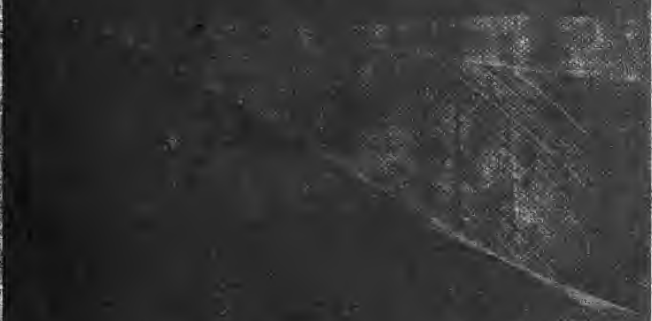
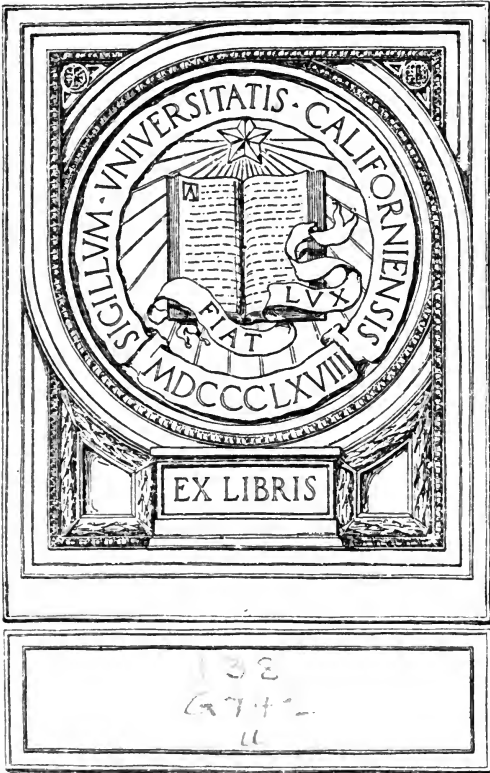


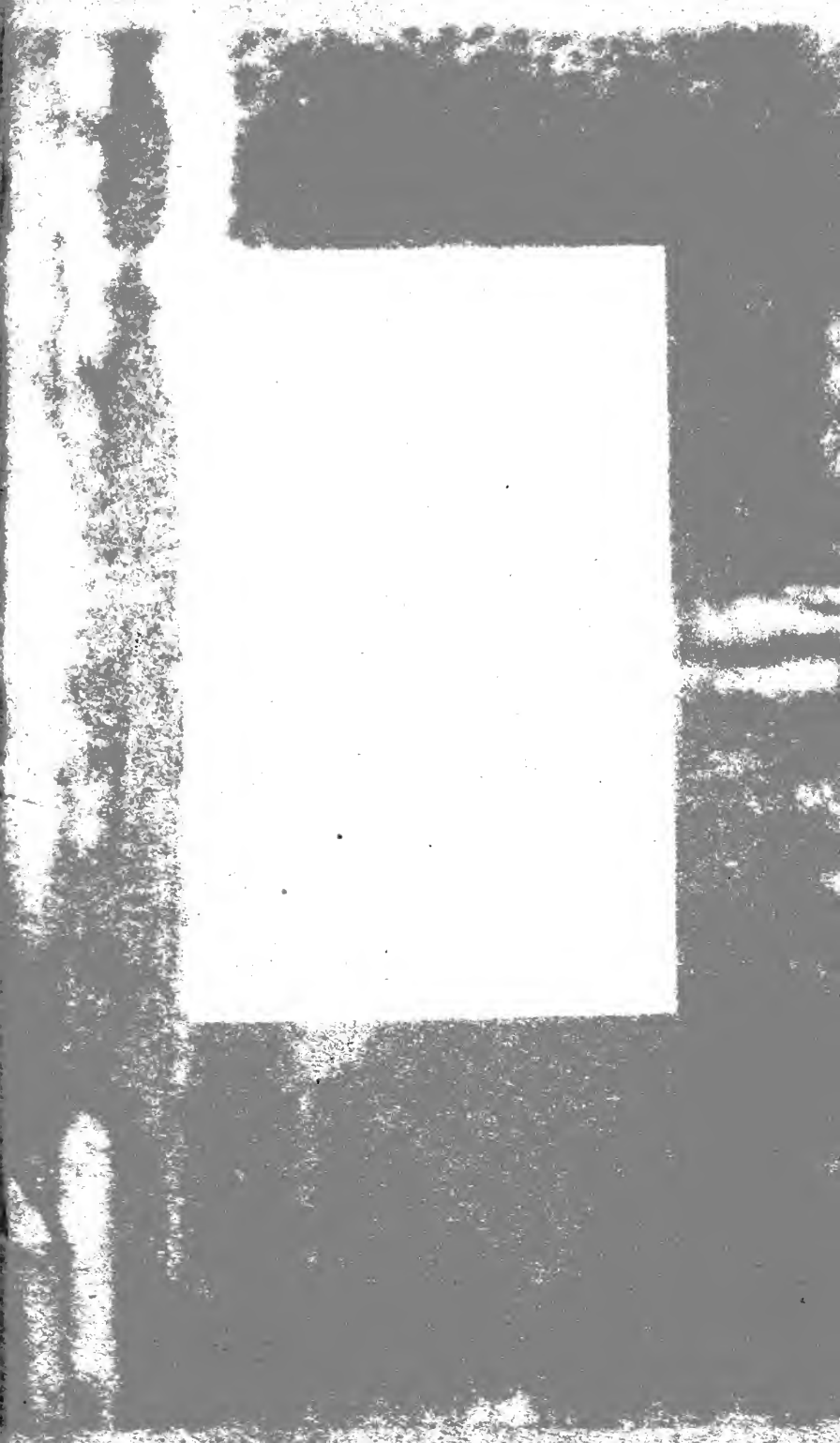
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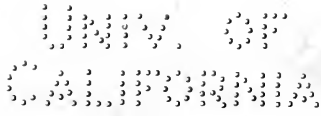
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*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

**A VAGABOND IN THE  
CAUCASUS.** With Some  
Notes of his Experiences among  
the Russians. With Sixteen  
Illustrations and Two Maps.  
Demy 8vo.





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*Michael Nestroy*

HOLY RUSSIA

# UNDISCOVERED RUSSIA

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM  
WITH 26 ILLUSTRATIONS & 3 MAPS

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STEPHEN GRAHAM.





## PREFACE

**R**USSIAN life is not known in England. The Slavonian land is not so far away but that the picture might have been visible had it not been for the dust raised between us in these years. Russia is not a land of bomb-throwers ; is not a land of intolerable tyranny and unhappiness, of a languishing and decaying peasantry, of a corrupt and ugly Church—that at least may be said right away in the forefront of this book. The Russians are an agricultural nation, bred to the soil, illiterate as the savages, and having as yet no ambition to live in the towns. They are strong as giants, simple as children, mystically superstitious by reason of their unexplained mystery. They live as Ruskin wished the English to live, some of them, as he tried to persuade the English to live by his “*Fors Clavigera*.” They are obediently religious, seriously respectful to their elders, true to the soil they plough, content with the old implements of culture, not using machinery or machine-made things, but able themselves to fashion out of the pine all that they need. But they have all the while been doing this, and have never fallen away as the English have. There is no “back to the land” problem in Russia, nor will there be for a hundred years.

The Liberal press and the revolutionaries would like

to educate the peasantry to give them a vote. They would at the same time place no restraints on Russian manufacture and the freedom of town life, and so once more betray the country to the town and rush into all the errors of Western Europe. England has fallen away from the soil and ceased to produce its own food, and not Ruskin, nor all the king's horses and all the king's men could replace her where she was. If Russia falls away, there will be one less humble toiling nation, one less bread-producing land. Someone has said, "It is the folly of democracy that it wishes to make all lower orders upper orders"—that may turn out to be an international folly. The English have done supremely well as a nation, but the inclination of their character and the way of their development is not the same as that of other nations. Indeed it would be difficult to imagine two races more radically divergent from one another than Teutonic and Slavonic. Russian and Englishman are more unknown to one another than man and woman. In the words of Merezhkovsky, speaking to the rest of Europe—

*"We resemble you as the left hand resembles the right; the right hand does not lie parallel with the left, it is necessary to turn it round. What you have, we also have, but in reverse order; we are your underside. Speaking in the language of Kant, your power is phenomenal—ours transcendental; speaking in the language of Nietzsche, you are Apollonian, we—Dionysian. Your genius is of the definite, ours of the infinite. You know how to stop yourselves in time, to find a way round walls, or to return; we rush onward and break our heads. It is difficult to stop us. We do not go, we run; we do not run, we fly; we do not fly, we fall. You love the middle; we, the extremities.*

*You are sober, we—drunken ; you, reasonable, we—lawless. You guard and keep your souls, we always seek to lose ours. You possess, we seek. You are in the last limit of your freedom ; we, in the depth of our bondage have almost never ceased to be rebellious, secret, anarchic—and now only the mysterious is clear. For you, politics—knowledge ; for us—religion. Not in reason and sense, in which we often reach complete negation—nihilism—but in our occult will, we are mystics.”*

We have to tolerate and understand this new nation which is growing daily more articulate. Then, as the boundary lines become fainter on continental maps and the era of cosmopolitanism dawns, we may ask ourselves as Europeans rather than as Englishmen—“ Who are our brothers living away to the East, making food for us ; what are they to us, and what is their contribution to the whole.”

Russia lies at the back, an undiscovered country, peopled by a fresh and original peasantry. Far from the railways, round churches in forest clearings, in verdant half-forgotten river valleys, where Western clothes and Western culture never penetrate, lives a lost family of our brothers. It is among them that I have been wandering and living. Here is Russian life as I have seen it and understood it in remote unknown parts where Western Europeans have never travelled.



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# UNDISCOVERED RUSSIA



# UNDISCOVERED RUSSIA

## CHAPTER I

### A STRANGE CHRISTMAS PARTY

**D**ECEMBER and the year had almost unwound themselves. We were among the scantily clothed days at the end of the year. There was now no snow on the ground, or if there were any, it was not of the time ; it survived from earlier days when the skies had been prodigal. It rained a little and froze a little and the feeble air blew up in little gusts or lay exhausted in mists. The mists trailed over the withered maize fields or lay listlessly about the green roofs of the village houses, or cleared for a few hours to show the bases of the mountains. I was living in the far South of Russia.

I stood one morning in the little cemetery and looked around me. It seemed the mist had just cleared a space. The graves and the stones and the crosses, the grass and last summer's withered flowers could be seen quite clearly, and even the low green paling that fenced the graveyard in. But beyond these the mist had dominion. My world

had for the time shrunk, and the unknowable boundlessly increased. As I stood there I felt the mist encroaching, encroaching—like oblivion upon memory ; as if it would limit even to the seven feet of shadow I cast upon the ground.

Around me were many green wooden crosses, crosses that had weathered many rains and dried in hot suns, and become wet again in mist and rain, or white and green in snow, or silvered in frost. They were all fragile and unstable as if put up for sport by children, and the winds had tumbled them so that they pointed at all angles, as it were, at every star in heaven. Round the necks of the crosses hung little ikons or artificial-flower wreaths, a prayer book, a shape, a token ; and below, one read the legend :

*“ Here lies buried the body of a slave of God.”*

It was an ancient graveyard full of dead, and had served several little villages for a century or more. Its fresh dark earth exhaled an incense to the mind, a remembrance of tears and prayers.

Fast underground lie the poor joinered coffins, most of which the moujiks had made for themselves before they died. All the fair form and flesh has vanished away, and with them the personality and lovableness of those whose life’s limit was marked by these crosses. But to the Russian it is the cross planted upon the grave that nullifies the grave, signifying the triumph of Christ over death. No crosses are of stone, and the wood is for him the wood of the Tree of Life.

For there are no dead in Russia . . . all who have passed the dark portal are alive for evermore.

Suddenly out of the mist a form emerged, as if the

mist itself had taken form. An old woman, tall, and bent with age, came slowly forward, gathering sticks here and there as she walked. She did not notice me, but wandered to and fro among the graves. Then as I reflected what she might be doing, a grey-headed crow fluttered down from an unseen tree and balanced itself upon a cross in front of her. Whereupon she turned hurriedly from the bird of evil omen, and I saw that she was a worshipper at a grave. At some distance from me, where little rustic seats had been placed about a grey-green cross, a candle was burning, and a young woman was arranging some tribute upon the low mound—a wreath perhaps. I approached and recognised my neighbour who lives in the house facing the white church on the green.

I did not go nearer, but I saw they had planted a new Christmas tree before a grave, and they had hung it with little ornaments and candles. The old lady lit a little fire with the sticks she had gathered, and the young one, her daughter, spread out a cloth in which was a portion of cake from their Christmas table. They had come to share their rejoicing and their festival with one who had died, a daughter and a sister.

The fire crackled and sent up clouds of blue smoke, and the little lights twinkled on the tree upon the grave. The red and yellow candles gleamed. The liquid mist flowed about the scene like staring ghosts, and I was the only human witness.

Presently, after crossing herself, and kissing the ground, the old lady rose. She placed a little cake upon the mound for the dead one, and took to herself a little, and gave a little to her living daughter; then to myself in my heart the sacred fare also was given, and we made

up this strangest Christmas party. There were four present ; there were four thousand—the ghosts pressed around in the mist, a mob of the dead. I felt like Ulysses in quest of Tiresias.

She who had died was a beloved daughter, and the tears streamed adown the face of the old mother, and though the younger did not weep, I have learned there were as many tears in her heart as in the eyes of the other. The old woman, the *babushka*, belonged to Old Russia, and the young one belongs to the newest of the new.

I have more to say of them. They took the toys from the tree and gave them to the poor children round about their home, and to these also gave of the cake. For the younger woman had learned the lesson that in the living we can find all our dead again.

Once more at Easter, when the whole countryside came out in holiday to the graves with priests and with tapers to share the festival with the departed, the old lady was again to be seen with her daughters at the grave, and before the cross, still adorned with palm-branches, stood a lighted candle. Upon the rustic seats in the press of the crowd sat beggar men and women eating rice and raisins in company with the dead, and for the remembrance of them upon the earth.

Then at each communion-time, when at the porch of the church one purchases a little loaf and sends it with a piece of paper and a name to the priest at the altar, the mother and sister would write the name of their dead one, and send the bread that the rite of Communion might be fulfilled. Many, many names were written, of fathers, mothers, grandparents, living friends, dead friends ; in Russia, in prison, abroad, lost ; and

with the written name went the little piece of bread. The priest would receive all the bread and all the papers, and then in the silence before the mass, read out the names of all. One did not know which were living and which dead, but one felt one's self compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses.

One morning I came in to see the *babushka* and her daughter, and found them preparing for a meal of communion. The room, in perfect purity and cleanness, gleamed in the sunshine, and jugs of flowers stood on the white-spread table. The old lady came in after my arrival, evidently from the church, for she wore her cloak, and in her hand she carried a cloth with a communion loaf. Her hair was peculiarly white, and her soul shone through her eyes in the radiance of religion. When she took off her cloak and showed her white dress and rich old white shawl one felt almost in the presence of an angel.

Very quietly and calmly she sat down to the table where the samovar was steaming. She had fasted since six the evening before, and now would break her fast on the sacred food. The daughter poured out tea, the mother broke the bread, and then, having crossed herself before the sacred picture in the east corner of the room, she began her communion meal.

"My mother wishes that she may meet you in heaven," said the daughter, handing me a portion of the bread.

I love Russia. She is something more to me than my native land. Behind her eyes are new mysteries, new potentialities; for she is the daughter of a different family from mine. Those of England who come as I

have done will rest under the same spell and feel the same enchantment, but she is a difficult princess to come by, hidden by soldiers and fortresses and towns, and shut away behind the ancient forests. Often it seems to me I am the fortunate prince who has found the Sleeping Beauty.

I have lived among beautiful people leading serene and tranquil lives far from the Western hurly-burly. These have been so mystically pure that I could never be quite sure that they had not foreseen my coming in a dream. England knows not such. To me they are a revelation of love.

There is such hospitality of mind in Russia that one passes from friend to friend as if floating down stream upon a river. "You wish to see Russia as it remains in the old unknown parts," said the younger woman to me; "you should go to the North, for there all that Russia ever was is conserved in the forests as in ice—in the provinces of Archangel and Vologda—where there are no railways and no intercourse with the advanced world of the twentieth century. If you go I shall write about you to a friend."

"Stepan Petrovitch will leave us!" said the old woman. "Ah!" and a look of disappointment crossed her face, to be immediately dissolved in a new radiance. "Though he goes away, he will not be far from us."

It turned out that I resolved to go to Archangel, and to live like a pilgrim or a tramp in the North for a whole summer, and so be one for a while with Russian peasant life.

The friend replied that it would be well for me to come, for the North was full of wonder and of charm; yet he



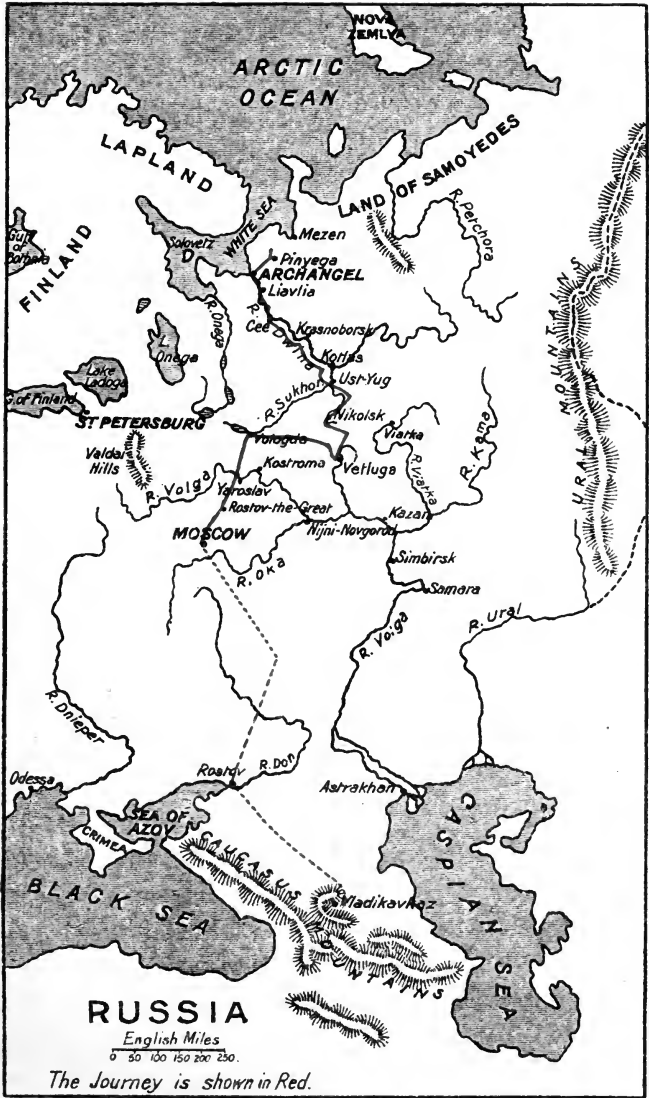
would counsel me not to come if I were sensitive to the moods of Nature, for the dark forests and the skies of sadness might make me too unhappy. If, however, I came he would introduce me to his friends, get me a special passport from the Governor, and be as kind to me as it is possible for one man to be to another.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WHITE NIGHT OF RUSSIA

I MADE the whole three thousand versts journey that takes one from the extreme south of the Tsar's Empire to the extreme north. I crossed the steppes to cholera-stricken Rostof-Don, climbed the downs of the Don Cossack country through Little Russia to Voronezh and Moscow. The sun was already scorching the plains when I left the south, but at Moscow it was so chilly that the waiters at the open-air cafés were wearing overcoats over their aprons. When I reached the northern provinces I found I had left the summer and come back to the spring. I went from Moscow to Rostof the Great, so called through being once a kingdom by itself, but now a little peasant town so closely packed with ancient churches and crosses that, as the legend says, "The Devil is feared to go there." I walked through beautiful birch woods and crossed the baby Volga at Yaroslaf, and thence through endless forest to the tundras of Archangel. It was even colder than at Moscow, and one saw half-melted snow among the trees.

The weather was unseasonable, but on the afternoon of my arrival the clouds parted and disclosed a sun not less hot than that I had experienced in the south. Then, as a native informed me, the dinner wind had changed





to that of midnight, and there would be neither snow nor rain for twenty-four hours. The *obyednik* or dinner wind is that from the south-east, from which quarter the sun shines when it is time to prepare dinner, and the *polu-notchnik*, or midnight wind, is that from the north, where the sun stands at twelve o'clock at night. . . . And at midnight the sun is visible at Archangel. I had arrived in the land where, for two months in the year, there is ceaseless day, and for two months ceaseless night.

Archangel is a fine town about seven miles long, with many churches on whose gilded domes the sun flashes. The houses and the pavements are made of pine logs, unpainted and unvarnished. On the quay-side there is a busy life of lading timber and unlading fish ; on the wooden landing stages women are washing cod ; girls come rowing in from villages on the other side of the Dwina, a rare sight, four women in red cotton coming into harbour with a measured beat of oars. At the hundred stalls of the daily fair one rubs elbows with handymen of Scotland and Norway, and sees for purchase such unlikely ware as cod pie, basins made of birch bark and pipes of carved fish bone, pictures of the Saints and holy rubbish for poor pilgrims. Meanwhile, passenger steamers for the White Sea islands or the river villages are continuously hooting, and steam tugs are hauling islands of pine logs up and down the river. The piers, and especially the Solovetzky pier, are crowded with beggar pilgrims seeking boats to the monastery of Solovetz, counted a most holy shrine. Some of these have walked a thousand miles or so, and received hospitality all the way, for often they come without a penny in the purse. I took a boat down-stream and saw the immense pilgrim

ship belonging to the monastery. The whole crew of this steamer, from captain to cabin-boy, are monks, and very picturesque and old-fashioned they look in their blue smocks belted at the waist, and their long hair. The embarkation of the pilgrims, in their dirty multi-coloured dresses, would make a remarkable picture of life behind the scenes in civilised Europe.

I had made my abode among these pilgrims, *God-praying-ones*, as the Russians call them, in a riverside inn kept by a charitable old dame, who entertained more beggars than customers. It was no more than a little cosy parlour, and two or three little rooms. Perhaps twelve might sit at the tables at a time, certainly no more with comfort. It was a resort of boatmen and pilgrims, and outside there was a notice in washed-out blue, like an old sailor's eyes—*TEA PLACE*; and for those who couldn't read, a lively painting of a teapot, cups and glasses, rolls, krendels, fish. Inside one might obtain tea at the rate of a farthing a glass, only half a lump of sugar being allotted to each glass, however; pickled herrings served on pieces of old newspaper at two or three a penny, and milk or biscuits roughly served but not unpalatable. The hostess was a clean old dame, and she knelt to scrub her floors and forms not less than to the sacred pictures which looked across her counter.

Archangel had always seemed to me a remote town, and years ago I had asked myself what kind of life and what sort of people there might be there. I had a fancy to go there. Now my fancy has been gratified, and there is yet another place written down in the charts of my experience. And it is always a little saddening to exchange a dream for a reality—once also the Caucasus

was a name crowded with boundless possibility, and I went there and saw what it was. I almost envy those stay-at-homes for whom Europe and the world is quite unproved.

But I suppose whoever has seen any place, or has described it and has said in his heart, "There, that is the place, and *that is all*," has really sinned against the Spirit, or to use a more lenient language, *he has forgotten*. A town has a soul. One might stay in a hotel in Archangel and see nothing of it, make a tour of Russia, and get nothing more than would provide a modern novelist with local colour. The teeming life which shows itself at once is only a veil. The undiscovered lies everywhere behind the discovered.

Archangel is a mysterious town, an almost unguarded port filled with the vessels of all nationalities. One feels one's self to be, to use a children's phrase, "on *the top* of Europe." The sky seems lower here than anywhere else. It is a broad sky that seems to be never more than half clear. It holds peculiar little clouds which look like sheep or cows with long bodies. They circle round the horizon and take all the soft purples and crimsons that the various sun gleams lend them.

When I returned from visiting the pilgrim boat on the first evening after my arrival, it was eleven o'clock and still bright day. The streets were empty, everyone slept. It was as if everyone had left the city, and all the houses were tenantless. The feeling in the air was strange, for the sun was shining, and everything in my consciousness told me I had never known it to shine at that hour before, and never known day to succeed day without the interval of darkness and refreshment. I walked

back to the many-masted river and the ships gave assurance, for there are not ships in a deserted city. But even they were motionless, and the fast-flowing stream seemed more gentle and hushed in its movements. The clouds in the sky rested in their trouble as if wondering at the failure of the night.

The white night is a reality. It was as light at twelve as at eleven, and one could read as easily at one in the morning as at one in the afternoon.

I sat on a high bank by Tsar Peter's pavilion and looked towards the sun. It stood on edge like a hoop on the surface of the White Sea and its light flooded upward, half in sunset, half in dawn, and the purple lights crept to and fro on the charmed river. Far to the west among the pine trees, shone the high white wall of a church, dimly and wanly. There was a strange mystery in the night, gentle, mild and wonderful. Nature sat with head between her hands, elbows upon her knees, and dreamed. One felt one's self in a light of peace and calm, as in the depths of some holy mystery, perhaps the vision of Holy Russia; it was the light of a vision before the eyes, flooding and transfiguring the darkness, the light of many haloes, dream daylight. . . .

Night is to the day as death is to life, and it seemed to me as if perhaps there might be somewhere in human experience a vision of death akin to this vision of the night. As Richter saw how "world after world shook off its glimmering souls upon the Sea of Death as a water bubble scatters swimming lights on the waves."

I looked to the town. Still it slept, and was no less in the darkest night than the cities of the south. For the light is for those whose eyes are open, and to see the real



vision of the night made visible, there are even inner eyelids of the soul to be raised. Only the deep-eyed may reflect in their mirror souls the glint of the white wings in the air. I breathed lightly and gave my heart to Russia. She is a woman. Behind her eyes are forests of pines and unexplored darkness ; in her hand she carries blossoms. She is the mother of nations, the holy one who sits at home and prays, while we, more secular, go abroad into the day. She is the mother earth to which the spirit of the blossom must descend in order that the God who rewardeth openly may add another lustre to the rose.

“ How do you *feel* Russia ? ” said my new friend, Vassily Vassilievitch, when I found him next day. “ Do not answer ‘ good ’ or ‘ bad ’ or ‘ interesting ’ ; you understand what I mean.”

“ I feel her old, fragrant, melancholy, like the black earth,” I answered.

## CHAPTER III

### PEREPLITCHIKOF

**V**ASSILY VASSILIEVITCH PEREPLITCHIKOF is an artist of the new school. "An Impressionist," he calls himself, and, like Russian painters in general, he does not paint so much what he sees as the soul of what he sees. His aim is to reproduce the mood of Nature in the mind of the beholders of the picture. The Pre-Raphaelite paints exactly what he sees ; the painting by an impressionist is more in the nature of a guide-post for the imagination. Vassily Vassilievitch paints the North as he feels it, and I am sure the English Academy-goer would declare, when looking at his pictures, that no such scenes as those represented could be found under the sun. Yet the galleries of Moscow and St Petersburg are full of such pictures, and the Russian world of Art is a world of impressionism. It does not matter *what* is painted so much as *how*. The artist is perfectly free from traditions and conventions, and he uses his material as he likes. His representation may mean nothing to the mind looking through the eyes alone. The sense is wafted as the seed of wild flowers—by accident. One catches a meaning from the *tout ensemble*, but not through methodic effort to understand.

Pereplitchikof is a popular Moscow painter, though it

says much for the *Intelligentia* that such paintings as his can be appreciated widely. They are all full of poetry and also full of sorrow. His are the cold dreaming pines, the purple and violet lights of sky and river, the old grey izba, the Mother-Shipton shaped old churches. One feels in his pictures the land that winter has treated so unkindly. His summer landscapes are full of the remembrance of pain, and in his White Night pictures, Nature seems to weep because darkness has not been given her.

On the day of my first acquaintance with him, we went in a steamer down the river to Salombola, a suburb of doss-houses, low taverns and music halls. It was in the afternoon, and the sun flooded from the west as if it were standing at the gateway of its home. We passed the town in review—the cathedral, the gardens, the house built by Peter the Great when he lived at Archangel, the old town gaol with its black burned walls and fifty empty windows—the place is out of use now—the splendid suburb where all the Germans live together. There are many Germans and English in Archangel, though they are mostly Russian subjects, the descendants of people who at the time of the Crimean War took out letters of naturalisation. The painter did not say much, but looked across the river to the left bank where there are no buildings except here and there an *izba* or a church. The water is wide as the sea, but calm and clear, and the colours of the strange northern sky are dissolved in it. Suddenly the painter turned and said, “This beautiful country is ours, is it not, better than if it were our private estate, for we know the meaning of its beauty. You know the saying, ‘Not he owns a picture, who hangs it on his walls, but he who understands it.’”

When we returned to the port we had a lively experience in a dried-fish warehouse on the shore. There a travelling musician was playing on the *goosia*, an ancient Russian instrument, hand-made, a guitar or harp of twenty strings. He had made his *goosia* himself. An old man with blue glasses, he came from Nizhni-Novgorod province, but had no home. He just wandered over Russia as so many others do, from town to town, throughout the varying year. Picture him sitting on a sack of dried herrings, playing, not only with fingers but with fire, the old songs of the peasantry. Two hooligans had officiously taken it upon themselves to fulfil the missing part of the programme, and they danced as only Russians can, not with legs only, but with neck and shoulders, nose and eyes, sides and arms. At intervals they subsided and took round the hat, duly delivering the collection to the old musician.

We were the most important spectators. Vassily Vassilievitch is a devotee of the balalaika and all stringed instruments, and is quite ready to sit up all night any season to listen to their music. We dictated the programme, very carefully putting him off when he struck on something modern like "Sing, swallow, sing" to the tune of "Two lovely black eyes." They were old tunes of the country and merry ones—"Away down the Volga River," "Down the cobbled roadway," "The Kamarinsky." The audience felt very happy; it thrilled to all the sentiments in the tunes. It is wonderful how the little glories of man's life are sent up to the gods with a crash of music; as we think God sends music with the presence of the Grail.

