away. His day's work is done. He has driven the Emperor—that is the whole of his duty. For that he has officer's rank, a salary of several thousand rubles, and lives in clover. But the medal has its reverse; for it may happen that the Emperor, on getting into his carriage, instead of bidding him drive to Kamini-Ostrow, gives the word "to Moscow;" and, just as he would have driven seven versts, in the one case, so he drives $726\frac{1}{2}$ versts in the other, without pause or refreshment, without closing an eye or leaving his box. At certain distances along the whole road there are little houses built as halting-places for the Emperor Alexander; but Nicholas does not use them; he seldom alights till he reaches Moscow, and, the changes of horses being effected with lightning-swiftness, the coachman has hardly time to toss off a glass of *wodka*. At every post a fresh postilion gets upon the box with him; but the most the postilion is allowed to do is to urge on the horses; the reins never leave the coachman's hands, and thus he gets

over the *one hundred and four German miles*, standing, with outstretched arms, without food, his attention unceasingly upon the strain, exposed to every possible variety of temperature — on the box of the carriage with twenty-four degrees of heat, and on that of the sledge with as many of cold. It has happened that, on his arrival in Moscow, he was unable to leave his box; four men lifted him off, he was perfectly stiff, his eyes were starting from his head, he had to be bled and put in a bath, before his stiffened limbs and overstrained nerves resumed life and suppleness. No German could endure such enormous fatigue; the Russian endures it with ease, when he *must*, — *he* who would do nothing all his life long if he *might*.

The case of the cabinet-couriers is similar to that of the coachman. Two of the former are constantly on duty in the Emperor's cabinet. Perhaps at two o'clock in the morning an aide-de-camp brings to one of them a despatch for Lisbon or Naples; and half-an-hour afterwards the courier has left St. Petersburg. And fortunate may he think himself when such journeys fall to his lot; they are mere pleasure-trips, for he soon reaches the frontier, and then he makes himself comfortable — avails himself of railroads and of postchaises; which latter, even were they everywhere as bad as on the road from Vienna to Prague, would still be state-carriages compared to a Russian britschka. Seated on a board covered with a thick leathern cushion, in a wooden vehicle without springs or back to lean against, and on a level with the traces, the courier travels at full gallop over the most wretched roads, without rest or repose, to Odessa, to Chiva, or even to Port St. Peter and St. Paul, 12,800 versts from St. Petersburg. Add to this, that the courier, so long as he is on Russian ground, is forbidden, under pain of dismissal, to close an eye in sleep. On such tremendous journeys as the last referred to, nature becomes at last too powerful for duty to resist her call, and the harassed courier allows himself brief repose. But it has often occurred that when the despatches

reached their place of destination, their bearer was unable to deliver them: he lay a corpse in the carriage.

Less fatiguing than the journeys of these couriers, but still far from agreeable to the foreigner, is the travelling with post-horses, or by diligences. By the first mode he is very much at the mercy of chance. If he quits St. Petersburg provided with a good *padroschnik* (an official document to procure him post-horses), and if he finds no competition at the posting-houses, he gets on pretty well. But if he has not the paper in question, or if there happens to be a demand for, and consequent scarcity of, horses at the relaying-places, he may abandon all calculation as to the probable progress of his journey, and resign himself to the will of Providence. Supposing him to have at last got his horses, and to have left the post-house far behind, he yet has no certainty when he may reach the next; for he may chance to fall in with a courier, or with an officer travelling on service, to whose horses some accident has happened, and who forthwith, and without the slightest ceremony, stops the luckless stranger, takes the cattle from his carriage, harnesses them to his own, and gallops off, perfectly indifferent as to the fate of the man whom he thus leaves horseless and helpless upon the Emperor's highway. The traveller by sledge—say even from Riga to St. Petersburg, between which places the road is tolerably good—may deem himself fortunate if he does not get lost in the night; and may thank, for his safety, the quick ears of his postilion, who, hearing his cry of distress, pulls up and waits until he can pick himself up out of the snow, into which (and out of the sledge) a sudden violent jolt has shot him. I would strongly advise every body who has to travel from Petersburg to Moscow, or to the Prussian frontier, to go by the diligences; which, as far as Moscow, and also on the road to Tauroggen, are very comfortable, and arranged quite in the German manner. By these diligences the travelling is very rapid, and remarkably cheap. From Petersburg to Tauroggen

the fare is somewhat more than thirty Prussian dollars (4*l.* 10*s.*). But as to those persons who are compelled to journey into the interior of Russia, I can only say "Heaven help them!"

At St. Petersburg, when the stranger alights, weary and worn-out, from his travelling-carriage, he finds another little trial to pass through before reaching his hotel. The droschki which conveys him thither consists of a cushioned seat, four feet long, with a back one foot high, and with splash-leathers on both sides to keep off the mud. His safest plan, perhaps, is to sit astride on it; for, if he places himself sideways, he rather hangs on than sits, and is apt to find himself, at any moment, stretched at full-length on the pavement. This is very bad, although it is being almost continually repaired; but the nature of the soil, partly sandy, and partly marshy, is the cause that no good foundation can ever be obtained. Various streets, as for instance the Newsky Perspective, the Great and the Little Morskoje, and some others, are paved with wood, which is a great advantage both to those who drive through them, and to those who dwell in them. The houses in those streets where this mode of paving does not prevail, suffer greatly, particularly when the streets are narrow, from the vibration caused by the perpetual traffic. In consequence of this, even the Newsky lost one of its greatest ornaments; formerly it had on either side an alley of trees; to which, however, the constant rattle of carriages was so obnoxious, that the whole of them withered and died.