"My friend, you are wonderful," said the painter.

“ You ought to be a society entertainer and not a strolling musician. Where do you live ? You ought to come and see me.”

But the old man declined to be flattered or to look up. He regarded as suspicious any well-dressed person who should ask him where he lived, and only after the question was repeated, he replied, “ I have no address . . . as yet.”

We went away to see a hunter who lives on the Troitsky. We hoped to get him to arrange about a special passport to help me in my tramp through the country. This was M. Beekof—Alexander Alexandrovitch, as he is called—and he was of much assistance to me. A very interesting, all-round man I found him. I should say his like was not easily to be found in any country. All the summer he sits at the counter of a large drapery establishment of which he is the owner, but in the winter he shoots bears. He has visited and photographed parts of Nova Zemlya, which no one else has yet discovered. He is an excellent photographer, working even in coloured photography in such a remote district as Archangel, rows well, shoots well, rides well : is married, and his little children play with young pet bears in the nursery. Picture a short stalwart man with lowering, frowning forehead and protruding eyes. Though only twenty-six years of age he is bearded. He is very stout and massively strong ; in the country he wears a loose red Russian blouse fastened with a belt. Capable, of course, to the finger tips, he would probably do anything well, and in intellectual parts he is not lacking, I should say, for he is a contributor to several Russian journals. Yet his aspect is forbidding . . . but his character, pure gold.

We were shown into a large sombre room. It was an expression of the hunter's soul. A great black bear stared over one's head at the doorway, a bear's head looked up from under the writing-desk, another looked down from above the divan. On the walls were long guns and short guns, pistols, knives; on the floor, skins. The holy pictures looked down from one corner, and from another, over the writing-desk so that he could see it when he was working, his wife's picture. The exterior of Alexander Alexandrovitch might seem unprepossessing, but the portrait of that smiling girl is the explanation of his heart.

We turned over some hundreds of photographs together, chiefly of Nova Zemlya, snow, Samoyedes, and bears. He seemed to think I might get into some difficult positions while tramping south, and telephoned to the governor of the province, asking if he could give me special letters. The upshot was that I arranged to go to the palace on the morrow and talk the matter over with the Vice-Governor.

With that we bade the hunter farewell for the time being, and went to pay another visit. This was to a friend of Vassily Vassilievitch, who had just moved into a new lodging. It is a custom in Russia, when a friend changes his rooms, to bring the hostess a cake, and the painter, who is a devoted observer of old customs, went now to the chief baker in the town and purchased an immense cake. There was great difficulty in tying it up, and we carried it through the streets with some exultation to the house of M. Karetnikof, a government engineer, who promised me all manner of aid should I need it. But after all, what aid was I, a tramp and a pilgrim,

likely to need beyond a night's lodging at the end of each day's travel.

It was a long evening I spent with the painter, and it was difficult to feel how late it had become. We parted at two in the morning and it was still clear bright day. Very, very strange it was, walking through the sleeping town in that unnatural light. I found my way to the little house where I was staying, and reflected that on the morrow or next day I should probably be in a position to leave Archangel and begin my life among the moujiks. It happened as I expected. I saw the Vice-Governor; he gave me a general certificate and a letter of recommendation, loaded me with pamphlets—even made me a member of a learned society, the Society for the Exploration of the North of Russia. I spent an hour or so studying the maps of the Government Survey, and I felt that if Pereplotchikof was ready, there was no reason why we should not start at once. He, too, was going to the country to paint, and I should accompany him thirty miles of the way. My plan was to live with him for a few weeks in his village, and then to resume my journey alone.

So it was arranged, and we rowed down the Dwina that night to the village of Uima with Beekof and his wife and children. They were going to a *datcha*, or country house, to get a change from the town air; the husband was returning on the morrow. For some reason or other we did not start until ten o'clock at night, and it must have been past midnight before we reached the village. But there was clear bright day on the sleeping river. We rowed past the many landing stages of the port and the huge barges high in the mud. We took turn

and turn about with the oars, and as the night was sharp and cold, it was much more pleasant to row than otherwise. The journey took us three hours, and we rowed three spells of half an hour each. It was a strange experience rowing those bright midnight hours on the broad deserted river ; one felt as perhaps the old explorers felt coming up the Mississippi or the St Lawrence for the first time.

The Dwina is about three times as broad as the Thames, and is clearer and more rapid. It has broad yellow shores like a sea, and cliffs of crumbling clay. Along these cliffs, which in these parts they are pleased to call mountains, are prim rows of cottages, like neat annotations or remarks on the margin of the river. Beyond the cottages stretches the pine forest—"undreamed, unprobed abyss." Uima is a village about four versts long, and its name, a pretty word used only in the North, means "many"—*Uima domof*, or many houses. We slept anyhow we could, on sofas and chairs in the country cottage, and next morning the painter and I proceeded to Bobrovo "Mountain." This was yet twenty-five versts, and we made the journey in a troika, a light cart drawn by three horses.



## CHAPTER IV

### A COUNTRY FURRIER

**I**T was in the ninth and tenth centuries that the Russians conquered and colonised the North. Slavs from the Baltic regions and Finns extended the sway of the Republic of Novgorod, and settled down upon the banks of the Onega and the Dwina. The aborigines fled before them into the fastnesses of the forests, many of them to perish of hunger or of cold, or to be devoured by bears and wolves ; they fled as did the ancient Britons before the Romans and the Saxons, though they survive in even greater numbers to-day than the Welsh and the Gael. On the Mesen River, on the coasts of the remote Petchora, dwells an alien nation, uncultured and savage, and for the most part without even the Russian tongue to connect it with the West. They are the Samoyedes, the Ziriani and the Lopari ; ancient inhabitants of Northern Europe, offspring of the earth and the forests, unintelligent and pagan. Perhaps once also in the lost past these rude tribes were wild and warlike, coming from some mighty southern kingdom, and they settled there and were overcome by the cruel winter and the enchantment of the dreaming pines. For though the Russians came there with lances and swords, with wine and the songs of battle, they also were subjugated by Nature. They forgot the

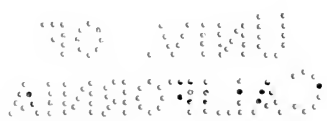
rumour of Christianity, and even in time *Peroun* and their Northern Gods, to become worshippers of the spirits and devils whose footmarks they found in the dark forests. The sword and the lance were put aside, and they became poor fishermen and hunters living by the net and the bow. Perhaps also, as now, they sowed the rye, taking at last a poor, poor harvest from the dead sandy soil. They farmed reindeer, eating their flesh or harnessing them to their sledges in the long dark winter. Some were discontented with the land and therefore returned to the tumultuous life of mediæval Europe, to struggle with the Mongol or the Turk; the others settled down in the forests like the deep moss itself. No one sought them from without, no wars broke their peace; only in winter the cold blast blew, and the strange Northern Lights made the black night like day, and in the summer the melancholy white nights brooded over the trees. It was a vast continent of forest, where only a few human beings crept to and fro where the silver rivers had washed valleys unnecessarily broad. Except for the savages, living like wild beasts in strange swamp-bound communities here and there, there was no living man in all the woods. Mankind were the guests of the rivers. Where the rushing stream had broken away the forest and made a clearing, there men came and put up wooden and clay dwellings. Where the river rushed through a deep and narrow gully overhung by trees, there the dwellings of men were absent. So it is to-day also, except that the clearings have become greater, and the broad valleys will support more people.

The Baltic Slavs still live by the streams and the lakes, and although Christianity has found them, they



ABORIGINES OF NORTH RUSSIA. (PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY NATURAL LIGHT AT 12 MIDNIGHT)

*Pereplotchikof*



have cherished paganism along with it. They have retained to a great extent their ancient language and accent, and scarcely understand the language of the educated man, full as it is of Tartar words and Europeanisms; and although they have found new means of livelihood—the felling of timber, the boiling of pitch, the catching of fish in great weirs and nets—and have become prosperous, yet even in prosperity it is the same antique peasantry, dwelling under the shadow of the same dark pines.

My first village in Archangel province was Bobrovo-Mountain, a collection of *izbas* on a clay cliff over the Dwina. I obtained a lodging at the house of a furrier. Two white bearskins hung on a clothes line where the garden should have been, and in a pig-sty cage at the front door was a great brown eagle who had unfortunately fallen into the hands of the moujik. I had expected the dirtiest abode, for the Russians have no lust for cleanliness, but my surprise was great to find myself in a well-kept tidy bedroom with white floor and walls, and a high four-post bedstead not unlike an English one, a feather bed, white pillow and a patchwork cotton quilt. I was assured there were no insects; they had all been killed by naphthaline and fur-preserved. There were a multitude of things in the room, chiefly stuffed birds, knick-knacks carved out of pine, and ikons. Fifteen separate ikons looked down from the walls; some, ancient pictures painted on wood, others quaintly engraved and enamelled on metal. Next door to me was the kitchen with its immense open stove; there Natasha, the hired girl, slept on a mattress spread on the floor. In a loft above me was an accumulation of hay and

straw, salmon nets, axes, guns ; ropes were stretched from wall to wall, and hides hung on them, airing—bearskins, sealskins, wolfskins. In a sort of large kennel, a bed completely roofed and walled in with straw and hay, slept the man and his wife ; they had to crawl in at a little hole like the entrance to a burrow, or the den of a wild beast. They liked this bed, because in it they were preserved from the torture of mosquitoes.

I was heartily welcomed, and the *Khosaika*—hostess—purveyed me porridge and milk, and fish cooked as best she knew how. Gregory, her husband, worked upstairs, scraping the insides of hides with a blunt knife, or treading fur clean in a cask of sawdust. I spent much time watching him and the hired girl at work. Most amusing it seemed to me to see Gregory standing in a huge barrel in his jack boots, stamping up and down on a glorious black bearskin. He assured me he did the hide no injury whatever.

This was the place also to buy furs. Peasants continually brought skins when they had shot a fox or a wolf, and tried to sell them through Epiphanof—such was my host's name. Bearskins could be obtained for a sovereign or thirty shillings, though a really fine one would fetch four or five pounds ; sealskins sold for two, three, or four shillings among the natives ; wolfskins at ten shillings to a pound ; for two pounds one could get enough deer skin to make a cloak, and *such* cloaks they make in this district, changing one's appearance to that of a wild beast !

Down in the kitchen the wife sewed fur slippers out of reindeer skin, and also *pimi* or fur leggings ; *bakhili*, or fur boots ; *malitsi*, fur coats. They must have been a

rich couple, for they had always plenty of work, they did not drink, and they had no children—as rich as they were exceptional, for the Archangelsky moujik drinks like a fish, and never misses double figures in children.

I arrived at the fast of St Peter, and no milk was being used as food. They had no objection, however, to my drinking milk. I wondered if the balance were thrown away, but no, not a drop; some of it was made into butter, and the rest they put to go sour, and made it into cheese curds, *smetana*, or sour cream. The Russian thinks his milk is better after it has gone sour. Professor Metchnikof, promulgating his sour-milk doctrine, was only persuading the Western world back to the common diet of the Russian peasants.

Everyone in Bobrovo has a cow, as indeed they have in all the villages on the Dwina. The cows live all the summer on a great sandy, grass-grown island in the Dwina. In the spring they have to swim the river from the mainland, and again they have to swim back in the autumn before the ice forms in the stream. It must be a glorious sight to see the fine cattle plunging and struggling in mid-stream. When the winter comes they are all safely housed in the barns.

I spent some ideally happy days at Bobrovo, breathing in the beauty of river and sky. It is out of the world; the whole of Nature seems one's own. I bathed in the river and sat half-dressed in the sun by the water's edge watching the wavelets break on the crisp sand. Songs rose to my lips as from a bird's heart, and I understood for moments that idea of the poets, of animate things praising the Creator.

At four in the afternoon I would go with the *Khosaika*

and Natasha, in a boat, to the island for the milking of the cows. All the village women would be on the water at the same time, and were a gay sight in all their various coloured cottons. After an hour we would all come back, and return in couples up the long mud and log stairs that led from the beach to the mountain-top where the *izbas* were gathered. Then Pereplotchikof would meet me, his day's work over, and I would repair to his lodging, a house opposite mine, and would look at his new studies of the Dwina shore, or of clumps of pine trees by the old water-mill. He would read some Russian poems if he felt serious, or tell me the day's jokes if a light mood had overtaken him.

And it got late by the clock without ever getting late by the sky. There came those glorious evenings indefinitely prolonged, the five hours of twilight. I would return to my room and if my host was up, talk with him of the long, long winter nights when he sat by lamplight, carving, like Ivan Ivanovitch, the Kremlin rich and rare, out of the all-manageable pine; or cutting with neat saws and penknives delicate little church-models or ikon frames to further adorn his crowded little bedroom.

Then every morning Gregory shot a crow and gave it to the eagle. I wondered that he did not shoot a pigeon, for they were much more plentiful and easier to shoot, but it appears that the dove is considered sacred.

"The eagle won't eat anything unless it's fresh," said the moujik, prodding the hawk with a pine branch. "Wicked old bird! See how it grips with its feet; you couldn't get that crow out of its grasp now, not with three times a man's strength."

"What do you give it to drink?" I enquired.



The peasant grinned knowingly and answered—

“ It never drinks anything but blood ! ”

“ What ? ” I said.

“ It never drinks anything but blood. We tried water at first, because we were afraid it would die. We forced its beak open, two of us, and poured water over its head. But I’m sure it didn’t drink anything. . . . Wicked bird ! ” he ended up, giving it a clout on the head with the stick.

The eagle beat with its heavy cramped wings, and jumped with the dead crow in its talons. Its eyes took no stock of the moujik, or of our doings, and seemed to be fixed in a sort of steady, sullen anger.

One day whilst I was at Bobrovo, a visitor came and bought the bird for two roubles and set it free.

“ Who was it ? ” I asked.

“ Oh, a fine hunter, a *barin*, but I don’t know why he let it go.”

“ He let it go because it was strong and beautiful and noble. And you ought to have let it go yourself,” said I. “ If it had been an official, he would have commanded you to set it free, and have given you nothing in exchange. Why ! it was a disgrace to the Russian Flag, an eagle in the pig-sty and a bearskin on the line ! ”

## CHAPTER V

### THE FLOWER OF HAPPINESS

I HAD a talk with a *baba* about the spiritual welfare of the village. She was not content with it. The people were very "raw," she said. It was probably because they had so few church services.

"But," said I, "you have a beautiful new-painted wooden church. I should have thought you were all very religious."

"We have a church, *barin*, but it is always locked up because there is no priest. The priest ought to come, but he lives six miles away, and is always very drunken. It is a great sorrow. We began building the church long ago, that is, the moujiks began. We had a meeting, and one moujik agreed to do this, another to do that; one to give this thing and another that; some were to fell the trees, others to hack them into shape, others to fix them together and build. They began the work very slowly; it was holy work and God does not require us to build quickly. It was two and a half years before the church was built, that is, the church walls and the door. Then it had to be ornamented inside, and some of us gave Ikons. We saved up money to buy paint—paint is very dear—and then they painted it all white, as you see, with a red roof. Again we saved money and bought a little steeple, and when we had saved more we

bought a big one, and then we bought a bell. It was all a beautiful offering to God. All the while they were building, they were more holy than they have ever been since. When it was all finished they were very happy, and we had a great holiday and kept open house, inviting all the people from Tripusovo and Liavlia and Koskova and the villages round about, and everyone got dreadfully drunk. It was the worst holiday I ever remember, and no good came of it at all, for I said it was not at all correct to drink so much vodka. No one paid any attention to me, and everyone drank and drank again with a "Glory to Thee, O God," and they thought God was very pleased. But we women folk knew better, and not one of us touched a drop of liquor, and every now and then we crossed ourselves and prayed to God, "Oh, Lord have mercy!"

"And after all you have no services in your church?" I put in sympathetically.

"None, *barin*; they thought they would get a priest of their own, but it turned out quite differently. We had to depend on the priest of Koskova. He had to take the two villages together, and as he is too drunken to attend his own church properly, it isn't likely he's coming to say Mass in ours. I say it is just like a curse."

"And does he never come, never at all?" I asked.

"When he comes he has to be carried in a cart. One of the moujiks goes and fetches him, and tells him what he has to do; that is, when we have a marriage or there is a dying man who wants him. But he is a very good man. I have seen him in church sometimes, perfectly sober, and he goes through the service beautifully. Pity that the devil is always biting him!"

“ I suppose he won't be here to-morrow ? ” I enquired. “ To-morrow is a great festival, is it not ? ”

“ To-morrow is St John. He ought to come to bless the fields, but he won't do that even at Koskovo, may the Lord God in heaven forgive him ! All is doing well as you know, the grass and the rye is beautiful, and if only we escape frosts for three weeks we shall reap well, Glory be to God. But I fear the curse. With no one to sprinkle holy water in the fields on the day of St John, there is no knowing what calamity may overtake us. And our very life depends on the hay and the rye.”

I decided that on the morrow I would cross the river to Kekhtya and there see the carrying of the Ikons through the fields and the sprinkling of the holy water on the crops. Meanwhile I should spend St John's Eve at Bobrovo and see whether, as the old woman averred, the festival had become more pagan than Christian.

It is the greatest night of the Russian summer, a night of enchantment and wonder. The ordinary life of the world is suspended on that night, and the invisible becomes the real ; it is no common night ; who goes abroad on that night shall see strange things.

In the old days of Russia it used to be a festival in the worship of Fire and Water, or the festival of John the Bather, a prehistoric prophet not connected with John the Baptist, I am told, though always inextricably interwoven with him in the popular mind. Who was the John who bathed, none can say ; he belongs to the time when Christianity was only a rumour. But his customs survive, and on the twenty-third of June the young men of the village light bonfires and jump through them, and the village maidens bathe in the river and crown them-

selves with weeds. Those who seek happiness go into the woods to find the blossom that opens at midnight. As the poet Balmont writes—

*Who was Ivan the Bather? I many asked, but little learned. People little know of him, yet certes, lived he here upon this world. And if your heart is weary, go and find him on his night.*

*Oh at midnight, glad the heart is, and the spirit gains in fulness. All beauties are in waiting for the living, who this night do sleep not. Treasure gilds them, and like stars the ferns gleam, and among the grasses burn the flowers.*

*We little girls with eyes shining as in church, with eager lips and waves of flowing hair, have left our homes behind us and run into the forests to see the flowers shine forth into the night. Our hearts were like to burst within us.*

*In the thicket we were watching, and like children without sorrow, plucked we wild flowers; and fragrant were the bunches that we picked. We sang our sacred song of the cleansing by the water, and the baptism by the fire.*

*With ecstasy we chanted it, and we may not sing it more, or recall it to our lips till the Night comes round again. The light that shone that night shall wrap it from our memory. But we, like the flowers, know the reason of our joy, and each one dreams her little dream of heaven.*

And Natasha, the hired girl, took twelve different grasses and made a wreath to put on her hair before going to bed that night; buttercup, rattray, marguerite, dead nettle, grass, wild parsley, St John's wort, clover. . . . She wished to dream under that magic crown and see the vision of her happiness. They mean destiny, but happiness and destiny are synonymous in these parts. I talked to Natasha, and she said to me—

“ It is true, for it is written in the *Evangeli*, that at twelve o'clock to-night, twelve blossoms are born in the woods, and one of the blossoms is that of happiness. Many will go in search of it.”

The threshold of our cottage was heaped up with weeds so that the poor eagle must have wondered what was to hand. The *Khosaika* explained that they would be sorted into twelve piles in order that the house might have blessing. Then she herself would take a bunch of twelve sorts and go to feed her cow at midnight.

“ The cow is ill,” she said ; “ blown out at the flanks. It roars, not like a cow, but like a piece of machinery. They say it is the political people, the students and godless folk whom the Government settle here that poison the cows, but that I don't believe”—There are many hundreds of political prisoners in Northern Russia, banished from the more southern districts under administrative order——

“ *I* believe it,” said Natasha. “ I quite believe it ; they have evil eyes ; I never saw any people like them in our country.”

“ What nonsense ! ” replied the *Khosaika*, who considered herself superior in knowledge, having lived some while in a suburb of Archangel town. “ What nonsense ! There is no harm in the *politicals* ; they suffer for us, they want us to have more money, and say that the Government and the landowners ought to give us more land. I know. I haven't always lived in the country.”

“ All the same, when I see one on the road I am afraid,” said Natasha. “ I run. They are an unacceptable people ; they never pray. God doesn't help them. There were many, many cows very big and swollen last year at

Kekhtya, over the water, and the feldscher said it might be sorcery. The moujiks beat a student, and though the police sent one of them to prison for it, everybody was very glad, and the priest did not count it a sin,—at least, Utka didn't think he need confess it."

"All nonsense! It's nothing to do with sorcery. Cows often are ill like that, and the best thing to do is to sprinkle holy water on them and pray. I shall take grasses over to the island, and feed the cow at midnight, and she'll get right very quickly."

"By the way," said I. "Is the pope over at Kekhtya sober?"

"Oh yes," she replied, "strangely sober."

"In that case" I said, "I shall go over to-morrow and see what is happening."

We talked for some hours in the long evening, and she showed me steel and flint which she still would use if they ran short of matches. She told me of her mother's time, when matches were very precious indeed, and one might see in the early morning an old *babushka* sitting half naked, with the ashes of last night's fire between her legs, blowing for all she was worth to get a flame again.

At last the good woman went out down to the boat at the river side, with arms full of weeds with which to feed the ailing cow, and I watched her row herself across the silent stream in the strange midnight twilight.

The village did not sleep. Smoke issued from many of the outhouse baths. There are several bath houses in the village, and every two or three families use one in common. The old and the sick were steaming in these frantically hot bath rooms. I saw one man come out naked, and go in again—probably the smoke in his eyes

had driven him out. Does the reader know what a black *banya* is? He is happier in his ignorance. But the moujik would tell him that it was better than all physic to stew for an hour in his little inferno of smoke and steam, and to hold the twelve weeds on the head with one hand, while with the other he poured hot water over them in order that the precious influence might rain down.

I climbed the cliff and walked away from the village along the skirting of the forest, and as I walked I heard the strange wailing chant of the maidens singing the festival music, and the unpleasant sound of a far-away concertina. The midnight walking had begun. There was merry-making and drinking in the village houses, where vodka, the disease of modern Russia, had overtaken the old customs and superstitions. But in the quiet houses were men and women momentarily expecting visions under the auspices of the twelve wild flowers. Perhaps they thought each flower typified one of the apostles. . . . In the woods walked those in quest of happiness, and I also walked there, somewhat dreamily. The pines cast faint shadows on the moss; the wild roses burned on the sweet briars, and but for the distant singing all was perfectly silent. The night was unusually warm, and whenever I ceased moving, the mosquitoes settled on my hands and face.

I did not go far. It is dangerous to stray even a little way into that forest, for it stretches without a break a whole thousand versts to the east, and its grey firs are bewildering and fascinating. Suddenly the trees grew thicker, shoulder to shoulder, like serried ranks of warriors waiting on a hill in the night. So close were they that their branches met above, and roofed the whole



forest, so that not only now at midnight, but in broad day there would be utter darkness. I stood in the dusk and looked back to the light I had left, and then to the darkness that was in front of me, as it were to the past that I knew, and to the future that was hidden from me. Deeper in the wood, in the darkness, the flowers of destiny blossomed, the flower of happiness. Looking into the blank dark future, as I stood by myself, though encompassed by all I knew, I looked out and saw the bright flowers that blossomed, and I picked that one that I loved. They say that only one of the flowers is the flower of happiness. But then my flower is mine, and the other flowers belong to others. All the world was searching in the wood that night, and if they found not happiness, it was not because the flower was not there, but because their eyes did not distinguish it, or because they did not realise, with Natasha and her sisters, that Destiny is synonymous with Happiness.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GOSPEL OF THE END OF THE WORLD

**T**HE *Khosaiika* chaffed Natasha on the morrow, asking if she had seen her future husband. The hired girl was only sixteen, but marriage had already become a yearly possibility. I think very probably the vision of happiness she hoped to see was a husband, for it is not pleasant to remain unmarried a day longer than is possible. Natasha already looked forward to a menage of her own, and grumbled at having to work for other people. She seemed confused at the question of the *Khosaiika*, and the latter said "We shall go on holiday to-day; perhaps someone will ask you."

This was St John's festival, a great day of promenading, —*gulanie*, as it is called, and many bachelors seek wives on that day. Over at Kekhtya I should see how all the girls were dressed out, and how the young men walked up and down, considering which one it would be best to have. The harvest season was coming on, and it would be very advantageous to have a wife to work for one then. Moreover, this year the harvest was going to be a good one by all appearances, and the more hands in the fields, the richer one would reap.

"But be careful," said the *Khosaiika*, "they are a bad lot over the water. Here we are peaceful and honest,

and we never lock our doors at night, but there, every third person is a thief or a wizard. We go to bed at eight in the evening, and rise at two in the morning, but there they walk the streets and swagger and drink as in a town along the boulevards, up till midnight—think of it—and don't get up till the sun is in the south. Many pagans and *Raskolniki* are there, and last year a man came out of the forest and made the people hang themselves—a magician. I don't know how it happened, but nobody on this side thinks anything of the Kekhtyites."

It is strange how people on the opposite sides of rivers grow at enmity with one another. Rivers are the sharpest of boundary lines and have been responsible for many wars. The word "rival" itself means some one on the opposite side of a river. And of course at Kekhtya they said even worse things of the Bobrovites.

As the moujiks were keeping open house at Kekhtya, I got a passage over the water in a boat belonging to a family that was going across to visit some relatives. There was a brisk wind, and we put up two sails; a woman sat at the helm and steered with an oar—river boats are all rudderless—and two children with birch-bark basins scooped out the water from the bottom of the vessel—we leaked badly. I sat on the "nose" wrapped in a heavy coat, and watched how we weathered the seas.

There was a storm on the Dwina; it was no longer a calmly rippling river, but a wild ocean full of crested waves. We rose to the height of high waves and then fell with a rush into the undulations between. The water splashed over us. The exciting waves with the

big white backs, the children called sheep, *baráni*, and we counted the little waves in between.

It was ten miles to Kekhtya, our course being a long detour to get past the island, and the last part of the way we were travelling laterally, with the waves on our sides, so standing some chance of being capsized. But we reached Kekhtya safely.

I called at the house of the priest, but he was out with the Ikons in the fields, and when I went out to find him, I came upon a procession of people with banners and crosses and Ikons coming from the function. The prayers for the crops had already been made. I was disappointed, but the promenading had begun and the singing. At the cemetery was a little procession of village girls weeping and sobbing over the graves—so propitiating the dead, or showing their sympathy with them, an ancient peasant custom in the North. This over, they walked down the wide village street and were joined by twice their number keening and singing the Bathing hymns, the most unpleasant screeching sound that was ever put forth as singing. Young men lit the Ivanovy bonfires, a survival of fire-worship I am told, and there was jumping through the fire. But Kekhtya went through these customs somewhat half-heartedly I thought. Vodka was taking the place of other diversions, and only the women dressed themselves in their brightest and walked and sang, and when they were tired of walking they sat in a long line on pine trunks outside the cottages and sang more. A reeling drunken soldier would stumble past them; then three self-conscious hobbledehoy, howling the chorus of the songs and giggling at themselves and the girls; then three or four others, escorting a young man who has a

concertina, but can't play it, for Archangel is the most unmusical province in all Russia ; then another staggering drunkard. Then perhaps the *svakh* would be seen, interviewing some maiden on behalf of one of the self-conscious hobbledehoys—the *svakh* is a man who arranges marriages. The young man who wants to marry does not consider it delicate to ask the girl himself, and courtship is not thought of, far less understood.

I put up at a cottage and ordered the samovar. I call it a cottage from habit, but it was a large two-storeyed house, and I was able to sit in the upper storey and watch the street from the windows. Whilst I was having tea, the little girls and boys, all the children of eleven or twelve years, came and played rounders, using for bat, a stout cudgel, and for ball, a piece of pine wood. The wife bazaar, the screeching singing and the promenading continued monotonously though now and then one or two of the young women would join the "rounder" party. As I looked up the street I saw all the cottage windows wide open—the elders were sharing conviviality round the samovar, or the bottle. I came to the conclusion that I had seen enough of the festival. So I borrowed a boat and rowed myself up the little Kekhtya river, through meadow and forest to the shrine of the Old Believers, where there had been very strange happenings the year before.

In July of last summer, a new sect established itself at Kekhtya, the sect of suicide. A strange preacher arrived from God-knows-where, and began to preach a gospel of self-murder. He was a tall strange-looking man, middle-aged, dark, with staring eyes, if report speaks truth. He was clothed in very ancient tattered

garments, and his ragged beard stood awry. To all appearance he came straight out of the forest ; he gave it out that he came all the way from Siberia, where he had had a revelation from God. For some time he fasted and prayed at the old hermitage in the woods, a bygone refuge of the persecuted Old Believers, and he had all the aspects of holiness that the moujiks revere. Add to which his naked body was welted and grooved where heavy irons and chains had eaten into his flesh during some period of fearful asceticism. He had only cast off his chains when God had bidden him go and preach the End of the World. His message might not be true, but he was evidently a saint. After his period of preparation by prayer and fasting he began to preach in the villages round about, and as there is now a General Indulgence of Religion in Russia, he escaped molestation. And this was his doctrine. He declared that on Elijah's Day, the 20th of July, the world would come to an end, and in order that man might escape eternal damnation it was necessary to release his soul from his body before that dreadful day. His mission started at the beginning of the month. The people scouted the idea at first, but he preached with such earnestness, and with such untiring, unflagging energy, and appeared so holy that he gradually obtained success. Great crowds of moujiks came to listen to him ; perhaps it tickled their minds that in ten days or a fortnight, the prophet's message must be proved true. As a general rule, the promises of holy men and priests were not so quickly to be fulfilled. Perhaps the dreadful audacity of his rhetoric held their simple natures spell bound, his " hang yourselves, drown yourselves, kill by the knife, by the gun, by the rope, it is equally accept-

able to God. If your women and children do not understand, despatch them first—God loveth the cheerful giver.”