Independently of its being preferable as regards the duration of buildings and carriages, the wood pavement is as agreeable to those who drive in the latter, by reason of the uniform pleasant motion, as it is acceptable to those who reside in the former, on account of the great diminution of noise. For horses, on the other hand, it is very dangerous, especially in damp weather, when they easily slip down and injure themselves. This way of paving is extremely expensive, even in St. Petersburg, where wood is nothing like so dear as in Ger-

many. The labour of laying it down is also very great. First is placed a layer of masonry; or, better than that, of square-hewn blocks of wood, each about a cubic foot. These are fitted tight in; then the chinks are all filled up with pitch, which is also spread over the entire surface. The wooden pavement comes over this. It consists of a second tier of square blocks, similar to those of the first layer, and disposed in precisely the same manner. The blocks are merely hewn with the axe, but it is wonderful with what exactitude this is done: they are all as precisely alike as one drop of water is to another, and are as smooth as if they had been carefully planed. This pavement lasts longer than the stone one, which is in more general use; nevertheless it is constantly under repair. Louis Philippe once proposed to pave all Paris at his own cost. It is difficult, in this instance, to give him credit for a generous motive, or to think that he had merely the improvement of his capital at heart; his object more probably was to supply barricade-makers with a softer material.

CHAP. XV.

THEATRES.

FOR the beginning of the season, between the middle and the end of September, everybody returns to the capital, and only the highest nobility, the immediate court circle, remain in the country as long as the royal family stop there. At the end of October these also come back to town, and then approaches the period when St. Petersburg is seen in its greatest glory and brilliancy. It were labour lost to attempt to describe the splendour of the court festivals, of the balls, assemblies, and masquerades; to form a correct idea of them, one must have seen them.

The return of the court gives fresh life and vigour to the artistical world, and the drama flourishes in the beams of imperial patronage. The Emperor visits the theatres almost daily, especially the French play, which is particularly the court theatre. It stands in the heart of the city, opposite the Michael's Palace, and was a birthday surprise of the Emperor's to the grandduchess Helena. Its exterior differing in no respect from that of the adjacent buildings, she had no notion of the existence of a theatre in the immediate neighbourhood of her palace, until the Emperor conducted her thither to witness the first performance.

The name of the Michael's Theatre was given to it in honour of her husband. Compared to the other theatres it is small, hardly so large as, certainly not larger than, the Berlin play-house, but it is the most comfortable of all of them. Its unpretending and simple elegance, its cheerful aspect and commodious arrangement, particularly adapt it for a rendezvous of the best society. The whole house, both before and behind the curtain, is lighted—such at least was still the case in 1844—with oil, but so well lighted that there was not a corner where one could not easily read the smallest writing. And there is no lack of brilliant dresses, which at once benefit and are benefited by the good lighting. The internal arrangement of the house is capital. The stalls are as roomy and comfortable as arm-chairs, which is the name by which they go; boxes and pit are apportioned into a fixed number of places, and beyond that number no tickets are issued. Although there are broad passages through the pit and to the orchestra, no one, except the officer on duty, is allowed to stand up in the house; at the entrance, door-keepers, in rich liveries, receive the tickets and open the doors and seats; the servants who have charge of the refreshments are also in handsome liveries; everything, in short, is arranged with the utmost regard to comfort and convenience, with a sort of modest

sumptuousity, and without consideration of expense. An even steady light is thrown upon the stage, which leaves nothing to be desired with respect to decorations, properties, and costumes. It is rather different when we come to the repertory of plays; that is a medley which I defy any one to comprehend. Setting aside high tragedy, to which they do not aspire, this French company, which upon the whole is not very strong, performs almost all the novelties that appear in Paris. They give farces, vaudevilles, comedies, dramas, even tragedies, such as Victor Hugo's *Angèle*. To these latter they are not equal, and their performance of dramas does not rise above respectability. On the other hand, the performances at this theatre are excellent in the lighter styles of comedy and vaudeville, for which there is altogether a most effective company. But even to the higher style of comedy they are not uniformly equal. I saw them perform Molière's *Malade Imaginaire*, for one of the first appearances of Mademoiselle Dupont,—an excellent actress, whom I had known in Paris, whither she has lately been recalled by the management of the Théâtre Français. She appeared first in the part of the Duchess of Marlborough in *Le Verre d'Eau*, where, as in some other modern plays, she had very little to say. But in the *Malade Imaginaire* her talents made her conspicuous amongst all her comrades, and it was quite evident that she was the only performer in that company who understood how Molière should be acted. The French have very good, very capital actors; truth, however, compels me to declare that those at St. Petersburg, with the exception of Mademoiselle Dupont, were for the most part greatly overrated. Vernet and Paul Minet are first-rate comic performers; Dufour is an excellent actor of characteristic parts; Mademoiselle Alexandre Meyer was exquisite in naïve and sentimental characters, as was Madame Allan in a graver department. M. Allan was a very respectable sedate lover; and M. Bressan took the

part of *premier amoureux*. Both were good actors, nothing more, but both were praised and prized as if they had been artists of the very highest rank; and the last-named was actually made an idol of, especially by the ladies. This, however, was all natural enough. The French theatre enjoyed the highest patronage; it had become the fashion, it was considered *bon ton* to frequent it, and its performances were subject of conversation in the most aristocratic drawing rooms; the management did all in their power to keep up its brilliancy and vogue. All these things, combined with its real merits, could not fail to render it the spoiled child of the public; but, nevertheless, it was decidedly overrated. This theatre, too, was an example of the excellent influence an able administration—there represented in the person of M. Peissard—when properly supported by the directors, has upon the *ensemble* and “working together” of the whole enterprise.

If the Russian National Theatre is behind the French one in public favour, it is before it in real merit; although, like the prophets, it is not duly honoured in its own country. I do not here refer so much to its merit as an artistic institution, as to the non-recognition of the talent of the performers, of which it unites a greater amount than any other theatre I am acquainted with. In Martinow especially, it possesses an actor, who, as the French say, is an artist to his very finger-ends. I do not hesitate to set him down as the greatest theatrical genius of the day. At any rate the celebrated Bouffé, who, in Paris, is held to be the first living representative of that line of acting, cannot support comparison with him.

The Russians allot the palm of good acting to the elder Karatejin, but I cannot coincide with their opinion, for I consider him an inferior artist to Martinow. At the same time I must observe that it is impossible to establish a comparison between tragedy, which is Karatejin's line, and the class of plays in which Martinow performs.

Of all the people of the earth, the Russian, perhaps, possesses the greatest faculty of imitation, and the most complete technical aptness to render it available. Of him it is literally true, that what his eye seeth his hand can do; but it is absolutely necessary for him to *see*, for invention he has none. That is visible in all his works; in his buildings, manufactures, trades, and even in his pursuit of art. But as an imitator he is unrivalled, and that is what makes him so good an actor of farce and comedy, which require less the creative power of imagination than the reproductive faculty, and an acute observation of the daily appearances of life. These he renders with wonderful fidelity. In his own speciality of mimicry he is quite unapproachable. I shall never forget the acting of Martinow in the Russian version of the *Père de la Débutante*. It was a masterpiece of art. The character of the father is considered in Germany a comic part, and the actor's efforts are directed to make his audience laugh. I laughed, certainly, at the Alexander Theatre, and more heartily than I remember ever to have laughed before, but the actor's intention to produce this effect was not discernible; the poor father was in no jocular humour; the unfortunate old fellow, on the contrary, endured the most frightful torments; the sweat-drops hung upon his brow; the martyrdom of his heart and his many sufferings, made the bright tears gush from his eyes. Insensibly a sort of remorse of conscience crept over me for laughing at such a poor, harassed, tortured creature in the midst of his pains. But yet, who could help laughing? Nevertheless, and in spite of the perfection of his acting, the palm of the evening was not for Martinow. The Russian adapter of the piece from the French had introduced a somewhat frivolous scene, in which the *débutante* is introduced to the director of the theatre. The actor, Samailow, availed himself of this opportunity to take off a former intendant of the theatres, Prince Narischkin. I did not know the original; but that the actor

mimicked some person who had once existed, was quite clear to me, for there was individuality in every tone, look, and gesture. The audience was in an ecstasy of delight, particularly its older members, to whom was now presented a living reminiscence of their youth, and who, for the sake of this one scene, would never miss the performance at which they had, perhaps, already laughed full fifty times.

The house in which the Russians perform is the Alexander Theatre. It is about the size of the Berlin Opera House, but is not nearly so richly decorated. Indeed, I know no theatre which can approach the latter for the grandeur and brilliancy of its arrangement and fitting up. The Alexander Theatre is not inviting to the eye, not well lit, and especially not comfortable. The passages, leading to the seats, form a perfect labyrinth. Let no one, in the event of an alarm of fire, separate himself from the throng to seek exit by a side path; for only by a most extraordinary chance could he hope to succeed. It was in this theatre that I saw the Emperor for the first time. He came late, would not allow any one in the box to stand up when he entered, and, without ceremony, and in full view of the public, kissed all his children, great and small, so that you could hear it in the pit. The audience took not the least notice, and seemed quite accustomed to such patriarchal scenes.

The German company is by no means the most favoured in St. Petersburg. They perform alternately with the French at the Michael's Theatre, and use the French decorations, and whatever is fixed and fast; but the elegant French wardrobe warns them off with a "*noli me tangere!*" The German wardrobe is very poor; the Russian theatre gives them some little assistance in this respect, but anything in the way of novelties is very hard to obtain. Earnest remonstrances are of little avail; more may be accomplished by an apposite jest. For instance, I once had to perform Belisarius; the costume was

complete — all but the cloak, which was absent. Three successive requisitions for one were rejected. At last I addressed myself to General Gedeonoff, director-in-chief of the theatres; he referred me to the wardrobe of Karatejin, who played the same part, but was a man of gigantic stature. All my applications were fruitless; the constant reply to them was, "Take Karatejin's cloak." At last I retorted: "As your Excellency pleases; but if I am to have recourse to Karatejin's wardrobe, the only thing I can do will be to borrow one of his handkerchiefs to wear as a Greek mantle." The general laughed, and signed an order for the necessary garment.