The most extraordinary consternation took place in the villages, and men and women, though scarcely assenting to suicide, did begin to believe that the last day was at hand, and began to put their affairs in order, forgive one another, cease work and pray instead, weep and humiliate themselves. Those who believed in the prophet grew more and more, and at length when the harvest of souls was ripe, a day of reaping was named. The prophet bade all the people gather by the side of the lake near the Old Believer's Hermitage on the night of the nineteenth of July—that was the eve of the End of the world.

They gathered, an immense crowd, by the margin of the placid lake Slobodkh, and there, where a blasted pine leaned over the water, the prophet preached his last sermon. He commenced from the beginning of his story, recapitulating all he had ever said in any meeting, haranguing, persuading, praying. The peasants in frenzy shouted to him, lifted their heads, crossed themselves, lay on the ground kissing the earth, and every now and then the preacher paused to let the emotion come to a head. At length he showed ancient holy Ikons of the Old Believers and prayed before them, the crowd looking on in terror; then he asked the crowd's forgiveness and forgave them, forgave his mother for bearing him, and his father for begetting him, forgave mankind, and asked the forgiveness of God.

He displayed a rope and announced his intention of hanging himself, bidding the people follow his example.

“It is easy for me to die,” said he, “but I show you the way.” A peasant whom he had instructed fixed the rope upon the slanting blasted pine that hung over the water; and before all the people, the holy man placed his neck in the noose and hanged himself. Women sobbed, men cried and flung themselves on the ground; some of those who were in boats on the water flung themselves to drown, and others looked to the pale cloudy heavens to see them open.

The prophet died without a groan, and then suddenly whilst the peasants were wondering in what order they should mount the scaffold, a drunken man clambered to the preacher’s platform and said dramatically, “Well, now, that’s all over; he’s hanged himself, he was a cunning one.”

A peasant pulled him down, but somehow the crowd took up what he said, “It’s all over, we can go home.” And the whole crowd that was going to kill itself slunk away home.

That might have been all; but the dead prophet was left swinging in the wind, and his dreadful prophecy still haunted the minds of the peasantry. The following day ought to be the Day of Judgment if he had spoken the truth.

It entered the mind of many to go next morning early to the pine gallows—somewhat as the apostles to the sepulchre of Jesus—for they knew not what to expect from God. A great crowd gathered and didn’t know what it had gathered for, questioned itself, and stared at the dangling corpse. The day wore on; some left the crowd, others augmented it, and in the evening when all began to doubt the fulfilment of the prophecy, an



extraordinary wind sprang up, roaring in the pines and lashing the water into waves. Great thunder clouds came up out of the horizon, with far distant but ever nearing lightnings, and such a storm occurred on the lake as no one had ever known in the district before. Thunderstorms are not very frequent in the North.

Some of the peasants who thought it was the Last Day indeed, flung themselves into the water. Seven of them drowned themselves, others tried to drown, but lacking faith, or being splendid swimmers, simply couldn't do it. And the cowards and the cautious waited on the bank to be more sure that it wasn't only a thunderstorm.

But it was a thunderstorm, though such a dreadful one as really saved the reputation of the suicide. The crowd went home stupidly, or stupefied, and left the dead behind. Eventually the police came and tried to find some criminals to arrest—which was difficult, for the only ones who had offended against the law were those who had taken their own lives. The matter is now being thrashed out by a commission at Archangel. But the commission has not discovered who was the mysterious hermit who caused it all.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE OLD BELIEVERS

**S**UCH a drama was played out before the listening pines, and who knows what other dramas have been witnessed in those secluded secret villages of the North! I heard later how, some score of miles to the south, another tragedy occurred. It was of a commoner type, the killing of the Antichrist. A simple woman woke one morning from a strange dream, and confessed to her husband that *she* was the Antichrist, whatever she might mean by that. The husband told some of his neighbours and they prayed and consulted together. Their duty was to go to the priest, but it was a little hamlet, and had no priest of its own. The inhabitants worshipped at a little pine built chapel before hand-made Ikons, and seldom if ever, travelled to the church service fifteen versts away. This was what happened to the unfortunate woman. Five neighbours came to her house, and together with her husband, held a sort of prayer meeting in front of the holy pictures, and sang parts of the church service. The woman sat on a seat in the middle of the *izba*, and the neighbours sat round her with axes. After the prayers the woman kneeled on the floor, and as she still confessed herself to be Antichrist, one of the moujiks tapped her head with an axe, then each in turn struck at her and they



SILVER OR TIN TOKENS WHICH THE PEASANTS HANG ON THE IKONS TO REMIND GOD OF POINTS IN THEIR PRAYERS—THAT THE COW OR THE HORSE IS ILL, THAT THEIR EYESIGHT IS FAILING, OR AN ARM IS BAD, ETC., ETC.

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killed her. Then came more prayers, and they took the woman's body and buried it in a field, and not the least disturbed in conscience, returned to their homes and their work. Only about a month later the police heard of the happening, and the moujiks were put under arrest, four to be liberated, and the husband and another to be sent for five years to Siberia.

The idea of the *Antichrist* has been extremely fruitful of murder in the Russian villages, one of the commonest crimes being child-murder on this score. If a baby is born looking at all unusual, it is liable to be taken for the Devil or Antichrist. Indeed, even a stranger arriving in an out-of-the-way place is somewhat in danger on this count, and often when I was travelling in strange places, when it was difficult to give a satisfactory reply to the questions of the moujiks, I felt I might be mistaken for the Antichrist. It has been the lot of many revolutionary propagandists to get mobbed and beaten on this score. What happened to the immortal Tchichikof in Gogol's story of "Dead Souls," might happen to any unusual wayfarer like myself to day. Some madman might shout out, "Behold the Antichrist, hitherto chained behind the seven seas, who has come to destroy the earth!" I remember the authorities in "Dead Souls" were rather inclined to disbelieve the madman, and to give their heed to a liar who swore that Tchichikof was Napoleon escaped from St Helena.

There are many districts in the North where the peasants have bred back, not indeed towards the ape, but towards something certainly more elementary and barbaric than the ordinary moujik. By the way, it is a strange fact that a town crowd of Moscow, Berlin or Lon-

don, is much more like the monkeys than the European peasantry, more nimble, more slender, more clever. The moujik when left to himself tends to develop towards the state of ancient Britons, he becomes wilder, braver, and he unlearns Christianity and gets back to the devils and spirits of the woods. Wherever there is no priest within twenty versts, the strange breeding back begins. Hence the occasional cases of paganism which are brought to the Russian courts; and for every case brought to court, there are hundreds that no one ever hears of.

Paganism flourishes secretly in the provinces of Archangel, Vologda and Kostroma, and missionaries have as much duty to go and preach the gospel to the Slavs as they have to the Hindus. But missionaries, though believing in the damnation of members of churches other than their own, and of the damnation without a doubt of poor savages worshipping forest devils, are by no means ready to interfere with the internal affairs of a powerful European state. Yet even if they wished to go to Russia, it is unlikely that the Tsar would tolerate them. "General" Booth once wanted to introduce the Salvation Army, but his proposal was sharply negatived, and Tolstoy, who might have been the greatest of home missionaries, was cooped up by various decrees, and his light given to all the world except his native land. It is time the Russian Church began to set its house in order—especially in the North.

Since October 1906, when M. Stolypin's ukase granted freedom of religion to all sects in Russia, many strange faiths have crept out of holes and out of forest thickets, and shown their somewhat ugly faces to the light. Chief of these, though least benefiting by the edict, has been the

the *Staro-obriatsi* or *Raskolniki*, an antique sect that the Orthodox Church has been trying to annihilate for nearly three centuries.

Their origin is interesting. They date from the reign of the Emperor Alexis, when the Patriarch Nikon ordered a revision of the rites of the Church. All manner of error had crept into the services, the copying of the sacred books and the painting of the Ikons. When the errors were rectified, a great number of the people refused to recognise the new rites and counted them heretical. They left the great body of the Church, and were called *Raskolniks* or *schismatics*. In their turn they considered themselves to be The Church, and the reformers the Schismatics. They called themselves *Staro-obriatsi*, or Keepers of the Old Rites—Old Believers, the term is sometimes translated.

In Russia as in mediæval Europe, there had been armies of copyists attached to the monasteries, mostly peasants, and not very literate people. They had copied the holy books for centuries, and in their copying had added their own mistakes to the mistakes of others, so that it often happened that the latest edition of a holy book was the worst and most incorrect. Nikon had the books corrected by comparison with the original manuscripts, and then printed and distributed. Likewise with the Ikons—he had them corrected, and as the new were produced, he caused the old to be destroyed. But the Old Believers preserved all their old books and old Ikons, and protested loudly, showing themselves a force in the land, and they retain till to-day those old books and old Ikons with all the errors contained in them. They suffered much persecution, and were forced into the backwoods and

secret places, they had no churches, no cemeteries, and their books and Ikons were liable to be destroyed wherever found.

An extremely fanatical and absurd sect they have been, and are ; their differences of belief being confined to the spelling of the name Jesus, with or without a J, the crossing themselves with two fingers instead of three, and so forth. They conceive that the printed books are more liable to error than those written by hand, and that it is blasphemy to cross oneself before a lithographed Ikon.

The old prophet who preached the End of the World was probably of their Order, and a great many dreadful and ludicrous deeds have been done at their instigation, for they guide their behaviour by portents, visions, omens, and they treasure as holy the darkest superstitions that a wild country has preserved.

When I returned from Kekhtya to Bobrovo, I walked ten versts to Ershovka, to find a chapel in the woods. It was one of the old forbidden meeting places of the *Staro-obriatsi* ; an ugly square-built box-building, uncarved, undecorated, windowless. Inside were no seats, but, almost as high as the building itself, two immense Ikons, ancient and mud-bespattered. One was a picture of the Last Judgment, I think, and the other was of Jesus Christ, but so dirty and ruined that they reminded me of a disused weather-beaten London hoarding, at whose old advertisements boys have been aiming clay. On the front of the breast of Jesus was a large tin tray, on which stood an oil lamp and candlesticks ; the lamp and the tray and the candlesticks were all very dirty. At the feet hung charms and *rizas*. The charms consisted of



THE CHAPEL OF THE OLD BELIEVERS IN THE FOREST



*Pereplochisog*

THE CHAPEL OF THE OLD BELIEVERS IN THE FOREST

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shapes of cows, horses, sheep, men and women and so forth, cut out of tin or pewter like children's toys. They had been placed there by the people to remind God of their prayers, or perhaps as an offering to please Him specially. If an Old Believer had a cow whose sides were distended he would put a tin shape of a cow on the Ikon; if a horse were ill, he would put that of a horse; if a child, that of a child. Among the charms I saw representations of eyes, of legs, of arms, all suggesting the complaints of those who had been praying before the Ikon. Where they got the shapes was a question to me, but I heard that pilgrims and pedlars brought them to and fro, and that there were even priests of the Orthodox Church who dabbled in the trade, selling the little tin models at so much the pound. I imagine that this offering of shapes, which in the north is by no means confined to the *Staro-obriatsi*, may be a survival of the time when real sheep and cows were slaughtered as a sacrifice to mollify the Deity.<sup>1</sup>

The old chapel was dark and silent, no worshippers came when I was there. I walked out into the old graveyard, where the crosses lay strangely tumbled. Under the mounds lay the bodies of hunted and persecuted men, whose lives had been as wild and desolate as the places where they were buried. Not of an English sort, these people! You could not say—

“How jocund did they drive their team afield!”

OR

“Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of their soul.”

Under that black pine mould lay buried Slavs.

<sup>1</sup> See illustration facing page 46.

In England there also are people who believe in a concrete Hell and Judgment Day, but these at least have had to answer their doubting brethren ; have had to close the ear to scepticism. They have had a flickering of doubt. Here, under the sod, lie the bodies of those who have never had a doubt, who believed that the Last Day comes with dreadful fire, when God shall appear in the heavens, and call to Himself the Elect, and send the damned to Hell. And they thought that from the whole world would arise to Heaven only the *Staro-obriatsi*, the Old Believers ; and the rest would go to the fire.

I went afterwards to Pinyega, two hundred and ten miles north-east of Archangel, and there by chance stayed at the house of a wealthy Old Believer, one who had come out into the light since the ukase of 1906, and from him I learned first hand many things about the brotherhood : that they neither smoked nor drank, that they counted it a sin to cut the hair, and never used the scissors on their persons from the cradle to the grave, and that many of them had renounced passports, and got into trouble with the Government ; for though one may renounce the World, the Flesh and the Devil, these are not officially held to include the passport and the taxes. But of my host at Pinyega, and of my journey up the Pinyega river, I shall write later, for I have yet to tell my adventures in this interesting country. On my return from the cemetery I gave up my room at Bobrovo, and went to live in the village of Novinka, eight miles to the north.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A WALK IN THE FOREST

**W**E left Bobrovo because Vassily Vassillievitch could not paint there. "Nature does not move me," said he. "It is all too quiet, I cannot feel anything." We came to Liavlia, a collection of hamlets round a wooden sixteenth-century church. It is one of the most beautiful places of the Dwina, standing high on the left bank. Rows of gigantic pine-built windmills stand like watch towers on the crests of the hills, and are visible even miles away on the other side of the broad river.<sup>1</sup> They are much higher and more solid than English mills, built apparently out of thick telegraph poles. In the old times they might well have served as castles, and sustained sieges. Pereplotchikof liked them, we all liked them. They were ancient, genial old trolls, robbed of their malice and now serviceable to man. I spent hours looking at them, and I swear they chuckled to one another in the evenings, and smoked clay pipes at the downgoing of the sun. Not in all Russia are there such mills as these. Indeed, except in Little Russia, all grinding is done by water-force, for there are never any winds on the great European plain. But in the provinces of Archangel and Vologda are great winds, and a freshness

<sup>1</sup> See illustration facing page 200.

from the Arctic seas ; and the peasants have made use of them, and built these mighty mills, thereby not only grinding rye, but expressing some latent majesty in their rude souls.

I walked from Bobrovo to Liavlia through the beautiful fir forests. The wild strawberry and raspberry were just beginning to bloom. It amused me to see the belated little blossoms, for now it was July, and I had eaten the ripe fruit at Easter in the Caucasus. Summer was a long way behind in the North. I wondered what the morose Northman would think if he could be transplanted to the luxuriance of Imeretia, or the Persian, if he could be settled in this bleak land.

I passed through the wood by paths near the cliffs over the Dwina, and it was difficult walking, for the earth is often boggy, as if hinting of the not-distant tundras. The black fir trees bar the way, looking like hags with streaming tangled hair, and skinny fingers laced. Now and then it became a matter of walking on hands and knees over the deep green moss and the many-coloured fungi ; it was amusing and pleasant, but now and again I thought I should have the humiliation of being forced to seek the post road, or to climb down to the crisp sand of the Dwina shore. For I was going through quite unnecessary difficulties just to please my fancy, and my fancy had suggested I should go the forest way. Vassily Vassilievitch had gone before in a cart.

And it is always very lucky to follow one's fancy. Not that one has great adventures always, but because one is led into strange scenes, into those hidden parts that lie just behind the obvious and the utilitarian. In

the woods I found an old man who lived in a hut that he himself had made out of branches of fir and moss ; it was more like a den than a house, but he assured me it was weatherproof, and that he lived comfortably there all the summer. He had a very cunning dog that had a mind which had evidently profited by long companionship with the man of the woods. One saw in its little sharp but trustful eyes the pride of its friendship, and the old man regarded it very cheerfully as he pointed to a handsome young woodcock it had just brought in. I made my lunch sitting on a log outside the hut, and whilst I rested so, the man of the woods made me a pair of boots out of the beautiful white bark of a birch tree, and very nicely he made them, and I gave him sixpence for his pains, for which reward he was so grateful that I thought he would kiss the ground at my feet. All of which came of following my fancy and clambering over the Dwina cliffs through the ranks of the wicked hag firs.

Near Trepusovo, a hamlet two miles from Liavlia, I came upon a party of little children gathering mushrooms in the dark wood, and they had jars made out of birch bark, like my new boots. The little children themselves looked like mushrooms, and by a sport of fairyland, it might easily have happened that the mushrooms themselves were children. All brown, dirty faced, and where their cotton frocks were torn, little brown bodies peeping through—they were just lately made out of the earth ; one felt it would be a year or so before they would become flesh and blood. They stopped and looked about when they heard the tramp of my feet, for these children are brought up on tales of bears, and have a very lively fear of meeting Father Bruin in the wood. It occurred

to me that they would have stopped and stared just so had they been fairies, and when they saw it was a "human," would have returned at once to mushrooms. But they were little human boys and girls after all, and they stopped gathering, and stared at me in a little crowd. I wasn't a bear, but a man in the woods, and they were half afraid, for there are wicked magicians and sorcerers in these parts, and there is no saying whether a stranger may be friendly or unfriendly. I spoke to one little boy, and he burst into a cry—"boo hoo; oh, oh, oh." This confirmed the fears in the others; a girl also began to cry, and they all toddled off to their mothers at the pine cottages I could just see through the trees.

Then I came to Liavlia, and the immense mills, and the little trickling Liavlia river flowing down from the forests and the bogs, and the new painted but ancient church with its avenue of eglantine deep red with hundreds of blossoms. Liavlia, with its many peasants, and its *intelligentia*!—*intelligentia*, because the Russian Government has exiled there a score of students and political persons whom it desires to keep a closer watch upon than is possible in the complex life of Moscow, Riga, Warsaw, and the centres of revolutionary propaganda. I was to live for a while, half with the exiles and half among the natives, and to see some of the most interesting life which Fortune and Russia have shown me. Vassily Vassilievitch found a lodging at the hamlet of Zachapina. I lodged with one of the exiles for some days, and then found a room on the Novinka, a row of old izbas in the mud behind the church.





THE MAN OF THE WOODS, REPUTED TO BE A MAGICIAN

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## CHAPTER IX

### HECKLED BY REVOLUTIONARIES

A GROUP of ragged-looking men were standing outside one of the *izbas* and conversing with Vassily Vassilievitich. They were all barefooted; some were bareheaded, one was wearing a woman's straw hat untrimmed, and another an ancient soft black felt that had lost its ribbon. They were in Russian blouses and tight factory-made trousers.

Vassily Vassilievitich introduced me. They were the political exiles of Liavlia, banished to that place by the Government for various reasons. And they talked and laughed with the eagerness of people who for months have been yearning to see faces and hear voices other than their own.

My first impression was that I had come to a convict settlement, but as none of the exiles had been convicted definitely of a crime, the term was evidently inappropriate. Every one of the prisoners had been brought to trial before the martial courts and had been found "Not Guilty"—not guilty, but also not innocent, for they had evidently dabbled in terrorism and propagandism, and though no case could be made out against them, it would have been too dangerous to release them. The Government had banished them "under administrative order" to this forest-girdled village, where further plotting

would be absurd, and escape impossible. In Liavlia there were about fifteen men and five women; within certain bounds their life was fairly free; they might go where they liked within a five-mile radius of the police station; they each received a grant from the Government of seventeen shillings or twenty-seven and six a month, according to their rank in life; they might work for the farmers if they cared to, might hunt or fish, study, or receive their friends and make merry. On the other hand, they were under the surveillance of keepers, their books were liable to seizure and examination, and their letters were opened if the police had any suspicions.

The tyranny of such treatment lies in the fact—

1. That some of the exiles may have been perfectly innocent and Tsar-loving;
2. That they have been brought from a comfortable town life, and settled side by side with an antique and savage peasantry, in a land of eight months' winter, far from railways and the outside Western world; and
3. That all the while they are held here in pledge, the Secret Police are unravelling the story of their lives and seeking to find sufficient evidence to bring them to trial once more.

English people wouldn't stand it, but then it must be remembered that English people would never encourage assassination even for the attainment of the best of purposes. When once murder has come to the reinforcement of a cause, the question of the inherent goodness of that cause is forced into the background. If the good try to murder the wicked, and succeed time after time,

no one will disallow the wicked the right of self-defence, the right of taking preventive measures. The policy of the Russian bureaucracy is very clear and simple: even if they cannot succeed in governing the country more efficiently they will protect themselves and their wives and families from the bomb and the revolver shot. One has much sympathy with the revolutionaries, but the conduct of their enemies is explicable and defensible.

The Russians tell me that their countrymen in exile are the cream of the nation, which might be true but that it suggests that all the rest are skimmed milk. The rest—those who have not suffered, those even who have oppressed—are just as interesting, just as beautiful, just as worthy of a place in the Russian harmony as the handful of average men and women who have had the good fortune to suffer for righteousness' sake in this era of *laissez-faire*.

"I see," said I, when Alexey Sergeitch and the other exiles had been explaining why they were banished, "your life is that of the chess pieces who have been taken and put to one side whilst the game is going on—white pawns, who ventured just too far, or who were sacrificed for great ends. You don't know what is happening on the board, and you think the game is still going on and that your colour has a chance. But the game is all over and the players have left the pieces and gone to bed. Your terms are all ending now—when a new game commences you will all be back in your places again."

"I suppose it *is* all finished now," said Alexey, the Moscow student at whose lodging I was domiciled for the time being.

“ Yes, it is all peaceful now, and the Tsar has got a perfectly tame Duma that will do what it is told to do. The revolutionaries have played their game and lost—there is nothing left for them to do but to make themselves secure whenever they can escape the toils of the Government. Their cause is safe enough—the Tsar and his successors will achieve it, and achieve it more lastingly than they would, though it will take a long time. Evolution is the order of the day, and not Revolution.”

“ But the abrogation of the liberties of Finland, that was also revolution of its kind,” said one.

“ The English protested violently against that,” said another.

“ They scarcely protested at all,” said an implacable looking woman, smiling acidly. “ Only thirty or forty members of the British Parliament signed the petition to the Duma.”

“ You are mistaken, there were sixty who signed it, and that I find to be a considerable protest.”

“ Sixty out of six hundred and sixty,” replied the woman. “ Do you call that considerable? I don’t. They say that England is sympathetic. I don’t believe it. Why didn’t the members of parliament come over with the first petition and present it themselves? No harm could have come to them personally since they were British subjects. We had arranged a beautiful reception for them, and it would have strengthened our cause more than all the leading articles in their ridiculous newspapers. What happened? The Russian Government sent a note to yours and asked that the visit might be cancelled. Your Press ran up a fictitious story of bombs and cossacks, and frightened the poor members.

And they said that the visit, if persisted in, would do more harm than good, forsooth! What did they do? They sent Mr Nevinson, a journalist, not even a member of parliament, and deprived the petition of every atom of political significance. You write back to your papers, and tell them we've had enough of their sympathy and goodwill and subscriptions. What we want is a stiff upper lip, and political help rather than newspaper froth."

There was a pause, and she went on. "You are supposed to have a Liberal Government in power, but I can't see where the liberalism of its foreign policy comes in. There was a time when Liberalism was willing to lift a hand in the cause of right. But now it seems unwilling to risk a war with any European power for a charitable object. Which doesn't mean that it oppresses the Hindus or the Egyptians any less. If Sir Edward Grey had spoken resolutely and clearly on the question of the suppression of the Finnish Diet, or of the occupation of Persia, Russia would have given in without recourse to arms, and British credit would have gone up all over Europe."

Vassily Vassilievitch interrupted.

"But Stepan Petrovitch thinks Russia a more happy country than England, and thinks we ought to help her to throw off the 'oppression of her freedom!'"

There was a laugh, and everyone looked towards me.

"I do think," said I, "that you young men would find yourselves just as rebellious if you were called upon to live a London life. You have no notion of London life. I can tell you it is very different from that of Moscow or Petersburg.

"Better!" said Alexey Sergeitch.

"Well, you could call it better perhaps—I don't know. *I* don't call it better. In Moscow or Petersburg two-thirds of the young men are students, in London, nine-tenths are clerks."

"Well dressed, and earning a good salary," the woman put in.

"No, earning a very poor salary, and working ten hours a day to get it, and having very little prospect. I can assure you I'd rather be here under police surveillance than be one of the million clerks of London. You are individuals cultivating your minds, and they are bolts and wheels rotating monotonously in the great machine. You are tyrannised over by an autocracy; they are enslaved by a plutocracy."

"But at least you are all educated," someone called out, "and we have a hundred millions who can neither read nor write. Take Archangel Province, only one in five can sign his name."

"There you make a mistake. It is true we have no illiterate peasantry, but you think that means that the poor man ordinarily goes through a university course, as does the Russian student. In England we have millions of badly educated people; in Russia you are either well educated, or not educated at all. You may choose which you please. I prefer "no mind" to "a little mind."

Then the exiles began to talk among themselves and wonder, for they had never come up against a rebel before. Their experience of Englishmen had been confined to correspondents of the newspapers and business men, and they had taken it for granted that England



was the happy country, the free and democratic that went before, showing the young nations the ideal path of development.

"Well, it's the first time I've heard an Englishman talk like that," said the lady who had been vituperizing Sir Edward Grey.

"And, do you know," said Pereplotchikof, "I love him because he loves Russia, the old and beautiful, and hates commercialism and all that commercialism has done. He finds he can breathe better in Russia, that the air is purer and life freer. See what a living paradox he is—he came to Russia because it is a free country."

"It's free to foreigners," said someone with a sneering smile; it was little Garbage, the Jew. "The Englishman can go where he likes, Russians will kiss his boots. If a stupid official arrests him, the British Government will make us pay a fine. See now at Archangel, they have stopped the trawler *Onward*, and the Russian Government will have to pay a large sum of money."

"Oh!" said I. "I also have been arrested, three times, no less"; and I proceeded to tell them of my adventures in Warsaw and the Caucasus, which pleased them very much, for the revolutionary always delights to hear of the stupidities of the officials.

But enough of talk! Nikolai Georgitch, a Little Russian, who had been arrested at Kharkov a year ago, took me away to test my muscles, for he was a gymnastic enthusiast, and had made for himself parallel bars and a horizontal bar out of pine logs. After going through his tricks on these, we went and climbed hand over hand on ropes to the height of the great windmills. Nikolai seemed to think I might pass muster, though it is my

legs and not my arms that I am used to exercise. Then, like schoolboys, we had a spell of vaulting five barred gates, and I thought soon he would be proposing leap frog.

That evening there was another storm on the Dwina, and I had an experience similar to that of my journey to Kekhtya. But heavy rain came on with a stinging North wind, and we let ourselves go ashore on the sand and mud, and after making the boat secure, sheltered ourselves under a sail on the beach. We got thoroughly soaked, and presented rather a funny picture when we returned to the village. It was very inconvenient for me, getting wet, because as a tramp I could not possibly carry a change of clothes. But the defect was easily remedied through the kindness of Alexey Sergeitch, and when I next appeared in public, everyone declared that I was completely Russian, for I was dressed in a pair of bright blue students' trousers, and a Russian blouse belted at the middle.

## CHAPTER X

### HOW THE REVOLUTIONARIES KEEP HOUSE

**T**HE Russian Government allows each revolutionary thirteen roubles a month, though if he be of peasant origin the sum is only eight roubles. This money is supposed to pay for board and lodging, and an additional grant is made each winter for clothes. In the English country one could scarcely live on twice the amount, but food and lodging are cheap in Russia.

The exiles live at a common table. They take it in turns to cook dinner, one cooking for ten. Each morning there is a grand shift round of pots and plates and spoons. Each afternoon the hungry men and women gather at a new board. I also cooked for them once, for they immediately admitted me to their circle when I came to Liavlia. These dinners cost little. The first course was usually fish or mushroom soup, and as they drew the fish from the river, and the mushrooms from the forest, the only money expended was on the flavouring. The second course would be roast fish or stewed beef, and the third, porridge or pancakes or tartlets. Such a dinner seldom cost more than eighteenpence or a florin for the lot, and the exiles grew fat upon it.

## In Archangel Province—

Milk costs . . . . .	1d. a quart
Eggs . . . . .	¼d. to ½d. each
Butter . . . . .	7d. or 8d. a lb.
Beef . . . . .	4d. a lb.
Rye bread . . . . .	3d. or 4d. a lb.
Cheese . . . . .	4d. or 5d. a lb.
Cod (pickled and evil smelling)	1d. to 3d. a lb.
Salmon—at Archangel harbours	4d. and 5d. a lb.
Rice . . . . .	3d. a lb.
Semolina . . . . .	2½d. a lb.
Sugar . . . . .	4d. a lb.

The exiles bought their flour wholesale, and baked their own bread.

A furnished room costs four or five shillings a month, and nothing extra is charged for heating. No one indeed pays anything for fuel, no coal being burned. And when the cooking day comes round, the peasant women have no objection to boiling the students' pots on their huge stoves.

A number of the best newspapers and reviews, being in sympathy with the Liberal movement, send free copies regularly, and the Government has provided a free reading-room and stocked it with what the revolutionaries are pleased to call "black-hundred literature." So there is no need to spend money on books. A Government doctor is also in attendance free. So it will be seen that the grant made by the Russian Government is truly not inadequate, and that the subscription raised for these people, through the English newspapers some years ago, was really rather superfluous.

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The monthly budget of the revolutionaries may be briefly set forth in this style—

For those who receive 13 roubles from the Government—

			S.	D.
Cost of room . . . .	2 roubles	50 kopecks	5	6
Cost of dinner . . . .	2 „	50 „	5	6
Quart of milk each day . . . .	1 rouble	20 „	2	6
1 lb. bread . . . .	1 „	..	2	2½
Tea and sugar . . . .	1 „	..	2	2½
Washing . . . .	..	50 „	1	1
<hr/>				
Total . . . .	8 roubles	70 kopecks	19	0

For those who receive 8 roubles, *i.e.* the peasant exiles—

			S.	D.
Cost of room . . . .	2 roubles	..	4	5
Cost of dinner . . . .	2 „	..	4	5
Cost of milk . . . .	1 rouble	..	2	2
Bread, tea and sugar . . . .	1 „	50 kopecks	3	2
Washing . . . .	..	40 „	0	10
<hr/>				
Total . . . .	6 roubles	90 kopecks	15	0

And as many of these peasants labour in the fields, they are able to supplement the eight roubles they receive from the Government.

In the spring and in the autumn they all receive a grant of a pound or so for clothing, and as they go about dressed in any old rags of old clothing, and there are no conventionalities to live up to, this money is mostly saved.

When I heard all these things, I could not help expressing my astonishment. There was certainly no case

against the Tsar on the score of harshness ; the tyranny was most tempered.

“ But,” said Alexey Sergeitch, “ think of the comfort and happiness of Moscow, and then compare it with this place, where there is no company beyond the moujiks, who are no better than savages, no theatres, no music but our own, no luxuries.”

I did make the comparison, and it seemed to me that to sum the matter up briefly, the Government had sent them on a trip to the country of Russia, which they professed to know so much about, and of which they really knew so little, and had paid their expenses. The Tsar counts himself the Father of his people, and this arrangement is truly paternal. Perhaps parental authority is often harassing and unpleasant, but Young Russia is probably just too young and too foolish to be given a latchkey and the freedom of the house ; some day it will come to years of discretion, and then doubtless thousands of tourists will do voluntarily what the exiles are now doing of necessity, and then you and I and all the world will hear what Russia is, or what Russia was, in the broad dark country where the millions live together.

## CHAPTER XI

### A VILLAGE FIGHT

*LIAVLIA, 2nd July, Old Style.*

**T**O-DAY it is cold and rainy. The windmills look like giant soldiers huddled in overcoats, unmoving, soaked. There is no hope in the muddled sky, and the wind blows and whistles.

Obstinate dreary cows stand midway in the village street, and stare stupidly; and but for them there is no living being to be seen. Oh, it's rainy! I understand ennui and drunkenness in a place like this. Until the harvest season no one has more than two or three hours' work a day, and the vodka shop is open from ten till five. I should take to vodka myself if that door were open to me.

I had written so much when I was disturbed by a peasant singing in a high-pitched voice. It was Kalmeek the drunkard, in a scarlet shirt, but without a hat, and soaked through to the skin. He is one of the interesting "characters" of the village. Kalmeek is his nickname: he is supposed to resemble a Kalmouk in appearance. The reader may search the countenance in the illustration and judge for himself. Despite his continuous inebriety there is a certain intellectuality in his face. This is his little song—

Oh, I am a maiden forlorn;  
I am poor and bedraggled and torn;

Though I'm pretty, none will marry me,  
 So single to the grave they'll carry me.  
 To a far-off monastery did I tramp,  
 And before the sacred Mother lit a lamp,  
 And before the Ikon shed I floods of tears,  
 And told the holy saints my hopes and fears.

Oh, how sad it is to be without a husband !

How mournfully he screeches out the tune ! But Kalmeeck is happy, even this wet day. For him the country dances in more lively colours just because he's steeped in vodka—a questionable happiness.

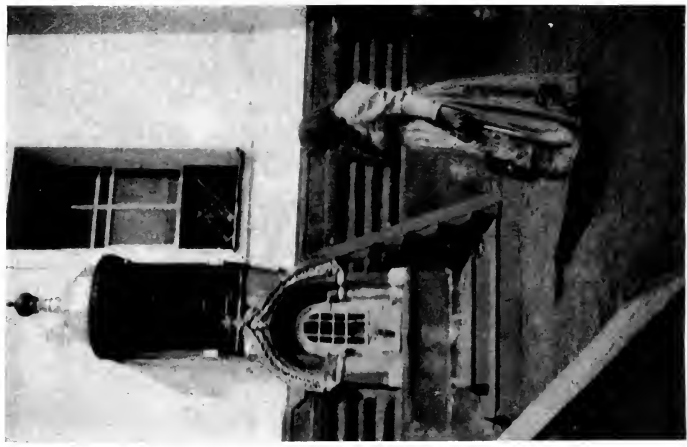
Yesterday Kalmeeck had a great fight. This was how it happened. A man came over the river from the "wicked" side, the Kekhtya side, and the police "provoked" him to quarrel with the peasants. First he attacked an aged bargeman who was down by the Liavlia stream away from the main village, and beat him almost to death with a pine cudgel. The police had had a grudge against the old fellow ; he had perhaps been standing in the way of their getting bribes in some transaction. They fought like wild beasts, these two, the greybeard of seventy and the ruffian of twenty-five ; but age could not stand against youth. When at last the poor old chap lay down on the road, and did not attempt to rise, the police hauled him off to prison—to the local "bug-hole" as the revolutionaries called it. The hooligan then went away to find some one else, and whom should he come up against but Kalmeeck singing at the top of his voice—

"Twelve years other people's babies have I nursed ;  
 The girl who is not married at thirty is accurs'd."

"What have you got to sing about ?" asks the village *provocateur*.



THE  
GREAT  
WALL



A PEASANT WOMAN CROSSING HERSELF BEFORE  
A WALL IKON (ROSTOFF THE GREAT)



KALMEEK, THE HERO OF THE FIGHT

TO VMU  
ABSTRACTS

No answer.

“What makes you sing? Have you got a bug biting you?”

Still no answer, and so the rough swore at him. “Cursed catsap!”

Now the word “catsap,” though untranslatable and meaningless as far as the English language is concerned, is about as bad a thing as you can say to a man. In Little Russia *catsap* is an abusive term for a Great Russian or a Northerner, and in the North, it is, vice versa, the word in foul language for a Southerner.

The rough essayed to poke Kalmeeck in the stomach, and the latter, having stopped singing, was staring at his interlocutor with an expression of mixed sorrow and rage. Suddenly he bent down and seized a quarter trunk of a birch tree that lay at his feet, and rushed to kill his antagonist at a blow. The latter dodged, and got it on his shoulder. A battle ensued, the rough fighting with his short cudgel and Kalmeeck with his club. Other peasants came to see and laugh, and even the police watched the proceedings, holding, as it were, a waiting brief. Only the women called out to stop the fight, and tried to persuade their husbands to interfere.

Such a battle it was, all up and down the village street, each calling the other names, and striking blows which, if they had reached their mark, would have killed any ordinary people. Kalmeeck was unlucky; his face was all blood, for the little villain opposed to him was a clever dodger, and jumped in and out, avoiding the heavy blows of the birch tree, and every now and then giving the peasant an ugly clout with his rough pine cudgel. He smiled, but Kalmeeck did not smile; he was in grim

earnest, and wielded his huge weapon like some stupid ogre in a fairy tale, his aim being to bring it down on top of the hooligan's head, and so do for him once and for all.

Suddenly, after an unpleasant wound, our peasant was so enraged that he altogether forgot himself, and began to whirl the club round and round and rush upon his antagonist. The Kekhtyite was taken by surprise and fell back in bewilderment, turned round, and began to run. Kalmeeck was after him. In a minute he caught him up and struck him a fearful blow on the side of the head.

The hooligan lay gasping in the dust, looking like a wild beast that has just been brought down in the hunt. The peasants laughed, and one of them standing over the prostrate foe, asked—

“ How is it, brother ? ”

Getting no answer, he gave the body a kick.

“ Dead ! ” said another.

Some one proposed to throw the body into the river. Then the policeman came up and said it was his affair. It was a Siberian business now. Kalmeeck must follow him to gaol.

Kalmeeck, however, showed no inclination to move, but stood like an executioner in his red shirt, holding his bloody club. And the policeman entered into a long harangue as to the advisability of Kalmeeck proceeding peacefully to the prison. But the other peasants raised a counter plea—to throw the policeman in the Dwina. The upshot was the policeman went to fetch his mates, and they took the corpse-like ruffian to the river side, put him in the charge of a woman, and bade her row him

over to the Kekhtya side and drop him on the sand. This the woman did even better than her instructions warranted, and took the young fellow home, where he soon revived. But for a little loss of memory, which would serve him well next time he went to church to confess, he was none the worse for his bout.

Kalmeek went off with some of his friends to have a drink. When he came home at night he found his wife had barred the door and the windows to prevent his coming in. She had never touched vodka in her life and hated drunkenness. Then she feared, perhaps, to be beaten, or perhaps feared that the police might come in the night and break up her home and frighten the children to death.

The husband bore it, however, with equanimity, and came singing down the village street again—

“The canary, God’s bird, with the yellow breast  
Has for its little ones a little nest.  
The she-wolf hath its lair  
With its little ones to share,  
But I in the wide world am alone !”

Vassily Vassilievitch stopped him, and asked for a description of the fight.

“Why did you fight him ?” I asked. “What was the reason ?”

The moujik stopped singing and stared at me, as if wondering whether he had ever seen me before, and then said very deliberately—

“He said to me . . . an intolerable word.”

. . . . .

## CHAPTER XII

### SHOOTING WIVES OR CATCHING QUAILS

**A**LEXEY SERGEITCH was the most interesting of the exiles. He was too cautious to reveal to me the reason for his banishment, but although he was an enthusiastic Liberal I do not think he was deeply involved in the Revolutionary intrigue. He had spent eight months in prison before being brought to trial, and he gave me a very interesting insight into prison life.

“Did the time go slowly?” I asked.

“It never went faster,” he replied. “The gaol was full of students, and I went from cell to cell all day, teaching. You know I have all but finished my University Course. I gave eight lessons every day.”

And in Liavlia there was a constant interchange of lessons. They even started me teaching them English. The Russians are the most studious people in the world, the best scholars and the ablest minded. They are, however, not practical, and they play no outdoor games worth mentioning and take little exercise. They are emotional and whimsical, and a sedentary life ferments their whimsicality.

In Moscow, in St Petersburg, in Kiev, in the students' dens, in the houses of the “intelligentia” one is constantly prompted to cry out, “Fresh air, fresh air!”

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For the windows are kept closed and the living thoughts of Nature are not allowed to vivify the dead thoughts of books.

I heard a typical story of Russian life whilst I was here. It is told by Tchekhof.

A husband, incensed against an unfaithful wife, went out to a shop to buy a revolver wherewith to shoot both her and her lover. He had eight roubles with him for the purpose, but when he got into the shop he saw a net for sale.

“What is that?” he asked.

“It is a net for catching quails.”

“And how much does it cost?”

“Eight roubles.”

“Wrap it up and let me have it, please.”

So he abandoned his intention of committing double murder and went home to catch quails instead. Which may mean that whenever a Russian commits suicide, and thousands do every year, or whenever he shoots his wife or assassinates a policeman, it is because he failed to find a net for catching quails. He failed to find a game to play at. Vice versa, may it not mean that the Englishman gets so enthusiastic over cricket and sport that he can never get into a temper over anything else. Which is the better way?

Neitzsche talks of the “horror vacuum of the will,” which is only a striking way of translating our English proverb, “Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.” Nikolai Georgitch had a way of speaking of revolvers, talking between his teeth, and murdering his breath the while, and he will run his head off his shoulders some foolish day, but away there at Liavlia, with his

parallel bars, mill ropes and rowing boat, he is safe from the Devil.

Alexey gave me a book to read whilst I was at *Novinka* ; it is one of the most astonishing contributions to the literature of the Revolutionary struggle—"The Last Letters written before Death by Condemned Revolutionaries"—edited by Korolenko.

Tolstoy wept over this book, and expressing his feelings in a letter to the "Retch," caused that number of the journal to be confiscated. It is of such stuff that even the hardest heart would be touched by it.

In the long space that generally occurred between the condemnation by the Court and the carrying out of the sentence, prisoners were in many cases allowed to write. They lingered in the cell six weeks, six months, a year even, hoping their penalty might be commuted, hoping some turn in the affairs of Europe might set them free, hoping against hope that they might escape the scaffold—but at the same time dreading each coming minute, hour, day, as perhaps bringing with it the gallows, starting at every prison noise that came across their sleep in the long night. The letters that they wrote are, to speak figuratively, of blood. They are fascinating, appalling, stirring. Korolenko has done little more than set them before the eyes of the outside world—show them dead Cæsar's wounds, and bid *them* speak.

Those that died were nearly all young students like Alexey Sergeitch, Nikolai Georgitch, Garbage, and the rest of my revolutionary comrades at Liavlia. They had joined in the expropriation gangs, and despoiled public houses, robbed banks, raided public buildings,



and the like, confiscating the money either to their own ends or to the funds of their party. They were rash many of them, and foolish, students of eighteen and twenty, writing to their mothers. One forgives them, laughs at them, melts to them a score of times in one little letter. Nearly always the father and mother belonged to the old-world holy Russia, and were religious and even superstitious people, who had disapproved of the freethinking and radicalism of their sons and daughters. But in these letters, the children come nestling back to their mothers' bosoms, where they have been accustomed to find comfort, and there they pour out their sorrow. "Oh that the world is of such a sort that it has not room for me, that I must die, must give up, must go out, young, strong, beautiful. How can I deserve to die!"

In their long vigils they learn how good a thing home was, the shelter of the old people, and they are sorry that they rushed out into the danger and the turmoil, and that they have offended their parents. In these last letters they are repentant, gentle, tender. "I have taken the Communion and confessed myself," writes one to his mother. Dear boy! Another writes—

DEAR PAPA,—I send you a last farewell, and wish you much . . . much . . . happiness. Forgive me for not writing. Did you think I had forgotten you? Oh, do not blame me so hardly. All the time of my separation from you has been torture for me. I looked forward to being re-united, and to live with you always and heal your heart's wounds. But a bitter reality has interposed: on the 29th May 1908 I was imprisoned, and on the 23rd

January 1909 I was sentenced to death. If you can, dear papa, come and see me : it is allowed. . . .”

And so on. And that old man did try and see his son, and spent weeks on the doorsteps of officials trying to find out where he was or what had happened to him. No one would take the trouble to tell him that his son was already hanged. It is a strange contrast—the hospitality of the Russian in his home and the callousness of an official in his office.

One poor boy, doomed to be hanged, begins this letter—

“ My dear parents, papasha, mamasha and little sister Phenia, I am writing the most loving letter to you with tears in my eyes.”

Another, an expropriator, is sorry he was led away by comrades, and asks anxiously after his younger brother, bidding the home people keep a greater guard on him, and bequeathing his gold baptism Ikon for the brother to wear round his neck in memory of his last good wish.

There are stories of the many suicides which took place in gaol, of the agony of prolonged hope which caused many of the condemned to reserve poison to the very morning of execution ; stories of those who would not wait. In the latter category is that of a man who smoked, laughed and talked with his companion in gaol, and who all at once, in the middle of conversation, laid bare his chest, felt where his heart beat under the white skin, and struck suddenly with his knife : one ! two ! and who then ejaculated : “ That is well ; now carry me out,” and expired without a groan.

There is the story of a man who was hanged on a fire-escape against a prison wall, and who had renounced

the Communion Service, and instead substituted this formula—

“Forgive me, North; forgive me, South; forgive me, East; forgive me, West!” and with that, like a brave man, marched to his death.

The book is full of such precious memorials.

Why did the Russian Government kill all these fine young men? It was through fear, I suppose. It would have been much wiser to relieve them, and send them to the Government of Archangel, where they might have found quails to catch instead of the affected occupation of bomb-throwing and expropriation.

The Government feared: that is why they killed. When a man was known to be dangerous they got rid of him, even if his guilt could not be brought home to him. They tricked men into death, giving them sham chances of escape, and shooting them down from unseen sentry-boxes when the poor students took the chance.

## CHAPTER XIII

### COOKING A DINNER FOR TEN

**M**Y lodging on the Novinka cost but a shilling a week, and the terms were inclusive. I had tables, chairs, a bed; the samovar was brought in to me whenever I wanted it; I had the use of the stove when I cooked dinner for ten. Add to that, my hostess brought me in a plate of sour milk cakes whenever there was a festival, and it will be seen that a shilling goes a long way in these parts.

Indeed, money is extremely scarce. The peasants are rich, but it is in their stock. They have plenty of things that are worth money, but no one has any money to buy them. They have houses of two storeys, cows, sheep, furs, embroidery, hand-made furniture, but these goods merely accumulate upon their hands. It would often be difficult to rake together a sovereign's worth in coin if one emptied the purses of the whole village.

So I got my room for a shilling—money to be paid to the old woman, the mother-in-law, and not to the man, who might at once adjourn to the vodka shop. Husband and wife lived under the tyranny of the wife's mother, who ruled the household with a rod of iron.

She would have ruled over me also, especially in the matter of cooking the dinner, but she found me somewhat intractable. She wakened me at three in the

morning, without any "by your leave," coming straight into my room and shaking the rickety bedstead.

"Time to put the stew on," she said. "Time to go out and buy eggs."

"You silly old woman!" I said. "Go away. Leave me in peace."

"But it's time to go out and find some cooking butter; if you're not early, it'll all be gone."

"All right, all right, all right," I said.

She went out and I lay where I was. Presently I heard her voice outside my window calling the cows.

"*Pooky, pooky, pooky.*"

She was taking them out to pasture.

The next thing I heard was the clank of the samovar upon my table. I had dozed off again. It was steaming and buzzing and spluttering in a sort of delirious excitement to make tea. The samovar is a tea urn, in the centre of which is a closed charcoal stove; when the fire is large, the boiling water emits great quantities of steam, and even lifts the lid of the urn. By means of the burning charcoal the water can be kept boiling for hours.

I had to get up now, and so I made my coffee, and ate rye bread and butter with it, and fed alternately the crows and the doves at my window. Then, under pretext of going to the village shop, I went down to the river to bathe.

Alexey Sergeitch's young brother met me—he was not an exile, but was spending his summer vacation at Liavlia, just for the fun of the thing. He was "game" for anything. Of course we vaulted over all the gates we came to—no one except a peasant ever takes the trouble to unbar a gate. We rushed through the barley

fields, and along the high clay cliffs of the Dwina river, then down a by-path, jumping from tuft to tuft along the weed-grown slopes, and reached the only really pleasant bathing place on our side of the Dwina River. The others generally crossed to the Dwina island, landing the women at one point and the men at another, a hundred yards down the shore.

How cold it was! But the water was warm. The water of the Dwina is always warmer than the air. It is deep, and waves like the waves of the sea come rolling over the surface, lifting one up or taking one down. The bottom is sand or clay or quaking tundra, and where dark shadows stand fixed all day upon the clear water there are treacherous pits. Vsevo, my boy-companion, was very careful not to slip out of his depth.

As we had come out without towels, and as it was far too cold to wait about till we dried, we just threw our clothes on, and dried as we could. As a matter of fact, we promptly forgot that we were wet directly we had donned our garments.

In two minutes we were clambering up the cliff again and looking for strawberries to make a third course at my dinner. Nature was supposed to produce strawberries on these sunny slopes at this time of the year, but the total number we found was, I think, seven. Nature did not come up to the mark.

Hundreds of sand martins flew to and fro above our heads, chirping and twittering, mostly new-fledged. The cliff was honeycombed with their holes. Birds flew out and birds flew in. We stood level with the nests and tried to put our big hands into the little holes; and over our fingers, at the very burrow we were playing

with, one, two, three little martins would fly out one after another. Vsevo was under a spell : he must catch martins for the rest of the morning.

So I left him, for I had a dinner for ten on my conscience. After all, it was only nine o'clock, there was plenty of time. I went into the little shop to see what I could buy. I looked over the whole stock-in-trade whilst the woman tried sorrowfully to wrap up a pound and a half of rice in two loose sheets of an exercise book.

"What is this?" said I, looking at some packets labelled "Dry fruit-berry wine powder."

"That," she replied, "is instead of tea. Very old grandmothers, poor old women, drink that. It costs a penny a packet."

"Ah! And what is this stuff?"

"Dried vegetables, *barin*; dried cabbage, dried carrot, bits of dried turnip, dried leek, dried celery, dried dandelion, dried cauliflower. It's for soup. You see it's all cut up small. Vegetables don't grow here very well; the earth is too poor, too sandy, and the frost nips them."

"Give me half a pound."

She put me up half a pound in another sheet of an exercise book, scrawled over with addition sums.

"Where did you get that paper?" I asked.

"From the wholesale merchant, who comes once a year," was her amusing reply. "He also brings me a hundred pounds of *baranka* biscuits all on ropes like onions, and I keep them in the cellar."

"Half a pound of semolina; half a pound of flour," I added, and she proceeded to weigh them out in the same way.

"A quarter pound of sultanas. Have you any eggs?"

"No, *barin*. But there was a man brought eggs down in a barge yesterday from Archangel. Perhaps he is down there by the riverside still."

No one keeps any fowls in Archangel Province—it is probably because the winter is so severe.

"Give me half a pound of salt, and a pound and a half of soft sugar. What are these leaves for?"

"They are bay leaves for flavouring."

"Give me a farthing's worth."

She gave me three.

"Anything more?"

"No more."

She proceeded to count up what I owed her by the help of an abacus. I had given her a big order, and she felt quite bewildered. Three times she had a shot at her little sum, and failed absurdly. She proposed to deprive herself of twenty copecks. I put her right.

Then came a problem worse than that of money, the taking home of this collection of spilling packages. The rice remained a dreadful failure, and the sugar kept pouring into little cones of waste upon the counter. The semolina was fragile, and had to be lifted as daintily as one would take a cat's cradle from a girl's fingers.

The woman was dismayed, but exclaimed suddenly, "Slava Tebye Gospody!" "Glory be to Thee, O God!" She had found a large bag in the corner of the shop.

"I'll lend you this," she said. "But you must bring it back."

We put the ill-disciplined rice at the bottom of the bag, and on top of it the gentle semolina, then the threatening flour and the sifting sugar. Sultanas crowned these.



"Thanks," I said. "I'll put the salt in my pocket, and the bay leaves in my card case. Good-bye! I'll certainly bring the bag back."

"God bless you!"

So I departed, and put my purchases into my room through the open window. I feared to face the tyrannical old babushka, after having been so long absent on my errand. I had potatoes to buy. For these I had to go from door to door. Butter also I wanted, but all the old dames said, "Go back and fetch a plate to put it on."

I procured two pennyworth of potatoes, all the size of marbles, given me in a birch bark basket. I also obtained half a dozen eggs from the old man who had come down in his barge, hawking town products from village to village.

When I returned the babushka was out. I set to work at once to wash the rice. That done, I filled an earthenware pot half full of milk, added half a pound of sugar and put the rice in, covered it over with a stone lid, and put it in the recess of the old mother's great bread oven.

Then I took the potatoes in hand, and pared them with the only knife in the family. Such a business it was! I wondered when the exiles were coming round to help me. They had all been proffering help the day before.

The babushka came in and gave me such a "blowing-up."

"Where have you been? You don't expect to get the dinner cooked in time now! What's this rubbish—rice? It's burning; you ought to stir it all the time."

I filled up the pot again with milk, and resumed my

potato peeling. "Here, put these in the soup pot," said I, giving her the dried vegetables.

"Meat first!" said the old woman scornfully.

"There is no meat."

"Wha-at?"

"No. No meat."

"You can't make soup without meat."

"You can make soup from a nail," said I, "if you only add salt and flour and one or two other things."

She stood blinking at me a few moments, and then went out in silence.

Fortunately there was boiling water. I filled the exiles' large communal pot, and put the potatoes in one by one, also the dried vegetables, the bay leaves, the semolina, a spoonful of flour and another of salt.

The babushka stood by, holding up both her hands in horror.

Presently a girl-student came in with some mushrooms and we put these in also. The rice had swollen, and so I added again more milk. I went to wash the sultanas. Such filthy, sticky sultanas they were that the English reader can hardly imagine them. After five minutes' struggle, bathing each raisin separately and removing the stalk, I gave it up for the time being, and went out for half a pound of butter, taking a plate this time. When I came back, the babushka was struggling to stir my pudding. I put in more milk, and added a quarter pound of butter. The other quarter pound went to the soup. Then one after another I broke the six eggs, beat them up in a cup with the one family fork, and poured them into the rice.

The old woman gasped. She never put eggs with

*Kasha*. It would only spoil everything. And when I began to put sultanas in, she said, "That's Koutia, and we only eat it on Remembrance Days with the dead."

"No," I said. "This is only the English way of making rice pudding. You never put in eggs or butter or sugar or fruit, that's all the difference, and ours tastes better, you'll see."

She didn't understand, for I overheard her tell her son-in-law that I was making rice *Kasha* in the Chinese way.

I finished the washing of the raisins, and put them into the pudding. The oven was cooking so slowly now that the rice had ceased boiling, and was gently baking. I replaced the stone lid, and lifted the pot, by the aid of a long holder, into the depths of the stove. All was going well. I cleared up the litter on my floor, brought the table into the middle of the room, covered it with two sheets of the *Novoe Vremya*, and two of the *Daily News*, the only copy of an English newspaper that I received during my Northern vagabondage. These served for table-cloth. The babushka had three plates and a basin. I put these down; she had also six wooden spoons; I commandeered these also. I put some sugar in a coffee-tin lid, and some salt in an old envelope, brought in two forms to seat my company, and arranged all the literature I could find to entertain them while they were waiting for dinner. Then I had to scour the village for plates and spoons. Alexey Sergeitch gave me a dozen paper serviettes and another couple of spoons, and among the other exiles I raked together enough utensils to go round.

Meanwhile the soup and the rice *cooked*.

Coming back, I found half the company assembled, and Nikolai Georgitch had brought me four pounds of the exiles' communal black bread ; which was very fortunate because I had forgotten to provide bread. The babushka was asked to produce two measures of milk and half a pound of sour curds—Russians like Metchnikoff's sour milk with their soups.

Then they all sat and waited whilst I brought in the first course.

Suspense ! Then I took off the lid and looked. The soup had a fragrance that astonished the company. I asked one of the ladies, Sophie, to ladle it out, and gave into her hands the exiles' big communal ladle, an emblem of socialism.

“ Oh my ! ” said Garbage. “ It's thick.”

Thick it was, almost stiff, and amazingly rich. The exiles laughed and applauded, and the girls exclaimed :

“ Oh Meester ! ” and went off into giggles.

Everyone was guessing what was in the soup and what not. No one thought of the semolina—it was that that had swollen and thickened the soup, that had made a hash of it, so to speak. I watched Karl, the Lithuanian, considering two bay leaves which had come to him adventitiously, and Varvara Sergievna trying to decide whether a piece of mushroom was fish or vegetable.

But they all ate well, and one or two even had second helpings. I lay low, knowing that my second course was a triumph of the culinary art.

It had been a profound secret, but after repeated questions I announced “ Angleesky pudding,” and there was a flutter of excitement. Everyone was saying

“puddin-g,” “puddin-g,” pronouncing the final “g” as if it had a spring in it.

In it came, held high, like the boar’s head, and was planked down in the middle of the table. On the top was a seductive yellow crust with sultanas lying in it like gems, and, like the King’s daughter, it was all beautiful within.

Most beautiful—and tasty beyond words, and I had made an enormous quantity of it. Two helpings all round with milk and sugar; first helping with cream! Everyone professed to admire me, and Alexey said I had almost converted him to vegetarianism.

The samovar was brought in and tea went round, and several of the exiles begged the babushka to allow them to sleep for a little while on the hay in her barn. Vsevo let five martins go all at once from his blouse and they filled the room with wing movement. I gave the old woman a helping of the rice pudding, and she said she would put it away till the morrow as she wasn’t hungry.

With the remains of the soup we fed the hungry village dogs, and the crows came down, dancing and hopping in front of us, trying to steal bits.

I gave them some scraps. “Don’t feed the crows,” said Mikhail Gregoritch. “They are wicked birds, black hundreders. Feed the doves; they are gentle.”

“I suppose the Dove is the kind you would like to perpetuate,” said I.

“The Dove is a type of the Christian,” said Mikhail.

“Well, I think you can’t get good Christians without strong devils side by side,” said I, and I could not help thinking of that phrase of the philosopher “gregarious

desirability." But this was beside the mark, especially after dinner, and we did not prolong the argument, but fed the birds—he doves, and I crows, according to our inclinations.

Varvara wished to stay with me to wash the dishes, but the babushka took that unpleasant job right out of our hands. It was another little item covered by my shilling a week rent.

Varvara complimented me. "You did splendidly," she said.

"All the same," I replied. "It's woman's work, and it's absurd for men to be playing about in the kitchen. Man in the kitchen and woman in parliament, I suppose that lies in the bad future."

Varvara laughed. "If the women do as well as the men . . ." said she. I felt she had said something that was irresistible.

"I'll tell you what I mean," said I. "When a woman gives one food, she bids one live. From a man's hands food is but bread and wine, but from a woman's, it is already the flesh and blood of life."

This Varvara did not trouble her little head about, and a good thing too. She evaded my remarks and hurried on to say, "Wasn't I going to the wedding procession in the evening—up near Vassily Vassilievitch's lodging?"

I thought that I was.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A COUNTRY WEDDING

**T**HAT evening we assembled at Pereplotchikof's lodging in the Zachapin hamlet. It was there that a wedding was to be on the morrow. The bridegroom lived in the same house as Vassily Vassilievitch, and the bridegroom's father would keep open house for three days after the ceremony. Guests were coming in from all the country side, and being housed with neighbours. Spirits and beer were "on at the main" so to speak. In fact, Pereplotchikof took me aside to show me a strange sight, in a room all by itself, on the floor in carboys and demijohns, vodka, gallons of it. It was not to be broached till after the ceremony, and now it was cooped up and imprisoned like the genii in the fisherman's lead, like the tempests in the bags of Æolus. To-morrow and for three days, the significance of these bottles would be made visible up and down the one street of Zachapin. The vodka must have cost a small fortune as peasants' money goes, but the bridegroom's family was the richest of the district, and the spirit represented the savings of years.

Vassily Vassilievitch made us tea and we sang songs; there were about twelve of us in the small room. Lef Alexeitch, an ex-revolutionary, who had come down from Archangel, played the violin. Lef Alexeitch was

one of those who became so enamoured of the country of his banishment that when his term was ended he proposed to settle there. It is strange now, to think of him playing the violin that night ; it was about the only time I ever saw him, but his face was clearly impressed in my memory, for I did not like his personality. Now I know I shall never see him again, not even by chance, as then, for shortly after I left Liavlia he was playing with a gun and shot himself.

We were impatient for the wedding procession and promenade that was to take place this evening, and we occupied ourselves in such trivialities as imitating musical instruments, and barking and mewling like dogs and cats. Students are the same all the world over.