Besides the manager, every theatre in St. Petersburg has an official personage attached to it, whose duty is general supervision and to note casualties and deficiencies. At the German theatre this post was filled by a German *employé*, a good sort of fellow who troubled himself little with anything beyond seeing that the young figurantes and chorus-singers were nicely dressed. One day the Court suddenly announced its intention of being present at my benefit, then close at hand. Nobody was prepared for this novelty, and there was great bustle and running about in consequence. Messengers were scampering over the city, hunting for General Gedeonoff, who showed himself at the German theatre scarcely once in eight performances; the German superintendent had a grand parade of figurantes, walking gentlemen, &c., and inspected them from head to foot, and called me to account because one of them had dusty boots. I wondered what made him all of a sudden so anxious in his inspection. "The Court is coming," replied he, "that is a great rarity here, and everything must be clean and bright." "Certainly," I answered, "and so ought everything to be every day of the week, and if you would more frequently see that the boots are well polished, and all corresponding matters in good order, the Court would doubtless oftener come to see the Germans act." The superintendent held his peace

and went his way, whilst the French scene-painter, who had heard the conversation, tapped me on the shoulder, and said, parodying Charles X.'s famous *mot*, and pointing to the departing official, "*Ce n'est qu'un ennemi de plus!*"

At that time the German theatre was in a better state than it had been for years previously. At the performance for my benefit the Court were very much gratified. The Emperor testified to me, through General Gedeonoff, and subsequently, through Prince Wolkonsky, his gracious approbation of my exertions both as actor and as manager, sent me the next day a present of a costly diamond ring, but did not return to the theatre. Soon afterwards came Emile Devrient, provided with strong recommendations; the most influential persons at court interested themselves for his performances, but were unable to seduce the court, then resident at Peterhof, to a single one of them. At last their exertions were so far successful that the German company was allowed to give a performance at the Peterhof palace. The piece selected was the *Landwirth*, and Devrient was really capital; with him performed Lilla Löwe, a truly charming actress, whose marriage has been a great loss to the German stage. The performance went off excellently well, the audience were perfectly satisfied, and the next day Devrient received a valuable ring, but—no second performance took place, whilst the French company, although lacking the charm of novelty, had the honour, once a week or oftener, of being summoned to act at the country residence of the court. Such is the fate of German art, and of German artists.

The largest of the St. Petersburg theatres is the Stone Theatre (*Camino Teatro*), whose dimensions are quite colossal. There German and Russian operas and ballets are given. Although every thing possible is done to encourage the Russian opera, it has never yet been able to raise itself to the rank of the German, which in its turn was utterly eclipsed by the appearance of the Italian opera.

It was at Easter, 1842, that General Gedeonoff, then director of the imperial theatres at St. Petersburg, had the honour of being appointed by the Emperor Director in Chief of all the "imperial" theatres in the empire. This appointment was a disastrous one for German theatricals in Russia. The comprehensive title in fact extended the general's power only to the Moscow theatres, for no other city in Russia has "imperial" theatres, but that extension sufficed to deal the deathblow to German dramatic art in St. Petersburg.

This is an appropriate place to say a few words concerning the character of the officer who exercises so important an influence on Russian theatricals. General Gedconoff is a man of extensive acquirements, rare administrative talents, quick perception, interminable routine, indefatigable activity, and of almost incredible perseverance. He is goodnatured, but passionate and violent. He loves art just as far as, and no farther than, the Court loves it; he patronises the style which the Court views with favour, and is apt, moreover, to estimate the value of a performance by the sum it brings in. From the moment of his appointment as Director-General of all the imperial theatres, he planned the establishment of an Italian opera in St. Petersburg—undeterred by the total failure of a previous attempt of the kind. In the autumn of 1842 he inducted a brilliant Italian company into the spacious Camino Teatro, and to this undertaking the sacrifice was, as usual, the Germans. To make room for the Italian opera, the German opera was sent to Moscow for that winter. But this was the death-warrant also of the German dramatic company, which was enabled to produce pieces of any importance only by the co-operation of the members of the operatic corps, through whose loss it was now so reduced in numbers—whilst nothing was done to fill up the vacancies—that the modest circle of its capabilities was very soon determined. According as the receipts diminished, the number of

performances was lessened, until, towards the end of the winter, they occurred but once or twice a week ; proof sufficient that they declined in favour in the same ratio as the cashbox grew lighter. The success of the Italians proving triumphant, they returned to St. Petersburg for the season of 1843-4, and again the Germans were packed off to Moscow. The result of the second season being as satisfactory as that of the first, in the spring of 1844 the Italian opera was permanently established in St. Petersburg, and the German, as might be expected, dispensed with. Such, in St. Petersburg, is the fate of the beautiful in art. With the discarded operatic company departed also those members of the dramatic corps who had sufficient talents to ensure success elsewhere, or who were not detained in St. Petersburg by the prospect of a pension. The German theatre sank into its former mediocrity. The immense success of the Italians in St. Petersburg has maintained itself to the present day, and, if no warlike alarms operate unfavourably on their position, a long and brilliant popularity may be foretold to them. The triumphs there achieved by some of the principal singers can hardly be described with mere words. Only those persons who have witnessed the enthusiasm of Spanish and Italian audiences can form an idea of them. Above all, Rubini, although he then possessed but *the tradition of his voice*, and the admirable Viardot Garcia, were the heroes of the day. The first was appointed singer to the imperial chamber, and Prince Wolkonsky himself was present in the Winter Palace at the ceremony of his investiture with the uniform of that post. At his benefit a golden laurel wreath was thrown upon the stage, and at Garcia's benefit such a rain of flowers fell around her that she literally waded through them, and they had to be carried off the stage in great wash-baskets. Bearing in mind that this was in February, when in St. Petersburg a rose costs twenty rubles, and a handsome garland or bouquet eighty to a hundred rubles,

I shall not be exceeding the truth if I say that on that day a fortune faded on the singer's bosom. Could there be a more characteristic trait of the luxury and extravagance of the Petersburgers? Without positively asserting it, I yet fully believe that many a young man that evening laid the foundation of pectoral disease. What I *can* positively affirm is, that many sonorous powerful voices in my neighbourhood, which, when the curtain fell, nearly deafened me with their furious acclamations and calls for the great singer, were totally extinct at the end of the uproarious interlude, which lasted full half an hour. During that time Garcia had to present herself at least twenty times to these extravagant admirers, who at last, completely hoarse and exhausted with such riotous applause, left the theatre to try to regain their voices against the next performance.

The ballet occupies a very prominent position on the St. Petersburg stage, and is cherished with infinite care. Indeed so great are the taste, artistic feeling, and pecuniary means expended upon it, that it may boldly place itself in competition with the first in Europe. The ballet-master, Titus, and the machinist, Roller, have done it good service; the *corps de ballet* is excellent, and amongst the most prominent native talent I may name Mademoiselle Adrianow, whose taste and *aplomb* in the performance of the most difficult steps cannot but content the most fastidious judges, and who in grace and elasticity is not inferior even to Taglioni.

I must not conclude this chapter without speaking of two institutions, whose like is nowhere to be found: I refer to the Institution for Pensions, and to the Theatrical School.

Upon the first of these two establishments all persons have claims who have served the stage in an artistical capacity, and for a period fixed by law. The mode of pensioning is various. Russians get a double pension, but must serve, in order to obtain it, twice as long as foreigners. The law

prescribes that, after twenty years' service, and two years more, known as "grateful years," every artist, employed in an imperial theatre, has a right to retire on full pay. This full pay, however, never exceeds in Russia the sum of 4000 rubles banco, or 180*l.* sterling. But the fixed salary constitutes only a small part of the earnings of the more popular actors. Allowances for each performance (*feux*), and benefits, often multiply their profits five or six fold. Karatejin, Martinow, and others, draw fifty to a hundred rubles of *feux* every time they act; and their benefits at the great Alexander Theatre often bring them in 3000 rubles and more. When they have served their twenty years without interruption, a pension is decreed them, and they thenceforward receive, from the imperial treasury, the same salary as they before got from the theatre, but are bound to serve two more years gratis; that is to say, that they receive from the theatre, during those two years, only their *feux* and the amount of their customary benefits. So that, in fact, they serve twenty-two years before they are completely pensioned. The two "grateful" years over, they are at liberty to retire from the stage, or—still drawing their 4000 rubles pension—to enter into a fresh contract with the management. As Russian actors, for the most part pupils issuing from the theatrical school, usually go on the stage very early, they often get a pension before they are forty years old, and can very well take a new engagement. As regards foreign actors, a different arrangement exists. To be eligible for a pension they need to serve only ten successive years, and the two "grateful" years are not required of them. The amount of their pensions was formerly regulated by that of their salaries, but of late years another plan has been adopted. By this, the pensioners are divided into two classes. The first of these, consisting of persons whose salary was of 1000 rubles or less, receive pensions of 1000 rubles; all whose salary was above 1000, receive

a pension of 2000 rubles, which is the highest given. This sweeping arrangement led to some odd results, which fortunately, however, were to nobody's disadvantage. Thus there was an instance of a member of the orchestra, whose salary was only 500 rubles, obtaining a pension of 1000 at the expiration of his ten years' service; twice as much, that is to say, for doing nothing, as he had received for working. Foreigners who obtain these pensions are at liberty to go and spend them where they please, and after their death they are continued to their wives and children. Lately, however, the term of service after which a foreigner may claim a pension, has been increased from ten to fifteen years.

The other institution to which I referred at the commencement of this chapter, is the Theatrical School, and a most remarkable institution it is. Founded originally on the model of the Conservatory at Paris, it is far more comprehensive and complete. I am unacquainted with the manner in which admission is obtained. It may depend on the personal recommendations of the children, or on the interest that can be made for them. All that I know is that, once admitted, every facility and advantage is afforded that may be expected to conduct the pupils to success and fame. They are lodged in a palatial edifice, which also includes the director's dwelling, his offices, the counting-house, theatrical library and wardrobe. Here, as in all the imperial schools, the most ample provision is made for the material and intellectual wants of the scholars of both sexes. The direction given to their studies is of course chiefly artistical. Besides the instruction usually imparted at schools, they have the benefit of the very best teachers of declamation, music, singing, dancing, rhetoric, drawing, &c. On the recommendation of Countess Rossi, General Gedeonoff sent to Vienna, in the year 1840, for that lady's former instructress, Madame Czecea, and installed her as chief of the singing department, with a salary of 4000