We went outside and played playground games ; tired of that, we sat on logs and had more music. Then came dances ; waltzes and polkas, girls and young men in their naked feet. Then Pereplotchikof danced the " Kamarinsky Moujik " with Varvara Sergievna, the most amusing spectacle I ever saw. The Kamarinsky is a whole ballet rather than a dance, and with his thumbs in his belt, and his eight fingers all apart, his head well back, his flexible face twisted into all sorts of grimaces, his eyes winking, Pereplotchikof went through the steps. Varvara Sergievna, with her hands at her waist, took the woman's part ; the approaching, the drawing back, the coyness and the impudence. Anyone who has seen a Russian peasant-dance in London can form a notion of what it was like, the grotesque steps, the shrugs of the shoulders, the occasionally ugly and revolting body movement. Russian national dances are coarse, but the Russians love them.



Not long after this, the village promenaders began to file past. It was a beautiful "white-night," pleasantly warm, and so ideal for the purpose. The girls were the first out and came first in batches of twos and threes and then in sixes and sevens. They sang and keened or pretended to weep, and they walked round and round the village untiringly, gradually increasing in numbers till they became a flocking crowd.

The women were overwhelmingly dressed, their clothes being intended chiefly to show what the owners were worth, and by no means for purpose of adornment. If a woman had a new cloak she wore it even though the weather was hot, if she possessed over-boots or galoshes, she wore them, even if the ground was perfectly dry. They carried parasols though it was night time, and some of them umbrellas, though it wasn't raining. Many of the older women were clad in ancient costumes; they wore them not because they were old or curious, but because they hadn't anything better to put on. To their minds, such costumes were old-fashioned and almost absurd; the blessing was they were already married and had not to think of pleasing the young men. But these dresses were very beautiful. They were all of hand-spun linen and richly embroidered. Each woman wore a small box-shaped hat, like an extremely ornamented smoking cap emblazoned with beads and shining silk threads. The skirts were something like English children's petticoats, and were held up by straps over the shoulders. With them were worn extremely short jackets, just a pair of sleeves and a yoke coming no lower than the breast, and then over this, a gorgeously coloured cape with armholes.

This procession is called a *gulanie*, a walking, and it always precedes a wedding, and follows it for the matter of that, if the men are steady enough on their feet to accompany the women. It is partly in honour of the bride and partly an opportunity for the young men and women to arrange new matches. The bridegroom on this occasion had in his turn met the girl he fancied at a *gulanie* in another village. The great advantage is that if there is no one among your acquaintances whom you would care to marry, you may easily meet an acceptable stranger at one of these merry meetings. The girls are all very anxious to get married, and it is extremely seldom that a young man is refused when he proposes. The girls even try to propose on their own part, and are always wheedling the wise women of the village to get up a sort of meeting with young men. The wise woman is called the *Svakhina*, a most peculiar type, to be found all over the North of Russia. She is somewhat related to the midwife by temperament and character. One glance at her face would suffice to tell you that *she knew too much*.

So now at Zachapin, as they did at Kekhtya on the festival of St John, young women walked and showed their paces, hoping to find favour in the eyes of young men.

The moujik who owned the house where Alexey Sergietch lived, was married to a woman whom he had not seen previous to the wedding ceremony. The whole affair had been arranged by proxy. He wanted a woman in the house and so he sent out to find one.

We watched the promenade until about eleven, and then I bade farewell to Vassily Vassilievitch and the others, and went out along the cliff to look at the sunset. The

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THE WEDDING PARTY—FATHER AND MOTHER OF THE BRIDE ARE HOLDING THE SACRED PICTURES

horizon was all aflash with ruby, and the waves of the Dwina were like many crimson flags.

On the morrow the bride was to come in a boat with her relations, the family Ikons and her trousseau. I was up betimes to meet them. A fresh wind blew, turning the Dwina ripples into rollers, and the boat, which trusted more to sails than oars, evidently did not find the breeze to its liking. It was very late and we waited all the morning for it. The sky was overcast, but I took my kodak, and hoped to get a photograph of the meeting.

When the people at length arrived I made them wait. The father and mother of the bride came out, carrying the bridal bedding all roped up, and after them the relations of the bride, bearing large pine baskets with her wedding portion. Then came women carrying the bridal Ikons and candles, and last the bride, weeping and red-faced, fearfully and bunchily dressed in seven or eight petticoats. The best cart in the village was drawn up to receive the bride and groom, and the latter came forward to lead his bride to the equipage. The horse was in bright harness borrowed for the occasion, for unless a couple can be grand at their wedding, it's no use expecting to be prosperous afterwards.

I said I would take a photograph, and so they ranged themselves on the shore for a minute before driving off to the church.

Then away they went with all the villagers after them, the bearers with the Ikons and the relations with the trousseau.

The priest was waiting for them, and already the church was full of people. The cart stopped at the church door, and the bride and bridegroom, having divested themselves

of superfluous wraps, were led up the middle ; the two hours wedding service began, the crowning and the blessing.

The husband and wife were then escorted by the villagers to the house in Zachapin. Vassily Vassilievitch had vacated his room, and the whole house was full of guests, the tables were all spread. Bottles of vodka and home-made beer were ranged around, and the festival cheer commenced.

Early next morning I went along to drink the bride's health and wish her prosperity. From the windows came the noise of uproarious festivity. The bridegroom met me on the threshold and bade me welcome ; he felt it a great honour that I should come. He was quite steady on his feet, and beyond a generous flush in his cheeks, looked none the worse for the night's revelling. The bride, I understood, had gone to bed early, being too tired to join in the *Veselaya*.

The drinking and singing and dancing had been kept up all night, and it was a profitable matter for the young couple, because each person who drank their health was obliged to make them a wedding present.

They brought me a glass of beer. I crossed myself to the Ikons and then wished the young man happiness, many children, all sons, and great prosperity. Might God give him these things.

Then the father of the bride came up with a sack in his two hands. He was very tipsy. He pointed to the mouth of the sack, indicating that it was my turn to add a present to the rest.

“ Now it's your turn,” he said, “ to give a present.”

“ What are all these things you've got, Uncle ? ” I inquired, looking into the sack. I peered.

There was a fearful confusion—china, fur, meal, money, half-a-dozen vodka glasses, some birch-bark jars, a dead woodcock, an axe.

“It’s the second sack,” said the bridegroom with a smile.

I threw in a rouble.

Then I left them, wishing them luck once more, and stepping over the bodies of those who had fallen on the floor at an advanced stage of inebriety, I hastened over to Alexey Sergeitch’s lodging to take coffee with the exiles.

## CHAPTER XV

### A WHITE NIGHT AT LIAVLIA

2 A.M. 5th July.

**I**T is at this moment deep in the long still night, and all along the north and west, the embers of the day are glowing. Everyone sleeps, and I feel like a mother walking in the garden when all her children are in bed. On the eglantine, the deep red roses are fixed. It seems they have been produced by enchantment. In my secret garden there is such a rose-tree blowing, and each rose is mysterious. It is a strange symmetric tree of seven round roses. Each rose glows as with fire, and exhales enchantment.

Ever mysterious for me is the breath that I take from the world and then again return to it, the element that has been perfectly wrought for my being. Now at this moment it seems stilled, as if resting with Nature, and as I came home from the river just now it was as if I walked through high and gentle flowers, waving them to right and to left to make a passage for myself.

How all the herbage grows in such a night as this, rankly, swiftly. The oats and the rye, the grass and the weeds seem to get richer and longer before the eyes. All things that live on light are glutted.

Till midnight a girl has been sitting on the cliffs over the Dwina, singing by herself. I listened to it from far



away—it was full of sadness, and came again and again upon my ears like a complaint.

The windmills have grown gigantic since sundown, and I, too, am a veritable giant, getting white on my head from a scraping of the sky as I walk. Heaven affords no stars. Flit, flit, flit, a white moth has come from the rose on mysterious business. The moth suggests that the night is sultry—I should like to see its glowing eyes.

A feeling of sadness and loneliness came over me, a wave of home-sickness of a kind. But for *what* home? The wanderer is everywhere at home, and yet never at home, not even in the land where he was born. He is a seeker.

The world is a strange accidental place. Do they in other realms take note of what is happening in this garden where they have abandoned us? Is it not kindred in other worlds that we seek—spiritual fathers and mothers? The long summer day of life crawls on, and we wait like lost children for someone to come and fetch us. And we are weary!

To-day Kalmeeck sat astride upon the roof of his house in the sunshine, singing his favourite songs. He was still without hat, and clad in his dirty crimson shirt, and he struck the roof lustily with a heavy mallet. His wife had bidden him climb up and mend a hole in the roof, for the rain had been coming through. He did not once stop singing, and seemed as happy as man could be, but he is asleep now and all the village is asleep. The painter sleeps, the revolutionaries, all. Only my watchful soul is looking out attentively through my eyes, and trying as it were, to remember something, to see something in the night that shall remind me. It seems that once I forgot.

On my spiritual body is a strange royal seal, but the significance of the seal I cannot understand. And has not every man that seal? If so, most of them have forgotten. It is my fanaticism or misfortune always to remember, to remain for ever irreconcilable.

In England one is familiar with every sight and sound; the English world grew up with us and became part and parcel of ourselves. But when one arrives on new original ground like this of Archangel Province, one is suddenly struck with the foreignness of the world itself. One is forced to say every now and then "How the devil came I here?" "Whatever have all these dark forests got to do with me?" "What's there to do in a place like this?" "Where is there any real scope for my faculties?" "Are we not all Napoleons upon a St Helena?"

In England they are "progressing"—but to what end? Are not the English, like everybody else, children lost in a garden, and waiting for someone to come and fetch them? "Progress" is a game and a gamble just to kill the time, to while it away *till someone comes*. But gamblers lose their heads and forget the serious things of life, they forget. . . .

And we tramps and tree-climbers and watchers remember. . . .

And now the sun is rising again. New light is pouring into the old. The babushka has come out and is calling her cows—"pooky, pooky, pooky," and it is morning. I must go to bed—one gets into bad habits when there is no darkness to bid the restless spirit sleep. One is wakeful at night and sleepy in the morning, like night birds

BY  
THE  
AUTHOR

A WHITE NIGHT AT LIAVLIA 101

and moths. To-morrow or next day I must be leaving Liavlia, for the yearning is upon me to go further and see new places. Perhaps I shall find something upon my new wanderings, come upon some old homeland, or find the priceless pearl. Or I may find that I have the pearl all the time, and that such moods as that of to-night are the glory of our ordinary lives.

## CHAPTER XVI

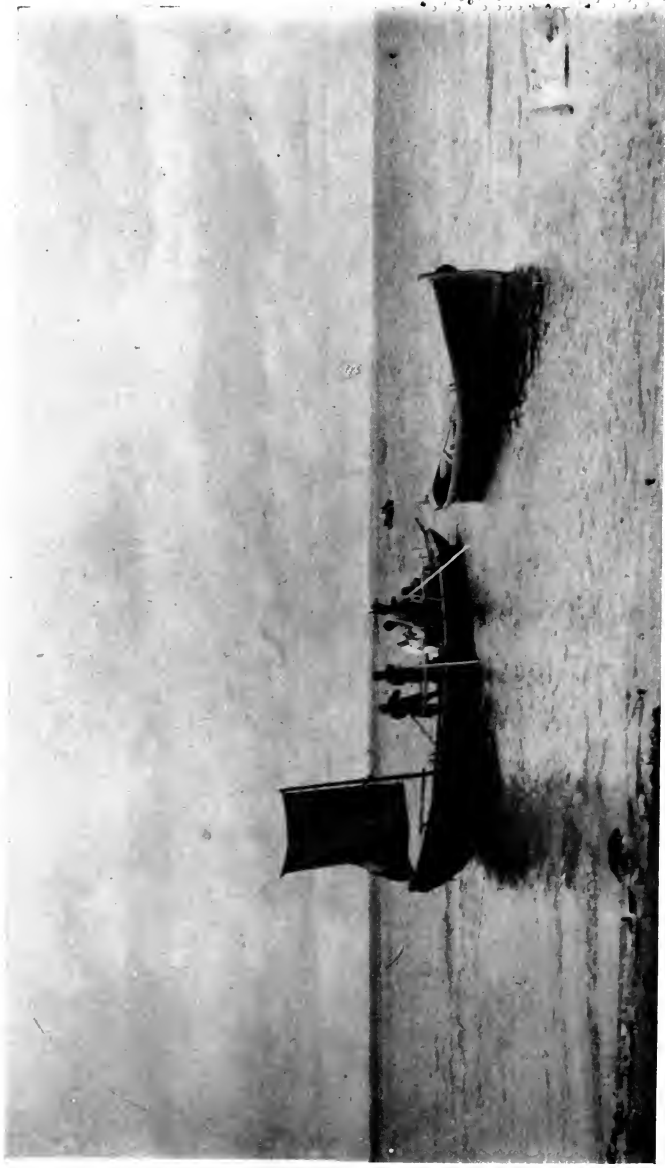
### YET ANOTHER WHITE NIGHT

**I** HAVE several records of these wonderful White Nights of Liavlia. The times were so marvellous that I can never forget them. Their call is so irresistible that some day I shall certainly return to them.

I bathed in the river each day, and one afternoon after more than usual exertion in the water I found a resting place in a forest clearing on the cliff above the river. I lay down on a couch which I made for myself out of hay, and in the full gaze of the sun, fell asleep.

The large yellow sun looked at me as if it knew me and wanted to attract my attention. It made a golden road to me over the broad river. It set, set, and yet was fain to stay, as if loth to leave the scene. And my eyelids set with it. I lay warmly and gently beside a rosebush clustered with blossoms, and the scent of the hay about me was an enchantment. I dozed and waked and dozed again.

The night came on, the quiet beautiful twilight extending indefinitely but merging at last in the morning. The little purple clouds crept to and fro on the wide sky. Breezes shivered in the trees. Mosquitoes swarmed in clouds about the little birch leaves. In the woods a goat-jar gurgled. The green of the firs became darker and



ELEVEN O'CLOCK AT NIGHT. A FISHING PARTY ON THE DWINA

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colder, and the broad sands turned to crimson. Fire boats danced on the waves where sunset rays were caught in the water, and last of all, white mists like ghosts, exhaled themselves on far reaches of the river. They rose from the water wraith-shaped, unshaped, and were wafted to the breathless forest branches where they clung and sucked and dragged.

Mysterious, quiet night. I sat up indolently and watched it.

A mile up-stream fishers were casting their nets for salmon and gwinead. I saw the movement of their black figures but heard not their voices. The sun had now gone down under the river, but would not sink in it, and its unconquerable light shone upward from below the horizon. Far windmills silhouetted themselves against the sky, and looked like melancholy border towers. A white church with green domes had effaced itself so that it seemed as if the domes rested on space. Wooden cottages looked like shy hedgehogs.

What is richer in life than to rest in the arms of the earth without thought, to cease looking at Nature and let Nature look into you, to cease looking at the sky, and let the sky be reflected in one's own soul! I love the earth, she is my gentle mother, whom I caress, whom I touch with my hands. How kind she was to have thought of me, to have begotten me and let me look out on this beautiful world and exist. I rested on her bosom, gently, placidly, and felt her living love. The breast of the earth itself heaved gently below me.

Man is the significance of earth ; an eye whereby it looks outward, a face whereby it shows its inner meaning. And life is a significance of man. I am just what I live, and

just what I see. The beauties of the world are a catalogue of my soul, of the soul of the earth, my mother.

How long I stayed I know not. I was very loth to go. But I suddenly felt lonely and felt almost afraid of my loneliness. In a pine tree near me, I heard an unfamiliar sound, *clak-clak, clak-clak*. I could not imagine to myself what it might be—*clak-clak, clak-clak*. A forest tramp doing something, maybe? A robber perhaps. An evil spirit? They say there is a terrible devil lives in the woods. He is as tall as a young pine tree, and is covered with an armour of plaited bark. His forehead is broad and yellow, and wrinkled. He cannot speak, he can only flap his wooden arms, and they sound thus—*clak-clak, clak-clak*.

The peasants only mean a tree with a broken branch swinging in the wind, but I dared not go and look. Foolish thrills rushed in my head. I got up quietly from my hay-bed, slipped down the steep bank, and took to my heels on the hard sand of the river. For I felt securer by the river than up above on the skirt of the haunted forest.

Away, away! I laughed and the sand flew backward off my heels. I returned to sleeping Liavlia. I tried to vault over a high gate but could not, being too stiff. A dog came out and barked, thinking me a thief, but no one noticed him or me. Even the sentry in front of the police station slept and snored, and I might have pulled his nose without offence. And how should there be thieves in Liavlia where there is such faith in man's honesty, that no one locks a door, and even the village shop is left with the window open!



## CHAPTER XVII

### DEPARTURE FOR PINYEGA

**W**HILST I was staying at Liavlia, the Russian authorities took under arrest the English trawler *Onward*, but were forced to liberate it and to pay a fine of £4000. The incident made somewhat of a sensation at Archangel, and I heard a good many comments on the affair by moujiks in the river villages. I was constantly asked did I think there was going to be a war, and one peasant said to me, "If there is no war, it is because the Generals are afraid the Japanese would help you."

The revolutionaries were much pleased that the Russian Government had to pay up. Anything that brought discredit and shame to the bureaucracy was a joy to them. "Now was my chance!" they urged. I was going into the country and was sure to be arrested.

Nikolai Georgitch took me aside and spoke the following words between his teeth, murdering his breath, like Richard the Third.

"If they stop you, let all the devils loose, don't be humble; declaim, shout, denounce. Write to the foreign minister in London. Make them pay up. Whenever you get a chance, make the Black Gang suffer—write about them to the papers; tell your friends, tell us, tell the Jews—rake hell! If I could only get my

fingers to the throats of some of them I'd press the life out of the rascals."

That speech convinced me of the character and future fortune of Nikolai Georgitch. His term ends in a year, and he returns to study at the University of Kharkof, but he returns a watched man, and but one or two indiscreet speeches of such a sort, and he is a doomed man. For in Russia the grass itself has ears, and there is not a single man on the Revolutionary side or on the other that one can be absolutely certain is not an Azeff, a spy in the pay of the other side. Why I, smiling, friendly and convivial, a confessed student of their life, noticing all the details, and noting everything down in a language they did not understand, might myself have been a secret agent of the Government, betraying them day by day.

"I'll tell you why I wouldn't take part in your political struggle," I said to Alexey Sergeitch. "It is because all Russians are liars; the greatest liars the world has known."

"You are speaking from a German point of view," replied the revolutionary. "You think a fact 'is' or 'is not'; we instinctively know that every fact both 'is' and 'is not.'"

"I agree," said I, "but the only solid, business foundation lies in the recognition of the difference between truth and untruth. You can't get on whilst any man among you, even the most important, may be an Azeff or a Father Gapon. Even a firebrand like Nikolai Georgitch may be simply acting a part to draw you other fellows out; find what your real opinions are, and report them to the Government."

"We never truly reveal what are our real opinions," said Alexey with a show of vanity.

"How then can you co-operate?" I asked.

And for answer he smiled that perfectly discreet, all-knowing Russian smile that baffles and saves when he is pressed in argument.

The subject was dropped somehow. We turned to that of the expiring terms of the comrades. Before the summer was over, five or six of the exiles would have completed the term of their banishment, and be free to return to their homes in the South. Karl Ulitch, Mikhail Gregoritch, Garbage, Nikolai Alexandrovitch, all these would be freed, and I should very likely meet them at Moscow in the winter. Karl Ulitch obtained his release passport and left the village three days before I did. On his account there was a festival evening, a students' "squash" in his room. Almost everyone in Liavlia attended; we had three samovars going, and loads of schoolboys' fare, "cookies" and sweets from Archangel, sausage and caviare. After the "stuffing," the whole party went off to find musical instruments, and we had a band-playing in the village street, a violin, two guitars, two balalaikas, an old concertina, Pereplotchikof imitating the trombone and Vsevo officiating as drum. The fair siren whom I had heard singing on the cliff was also present and sang thrilling solos. The students and the girls danced the Pas d'Espagne for an hour and waltzed for an hour. We had parlour and playground games of the style of "Red Rover" and "Postman's Knock." Varvara Sergievna was extremely in evidence in suggesting and arranging all the sports.

On the following day a party went across the river

to the Dwina Island, and across the island to a village to buy eggs. When we returned, our boat had slipped its moorings and was gone. It was visible far out in the shallow water a hundred yards along the coast. We were in a quandary, for the other boats on the shore were without oars,—the owners having hidden them in the sand—and there was no means of transporting ourselves to the home side. The women sat down on the sand and turned their faces the other way whilst myself and one of the exiles undressed and threw ourselves into the river to recover the lost boat. It was a useless struggle, for the current was strong and was taking the boat along swiftly. We returned, dressed, and set to work to find the hidden oars.

Somewhere in the sand, not far off, no doubt, we should come upon the buried oars. We could take the lightest of the boats and go in pursuit of the escaped vessel. In ten minutes we had found three pairs of them, unfastened a light boat and set off in pursuit.

For three quarters of an hour we went as fast as we knew how, and then came up with the runaway. It bobbed up and down in an unbalanced way on the waves, and seemed to have quite a cunning expression on its bows.

“Looks like a dog that knows it has been leading its master a dance,” said Alexey in his questioning way.

When we got back we found the ladies looking very bored and cold, still sitting on the sandy shore. Half an hour more, and we were over in Liavlia village.

The other exiles had been wondering what had happened to us. And when they heard of the adventure we had another carousal.

Next morning I went on an absurd outing up the Liavlia stream with Vsevo, through thick water lilies and reeds for about six miles, when the forest on each side closed over us and changed noonday to night. We had then great trouble steering out of the way of trees. Now and then a pine tree had fallen across the water, and we had to step over it whilst the boat slipped under it. We were explorers. In the afternoon, after Varvara Sergievna's communal dinner, we went with eleven others in a sailing barge up the River Smerd on the other side of the Dwina, to the village of Smerd, where a family of naturalised Germans had settled down to live a German life in the wilds of the forest. The scenery was extremely beautiful, the river lying very low beneath its banks, and having thousands of dark shadowy pools. The German family were not at home, but we saw their cabbage field, perhaps the only cabbage field in Archangel, their pigs, their chickens—all great rareties—their iron railings and tiled threshold, extraordinary anomalies in this place of stone and wood. A Lettish servant gave us bread and butter and milk, and talked Lettish to one of us who himself came from the Baltic provinces and spoke the tongue.

On our way back a great storm arose, and the waves of the Dwina were high as houses. The ladies, all except Varvara Sergievna, shrieked and demanded that we put back. We turned back at once, for there is nothing so dangerous as fear, and any moment we might be overturned if someone moved suddenly to escape a breaker.

That night we lay in a village schoolroom, wrapped up in reindeer skins. None of us enjoyed it much, but

I was amused to see two of the exiles who were in love, sit beside one another the night through, whispering their secrets and looking looks which only lovers can—to them the incident was utterly delightful.

At three in the morning, in drenching rain, we sat ourselves once more in the barge and rowed across, all grey and soaking. But no one seemed downcast, and, as ever in our water excursions, our songs went over the water to the beat of our oars.

The night before there had been some distress at Liavlia, and the police had thought of organising a search party—they half thought an escape had been made—all the party of us had been far out of bounds. But no reproach or blame was made when we were seen coming in drenched to the skin on the morrow.

That day, M. Beekof came from Archangel, shooting. I went to his lodging, and we had Angleesky pudding again, and he advised me as to the places and people I should see on my tramp. On the morrow I was setting off. I got letters of introduction from Vassily Vassilievitch, Alexey Sergeitch, Garbage and some others, and enough advice for the safe guarding of a regiment.

There had been great sorrow when I announced my intention of going forward on my journey, and much warning that I was rushing into danger—that I should be robbed, murdered, arrested and the like. But Russians had tried to frighten me before, and I knew that my way was at least less perilous than in the Caucasus. Then again, Russians have an extraordinary ignorance of their own country, and would rather go to prison than go tramping.

The literary vagabond is a *rara avis*, a very black swan.

I made my preparations, packed my knapsack, gave Pereplotchikof my surplus luggage to take to Moscow for me, obtained a mosquito bag, filled my camera case with films, put in a little book to read by the way. All was done. On the morrow I should leave early and resume the first stage of my journey south.

"Going to Pinyega on foot?" said the *babushka* slowly, and looking at my face to try and understand what sort of person I was, "Going on foot?" she repeated. "Why not take post horses? Is it possible they are too dear for you?"

"Yes," I said. "And besides, I want to see the people, how am I going to see them if I whirl past in a troika?"

"Going to Pinyega on foot," the old woman repeated, blinking her eyes. "It will take you a week. Fancy walking a week to get to Pinyega. It's not worth walking a day to get there, a miserable little town."

"After that I am going to Kotlass and Ustyug," I added.

She did not know of these places. Pinyega she knew well, it was "*hoodaya gorodishka*," a wretched hole, not worth going to; no inns, no shops, only drunken Samoyedes and Ziriani, and colder than Archangel itself, though, of course, not really cold now.

"I don't count Pinyega folk worth anything," she went on, "a low lot, dirty, thieving. They keep the cows in the kitchens, and on Saturdays they do not wash the floors

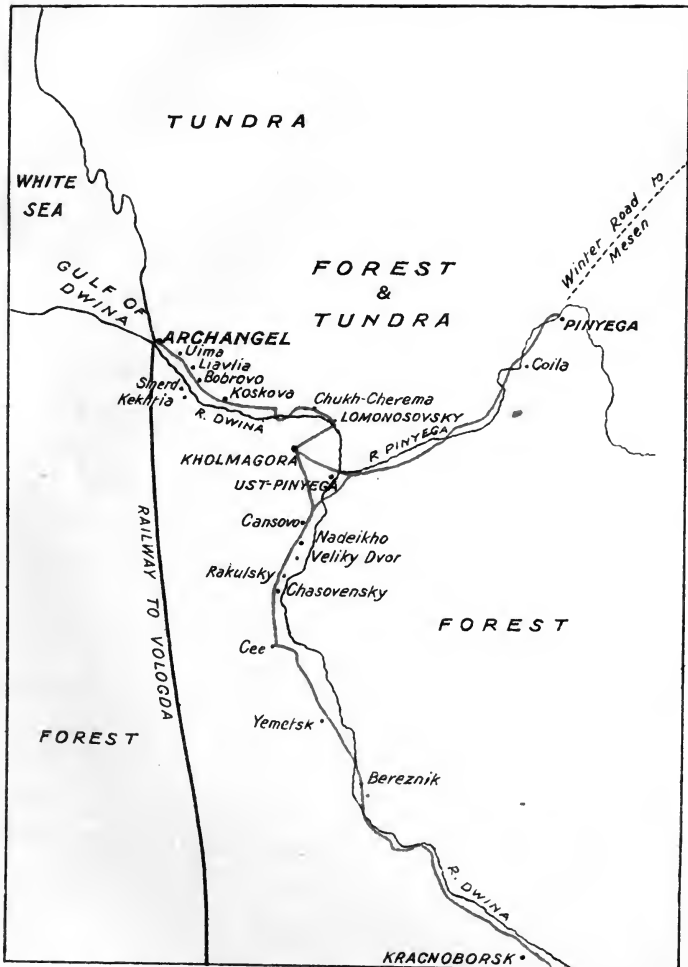
with soap and water, but scrape away the filth with a birch broom and a shovel."

She raised one hand and let it fall dramatically as if paralysed, just to show that Pinyegites were past talking about and past cure.

On the morrow I departed.



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THE NORTHERN DWINA. My Journey shown in Red.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### A DISCOURSE ON DRUNKENNESS

**O**N the morning of my going I received an anonymous love letter, begging me to stay. I concluded it was a composition of Garbage and Nikolai Georgitch, but as I afterwards learned, it came from the girl who had been singing on the cliffs.

I could not stay, however, for I had in front of me the prospect of upwards of a thousand verst tramp, and if once the autumn rains set in and cut me off two or three hundred miles from a railway station, I should be in a miserable plight. The roads often become so bad in autumn that one sinks to the knee in soft mud, or one has to wade through flooded clayey meadows. More than all the road dangers of man or of beast, I feared the weather.

Yet the skies seemed auspicious on the day I left. It was truly the hottest morning of the summer, a sultry breathless day suggestive of some July days in the Caucasus.

The whole village turned out to see me off, even the fair stranger I was treating so ungallantly. Pereplotchikof grasped my hand and held it in both his, lifting it up and down in a grandmotherly way, and the rest crowded round begging me to write or to remember them, and eventually when their terms expired, to meet them

at Moscow. The peasants all said, "Come again, *milosti prosim*, as we ask for mercy, do us the honour!" I bade them good-bye; there was a thick, confused murmur of blessings, handkerchiefs waved, and in half a dozen strides I had turned the corner of the village and got away. A stirring send off is a more trying ordeal than a thousand mile tramp itself.

Once more I was on the road, and each pine tree as I passed it, passed never to be seen again, certainly never to be seen so again.

On my way I went through Bobrovo once more, and called upon my host to say farewell, and drink his health in home-brewed beer. It happened to be the day of his "Angel," his name day, and despite his previous asseverations to me of teetotalism, he was quite over the edge of sobriety. With him was a boon companion who had just returned from a pilgrimage to Solovetz.

"Did you get there?" I asked. It often happens that through the drunkenness of the sailor-monks the pilgrim vessels never reach their destination.

He shook his head. "No," he replied. "God prevented us as a punishment for our sins, and sent a storm."

"How was that? I should have thought that pilgrims were not very sinful."

He looked at me with lack-lustre eye, and growled—"There was a student fellow on the boat, a-playing of the balalaika."

He probably referred to one of the revolutionaries, who had got a day off by shamming religious mania, but who, once aboard the pilgrim boat, had taken a Bank Holiday view of the affair. As for my moujik pilgrim, I smiled at him and I thought, "Ah well, you may get

drunk upon a pilgrimage, but play upon a balalaika—God forbid ! ”

It was some hours before I got away from Bobrovo, for the *Khosaiika* brought in the samovar and a whortleberry pie. The furrier and his pilgrim companion drank up a great quantity of beer and vodka, and the conversation took up a very low direction—absolutely unchronicable here.

The road lay again through dense forest to Koskova, and I reached that village about ten at night ; my head in the mosquito bag, for the little gnats swarmed in clouds.

It was too late to get put up in a cottage. At least I didn't feel inclined to disturb the sleeping villagers, so as the night was warm, I tried sleeping in a wooden hulk by the riverside.

This was my first night out since May, when I was tramping near Kutais. It was very dreary. For one thing, there was no darkness to soothe away the impressions of the day, no stars to look up at, no moon, only a dim soulless twilight, and cold wandering mists stealing along the river banks. The night was warm, but my hulk was cold as ice, and I lay and shivered, and wished for half a dozen blankets or a sheltered mountain cave.

At four in the morning, I gave up my attempts and took refuge in a large barn that I found well stocked with hay and straw quite near the water's edge. This was at the house of the ferryman. I slept there all the morning, and when I sought out my host to have tea and porridge it was already noon.

Up and down the street of Koskova a quaint procession was taking place—the priest, the old men of the village and the two village beggars. They carried hand-

made Ikons and Crosses, and sang portions of the Church Service. I asked a woman what was the reason, and learned that some years before, on that day, the priest had held a service, praying God to make the cows whole. There had been an appalling epidemic among the cattle. The whole village set aside a day and prayed, and the result was God had mercy, and the cows recovered, and the pestilence passed away. So in thankfulness, the priest had made a new festival all by itself, specially for Koskova village, and now each year, on the anniversary of the day of prayer, the Ikons are taken in procession in the morning and everyone keeps open doors in the afternoon.

The Ikons went by to the church. My host without his hat, staggered across the road to his threshold and stared at me angrily. When he heard I wanted a meal, he at once became friendly, probably foreseeing that I should pay him the price of a drink.

The samovar was brought in and porridge and milk ; my host brought a tabouret close up to mine and said to me in an ingratiating whisper.

“ Order what you like : all is at your service.”

“ Have you eggs ? ” I asked.

“ No, but order it, and I will find some.”

“ I shan't trouble if you haven't any of your own.”

“ Will you not order something better to drink ? ”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ Something hot for us together.”

“ You mean vodka. I don't drink it.”

The moujik looked extremely sorrowful. “ But I have brought you tea and porridge and milk,” he said. “ And yet you won't drink with me.”

I said I would give him twenty copecks for the meal and he could spend it how he liked.

"Then give it me now and let me go and get a bottle, and we will be happy together," he replied. I gave him the money.

In a quarter of an hour he brought back a bottle of vodka and put it in a cupboard, and again sat down at table.

"Not going to drink any?" I queried in surprise.

His face was a battlefield of conscience and desire. He hesitated a moment, and then brought the bottle out of the cupboard.

"There," said he, "that is what they make us poor moujiks drink. We don't want to, but if we don't they put us in prison."

"What do you mean?" said I, listening to this astounding statement.

"Truth," he averred, raising his eyebrows.

"It's not true," I urged sternly.

"If you say so, I confess," he replied. "But the shop is there, and what can we poor peasants do than spend our money there and get drunk, and then spend more money? The shop is just handy and we buy, that's how it is. Once you begin you can't stop."

"How much vodka does your village consume in a year?" I asked.

"No one knows; thousands of bottles, for even the priest is drunken. To-day, even in the procession he was drunk; some people say he only keeps the holiday so that he can go to our houses and drink and not pay for it."

"Surely someone knows how much vodka is sold.

There must be some way of finding out. Now, you for instance, how much do you drink in a year ? ”

He grinned at me, and his face seemed to suggest that I had been trying to entrap him into something. Then he said, “ I might reckon it if I were sober, but you see I’m—” He snapped his fat thumb and first finger on his red neck under his ear, half shut one eye, showing the whites of the other, meaning to imply some vulgarity which might express an advanced stage of inebriety. The Russian language has as yet no expression for “ screwed ” or “ half-seas over.”

“ But,” said I, “ I should think you might often hear at the vodka shop, how trade was going. Doesn’t the shopman himself sometimes get drunk ? ”

“ No,” said he. “ There is no conversation in the monopoly, and for this reason—there never is a man behind the counter. They’re all women. If they were men we could make up to them, get round them and talk, but a woman’s a different matter. They used to have men, but they found the women more reliable.

“ Don’t the women drink ? ”

“ Oh no, not at all. Men may drink, but not women. Women can’t drink. They take a glass of vodka and their reason is gone—they become *skonfusny* (a new Russian word for me, but evidently meaning confused ; however did the peasants find it !). Only public women drink, and they drink in the towns. It’s not considered decent.”

“ That’s very interesting,” said I. “ Now in England many women drink, and drink heavily, especially in London and the towns. They say English children often are drunk before they are born.”



The peasant blinked his eyes, then suddenly tapped his neck again to signify that he was too drunk to understand.

“The reason why you Russians turn out strong and healthy, generation after generation, though the fathers be nevertheless drunken, is because the women are sober and clean-living. The health of a nation depends more on the mothers than on the fathers.”

The moujik steadily helped himself to vodka, no doubt encouraged by the fact that it was the women that counted. Presently when he noticed my camera, he begged to be photographed. I therefore took a picture of this man, who though tipsy, had explained to me how it is Russians are at the same time healthy and drunken. A friend came in to share with him the day's festivity, and keep green the memory of the “Recovery of the Cows,” and sitting at a samovar together, they were both photographed.

That night also I slept in the ferryman's barn.

My host ought to have been ferrying over the river all day; he was an official ferryman, obliged to ferry anyone who should ask him at any time of the day or night free of charge. For this job he received eight roubles a month (17 shillings) from the Zemstvo, the borough council. He might have found his duties onerous, but that he always let the peasants ferry themselves over.

“Ah!” he said, “but it's bad to be knocked up at two in the morning to take some high official across.”

“I suppose you get something for a drink in these cases,” I hazarded.

“Only sometimes,” he replied. “Often, very grand

people give nothing at all, and one daren't ask them."

Apparently, tips had much to do with the poor man's drinking habits. The vodka he got through these little extras served merely to whet his appetite, and waste the very substance of his living.

The day after the Cow Festival he was very morose, and was oppressed with drunkard's melancholy. He talked to me of his poverty, of the penury of his wife and children, of his own wicked improvidence, and the like. He planned various ways in which he might do nothing, and receive in return a substantial wage from me. He would show me the pope's house, "if I *ordered* it," would send out for cod, and bid his wife cook it, "if I *ordered* it," and so forth. He hadn't got a halfpenny to spend on himself, and his wife wouldn't give him anything, so there was very little chance for him if he couldn't work me up to pay him something.

I went out to see his brother-in-law, a little freckly man, with bright red hair, nicknamed Ikra, or Caviare, perhaps because of the look of his face; from him I learned that the ferry-man was always getting into trouble through the loss of the ferryboat. About once a month regularly the boat was lost, and people had to be taken across in private boats till someone downstream caught the lost vessel and sent it up by a steam timber tug. Only yesterday three peasants had gone over on their own account, capsized the boat, and lost one of the oars. One day last year, when there had been thirty people on the boat one boy had got pushed off and drowned. There had been a great scandal.

Whilst I was talking with Ikra, a short, thick-set man

with little cocked ears came in ; this was Laika, named after a special breed of dog that is found in Archangel. He proposed that we should go fishing in the evening : the weather was hot and calm, and one might expect a very good catch. I agreed.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ALL-NIGHT FISHING ON THE DWINA

**T**HERE were six of us, four men and two women, all bare-legged, the men with their trousers rolled up well over the knees, the women in short under-petticoats. We sat in a large boat with two sails, and moved merrily over the little waves. On board there were fifty yards of netting, a basket of black bread and pickled cod, a kettle and a pot, two bark boxes to contain the fish, and one or two heavy deerskin jackets to put on if the night should be very cold. The men were idle; the women rowed. I ladled out water now and then, for we leaked badly, and there is nothing more unpleasant than to have one's food or clothes splashed with bilge.

There was a little conversation.

"Why is it so much fish comes up the Dwina this season of the year?"

"A bug drives them."

"If they didn't come up, it would be bad for us."

"God sends the bug to chase them, so that the poor moujik shall not starve."

"That is true. Glory be to Thee, O Lord!"

The women discussed whether the tide was coming in or going out. They agreed that if the tide were still coming in we should catch nothing but "spittles," mean-

ing thereby very little fish or nothing at all. We all hoped that the tide had turned.

By eight o'clock we reached the shore of a Dwina Island, drew in on the sand, and prepared the tackle for our first cast into the depths. The nets, fifty yards long and ten feet wide, were much entangled, and the stone weights attached all along the bottom did not make unravelling the easier. We spent an hour extricating the stones and the corks, and repairing the big rents through which, in their imagination, the women already saw our finest fish leaping. Attached to the four extreme corners of the netting were long ropes—these were the pulling ropes. Ikra's son and Laika took a pair of these, and Ikra and the two women took the loose ready netting on board and rowed out upon the water, throwing out the tackle as fast as we travelled, so that there was a long tail of corks and rope stretching behind us to the shore where the other two held their ends. The women rowed, I helped to throw out the nets.

When we had reached a convenient point we turned the boat and rowed back to the shore, making the floating line of corks and rope into a half circle. Once on the shore we took out our ends of the rope and pulled. Young Ikra and Laika also pulled: one of the women went over to help them. The nets were very heavy and yielded very slowly to our tugging, so heavy that one might have thought they enclosed all the fish of the sea. As a matter of fact, it was the river that resisted us and not the draught. We wound the ropes round our middles and lay back and dragged like captains of a tug-of-war.

Gradually, very gradually, we gained the victory, and approached the other party pulling towards us. We drew in the first strands of netting and then the second and the third, our excitement and expectation increasing as the half circle narrowed in and decreased, and we saw little fishes darting to and fro in the shadowy water.

We watched: but alas, what disappointment! We did not catch a fish larger than our middle fingers. They were all "spittles," and we all agreed that the tide had not turned yet.

It was our lot to repeat this laborious and fruitless performance three times before success attended our efforts. It was at the fourth cast, that our fortune suddenly changed.

As usual we drew in the nets slowly and heavily and approached one another, and then stood hopeful, but ready to be disappointed, watching the finale. On this occasion we saw big fish swimming about, trying to escape the toils, and one of the men could not contain himself, but rushed into the water and tried to secure one in advance; the consequence was a sudden splash and a jump, and a lively pike had leaped out of the trap back into the river. "Oh, oh, a three pound, a four pound fish, come back, come back!" we cried out and brought young Ikra back.

With a one, two, three, we landed the heavy sack of the net with its complement of mud and weeds and shells and splashing slithering fish.

A glorious sight presented itself—three large white gwineads all together, and half a dozen fair-sized fish emmeshed, half escaped but caught, then a bushel of

perch and dace and flounders. We all smiled and felt pleased.

By eleven o'clock when the sky was steeped in the first red of sunset, we had already cast the net six times and were content with the result. Two of the party went off to look at the bushes to see whether the wild black currants were ripening, and the rest of us sat round on the sand and ate bread and fish. Whilst sitting so, about twenty wild horses came tramping over the sand, and stared at us curiously; then when I tried to stalk them, galloped off pell-mell.

The river was perfectly tranquil: the yellow beach burned to crimson from the low rays of the sun. The Dwina villages slept, there was scarcely a craft to be seen on the river, and we seemed utterly alone in the world.

We began to feel cold and proposed to go in search of the others when suddenly they appeared, declaring there were no berries this year, nothing at all. We had better keep to fish; we should do nothing gathering fruit.

That meant that we set to work again. When we had filled our baskets we would light a bonfire, and make tea and warm ourselves.

Fortune remained with us—God allowed the fish to be caught, as one moujik put it—and we did well. We brought in much jack, many muddy flat fish, then a fat salmony-looking fish of which I know not the name, and at least a score of gwineads over a foot long. Ever and anon a big fish would jump and escape. We always swore that those which escaped were three times the size of those we caught.

We arranged the baskets, putting the large fish in one

and the little ones in the other. There was a cunning jack that was squirming its tail and snapping its jaws like an alligator. I offered him a little fish and he bit it in two.

At one in the morning the deep band of sunset still glowed in the north and west. The waters of the river drowned crimson with purple and the sands were becoming brown again as the dusk settled down. Soon it would be dawn.

At three it was cold, and we finished our fishing and built a brushwood bonfire on the beach. It crackled, smoked and flamed, scorched our bare legs, but warmed not our bodies. Yet the tea was good.

The sky was full of the prediction of morning, and whilst we sat warming ourselves at the fire, the great heat-bringer himself was rising to our service. The last red of sunset seemed to have vanished, and the two twilights were mingled. We went down to put our tackle aboard. Then came a wonderful period—the lighting up of the dawn, when the sun rose over the black forest changing all the pine tops to fire embroidery. The vision was splendid, and we stopped winding up the net at the water edge on the crisp wet sand, and looked to the east and to the light beams. Between the tree horizon and the zenith was a bed of roses.

On the river a tug was racing south with a message from Archangel. Morning had begun. And the night's fishing had ended. Very, very cold, we finished our work with a rush, got into the boat, and with all hands-to, rowed away.

Away home! We were all half asleep; my eyelids weighed pounds; we all kept out of time rowing



and splashed terribly. There was no breeze for our sails.

. . . . .  
At six in the morning I was sleeping in my barn again, and the last thought I took into the land of dreams was "fish for dinner to-morrow."

## CHAPTER XX

### THE LAME MUSICIAN-TRAMP

**A** PEASANT ferried me to the other side of the river. He asked me where I was going and I replied "To Pinyega, then to Cee." I offered him ten copecks for his trouble but he waved his hand and said, "You are going to Cee ; go into the monastery there and buy me a candle, and light it before the Ikon of Nicholas the Wonder-worker."

He landed me on a wide and desolate stretch of sand. Cart tracks a foot deep showed the way to places of habitation, and I followed them, trudging heavily through the deep loose dust and gravel. I came to a clump of trees and discovered the regular post-road to the town of Kholmagora. I sat down on a bank to consider whether I should take the road, or try my luck along the Dwina shore.

There seemed to be no one about, but whilst I was looking at a map of the province up comes a funny looking lame man with a concertina under his arm, asks where I am going, and evidently has no intention of leaving me now that he has found a companion.

He decided me ; he knew a path along the river shore, and I gave up the idea of going to Kholmagora by the straight way. The musician, though he dragged one leg as if it were hanging on by a string, was quite a fast walker.

He was a short, one-eyed man of fair complexion, but dirty face. His other eye had been destroyed in a factory accident, when he was a boy. " 'Twas a German factory," he said, " and that's all I know about Germans. They expect you to work hard. They say to me it's salvation when a factory comes, everyone has money. But I lost my eye in a factory, and then I took to the road. All the way from Khersonsky Government to Archangel I've tramped and never starved, often in prison, but always merry! "

We were a funny couple going along this desert shore—myself and this one-eyed tramp musician. I, unusually tall and broad, with an immense bundle on my back, and he, little and lame with no baggage, but always fingering and thrumming on the rusty concertina between his hands.

He went on. " A German overseer said to me, ' I don't believe in beggars, travelling musicians and the like, they ought to be working, to be making something.' That's the German way. They use men to make goods. They don't think of making men. All the same, they made a musician of me. It's three years since I left home now, three years from village to village, town to town, thousands of miles, countryman."

" There's plague in Kherson now; aren't you afraid to go back? "

" There's always plague there; my grandfather died of it."

" Why is that? I should have thought it would disappear."

" It can't disappear. Even if nobody suffers from it, it is there all the time, looking at us with envious eyes.

God keeps it back, God lets it go ; that is the way always. The same with the cholera."

"Are many sick of the cholera now ?" I asked.

"None in the North," he replied, "that is because there are no Jews there, and God is pleased. But at Chukh-Cherema they thought they had found the cholera fiend, *Kholershtchik*. There was a man, a picture-maker, who came over, a nicely dressed young man, the like the people had never seen before, and he had a box of tubes which he said were colours, and a drunken moujik spread the news in the village that he was the cholera fiend, and had brought cholera powders and was sprinkling them all round the village. A mob of Ziriani came down and threw the young man and all his things into the Dwina. If anyone thinks I'm a devil I show them my baptism cross. How about you ?"

I couldn't prove I wasn't a devil, and hoped I mightn't be called upon to do so.

We came opposite to the village of Chukh-Cherema, where the deed of violence had been done, and we rowed across to it in an old woman's boat which was lent to us on our side. The village is chiefly remarkable for a beautiful wooden church surmounted by nine little domes. It was a peasant-built and peasant-adorned chapel—the cupolas representing the nine orders of angels, I am told. There was nothing in the aspect of the people to suggest that they were different from other villagers I had seen, or that they were capable of such an absurdity as my companion had recounted.

We did not stay there, however, but passed on to Rovdina, and the village where the poet Lomonosof was born, now called Lomonosofsky.



TO THE  
HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

“It’s merry on the road,” said I.

“Always merry, countryman,” he replied, and struck up a lively air on the concertina.

“Where do you take most money?” I asked. “In towns or in the villages?”

“In the towns. Sometimes in a beerhouse, as much as two roubles fifty in a night. The landlord likes it,” he says, “Come to-morrow; come next festival day.” He lets me sleep in the shop and I make much money. I have been at Solovetzky Monastery and played to the pilgrims, and I picked up hundreds of copecks. It’s the poor men that keep us poor men alive—often in large towns I have played to beggars, and they have paid me.”

“And the police?” I said. “Don’t they trouble you?”

“Oh yes, sometimes. They always think that I am something else besides a musician; they search me for leaflets and foreign books, lay traps for me, dress up like moujiks and try to pump me. But I haven’t any secrets.”

“Up here there are lots of Old Believers,” he continued, “just as there are lots of Baptists. Perhaps they disguise themselves. There was a musician I met, a balalaika player, who went about blaspheming the Ikons and the Church; he had been everywhere; a cunning one, but the police’ll catch him. I put them on his track.”

“What of him!” said I. “Was he a revolutionary?”

“No, he was a Baptist. He taught people to read, and gave away Bibles. He told me all about the Baptists; a very nice folk, like the Jews. He said he had converted whole villages in his time, pope and all, but that I don’t believe. What would they do with the Church?”

I asked him if he had ever thought of changing his religion, but he shook his head violently. Nonconformity had evidently never tempted him.

We came to a village called Rovdina, on the Dwina shore, a collection of hamlets like Liavlia. It was evidently a place of rich peasants; the houses were all large and clean, and were even ornamented without by dabs of red paint over the windows—and paint is a great luxury. In front of some of the houses were old carved porticos. We stopped at one dwelling, being bidden in for music, and my companion's instrument procured a meal for both of us. It was taken for granted that I also was a tramping musician, that I danced or sang, or had some sort of instrument. So after much persuasion I sang "Rule Britannia!" and translated it for the edification of the company. "Britons never shall be slaves" was a pleasing sentiment.

"Sing Ta-ra-ra-boom," said my companion.

"What?" I asked.

"Ta-ra-ra-boom, the English song; I heard it in Odessa."

So I sang the only version I knew—

"I called on Gladstone one fine day  
And found him chopping trees away,  
Says I, Mr Gladstone, pray  
What d'you think of our Home Rule lay,  
Ta-ra-ra-boom de ay"—

which the moujiks did not understand at all. "Gledstone the friend of the Armenians I have also seen," said the musician.

"What, you saw Gladstone?"



“ No, the Armenians ; also in Odessa, and in Rostof, very like Jews.”

We left Rovdina and went on to Lomonosofskaya, of about two hundred inhabitants, a very peaceful place. The wooden ploughs were at work turning up the fields for the sowing of the winter rye. Men and women were at work in the hay fields, and a number of home-made carts rolled lazily over the long log road of the village. A bright new church, looking none the worse for its newness, stood out like a guarantee for the religion of the village, and as if God were pleased with “ his faithful slaves,” the full-eared barley seemed to be waving itself to ripeness before the eyes. In the barley, bright blue cornflowers shone like stars, and along the hemp-tied village railings were banks of red willow herb, a blaze of colour.

We sat down on a log by the church, and munched black bread, looking all the time beyond the village to a long stretch of sand half a mile broad, that ran parallel with the village—yellow, unscored, silent, morose. Across the sand lay a strip of stagnant river, and beyond sand, river and forest, over the tree tops, the pale dome of a church poking up into the leaden, many-clouded sky.

The village, the birthplace of one of the greatest Russian poets, Lomonosof, was itself beautiful, and reminded me very forcibly of Ecclefechan. But there were scenes here more charming to the eye than could be witnessed in the Dumfriesshire hamlet, the peasant women for instance, coming in from their toil, clad mostly in scarlet, and with old wooden rakes and forks over their shoulders.

Whilst looking on that sight I saw another which

most English people would say discounted the charm of the former ; a beggar girl in brown rags begging from house to house and tapping on the windows with a stick so that old crusts of black bread might be thrown out to her. But the beggar belongs to the Russian harmony.

Outside the village we came to an unfinished hay rick, and as the night was warm, we scooped out places for ourselves and lay and slept even more comfortably than on feather beds.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE ABORIGINES OF THE TUNDRAS

**N**EXT morning we walked in to Kholmagora over a desert of sand and marsh, eventually ferrying ourselves across the Dwina once more. Kholmagora was once an important town, and English firms had shops there, but now for the last hundred years it has been dwindling away. Its ruin has been caused by the prosperity of Archangel, for the sister town, being a more suitable port, has taken all its traffic. Once all ships used to come up the Dwina to the ancient city, but now no ship whatever comes, and the merchants and the tradesmen have gone away, and all their wooden dwellings have been pulled down. All that is left to-day is one dirty, crooked street, and two or three cathedrals in a field. The time may come when it will completely efface itself and cease to exist. Already there is scarcely a shop or an inn, there is not even a barber—a town without a barber!

This was a city without a barber, and even three times a city, since it had three cathedrals. "Into what pit, from what height fall'n."

"How is life in Kholmagora?" I asked a peasant.

"Bad," he replied. "It never was worse. We don't sow enough grain, and so have to buy, and buy very dear. Then all the forest is cleared round about and

only saplings left. We have to go far away for timber work, and so the moujiks leave. They like to be near the place where the timber felling is going on."

"What do you do for a living?" I asked.

"I farm, keep cows, fish, make the roads, boil pitch—" He waved his hand to signify he did everything, and then added, "and am poor."

So much for the trade of Kholmagora—once a capital of Russia, but now a slum without a West-end. It is still famous throughout the Empire for its breed of cows, and most people are ignorant of the fact that its name is that of a town, and not of a cow.

Kholmagora has not only three cathedrals but also several small churches, all in a state of disrepair, but not considered any the more interesting on that account. My musician acquaintance stayed to pray, and as our roads diverged at this point I left him. He was going forward on the St Petersburg highway, and I, taking the post-road to the townlet of Pinyega.

I went forward to the village of Mategor, through the wilderness of thinned forest and sandy waste, and there took the cross road to Ust-Pinyega, the village at the mouth of the Pinyega river.

At Ust-Pinyega, though the night was cold and wet, I slept out once more, and this time on a bench at the wooden landing-stage by the river-side. There was a jolly company there, some twenty or thirty moujiks who intended to sleep the night under boats on the sand; they were all aboriginal peasants, not Russians, but Ziriani, and of such a bad reputation that no one, except he be of their own kith and kin, will shelter them for the night. They had been engaged on some job at the mouth

of the Pinyega River, and were waiting for a boat to take them to their home villages.

I met a man who had known Pereplotchikof, when the latter was painting the village church the year before, and he engaged me in a very serious conversation on the religion of the English people, wanting to know what feasts we kept and what saints we honoured. He supposed we must be Christians, though not of their sort, but he evidently regarded us with some doubt as to our salvation. I drew him off to talk about the campers on the sands.

“They are Ziriani,” he whispered, “not men, but muck.” He waved his hand and shrugged his shoulders to show in what small esteem he held these gentry. “We won’t have them in our houses, they are beasts,” he urged. “They get drunk, and then go mad. The Government wanted to sell them drink, and then, later on, it was afraid to sell it them. What do you think? We used to take them into our houses, and they would bring in vodka, and stamp, and sing the whole right through. Or they would pretend to go to sleep, and then in the middle of the night get up and offend our women, or make love to them and smash the furniture, and throw our samovars out at the windows. They are devils. You know there isn’t any vodka shop here now.”

“What! Isn’t there?”

“No. There used to be, but we petitioned the Government to shut it up.”

“And they actually shut it up?”

“Yes, but not at once. At first they paid no attention. You know the shop closes at four in the afternoon. Well, one evening, after it was closed, the Ziriani came up from

the river with axes and broke it open, and took away every bottle of vodka there was. The Government sent down police and soldiers, but they didn't do any good, because the Ziriani live in inaccessible marshes, in villages many of which aren't marked in the Government maps, and therefore are not supposed to exist. The people are all like one another, and none of us could identify them. Besides that, very few have got passports, and none of them have any surnames at all. The police arrested some of them and some of us as well, but it didn't do any good. The Ziriani broke into the public house again, and there was cudgel-fighting all up and down our street. It was impossible for us to go to pray in the evening, impossible for the women to go to the wash-houses to wash themselves—they even broke into the baths, and there were disgraceful scenes. We petitioned the Government again."

"Would it be very bad for you if the vodka shop were closed?" I asked.

"Yes, and also no. We don't want vodka, though we like it. We drink it because it's near, and we can't resist it."

"And the shop was closed up?"

"Yes, this time. They saw they weren't gaining anything by it, so they shut it up."

"What then, did the Ziriani become sober?"

"No. They sent people up the river for vodka, and they were worse than ever. Russians are drunken, Samoyedes are drunken, but put a drunken Russian beside one of these, and you would call him sober at once."

"One night they made a ring round the church, and shouted and yelled and insulted the passers-by,

one of them trying to kiss Medvedka's wife—Medvedka's my brother. They broke into the shop and stole provisions. Then, later, they lay about the street in the mud. You know the proverb, "A drunken Ziriani cannot get along even on all-fours."

How is it they are so peaceful to-night ? "

"They are afraid now. One day last autumn there was a battle. We had a council, and in the evening, after we held the council, all the men came out with guns and axes and cudgels, and we beat them out of the village. We drove them down past the church, over the sand into the river, and we should have drowned them all if the police had not come up and attacked both of us."

"What happened ? "

"Oh, we won ; and the Ziriani haven't played us any tricks since, though of course the police tapped a lot of money in bribes afterwards."

"Were any of them killed ? "

"Oh no, none. It takes a lot to kill them. They live in the open air all the year round, and even sleep in the snow in the winter."

"But they have houses ? "

"Oh yes, what you can call houses, but they get drunk so often, and then fall down asleep where they are, that they've got used to it. They're beasts, not men. I've seen their women lying flat in the deep autumn mud, and wallowing and bawling, and not able to get up. Russians are dirty sometimes, but Ziriani —" He again waved his hand in despair.

"Why, when the vodka shop was open, they seemed to prefer to climb in through the windows to going by

the open door ; that's the sort of people they are. . . . If you're going to sleep here, be careful they don't come and harm you. You'd much better come to the village."

" Oh no," I said. I'm not afraid ; I prefer to stay."

" As you will," said my companion. " But I wouldn't stay and must be going, so God be with you ! "

He went away, and I was left on my bench on the landing-pier, and I stared across at the strange party of savages sitting on the sand by the side of the overturned boats. The night had got to dusk, and their six pine fires burned crimson against the dark sand. They were having an orgie, and there were bursts of uproarious singing. I could not help remembering Alaric, and wondering if these had anything in common with the ancient Goths.

Ust-Pinyega is a prosperous-looking village. It has three or four small shops, and most of its houses are three-storeyed. As in all the other Dwina villages, dairy farming is a most successful industry. The butter factories not only purchase the cream from the villagers, but give them a certain amount of settled work. The Kholmagora cows yield a plentiful supply of milk, and the factories turn out an enormous quantity of butter. In Ust-Pinyega shops, it was possible to buy the neat machine-wrapped pounds and half pounds, turned out by the works, and better butter one could not find anywhere in Russia. A great quantity of this butter comes at last to the English breakfast table, and though personally, I have never objected to eating the butter, it is worth while noting that there is an extraordinary number of tuberculous cows in this region, and I very much doubt



whether Russian sanitary authorities are either strict or honest.

The tramp, of course, has not much need of butter. It is one of the things he can "do without." But I bought a quarter of a pound here, and besides that, half a dozen hard-boiled eggs and some white bread. These I took to one of the houses, asked for a samovar and made myself tea. So I made my meal, the forerunner of a long series of meals, the dullest I have ever known.

The eggs were rosy-coloured inside, and suggested to my mind that the shopkeeper had kept them fresh just as long as he dared, and had then boiled them for economy's sake, which struck me as a very sharp way of increasing the life of an egg.

I poured out my tea, sat by the samovar and wrote letters. I had slept badly, and felt very slack. The weather was hot and damp, and a warm south-east wind blew in one's face like sickly breath. Something in the air, or in my health, made me look forward very pessimistically. I felt disgusted with plans, with Russian villages, with literature.

The day was a church festival, and the male population of the village was "spread very loose on the strand." I watched them parading up and down the village street. About twenty girls were playing rounders; they had a cloth ball, and they struck it with their hands.

I did not feel like tramping, and therefore borrowed a boat and rowed myself down the Dwina to Chukh-Cherema once more, and looked again at the beautiful old church with its nine domes; each little dome resembled a candle. The nine were huddled together,

and appeared like a stealthy eye looking out of the hidden, half-sleeping past. Whilst I was there a terrific storm came up, and the sky was filled with a multitude of little clouds, pressing against one another, as in Pereplotchikof's picture. I tried to understand what the painter intended when he depicted this "war of good and evil clouds." But whilst I was looking at the sky, a hurricane blew up from the south, and great drops of rain splashed on my face. I drew the boat up on the beach and went into a shelter. I chose a solitary windmill, and climbed its rickety stairway up to a level with the sails. There was a seat on the gallery, where the sacks of grain stood waiting to be ground, and I sat down there and overlooked the Dwina and the storm. It lasted two hours, during which time the wind changed from a gentle *obyednik* (S.E.) to a biting *polunotchnik* (N), and there was rain and hail and snow—snow even in July! The south was brown as mud, and the north slate blue, and though broad day, it was as dusk as midnight. The rain that first fell was the densest I have ever seen, and I was thankful to be in shelter, albeit in a dangerous place. The lilac-coloured lightning was amazing, suffusing the whole sky like the sudden ignition of an immense quantity of powder.

As the south-east wind changed to north, the sky cleared somewhat, and as the rain gave way to hail and sleet, I felt my lost energy renewed in me, and I looked forward to the southern horizon again with hope and expectancy.