rubles. For St. Petersburg this appears rather poor pay. But it was the least part of the value of the appointment. The teacher of the most renowned of Germany's sweet singers was appointed to give lessons to the Grand-duchesses Olga and Alexandra, as well as to the daughter of the Grand-duke Michael. She became the rage at St. Petersburg; the highest of the Russian aristocracy were eager to have their daughters instructed by her who had taught Sontag; her lessons were sought at extravagant prices, and she was overwhelmed with rich presents. Without reckoning these last, Madame Czecca's yearly income was not less than 20,000 rubles banco. This was rather a different figure from that which her talent had achieved for her in Germany; at Leipzig, for instance, where, under the splendid management of counsellor Küstner, she received 90*l.* sterling per annum as music mistress; or in Vienna, where the highest nobility think themselves extremely generous if they pay for the highest class of instruction in singing and music at the rate of two florins a lesson. At St. Petersburg Madame Czecca never gave a lesson at her own house under fifteen or twenty rubles; or under twenty-five to thirty rubles if she went out to give it. Once she went to the house of the Countess Scheremetiew rather after the appointed time, and pleaded, by way of apology, that owing to the very bad weather she had had to wait for a hackney coach. Upon the day fixed for the next lesson an elegant carriage went to fetch her, and when it had taken her home again, the coachman begged to know where he should put it up. Two lines from the Countess Scheremetiew begged her kind acceptance of "this little present."

CHAP. XVI.

HENRIETTA SONTAG.*

LET not every singing mistress, however great her ability, anticipate such good fortune at St. Petersburg as that which Madame Czecca met with. She was indebted for her favourable reception to the gratitude of the amiable ambassadress, her former pupil, who not only recommended her, but sang at a public concert for her benefit. This would have been nothing for Mademoiselle Sontag; for the Countess Rossi, in the midst of the high Russian aristocracy, and of their haughty prejudices, it was an incredible deal. The concert was the most brilliant of the season, and its net proceeds were 14,000 rubles.

The day after the concert, Madame Czecca showed the Countess the cash account of its results.

“Ah! Henriette,” said she, “what have you done for me!”

“For you?” cried the Countess, and threw herself, sobbing aloud, into her arms. “For you? no, for myself! Ah! once more, after many years, have I enjoyed an hour of the purest and most complete happiness. Providence has done everything for me; has given me rank, riches, reputation, the love of

* English readers will be apt to smile at the thoroughly German style and sentiment of this chapter, which I at first thought of omitting, as wholly irrelevant to the subject of the book, but afterwards decided literally to translate, (as literally, at least, as its complicated and exaggerated phraseology would permit), that it might not be said that Mr. Jerrmann's really interesting volume had been given to the English public in a mutilated form. For the same reason, I have retained the preceding chapter, on theatricals, portions of which address themselves more especially to actors and dramatic *dilettanti* than to general readers. It is hard to say from what reporter Mr. Jerrmann obtained his very minute and circumstantial account of Madame Sontag's rhapsodical conversation with Madame Czecca and affecting interview with the Armenian, or how far we are indebted to his imagination for the high-flown dialogue of this green-room pastoral. — T.

a man whom I adore, the possession of hopeful and charming children : and yet, dear Czecca, how shall I explain to you ? — But you will divine my feelings : the element of my existence is wanting. The sight of a theatre saddens me ; — the triumph of a singer humbles me ; — the sound of the organ, which summons others to devotion, drives me from the sanctuary. I am a fallen priestess, who has broken her vow. Art, which I have betrayed, now spurs me, and her angry spirit follows me like an avenging spectre.”

Bathed in tears, she sank upon the sofa.

“But Hetty,” said Madame Czecca, trying to console her, “you are still an artist now as ever, and an artist you ever must be. You still practise your art, and if the circle you now enchant is but a small one, on the other hand, it is so much the more select. The admiration of princely saloons may well compensate you for the applause of crowded theatres.”

“No, no, no !” exclaimed the Countess, springing quickly up, “nothing can compensate the artist for abandoning her vocation ; — nothing, nothing in the wide world ! They praise, and flatter, and worship me ! What care I for all that ? Can they do otherwise ? They are all friends and acquaintances of my husband — our daily circle. I am still young, not ugly, courteous to every one. People are grateful for the momentary pastime I procure them. Perhaps, too, they are glad of opportunities to indemnify the singer for an occasional moment’s oblivion of the Countess. But think, Czecca, of the stage with its heavenly illusions ! the sacred fervour which thrills us on the curtain’s rising ! the passionate anxiety which impels us, and the timidity which holds us back ; the feverish ecstasy that throbs in all our veins ! Such must be the hero’s emotion when he plunges, eager for the fray, into the battle’s whirl, confident of victory, and yet full of anxious anticipations. And then the public ! — that public over each individual member of which our knowledge as artists elevates us ; but which, collectively, is the

respectable tribunal whose verdict we tremblingly await ;—you well know, my friend, how often we bitterly censure its caprices, how often we laugh amongst ourselves at its mistaken judgments ; and yet, yet, it is this public, this combination of education and ignorance, of knowledge and stupidity, of taste and rudeness—this motley mass it is, which, for money, say for a single paltry coin, has purchased the right to be amused by us, and to avenge on our honour a disappointed expectation. To curb that wild power, and lead it away captive ; to unite that vast assemblage, without distinction of rank or refinement, in one emotion of delight, and to make it weep or laugh at will ; to transmit to it the sacred fire of inspiration that glows in our own breast, to captivate it by the power of harmony, by the omnipotence of art : that is sublime, divine,—that elevates the artist above the earth, above ordinary existence. Oh, Czecca, Czecca ! once more let me befool Bartholo, once more let me fall beneath Othello's dagger, amidst the echoes of Rossini's heavenly music, and no complaint shall again escape me : I then shall be content ; for then I shall once again have *lived*."