In the afternoon, when the sleet had ceased, and only the cruel north wind blew under the black, troubled sky, I thought of returning to Ust-Pinyega, but the Dwina

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



*Pereplotchikof*

A THUNDERSTORM ON THE DWINA



was stormy, and I did what was probably much better than rowing—got a seat on one of the floating timber islands being tugged up stream. My boat was taken in tow, and I walked gingerly to and fro on the floating, bobbing pine logs, and felt like Huckleberry Finn on his raft.

Away in the west, over the forest, stood a patch of dreadful sunset, pawing forward towards us like some dreadful tiger. It seemed marvellously angry, a thing of wonder and of awe, standing beyond the black forests. That evening, at Ust-Pinyega, it was still there, and I marched up and down the sands wondering at it, and repeating with new feeling—

“Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Framed thy fearful symmetry?”

About eleven o'clock at night a little steamboat arrived at the landing-stage, and all the Ziriani left their boat encampment on the sands and gathered round the captain to haggle as to a price of a passage for the party. When I understood that the boat was going up the Pinyega river, I ran to the house where my camera and knapsack were resting, and prepared to accompany the savages.

When I came back, the Ziriani were swarming over the side of the vessel, and still yelling and shouting prices at the top of their voices. The captain had said he would take the thirty of them for twenty roubles, but when I came back he was offering to do it for nine. The Ziriani said, “No, eight-fifty”; the captain ordered them

all off the vessel and threatened to throw them into the river. The Ziriani still yelled "Eight-fifty," so I came to the rescue and offered fifty copecks for my passage, thus bringing the total up to nine roubles, and the captain agreed.

Nevertheless it was not till long after midnight that the vessel started. I went downstairs, and finding a warm place near the engine, slept there awhile on a wooden form. After we left Ust-Pinyega I took a turn above, and then returned and slept again, and so on for hours. The Ziriani, very drunken, were lying higgledy-piggledy on the floor, on the stairs, on the forms. Some of them looked like corpses as one stepped over them. Some had even climbed up on the hot panels above the engine room and fallen asleep there. Three or four of the less inebriate were continually strolling about, their heads scraping the low ceiling. They were in red and black chequered flannelette shirts, broad belts, baggy cotton trousers and jack boots—three-storied men. They sang and shouted and drank without end. Four men on a form next mine sang church music for hours, laboriously correcting one another when mistakes were made. The music was chiefly that of the burial service, which being very sweet and melancholy is extremely popular in Russia. When afterwards they gave up singing, it was to talk politics, wild harum-scarum stuff about the Governor's new order. The Governor had made a ukase as to the preservation of forests, that moujiks who stole the Crown wood, or who set fire to it, would be severely dealt with. When one drunken fellow noticed that I was listening, he asked if I were a detective.

Every now and then I slept, and every now and then realised how uncomfortable I was, and I went more frequently above deck as the sun rose, and the morning became warmer. The Pinyega is a dreamy river, not broad like the Dwina, but like a placid pond, and its many reeds and lilies are still and unmoved upon the surface of the stream. The river is so narrow, one could often throw a stone across it, and on each bank is forest, forest and again forest, forest without end. This is the land of the tundra, the most dangerous region in Europe. The river goes northward to Pinyega, and then turns south again. But at Pinyega one is already further north than at Archangel itself, and in an altogether bleaker and stranger region. North of Pinyega, and east of it is trackless forest and bog. Only the Ziriani, the Samoyedes and other aborigines live there—one must except the hopeless townlet of Mesen, on the river Mesen, where another band of unhappy revolutionaries is cooped up. So remote is Mesen that sometimes a whole winter passes without one delivery of the post. The Government sends revolutionaries there if they misbehave themselves in better places.

The little steamer struggled up stream, and gradually the scenery changed. The forests began to climb up steep banks, and presently appeared a whole series of white cliffs, stretching almost the whole way to Pinyega. The Dwina cliffs are of clay, but the Pinyega cliffs of marble. Marble cliffs! Idle Russians talk of them in Moscow, as they do of the naphtha of *Solvichegodsk*. "Ah! if Russia were only developed," they say, "we should all be rich!" But the Russian infinitely prefers dreaming of doing, to doing itself. I did not look at the

marble covetously, but rather as at something extremely beautiful, a redeeming feature in the monotony of pine and birch.

A strange sight here are the subterranean rivers which gush out of caverns in the marble and pour into the Pinyega. Some of them flow fifty or sixty miles or more under the accumulation of a thousand years' leaf mould. They are rivers that have lost themselves under ground, and have eventually worked a passage through the rock. Up some of these rivers it is possible to row a boat underground, and one finds a tunnel much more extensive than the opening would have suggested. There are even great dark lakes in immense white marble basins, all underground.

Indeed I heard a very strange story at a place called Soila. I had landed there with a party of Ziriani, for I wanted to see the country. I went into a cottage, and after asking for the samovar, entered into conversation with the owner. He told me of a moujik who had been cutting timber in the wood, and had been swallowed up in the tundra. A party were cutting virgin forest, when suddenly Steoppa slipped and cried, and sank out of sight before the eyes of his comrades. It happened so quickly that there was not time to save him. They all gave him up as dead. He was prayed for in church—for there was danger of his soul being lost since he was not buried in consecrated ground. But he wasn't dead after all. What was the surprise of the villagers when he turned up at his own funeral feast! He had fallen through the bog into the bed of an underground stream, and had fumbled his way in the darkness right along its course till it emerged into God's air once more.



I heard another story of the tundra. There are many settlements of Ziriani between Pinyega and Mesen—Mesen, by the way, is called the capital of the tundras—many settlements that are swamp-engirdled, and consequently cut off from outside intercourse all the summer; just as there are several roads over the quaking tundras themselves in winter. I heard of several villages where the Ziriani lived like Hereward on the marsh of Ely. One of these near Pinyega is without name, unmarked on Government maps, untaxed, just because the Russian surveyor did his work in the summer and couldn't get across to it.

Last winter had been an extraordinarily mild one, and passing to and fro from this tundra village had been somewhat perilous in the months of March and April. There were many very adventurous rides during the thaw period. The solid earth itself bent and waved like rotten ice on the last day of a frost.

One family started out too late, and with many a bound and splash accomplished half the journey to the remote village and then found themselves too late; the road was water.

Too late! And to go back was almost as difficult as to go on—

“So far advanced from either shore,  
Returning were as difficult as go o'er.”

They chose to go back, and made a desperate struggle through the slush and mud a whole afternoon. Evening came on and found them still very far from the village from which they had started. Then by good fortune the night was frosty, and they won their way back.

So it turned out that they could not get back home the whole summer, but the amusing thing was that these people were not legally recognised as existent. They had no passports. They hadn't even any surnames, the father being known as "White Whiskers" and the mother as Kulka. The eldest son ought apparently to have been serving in the army. Add to all that, the priest questioned them as to their religion and pronounced them pagans!

Some official addressed them in this way—

"Who are you?"

"We are White-Whiskers and Kulka and family."

"That is nothing."

"That is all, your Excellency."

"But that is nothing. You don't exist. You only seem. You aren't."

The official grinned, and then turning to his clerk, said, "Write down his name as Bielliusoff (*i.e.* son of White-Whiskers), and the village Bielliusoffsky (*i.e.* White-Whiskers village).

## CHAPTER XXII

### SURNAMES IN THE MAKING

**T**HE peasants of the North are all known by their nicknames rather than by their families, just as streets in Archangel are named one name by the authorities, but called something entirely different by the populace. Wherever the peasants are illiterate there is small obedience to the printed word.

Some years ago, when the census was taken, several thousands of people were brought into the official fold, registered and made liable to military service. Where the moujik didn't know his family name, the officer put down the nickname, and called that his surname. And if he chanced to have both family name and nickname, the latter was put down in brackets.

All the surnames in Russia are just officialised nicknames. "Beekof" means "son of a bull"; "Pereplotchikof," "son of a bookbinder"; Alexey Sergeitch's surname was Resurrection. I knew a lady at Vladikavkaz called "Transfiguration," and so forth. It is common to nickname a baby after the saint's day on which it happens to be born. Old Admiral Rozhdestvensky, of North Sea fame, was, after all, only Admiral Christmas, Rozhdestvo meaning Christmas. Other people have been nicknamed after some facial or personal characteristic. One of Tolstoy's ancestors was a fat man. "Kuropatkin" means "partridge." Metchnikof is descended from some

sword maker, and "Pobiedonostsef" means "son of the victorious." A common surname in the North is Karbasnikof, which means literally "son of a bargee."

In Archangel Province, almost without exception, a moujik is known by a nickname and not by a surname. He is called by the name of his occupation, by facial peculiarity, or by some special trait in his character, and to my mind this is very "live" and real, and much truer than a surname.

Civilisation has killed many things, and one of these is the nickname. I could not but realise all the distance between our ancestors and ourselves whilst I was among these primitive people. Their blood is every bit as good as ours, only they are many centuries behind. They are near the earth; we are near the sky: they in the deep, dark soil, we on the arid mountain heights. If we go on progressing, the time may come when we drop even our surnames and adopt numbers like the New York streets, and Mr Brown and Mr Jones be known as B2924 and J3213, or the like.

The Russian peasant has no inclination towards mathematical terms, or cyphers or official labels. Even the winds he calls "the dinner wind," or "midnight wind" to suit his fancy. The days of the year he does not reckon by numbers and months, and there is many a peasant who could not tell you the difference between January and June. He knows the fast days and the festival days, and every day in the year has its pet name.

"When did you have a procession last?" I ask one.

"Second week of Peter's fast," he replies.

Or "When do you cut hay?"

"St Peter and Paul or Ilya the Prophet," he answers.

In Archangel it was quite difficult to find one's way about : all the streets being nicknamed, and known by the nicknames. It was no use asking even the gendarme unless you knew the popular designations—and this, although the official name is printed at every street corner as in England. For gendarmes can't read. Why, the councillors of Mesen sign their names with crosses !

On the landing stage at Soila there was a message from England, a sheaf of scythe blades all marked "made in Birmingham," the cheapest, poorest scythe blades imaginable, but nevertheless English. No one was in charge of the blades ; they had just been left as the trains in London leave the evening newspapers.

These were in readiness for the feast of Ilya the prophet. Each had a ring and tube into which to fit a wooden handle, and for some time past the peasants had been busy hewing handles, for evidently no handle ever lasts two years in succession. Presently, altogether, on one day, man, woman, and child would be out in the hay field.

I left Soila, still going northward, and proceeded through the moss-grown forest to the handsome monastery of Krasnogorsk, set high up on a cliff over the river, and thence came in a boat to the townlet of Pinyega.

It was another town without a barber, without an inn, without street lamps or water supply, without pavements, and like Kholmagora it made up for its deficiencies by a multitude of churches. I walked three times the whole length of it, wondering where I should find a lodging for the night. At last I made a bold bid, for I felt rather shy, and went into a house, and asked where I was likely to find shelter.

I was, as ever, fortunate. A woman came out and said :  
“ Perhaps you could stay here if you do not smoke.  
Do you smoke ? ”

“ No,” I replied.

“ But you smell of smoke ? ”

“ Oh no, I don't. I haven't been near a person who  
smokes for three weeks.”

“ Then you can stay with us if you like.”

I had come to the house of an Old Believer. The Old Believers count smoking a deadly sin, as they do all the other new habits which have come from the West. I was taken to a beautiful room, spotlessly clean, with polished varnished floors, and a bed with white linen—far too white and clean for a poor vagabond like myself. But my untidiness and unshavenness did not count with them. Perhaps the fact that I had let my beard grow may have been a recommendation, for the Old Believer considers cutting the hair a sin also.

I took off my knapsack and cloak, and made myself comfortable. From the next room came the scent of incense and a low-sounding chanting. My host and his family were at prayers.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### MY HOST THE OLD BELIEVER

I GOT up next day at noon, but heaven knows what time I went to bed. It seemed a bright sunny evening, the time the cows come home, but I remember waking some hours after I had gone to bed, and it seemed quite bright and sunny still. Pinyega is a lighter place than Liavlia.

My host was the most obliging fellow in the world. He was simply dying to come in and talk to me, and I saw him once or twice peering through the door to see if I had wakened. But he wouldn't disturb my sleep.

At last, when I shook off laziness, in came the burnished samovar, and new scones and cakes with butter. Evidently the Old Believer lived well.

I felt very fit and fresh, and quite ready for any meal that might be provided. Though twelve noon, there was a sense of glorious early morning in the air. The bright sun shone from a perfectly clear sky, a sun that seems quite near, for Pinyega feels like the roof of the world. It seemed like a glorious Easter morning, and my mind incessantly showed me pictures of cathedral columns and altar lilies. Such is the power of the sense of association—someone had burned incense in my room before I had awakened.

Whilst I was having tea, the Old Believer himself came

in and asked me all the stock questions—"Who was I?" "Whence? On what business? etc., etc. In turn I found out all his affairs. He was a foreman of a timber gang, a very thoughtful and clever man though a moujik. But first picture him. He was about six feet high, forty inches round the chest and fifty round the waist. Sixty years of age, his face and head all hair, and not a grey line in it all; eyebrows long, whiskers high up, encroaching on the cheek bone, and a beard coming down to the last button of his jacket. Under the jacket was a bright blue Russian shirt, of course not tucked into his trousers as an English shirt would be, but hanging loosely about two or three inches below the waist.

Whenever I see the rich peasant wearing his shirt so, like a poor peasant, I think of those words of Kipling, "The Russian is a delightful person till he tucks in his shirt." When he tucks it in and takes his stand as a western European, he is extremely difficult to deal with.

My moujik belonged to the former category. Prosperity had not spoiled him. The Old Believer is difficult to spoil: he is the conservative of conservatives. He mistrusts all new things, and his one aim in life is to keep himself and Russia marking time at the date of 1670. He belongs to the time of Alexis, and half thinks Peter the Great, who hankered after the West and introduced smoking, may have been the Antichrist.

Good sensible Old Believers! I myself am one of them in many ways, believing heartily in the old and hoping little in the new, and thoroughly opposed to the unnecessary habits of civilisation.

"What do you do then?" I asked Zikof, for that was his name.



"I am a master over moujiks," he replied. "We go into the forest with axes and fell timber. The wood is a long way from Pinyega, and we roll the logs down to the river.

"How far do you roll them?"

"About two versts."

"You need a traction engine."

"A what?"

"A locomotive."

"No, no. Horses are better than machines. We have lines of logs placed lengthwise like railway lines all the whole way of the two versts. It is slow, but we are going to make a water way."

"How will you do that?"

"There is an underground river which empties itself into the Pinyega. It ought to be dug out. Several times I have mentioned it to the agent, but they won't pay the men wages for doing it, so the work isn't done. The agents are foolish. Every year they mark a new stretch of forest to be cut down, and they never plant anything new. Whole woods are moving away down the Dwina River to Archangel and England. God took a thousand years to build the wood, and they take a month to cut it down."

"But won't the forest spring up again?"

"No, because young trees need the shelter of old ones. They ought not to have taken all the great old pines; they ought to have left some to shelter the nurseries inside. But now the cold wind comes every winter, and it has killed even the young trees that were growing up before we cut the old fathers down."

"Then it ought to be cleared and tilled."

“ Ought to be, but it’s bad land for tilling, and doesn’t belong to the peasant anyway. Then it’s very boggy. We often have accidents. It will all become tundra in time, grey and moss-grown to the White Sea. Even now the earth is salt with the water of the White Sea.”

“ How is that ? ” I asked.

He replied that the White Sea flowed under the forests, and was continually dissolving the soil and the rock. A most astonishing reply ! But the man went on.

“ I can take you to a cave if you like, and show you an underground lake where you can go for ever and ever in the darkness, and if you are not drowned, you will come to the shore of the White Sea, two hundred miles away. The water never freezes, it is salt as the sea and has regular tides.”

I said I should like to go, and without more ado he went out into the yard and ordered his cart to be put to, and we drove off together to see the wonder of Pinyega.

As we went along, he pointed to the desolate north and said—

“ Out there is the tundra, beyond the trees it is worse. But Samoyedes and Lopari live there and farm reindeer. They grow grass, but even their hay rots. There is a filthy yellow ooze that comes bubbling out of the swamp, full of iron they say. A man came and took samples last year and baked it in the fire, and told us it was iron. But it’s bad stuff and spoils everything it touches.”

As we got clear of the town and the churches, we came in sight of a long brown cliff that suggested there had been a landslide there at some time. It evidently extended some miles, and was extremely abrupt. There were many caves in it, and I perceived we were approach-

ing the place where the White Sea cavern was to be found. As we came nearer the cliffs, I saw that they were of streaky marble and hardened clay, a strange commingling. Zikof had rights to quarry the marble; he had applied for them five years ago, and the Government had given them without charge. The time was coming when the Government expected a minimum royalty, and Zikof, who had not quarried marble beyond the value of a few letter-weights and tombstones, felt apprehensive. He asked could I show him a way to relinquish his rights. No, I couldn't. "Would he be forced to retain those rights to quarry marble till he died?" Again I couldn't say.

A village boy interrupted, asking us to climb up the cliff and drink the health of the bride and bridegroom at a house above. There was a village wedding on. Zikof sternly refused. But he gave a mysterious message, "Go to Gavril; look whether he's sober. If he's sober ask him to come down, but if he's *piany* (drunk) don't say anything."

The boy came hurrying back with the unsatisfactory answer "*Piany*, drunk." So I missed seeing Gavril.

We came to the cavern; a great irregular hole in the cliff side, and there indeed the clear salt water rippled up as on a shelf of the seashore. The roof was wet, sticky, alummy mud, and the bed was slippery. I took a handful of the water to drink; it was icily cold and bitter as a tonic.

"Narrow here," said Zikof. "But it widens out directly you get inside, and becomes a great lake with high marble walls."

I took off boots and stockings and stepped gingerly

into the stream, took a box of matches and went in. I did not go far before it rapidly became dark, the water became deeper, and the bed broader. I struck a match. All around was shiny clay and grey-green marble, darkness in front and darkness at each side ; only overhead the heavy drops of water glistened on the sticky roof. The atmosphere was damp and cold ; gravelike. I went further and tried to memorise exactly in my mind the way I had come in, for the idea of not finding the entrance was haunting. Presently I stepped on to some softer clay and bethought me of the tundras and paused. I would not take the risk of going any further. I struck match after match and tried to look into the dark beyond. The matches burned very feebly : either it was too damp for them or there was a lack of oxygen.

It was the queerest place I have ever been in, but I saw no high marble walls. I could, however, easily imagine the place full of strange spirits, and I had a peculiar sensation of being buried alive. The blackness was terrible ; the silence and the loneliness awe-inspiring. I listened, listened. I could not hear my companions, could not even hear the far-off drip of water that I almost expected. I had left the world.

As I stood reflecting, and letting the Erebus darkness sink into me, I was suddenly startled by the sound of human voices, a human cry far away, remote. I could not say from what direction it came, and my heart beat with sudden terror. But it was only Zikof and some moujiks who had become frightened at my prolonged stay underground, and had called to see if they could get an answer.

Yes, it was time to go back, and what was more, I felt chilled to the bone. But I was so impressed that I actually forgot I was in Russia, and called out absent-mindedly in English—

“ All right. I’m coming ! ”

And back I went to mundanity.

When I returned to the mouth of the cave, one of the peasants went a capering for joy, and crossed himself ecstatically and praised the Lord. He had evidently thought I was a lost soul. Zikof and the others who had collected, eyed me with expectant curiosity. They were just like Horatio and Marcellus after Hamlet has spoken with the ghost, and when one said, “ What did you see ? ” and another, “ What did you hear ? ” I felt half inclined to reply, “ There’s ne’er a villain dwelling in all Denmark but he’s an arrant knave.” They could not restrain their wonder at my hardihood at going in, and yet, if rumour spoke truth, others had gone before me, and they had even discovered high marble walls. I could not tell them that it was like being buried alive, and that I felt like a corpse become conscious. But they understood that it was strange and dark, and that I had met no devils, so Zikof with a sigh of satisfaction offered to drive me back.

Away we went to Pinyega again. Zikof told me more of the wedding. The bride, he said, had just gone to her father’s grave to weep, and all her maidens had gone with her. He took me to the house of the bridegroom.

The latter, strange to say, was a Little Russian. He had once been banished to Pinyega as a revolutionary ; his term of banishment had expired, and he had chosen

to remain and settle there. Now he was taking a North-country lassie to be his wife, and wedding the North to the South.

A splendid man he was, who reminded me of the uncle of Nicholas, who entertained me in Little Russia. He grasped my hand in a fist of iron, and assured me of the untold pleasure the honour of my visit had done. "The English are splendid," said he. "The Little Russians are the noblest people in the world," I replied.

Glasses were brought and champagne and port wine. Zikof solemnly refused, but I drank the bridegroom's health in both, and then that of the beautiful bride. The Little Russian then ordered coffee to be brought in for Zikof. The latter had glasses of wine before him untouched, and had clinked them in the toasts, and indeed went to the outside edge of his politeness. He even smelt the wine.

When the coffee came in he sipped a very little and left the rest, so that I thought he didn't like it. But when we returned to the cart he told me he only tasted the coffee because Sasha, that is, the Little Russian, was an extraordinary friend of his. Ordinarily he didn't drink coffee.

Along the main street of Pinyega was a procession of girls escorting the bride home, and keening songs to keep the evil spirits away.

Crowds of strange men and women were in the street; people of unusual and remote physiognomy such as one never by any chance sees in England. Broad, ice-tempered faces, dark, shady eyes with triangled eyebrows or soft blue Danish eyes and burning-copper hair. There are unusual races mingled in the North; the Lapp,

the Finn, the Mongol, the Russian, the Viking, the North American Indian perhaps.

There was a big dinner waiting for us at Zikof's. Venison stewed with whortleberries, cranberry pie, porridge. Then my host, who was in an excellent humour, took me to his private room and showed me his ancient Ikons—a dark, mysterious chamber in which the deep greens and blues of old colour just gleamed in the shadowy pictures. Incense permeated the air. I crossed myself respectfully.

These Ikons are hand-painted, and go back before 1670, when the great schism took place. Since then they've had strange adventures.

I was permitted to look at ancient hand-painted and hand-written prayer books, bibles, and volumes of exhortation worth fortunes as curiosities, but now simply the good man's daily ministers. I looked through a dictionary of Hell, a quaint and curious compilation showing the sufferings of the damned, the tortures, the *supplices*. The pages were headed "The punishment of the gluttonous," "The punishment of the lecherous," "The punishment of the covetous," and so forth. The men and women drawn were shown perfectly naked, but without any real differentiation in form. The bodies were rectilinear figures, almost parallelograms; the hips might have been drawn with compasses; the thighs made obtuse angles with the stomachs, the legs were straight. The gluttonous were having their tongues and middles burned. Fiends with red-hot pokers were eternally searing the eyes of the covetous. And so forth—every picture had some instructive lesson.

Another book was a dictionary of Heaven, and it

showed, on the other hand, the pleasures of the virtuous. To my carnal mind it was not half so interesting.

Evidently my host's heaven was all blue, and the fruit trees bore green fruit. Those who couldn't get in might well cry sour grapes! There was an orchestral region round about the Throne, where angels tuned their harps. The apostles seemed all advanced to the rank of chiefs of police, and, under their direction, hosts of gendarme angels flocked to the gates to guard against the approach of the wicked. Some of the virtuous were coming in, and other angels, like waiters, were escorting them to the place of their reward; the pure in heart to the foot of the throne, the merciful to the tree of Mercy, which

“Dropped tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
Their medicinale gum,”

the ruler over five cities to be ruler over ten, and so on *ad infinitum*.

I thought to myself how much I should like to buy such volumes, and inwardly prayed that some day I might meet some more degenerate brother of the Church who would part with his books for a consideration. . . . But do I not deserve the punishment of the covetous?



## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE STORY OF SHANGIN AND DARIA

**Z**IKOF was a friend of Alexander Alexandrovitch Beekof, my hunter acquaintance of Archangel, and had been his right hand in many expeditions in the Pinyega forests. Here also, in the neighbourhood of Pinyega, lived Shangin the Samoyede, also a mighty hunter, but reputed to be a devil. All men who live in the woods like the wild beasts are either devils or wizards.

This Shangin was an extremely interesting character. Beekof had employed him on many hunts, and he told me his story. Zikof added some details.

Long ago he had lived an ordinary life in one of the villages. He plied a trade as carpenter, and had married a Russian peasant girl, with whom, to all appearance, he lived very happily. But there came a sudden end to their happiness, for one day he left home and disappeared altogether. No one could find him, and it was concluded that he had been killed by a wild beast or had been swallowed up in the tundra ; for he was very fond of walking in the unknown woods, and spent a great deal of time trapping.

Shangin had answered to the call of the wild, run away from home, slipped down the river on a timber steamer, and hidden himself in the forest west of the

Dwina between the railway and the river. He was an expert woodsman, knowing his direction without looking at a compass, just as the beasts themselves know. There were not more than six men on the river who could have tracked him in the woods.

He made himself a hut of wattle and moss, and shot wild fowl with a cross-bow, for he was an excellent archer. Each day he cooked his own dinner over a resinous pine bonfire, each night he slept in a depth of skins and moss in his low-built wattle hut.

For some years he lived in this way, either shooting on his own account, or hiring himself out to rich hunters, and far and wide he learned the intricacies of the Archangel forests. He might have become a wealthy man, as wealth goes in these parts, for hunting was more profitable than carpentering. He was always poor, because he had one great failing which wasted his money as fast as he received it—he was a drunkard. After a successful bargain in a village or a town, he would go on a debauch for three days, and when he had not a half-penny left, would return to his hut in the woods. Every now and then he might be seen in one of the Dwina villages coming in with his sack. In the sack would be wolf skins, cat skins, fox skins, hare skins, and men like my furrier host of Bobrovo would give good money for them, even though it was like buying from the devil.

Shangin made a great reputation, and men like Beekof of Archangel viewed him with no prejudice. Many rich hunters knew of him, but his wife did not hear, and had indeed given him up for dead. It was, however, destined that women should play a great part in his life.

One day in the woods, to his amazement, he came face

to face with a woman clad from head to foot in reindeer skins, and also carrying a bow and arrow—a Samoyede woman, red-nosed and drunken as himself, hunting the polecat. She also lived by herself in the woods, and had renounced village life. She was without passport, and gave no account of herself beyond that she was a Petchora Samoyede. Daria was her only name, though the village children called her *Volchitsa*, she-wolf.

Daria was a degenerate Diana, for she allowed Shangin to live with her, and the huntsman abandoned his own hut, and brought his tackle over to her dwelling. They found they suited one another very well: they cooked together, drank vodka and sang together, and hunted the pole-cat. Daria sang the old Samoyede songs, keening in a peculiar chant, and Shangin felt very happy.

It happened away in the great dark forest where the pines stand grim in ranks like giant armies, where the trees, like a fencing between earth and heaven, lift themselves gigantically into the sky, waving their dark crests against the moon itself. Down below, where the great grey boles are squarely planted in the black-brown aged soil, Shangin and Daria lived together like primeval man and woman.

They grew very fond of one another, and as they sat and chanted their Samoyede songs in their wild Asiatic strains, or lay together in deep furs with the winter snow around, they grew daily more indispensable the one to the other. They were faithful comrades, intrepid hunters, recognising one another's gifts, and owing one another life and safety in many a dangerous tussle with the beasts of the wild. Shangin never thought of deserting her, as he did his Russian wife, though it never occurred

to either of them that they were in any way improperly attached.

They lived in this way many years, but at length Death parted them. The end came suddenly, and in this way. Daria had taken the spoils of hunting to the market to dispose of them for money. She always went now because she was stronger-willed than Shangin, and less improvident. On the occasions when he had gone he had generally returned tipsy and penniless. Daria, however, loved her dram, and though she always brought back a plentiful store of bread and vodka, yet she generally spent her shilling at the Monopoly Counter. Vodka was her ruin. . . . On this occasion she sold her skins as usual and then repaired to the public-house, bought spirits, took the bottles outside, sat down on the doorstep and began to drink. One is not allowed to drink inside in Russia. The village children cried names to her—

“ Old Martha ! ”

“ She-wolf ! ”

“ Witch,” and so forth—for it is very unusual to see a woman drinking in the streets.

Daria did not mind, but remained there, crooning her songs gently until the policeman came and stirred her off. Then she stumped away in her huge fur leggings out of the town at sunset, grunting to herself and singing, and soon left human-kind behind her. She came at last to the railway lines of the Great North Railway, running from Vologda to Archangel, and sitting down on one of the sleepers to have another drink, she forgot where she was, and slumbered—slumbered and slept like the foolish virgins. She lay asleep with her head on the



*Beekey*

SHANGIN AND DARJA OVER A DEAD BEAR, HUNTERS WHO LIVED  
TOGETHER IN THE FOREST



metals, and then suddenly, out of the quiet night, the express train came roaring forward, and cut her head off. . . . Which was a rude ending to this romance of the woods.

Shangin came to identify the corpse, and giving the body a kick, averred that it was she, Daria, the passportless, unurnamed, the woman who had lived with him in the forest, hunting polecats, and with no more ado he went away back to the forest hut to resume a bachelor's life. He became more drunken than ever, and now melancholy also possessed him, for he missed Daria badly. He began to feel what she had been to him, and to realise what a good life they had had together. It dawned on him that he loved her. Life was not worth while without her.

For some months he survived in melancholy, and those who met him thought that vodka was turning his brain, for he hunted poorly, and was always grumbling at life.

Returning one night, like Daria, from the market, tipsy with vodka, he sought out the place where his comrade had perished, and laid himself down between the rails. He had resolved to leave this poor world, and follow his beloved to that heaven which God surely reserves for Samoyede hunters. He fell asleep with a peaceful though drunken spirit, and did not wake to change his mind even when the roaring engine with glowing eyes bore ponderously down upon him.

He did not awake, and the engine, with the night mail behind it, rolled over him and passed away. Perhaps he fabricated the noise of the train into some dream of bears and wolves. The express, with its green and

brown waggons, sped on to Archangel, leaving Shangin between the rails unmoved, unharmed. The poor hunter was quite whole, unscratched. Vodka and Fate had conspired against him, for the high train had passed over him without touching him.