She sank, sobbing, upon the sofa. A servant entered and announced a stranger, who earnestly insisted to speak with the Countess. A denial had no other result than to produce an urgent repetition of the request.

"Impossible !" cried the Countess ; "I can see no one, thus agitated, and with my eyes red from weeping."

"Never mind that," said Madame Czecca, "you are not the less handsome ; and perhaps it is some unfortunate person whom you can assist."

The last argument prevailed. Madame Czecca left the room, and the stranger was shown in.

He was a tall figure, in Armenian costume. His grey beard flowed down to his girdle ; his large sparkling eyes were ardent and expressive. For a few moments he stood in silent contem-

plation of the Countess ; and only on her repeated inquiry of the motive of his visit, did he seem to collect his thoughts ; and then, in a somewhat unconnected manner, explained his errand.

“I am a merchant from Charkow,” he said, “and my life is entirely engrossed by my business and my family. Beyond those, I have only one passion, namely, for music and song. The great fame which the Countess formerly enjoyed in the artistical world, reached even to our remote town, and my most ardent wish has ever been to have one opportunity of hearing and admiring her. Your retirement from the stage seemed to have frustrated this wish for ever, when suddenly we learned that, out of gratitude to your former teacher, you had resolved once more to appear before the public, and sing at her concert. Unable to resist my desire to hear you, I left business, wife, and children, and hastened hither. I arrived yesterday, and had no sooner alighted than I sent for tickets. It was in vain ; at no price was one to be obtained. Countess, I *cannot* return home without hearing you. You are so good : yesterday, for love of a friend, you sang in public ; make an old man happy, and rejoice his heart with half a verse of a song ; I shall then have heard you, and shall not have made this long journey in vain.”

As the dewdrops of night are absorbed by the bright rays of the morning sun, so did the last traces of tears disappear from the smiling countenance of the charming woman. With that amiable grace which is peculiarly her own, she drew an arm-chair near the piano for the old man, and seating herself at the instrument, abandoned herself to the inspirations of her genius. Her rosy fingers flew over the keys,—the prelude echoed through the spacious saloon ; the Countess had disappeared—Henrietta Sontag was herself again ; or, rather, she was Desdemona in person.

The song was at an end : the musician, transported for the

moment into higher regions, returned gradually to earth, and to consciousness. She looked round at her *audience*. The old Armenian was upon his knees beside her, pressing the folds of her dress to his brow. After the pause which followed the song, he raised his countenance; its expression was of indescribable delight—mingled, however, with a trace of sadness. He would have risen, would have spoken; but could not. The singer's little hand came to his assistance. He pressed it convulsively to his lips, rose to his feet, and, in so doing, slipped a costly diamond ring from his finger to hers. Then he tottered to the door. There he stopped, turned round, and fixed a long and penetrating gaze upon the singer. "Alas!" he exclaimed, in tones of deepest melancholy, "how great the pity!" And, with the last word upon his lips, he disappeared.

Henrietta Sontag returned to her piano: she would have continued singing, but her voice failed her. Deeply affected, she rested her head upon the music-stand, and, in mournful accents, repeated the Armenian's words. "Yes," she said, aloud, "the pity is great indeed." And, sadly pondering, she sank upon the sofa.*

CHAP. XVII.

CONCERTS.

ALTHOUGH I have already described the various public amusements of St. Petersburg, I now return to the subject, in order to supply ampler details of one of the most prominent and popular

* Years after these lines were first published, news reached us of the brilliant triumph which, in London, had been achieved by art over social prejudices. Genius had cast off the cramping fetters of *convenance*. Henrietta Sontag was again enchanting the public. Let Germany be proud of its daughter. — *Note by the German Editor.*

amongst them, namely, concerts. During the greater part of the year these are completely tabooed. Throughout the whole winter concerts are things almost unheard of, until Lent arrives. During the seven weeks' fast their reign continues—a reign which is absolute in proportion to its brevity. The Petersburgers so gorge themselves at the musical banquet, that they are sick of concerts for the rest of the year. When Lent comes, the theatres are closed, dancing-music is forbidden, and concerts have undisputed possession of the field. There are often half a dozen in a day. They begin at noon and last till an advanced hour of the night. Everybody goes to them every day, and often to two or three in one day. In spite of their seeming excess, they are always more or less well attended. This is partly accounted for by the circumstance that, at the season in question, a perfect army of virtuosi from all parts of Europe throng to the Russian capital. These professors usually make their appearance there a few weeks before Lent, provided with recommendations to the principal dilettanti, get introduced into musical circles, where they give proof of their talents, and so win patronage preparatory to their public performances. The saloons of Counts Wilhorsky and Lwoff afford them abundant opportunities for this, and a musician of real talent may be sure by this means of obtaining at St. Petersburg due appreciation and success.

Mere ordinary success, however, is no success at all in the Russian capital. The delicate considerateness of the more distinguished portion of the public, leads them to applaud even mediocrity, which, however, is again forgotten before they visit the next concert. But to obtain a real success, to cause a sensation, is difficult in St. Petersburg, and only to be achieved by talent of the very first order. The Countess Rossi had a triumph of this kind, but we cannot estimate her success by the usual scale applied to professional performers; the circle in which she moved separated her from that class, and it would

have been difficult for the keenest observer to determine the exact degree of influence which the *Countess* exercised upon the *singer*. Presently another musical celebrity appeared at the horizon. In January, 1842, the cry, "He comes!" suddenly resounded through St. Petersburg. Nobody asked, "Who comes?" The pronoun was sufficiently significant; all knew whom to expect. The whole city waited in excited anticipation. The mode of reception had its difficulties. Should the whole of the musicians in St. Petersburg go out in a body to meet him? This was the first idea. But would not the Dorpat University oppose this? He was a graduate. And would not the army put in its claim? For the hero of the piano was also a man of the sword; had received a sabre of honour as a gift from his countrymen, the Magyars, and had pledged himself, when returning thanks for it, to draw, in the day of need, for the freedom of Hungary. Finally, the youth of St. Petersburg would not be behindhand with that of Berlin, and 2000 young men volunteered to form relays and draw his carriage from Narva to the capital. Count Wilhorsky sent a courier to meet him, and to offer him quarters at his hotel, but the virtuoso declined, deprecatd any ceremonious reception, and excused himself by declaring his addiction to seclusion and to the society of the Muse. An express came to engage apartments for him at the Hôtel Coulon; for three whole days the streets leading to it were blocked up by the concourse of people. At last the sound of a post-horn was heard; its melodious notes were surely blown by the postilion who drove LISZT. The four horses rattled round the corner of the Newsky, and were pulled up in front of the Hôtel Coulon. A servant sprang from the box and pulled down the steps; a young man stepped, smiling, out of the carriage; his fur cloak concealed his features, but the long hair that waved over his shoulders, and the long fingers that protruded from his sleeves, betrayed his identity. "It is he!" was the cry that resounded through the streets, along the

Newsky to the Morskoy, and as far as the Admiralty. Aristocratic equipages come rolling up, the fashionable world begins to crowd the antechamber, but speedily again evacuate it with long faces and disappointed mien. It was not the great man; it was only Signor Pantaleone, Liszt's good secretary and bad singer, who had come on in front, as quartermaster, to take up the apartments and play St. Petersburg a little trick. The modest artist made his quiet entrance after midnight in another carriage and four, attended by his agent, valet-de-chambre, servant, and chasseur.

The day of days arrived. Liszt gave his first concert at the Nobles' Club. The Emperor, the whole Court, the highest nobility, all the artistical notabilities of the capital, a select circle of ladies, adorned the room, every nook and corner of which was crowded. The receipts amounted to 20,000 rubles banco, and the delight and applause were equivalent to twenty times as much. Liszt passes for a genius, and, by all the Muses! a genius he is; but the great public cannot appreciate him at his full value, which is not ascertainable at the price of a ticket. To know what Liszt's genius really is, to appreciate it in its full and true extent, one must have the opportunity I have enjoyed of hearing him without seeming to listen—sitting in a sofa-corner in his room, helping one's self out of his travelling cigar store. and turning over the leaves of a newspaper, whilst Liszt, heedless of the barbarian who can read the "Débats" whilst he plays, gives himself up to his inspirations, plays without affectation or coquetry, plunges into an ocean of sounds expressive of every gradation of the passions, and seems alternately to soar upon celestial wings, and to descend into the depths of an *inferno*. Then is Liszt magnificent, then is he sublime—then is he equal to his reputation. But before the public! no! then his better self struggles against his bad habits—conquering, but not completely mastering them. Would that Liszt could follow the advice which Herder somewhere gives

to actors,—“to forget that they are before the public.” Could Liszt attain to this degree of self-control, the public would recognise his genius as I recognised it, and their admiration would be immeasurably purer and more profound.

Liszt gave at least a dozen concerts during his stay at St. Petersburg; the enthusiasm was always the same, and his receipts were enormous: only the smaller portion of these, however, remained in his purse; with princely generosity, he loaded friends and countrymen with presents of money and money's worth; his liberality and munificence were proverbial, and served not a little to heighten his fame. True it is that he is generous to an excess; but—truth before all things!—Liszt certainly throws away his money by handfuls, but (without disparagement to his generosity) he throws it, by preference, *where it is likely to jingle*. To do good by stealth is less in his way.

Covered with laurels, the great pianist left St. Petersburg. His name and fame would have remained indelibly impressed on the minds of the living generation—if he had never returned thither. Better had it been for his reputation had he played a sonata of Beethoven's the less, and applied the time thus economized to the perusal of an old German comedy. Amongst much rubbish, such old plays sometimes contain valuable truths. One of these is spoken by the gipsy beldam in *Preziosa*, when she says,—

“Wird man wo gut aufgenommen
Soll man ja nicht wiederkommen.”*

The proverb holds good all the world over, but nowhere so much so as in St. Petersburg. That capital is a perfect shark in the matter of devouring reputations. Its applause resembles its seasons; in a single night one passes from summer's ardent

* “When once one has been well received in a place, it is wise not to return thither.”

heat to winter's icy cold, and a snow shroud covers the meadows which yesterday bloomed in the sunbeams. The Russian lives fast, and as he uses his life quickly, so he uses all things quickly which cheer and embellish existence.

A year after his first visit, Liszt returned to St. Petersburg. His genius had been true to him in the interval; his artistic skill was, if anything, still more perfect than the year before; in no respect had he fallen off, and yet, for some inexplicable reason, the public cared not for him. *Ce n'était qu'un artiste de plus.*





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