When he awakened he scarcely understood what had happened, but he was disappointed. He was troubled in mind moreover, and his good luck or ill-luck, whatever it might be, puzzled him. He returned morosely to the woods. It was necessary to get thoroughly drunk several times before he would get a clearer vision of the affair.

He could not console himself, however, and therefore he returned once more to the railway lines. This time he was sober, and was quite determined not to be cheated out of death. He waited for the approach of the train, and then solemnly knelt down and placed his head across the rails, kissing the ground with his lips like a moujik humbling himself before a sacred picture.

"Come on, come on," he said, as he heard the grinding, puffing engine. It seemed he lived an age in the interim of the approach. Every moment he expected the buffet and the decapitation. The noise came nearer and nearer, and Shangin was not appalled. He did not look up—the noise was thundering as if at his very ear. He was growing impatient, when suddenly the noise stopped and there was utter silence.

Shangin was amazed. Was it death? He put his hand up to feel whether his head was still on his shoulders. It *was* on.

He stood up, defrauded, enraged. What had happened? The train had stopped about ten yards from Shangin. Two guards came up and began to swear at him as a



drunken fool, and he, for his part, stood by deprecatingly, with an expression of offence upon his face. Someone identified him from the train. The guards declared they would send the police from Archangel, and then the train went slowly forward. The guards mounted and Shangin was left alone in the dark cutting between the forests of firs. The shining railway lines seemed to grin at him maliciously. He spat on them, and walked into the woods.

So Daria's spirit remained uncomforted in the other world, and Shangin's uncomforted in this. Evidently it was not intended that he should commit suicide for her sake, and so he gave up his attempts. At least, he has not tried again as yet.

Mr Beekof used to employ both Shangin and Daria on some of his bear hunts, and he avers that they were both extremely sagacious hunters. Shortly after Daria's decease, Shangin's first wife recognised him in Pinyega at the market, but he would have nothing to do with her.

However, when Beekof was going on his last hunt, and he sent for Shangin, he did not come alone, but brought a tattered beggar woman to do service with him in the field.

"What's this?" said Beekof; "married again?"

"Yes," replied Shangin. "It's not good that man should live alone, and I've found this thing. She'll do very well."

"What's her name? Is she a Samoyede?"

"Tanya."

It was a poor Russian woman who had at one time married a soldier. Her husband had never returned from the war, and she was left destitute, and had gone on the

streets to beg. She drank vodka, and had talked with Shangin one evening outside the Monopoly shop, and the Samoyede had taken a fancy to her.

She couldn't hunt, but friends saw to it that she was clothed properly. Shangin teaches her to set traps, to make boots, and knife sheaths of birch bark, and perhaps he will succeed in time in making her a woman of the woods.

As it is, they have gone to live in the forest.

Of such a kind is the life of some in this forgotten corner of Europe. It was a real romance, these two polecat hunters finding one another in the dark woods, sitting together on pine logs, or singing their Samoyedish songs. And it all happened whilst we Westerners were doing all manner of ordinary things, riding on omnibuses, reading newspapers, and so forth. It is what we should never forget : that there are such persons and such lives away behind us in the back woods, that there are darkneses quite unlit by the lamps of civilisation.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE STORY OF OOTCHI

**T**HE samoyedes are not all poor savages like Shangin. There are many who are rich and respected, of large estate and family, and they live on the Petchora River, or in villages on the desolate tundras of Murman, and wear long silk gowns. The one hundred population of Nova Zemlya is mostly of Samoyedes.

They are much the same to-day as they have been since the dawn of history in Europe. They have a traditional literature, handed down, not in books but in minds, grandfather telling to father, and father to son through the centuries. And their religion, the story of the beginning of the world and of the gods, and the God who was greater than all other gods, is still told and chanted in the lonely villages of the North.

I heard one of their traditional stories. Picture the scene where it was told, the stone on which the Samoyede was sitting, the deep wilted moss about, the pines brooding over him, and the lowering, leaden sky above all.—The Samoyede stares at the ground and enunciates gruffly—

“Obey your parents, or harm will overtake you.”

“Once in Nova Zemlya, a rich man had a son who longed to go a-hunting. But the father himself did not hunt, being a man of great riches, and other people

hunted for him and brought him food and skins.”—The Samoyedes do not hunt for pleasure : their sport is nothing if not utilitarian in its object.—“ The father said, ‘ No, the sons of rich men do not hunt. If thou needest skins, my son, bid a servant join the hunt for thee. It would not be seemly for my son to go.’

“ The son received the answer and was contented for a while, but again he grew aweary and yearned to go out to shoot the bear. And the father remonstrated again. Then a third time the son grew aweary, and this time he did not tell his father, but, instead, took down his strong bow, and took his arrows and his boots and his furs, and left his father’s home and set out far across the frozen sea to shoot the white bear. And the name of the son who so disobeyed his father was Ootchi.

“ It happened in the spring time when the warm winds come, and none would accompany the young man because of the dangerous season of the year. For when the land wind blows, then the ice round the coasts begins to thaw, and the icebergs are broken off from the frozen seas.

“ Suddenly in front of Ootchi a white bear appeared, strong and cunning and swift on its legs, and it sped away before him a great distance. And Ootchi longed to kill it, and he thought, ‘ I will kill the bear, this one bear, and bring it to my father’s house and make merry, and go no more a-hunting.’ And far away on the margin of the ocean, where the blue waves were rolling beside the ice, he overtook the bear and slew it, and he was very proud. ‘ Behold, now have I slain the White bear,’ he said, ‘ the king of the forests.’ And with his foot on the carcase he sang a song of triumph.

“ But in the middle of his song he paused and remem-

bered the saying, 'Obey your parents, or harm will overtake you,' and he was filled with terror, for at that moment he had suddenly felt on his face the warm mountain breeze from home, and he understood his peril.

"Before him was the sea, green and blue, and rippling as far as eye could see, and he could see it gaining on the ice, dissolving it, breaking it, floating it. 'What will happen,' said Ootchi, 'if I find myself on an island of ice? I shall perish far from my home, far from my father's house, on the cruel ice by the cruel sea.'

"Ootchi forgot the bear, and retraced his footsteps on the snow. But he was too late. Wherever he ran he found the fresh flowing sea cutting him off from the land. Indeed, he could not even see the land of his home, for the great island of ice had parted company with the shore and floated away to the east. He looked over the wide green sea, and could not see even a strip of land at the furthest limit of his eyes.

"His heart sank in despair, but presently hope came again when he thought he might perhaps float somewhere to land, and he reflected that he had the bear, and could live on its flesh till the chance came round. He returned and skinned the bear, and rolled its carcass to the centre of the island, and then lay down in the skin and folded his furs over him and slept.

"But the chance that he expected never came to Ootchi. Day after day passed upon his island, and the spring suns hotted to summer, and the ice grew less and less. There came the nightless days of June, when the sun neither rose nor set, and still it grew hotter, and the great ice-island melted away. Ootchi had eaten the bear, its flesh, its fat, and even part of its skin. 'If I do not starve

I shall drown,' said Ootchi. 'And if I do not drown I shall starve.'

"But one morning, soon after this, when his island had melted to twelve yards square, he met with a strange deliverance. He was lying in his furs sleeping, when suddenly he felt in the ice under him, a tremendous convulsion, as one might feel on land when the earth quakes. Ootchi looked up and saw a great green iceberg threatening to overturn the island. Already the surface was tipping, and it seemed that in but a few minutes he would be turned into the sea. But Ootchi ran up the slippery slope and sprang on to the iceberg and saved himself.

"Two days upon the iceberg he floated, faint with hunger, and almost without hope, but on the third day he suddenly descried land about two miles away, and gladness filled him utterly.

"Great gladness, to which was added greater, for at the reddening of the sky in the evening, his berg came slowly to the shore, and he deemed that he was once more near his father's home. 'I will go home,' he said, 'and never more go a-roaming.' Ah! he knew now how good a thing home was.

"But alas for the hope, alas for Ootchi, he was far from his father's home. He clambered up a high beach to a cliff, and saw around him unmelted snow, and he knew he was far, far to the north. He looked around, and descried no home or house of any kind, only on the horizon a black band of forest. Then, when hope had nigh departed again, chance plucked despair away. Down at his feet he saw the faint track of a pair of skis in the snow. 'These,' said he, 'are the signs of men,' and he followed the signs.

When he had gone far, and further than far as the saying is, he came upon a woman sitting in a clearing in the snow, boiling a pot over a wood fire. This made glad the heart of Ootchi, and he felt that he would now rather eat, even than find his father's home.

“When he had eaten, then the woman told him he was far from his home, very far in the North-west of Siberia. The woman said she would show him the way if he would give her fifty reindeer, but he must wait till the winter when the sea froze again. For it was necessary to cross the sea. ‘It is not fifty that I will give thee, but five hundred,’ said Ootchi, ‘for my father holds me dearer even than five thousand.’

“So it happened that the woman took him home at the beginning of the winter in a sleigh drawn by twelve reindeer, and she herself sat in front and drove them. Ootchi lay behind in furs, and dreamed how good it would be once more to see his home and clasp his father in his arms again.

“Ootchi's dream was a dream of truth, for Ootchi found his home again and his father. His father had searched for him, and hundreds of Samoyedes had searched, and all had said that Ootchi was drowned. Father and son shed tears on one another, and kissed, and Ootchi knows the meaning of the wisdom, ‘Obey your parents, or harm will overtake you.’ The old folk are wiser than the young, and whilst they live we should obey them. When they are dead, we shall already have become old.”

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE EXILES OF PINYEGA

**A**T Pinyega, as at Archangel and Liavlia, there were banished revolutionaries. I had an introduction to them from Alexey Sergeitch, and on the morrow after my expedition with Zikof, I sent in a letter to their quarters, and received invitation to come to tea. Alexey Sergeitch had asked them to show me the interesting things in Pinyega, but of course they had not one-tenth of the knowledge of Zikof, and Samoyedes and moujiks had little interest for them. They belonged to the Russian cities, and life in the country was tedium beyond words.

A fine-looking body they were, harder, more intellectual, more tried than the exiles of Liavlia. They had all suffered much in the cause of Liberalism, and were all dangerous to the Government. Pinyega is a remote unpleasant town to be cooped up in for five years. With the exception of Mesen, it has the hardest winter of any of the Northern townlets. It is bleak, inhospitable, wind-swept. Only those are sent to Pinyega, who are thought to be more dangerous and hardy. I found them much the bitterest men and women I had met in Russia. On their faces were the lines of long pent-up, frustrate hate, and of unspeakable ennui. I could not help feeling as I sat at table with them, that in the future they would



all be engaged in acts of assassination and violence. They needed to express their hate and get rid of it. In their eyes was the unfulfilled vengeance, the offspring of some fearful human pity. Such hate came not out of mere politics such as we know in England, it came out of intense human sympathy with the suffering, the flogged, the tortured. The brutality of police has been the seed of anarchy.

They are all full of kindness towards the moujiks, nevertheless, and do many deeds of charity, and the native population think them good men and women suffering unjustly. In particular there is a doctor there of great reputation. He has spent eighteen years in the fortress of Schlüsselburg, and has such a reputation for medicine that when the governor of Archangel was ill, he would not be attended by his own doctor, but actually preferred to send for his prisoner. This doctor is now an old man, probably of great intellectual power, though of course it is difficult for a young man to judge at once of an old man's powers. His face reminded me of Carlyle's description of Dante "the gentle affection as of a child, but all congealed into sharp contradiction . . . affection all converted into indignation; an implacable indignation."

They looked at me hostilely, even suspiciously when I entered, and had evidently not the slightest friendliness towards England . . . perfidious Albion. I was called upon as usual to explain the "Liberal" policy of Sir Edward Grey, and found it difficult. All I could explain was that English Liberals wouldn't have a war at any cost, and that we were mortally afraid even of the despicable army of Russia. The women present,

as at Liavlia, spoke with utter contempt of English sympathy.

The talk turned to the capture of the trawler *Onward Ho* in the White Sea, and one of them explained the attitude of the Government in this way—

“ You think they are jealous of their fishing rights, and no doubt they are, but first and foremost their action is political. They don't want English and Swedish ships coming close to the land, because it gives us a chance to get away abroad, unobserved. Often the Swedes have landed on desolate shores, and no one has disturbed them, and parties of exiles have got away by bribing the captain. The marine police seized the *Onward Ho* for an example. They want to enforce a twelve-mile limit instead of the three, and enforce it they will, for they own the whole Northern coast of Asia, and no one has any business near in to the shore.”

Then another who had heard of the *Onward Ho* incident asked eagerly did I think there might be a war. The revolutionaries all dearly hope for a European war so that they may attack the Government whilst she is harassed by international strife. Vain hope, I should say, unless Russia herself makes the war.

I told them I thought the day of the revolutionaries was over, and then one of them agreed, adding—

“ That is why so many of us are committing suicide. Unless we gain the victory, the world is not worth living in, and we had rather we hadn't been born. Some of the cases of assassination recently, where the revolutionaries gave themselves up, were merely acts of suicide. When the cause is lost, kill some black-hundreder official and get hanged, that's my motto.”



A STREET SCENE AT PINYEGA : A FUNERAL



“But now capital punishment has ceased,” said the old doctor. “Have you heard of the murder at Kem on the White Sea? It is a most interesting story:—

“In one family in the South of Russia, father, mother and sons had all been executed for participation in bomb outrages. There was a girl of twelve left, and a high official took charge of her, sending her under guardianship, to the far-away town of Kem. She was sent to school, dressed like a princess, and delicately housed and fed, and from time to time the official, her protector, came to see her, and the two passed the time very amiably together. When she was seventeen, the official bought a house for her and furnished it, and she left school and went to live there. He came to see her often and she entertained him.

“A motive for this kindness was shortly to be seen. He asked her to marry him. She refused, and his behaviour took a totally new aspect, for he then offered to settle a large sum of money on her if she would live with him. Again she refused, and he then pointed out that she was entirely in his power. The simple girl was terribly afraid, but she had sense to ask for time to consider the money offer. He gave her three days in which to make up her mind.

“She went in distress to some acquaintances, two young students who had been banished as we are. They seemed much wrought by the story, and after consulting apart, they told her not to fear, they would deal with the gentleman. And they waylaid the official in the forest and murdered him with knives. Most heroic, noble men . . . and they expected to be hanged. But instead,

they were sentenced, one to three years penal servitude, and the other to five . . . strange galling mildness."

I forget how the conversation went after this, but I remember they were finding fault with my mode of life. They could not understand what pleasure I found in tramping from one tedious village to another. I said I had a constant inward happiness, but they urged that the deepest thing in every man was sorrow. Apropos of this, one of them told a charming story from Anatole France. I give it as I remember it.

A Persian Emperor bade his historian prepare a history of mankind, omitting nothing, and the historian worked with assistants for twenty years, and then with a train of camels brought many thousands of volumes and presented them. The Emperor bade him abridge the work, as he had not time to read so much. After another twenty years the historian returned with fewer camels and hundreds of volumes, and again had to abridge. "Go back and cut it short," said the Emperor, and the historian reduced his history to ten volumes. But even then the monarch found it too long. Finally the historian brought one stout volume to the death-bed of the Emperor, and it was too late to read even that. The monarch was sad, for he had longed to read how men lived and thought upon the world, and all his life he had looked forward to reading the book. But a counsellor standing by, comforted him, and taking the book out of his hands said, "Sire, I can abridge the work still further, so that you may learn even in so short a time, that which all the thousands of volumes contained. Sire, you wished to know how men have lived upon this world—it is in one

sentence—'They were born, they suffered, and they died.'"

I flatly disagreed with the moral of the story, but the next week when I was limping along with blistered feet through Archangel forests, I felt it singularly true, and I said to myself, "I was born, I suffer, and I shall die."

## CHAPTER XXVII

“ TO A DISTANT MONASTERY DID I TRAMP ”

**N**EXT day I left Pinyega. Zikof would take no money in exchange for his hospitality, and he bade me come to him should I ever be in Pinyega again. With much blessing I departed, and returned to Ust Pinyega, there to resume my southward journey. And now to everyone who asked me whither I was going, I replied, “ I am going to Cee ”; Cee being the next important place upon my route. This was well understood by the peasants, because at Cee there is a monastery, and as I had a staff in my hand, and an immense pack upon my back, they took me for a pilgrim. Indeed if any moujik asked me why I was going to Cee, I replied very simply, “ I am going there to pray.” Someone said to me at Ust Pinyega “ You are going to pray, of course ” and I replied “ of course.” I realised it would be very awkward to be going to Cee for any other reason than to pray. So I concluded I must pray there,—I shall pray there, and I will buy a candle for the ferryman of Koskova, and light it before the altar of Nicholas the Wonder-worker.

The first time I said I was going to pray, I felt rather awkward. It was to a Solovetsky pilgrim going the



way opposite to mine; he gave me a long blessing, and I couldn't think of any fit blessing to give in return. I didn't even venture on “Glory be to Thee, O Lord!” or “Oh Lord, have mercy,” and I crossed myself in the Roman style instead of the Greek. I reflected that I stood a chance of being mistaken for the Devil if I behaved so strangely.

How blithely the road stretches out when the feet are not weary! My first day after the Pinyega rest was one of rollicking gladness. The sun shone, the fresh breeze blew, the dry sandy road responded to the touch of one's foot. I reflected that there were idle months before me, and that it didn't matter where I stayed or where I got to, or when I did anything at all. If I wanted to sit an hour by the wayside, two hours, an afternoon, a day, there was nothing in my conscience that urged me otherwise.

I idled hours this day, sitting on logs in the forest, and cutting slips of birch bark, and drawing holy pictures on them, then pinning them on tree trunks, no doubt laying the foundation of miracles. I gave that up and made myself a dozen visiting cards also of birch bark; there is something very fascinating about the feeling of a fountain pen writing on bark, and the cards looked very artistic.

But idle as I would, I yet accomplished a good number of versts, and passed many grey wooden villages, and in the evening came to a place called Great Torva. Outside this settlement I slept in a field of new-cut hay. I gathered an immense quantity of hay, and built it all together till it looked as if I were preparing my own funeral pyre. I jumped gently on the top and sank

quickly out of sight. "How well we human beasts contrive!" I thought. And there I slept with the odour of new hay tickling all my senses.

Next morning it was too cold for pleasure. The wind had changed to the north, and there were clouds in the sky. I started up and hurried along the road as if I had the most important business in the world at the next village. As if one could by any chance have important business in Copatchevo! No, I wanted to get up some blood-warmth.

Copatchevo, like many other villages, is of old, unvarnished wood, and of the same colour as the clouds, so that when the weather is overcast, one comes upon it in surprise, the eye not distinguishing it at first from the leaden clouds above. This morning it looked what the Russians call *surovy*, stern, or what I call chilly. It looked as if some wood spirit had sucked away every tinge of live colour out of its street, drab, dull, skim-milk coloured. I was going to have tea there at one of the houses, but not being in the mood for talking with moujiks, I made myself a little fire, and heated milk in a little pot that I had brought from Pinyega, and I made a breakfast of hot milk, black bread and sugar.

Hardly had I finished when the sun came out, and then, turning my back resolutely against the village I had left, I looked toward the woods. It was true: a spirit had stolen the colours. And in the forest I saw all the colours in hiding.

Was it the hot milk, or the sun that brought my good spirits back again. Perhaps it was the sight of wild flowers on my path. For now once more I saw the wild rose, rich and crimson above the tangles, and in a field

were abundance of ox-eye daisies, yellow rattray and buttercups, a reminder of the Caucasus, and of a valley I know there which outshines that most wonderful picture of flowers "June in the Austrian Tyrol." Now for the first time I saw on the road the gem-like "Grass of Parnassus," pure, glistening white stars.

The road led through fields of ripening corn, then across a long grassy sward by the side of the fresh foaming Dwina. Near the hamlet of Novinka I stopped at an interesting chapel. It was wholly peasant made, four walls of pine logs, made wind-proof with moss, and a log roof made with uneven logs as a child might build. The inside of the chapel was no more than a solid axe-carved cross from floor to roof, and in front of the cross a bench and one candle-holder.

After Novinka there were woods to Nadeikho, a space of ten miles without villages or house of any kind, and then after Nadeikho, woods again,—a not over safe country for the lonely pilgrim. Before a cross in the forest I saw a man kneeling in prayer. Long black shiny curls hung down his back, and I took him to be a priest, but as it turned out he was only a gipsy. He got up whilst I was passing, and seeing me, asked if I would like to be led to the gipsy camp.

I hadn't very much inclination, for in Russia, gipsy is often little more than a euphemism for robber. However, I agreed.

"How do you gipsies live?" I asked.

"By exchanging horses, *barin*."

That is a stock answer; a very convenient occupation for horse thieves, this exchanging horses!

"How else do you live?" I asked.

“ By plaiting and basket making, and begging for the love of God,” was his reply.

The begging “ for the love of God ” is, I am sure, the most substantial source of income. They are hardened, shameless beggars, and play the begging game throughout the length and breadth of charitable Russia with brutal cynicism ; hardened and shameless, because they are richer than the moujiks they solicit, and because if begging does not succeed, they are quite ready to steal, should occasion offer. Work of any regular order is almost unknown to them, and they are forever in their moving carts. I have seen them careering along with five horses, a five in hand, with three behind and two in front. They are of the sort that visited England some years ago, causing great perplexity to Essex officials. In Russia the police are on very friendly terms with them, which of course is no recommendation. They have passports, they belong to the Orthodox Church, and are buried in Christian soil

My guide quickly brought me to them. There were about a score of men and women seated on logs outside three tents, in a clearing of the wood. Multitudinous ponies scampered about, and boys rushed at them and whistled and yelled—it was the time for catching them all and tying them up for the night. A huge bonfire was sending up volumes of smoke, and when I came, one of the men threw on three or four logs, causing a cloud of sparks to fly up.

I made myself on friendly terms at once, for I was feeling very diffident. I took their photographs. This delighted them immensely, and in exchange, they stood round the fire, men and women alike, and sang wild glees.

Such a sight they were, the men all with long hair and wearing the most ridiculously baggy trousers. I think they must have been made by the women.

They were an interesting gang, some of them swarthy southerners, with the most lawless eyes on earth, and others cunning and cowardly-looking moujiks who for some reason or other had taken to the woods. How they stared whilst they sang! Their eyes are more open than other people's eyes. After the glees came solos and choruses, and they took it in turn to do step dances before me. It was a very gay scene in this clearing of the dark firs.

After the music there was tea, and I disbursed a few coppers to save the children beggars from being beaten on my account. I resisted an invitation to stay the night, and returned to the road, and hurried forward to the village of Cansovo.

At Cansovo I found hospitality in a one-room cottage where, after supper, a mattress was spread on the floor for me. Three women, three men and two children slept also on the floor, whilst another child was on a shelf over the oven, and a baby slept in an axe-carved hammock-cradle suspended from the roof. It was strange, undressing in the presence of the whole family, but evidently they thought nothing of it beyond a respectful curiosity in the English cut of my undergarments. Presently they also undressed, men and women alike unperturbed. The baby cried much in the night, and the cradle groaned as the mother rocked it. But I slept well, for my limbs were weary.

In the morning when I was having my tea at the samovar, an aged pilgrim came in and asked to share

breakfast with me. I agreed readily, as I was by myself, the other people having gone to the fields. This pilgrim drank eighteen cups of tea!

"Pour it out weak, brother" he kept on saying in a husky old voice. "I don't like it thick. I am an old man, *batushka*."

He drank four to my one, and every now and then turned his cup upside down on his saucer to signify he had finished. I persuaded him each time to have more. He took a lump of my sugar and broke it into eight parts—I always carried my own tea and sugar in my knapsack—and he put an eighth of a lump in each cup. These pilgrims learn to be economical on their travels.

"How long have you been upon the road, *batushka*?" I asked.

"Fifteen years," he replied "winter and summer, from monastery to monastery. Glory be to Thee, O God!"

"When are you going home?"

"I have no home. I'm an old man. No one wants me. I shall just go on—Glory be to Thee, O God!"

In saying this he stood up, bowed to the Ikons and crossed himself for thanks, and then, blessing me, departed. I did not go with him, for after all it was only five o'clock and I wanted to tend a blister on my heel.

After an hour's early morning leisure, I found out my hostess and asked how much I had to pay her. "Two boilings," she said, "five copecks each." She proposed to charge only for the samovars, but I had had about a quart of milk and a pound of bread so I gave her twenty copecks, whereupon she was very effusive indeed.

After walking five miles to Veliky Dvor, I put down



*Perpetchikof*

THE VILLAGE OF UST-PINYEKA





my pack and cloak at a peasant's house, and went for a day's picnic on the river Oboksha, a beautiful dark stream flowing deep down, below high forested banks. Here the pines are gigantic, and their trunks look like a fencing between earth and heaven. Here the ant heaps are higher than a man's head, and the bushes are laden with wild black-currants.

I came upon a mill in the forest, and there I found an old man and drank sweet rye beer with him out of heavy pewter tumblers.

"You think the river beautiful," said he. "You ought to see it in the spring, then it is more beautiful, all in flood, and choke-full of the timber that has been waiting all the winter to float down to Archangel and be cut into planks. Now the water has all run away. But in the winter, the frost stops its mouth up. Then the snow comes down and down and down, and covers up everything. But in the spring the snow melts and thousands of streams rush from the forest so that the little river floods and comes up, so high." He pointed. "You see where all the tree roots are showing, so high."

In the afternoon the old man walked back with me to Veliky Dvor. It rained, and a mist was over the Dwina, hiding the landscape and softening the long black band of forest to a gentle shadow. The ungathered hay lay rotting and spoiling, and in the barley fields there was havoc of green and yellow where the wind had been playing. In Veliky Dvor the water dripped from the mildewed cottages.

My new Khosaika possessed many old garments of very curious pattern which I was anxious to see. She had promised to dress up in them for my benefit. So

when I returned I was not surprised to see a heap of bright clothes on the kitchen table. "My great grandmother made them" said the woman "so you can think how old-fashioned they are, *kak oni staro-modny.*"

The garments were all of rough home-spun linen embroidered over with silks and ornamented with tinsel. The Khosaika very solemnly put them on before me. First she brought out a white skirt from the bottom of an old chest. This was faced with fine linen, the neck and sleeves being snowy white, whilst the rest was the usual rough brown homespun.

She put this on first, having laid aside her everyday cotton blouse. She then put on an embroidered skirt of port wine colour and this was held up by straps over the shoulders, and was cut like a little girl's petticoat. She then put on a vest of the same material. It was shaped like a man's waistcoat, and allowed the white linen sleeves of the shirt to be seen with great effect, whilst at the same time it covered up all the rough parts of the linen. She then put a red and gold, spangling cape on her shoulders, and a round hat like a smoking cap on her head. Round the hat she tied a bright kerchief.

Then she was complete, and with trills of half-suppressed giggles, she sat down to tea. I must say she looked very well, and the costume was superb.

"Why don't you wear it now?" I asked.

"It's old-fashioned, *batushka*" was all the answer I could get.

It seemed to me there must be some deeper, more psychical reason than this, for although Russians clothe themselves in bright colours, they never achieve anything so fine as this nowadays.

"Why do you keep them?" I asked again.

"Perhaps the fashion may come round again," she replied.

I smiled at the pathetic hope, and thought to myself it would be a long day before that fashion arose once more.

I slept that night on straw. Next morning I passed on to Rakulsky, where the moujiks have spoiled an old-fashioned church by trying to bring it up to date. It was still wet, and I should be pictured paddling along a sloppy road through a narrow river valley. I overtook a party of women with bare legs and bark boots on their feet, tramping through the mud. I came to a place called Tchasovenskaya, and there made a meal of tea and *shenishky*, country scones made with sour milk. Opposite me, on the wall of the cottage, was an immense picture of the Holy Trinity sitting at a table covered with a white cloth, apparently waiting for the samovar; an old man on his knees presenting them with a plate of fruit the while. On another wall, Elijah, quite naked, was ascending in the chariot of fire.

"Not many people hereabout," I suggested to my host.

"No," he replied, "it's narrow here; the valley won't support many. Lower, where the forest has been cleared, there are more people."

The valley grew narrower and narrower, and the road undulated over forested downs. All the afternoon it rained, and not a soul did I meet the whole long way. But Cee Monastery was ahead, and it attracted me forward. The more it rained, the more resolutely I marched for-

ward. I am sure no pilgrim ever before walked at such a pace, but after all I was a European in leather boots. The time was to come when my boots would have to be cast aside as useless, and then I should realise the difficulty of walking quickly in bark shoes.

What was my delight when, in a clearing in the wood, I suddenly heard church bells calling for vespers, and knew I was approaching Cee. I looked and saw, far away, the pale gleam of a white tower, and presently, as I came into the village, new-washed moujiks were issuing from the bath-houses. It was Saturday evening, and Sunday was already commencing. The monastery was, however, three versts distant, but I got a seat in a cart, and came in in time for almost the whole of the service. I bought a candle, and placed it before the Ikon of Nicholas the Wonder-worker, as the ferryman had bidden me. I am sure I felt some special grace ought to be born in me as a reward for fulfilling that duty. I had, in a little way, pilgrimaged to the Holy Land, though for me of course the "Holy Land" is always "here, or nowhere."

I received hospitality that night from the monks.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE AGE OF WOOD

“ ‘They tell me your carpenters,’ quoth I to my friend the Russ,  
‘Make a simple hatchet serve as a tool-box serves with us.  
Arm but each man with his axe, ’tis a hammer and saw and plane  
And chisel, and—what know I else? We should imitate in vain  
The mastery wherewithal, by a flourish of just the adze,  
He cleaves, clamps, dovetails in,—no need of our nails and brads,—  
The manageable pine: ’tis said he could shave himself  
With the axe,—so all adroit, now a giant and now an elf,  
Does he work and play at once!’

Quoth my friend the Russ to me,  
‘Ay, that and more upon occasion.’”

BROWNING.

**T**HE road from Cee goes on a two days’ journey to the village of Yemetsk. I had now left the region of the tundra, but was still in the land of marsh and stream, where the man who loses himself in the forest comes upon strange silent lakes unknown of man and unused by him. It is a country not unlike Finland—now familiar to the minds of western tourists.

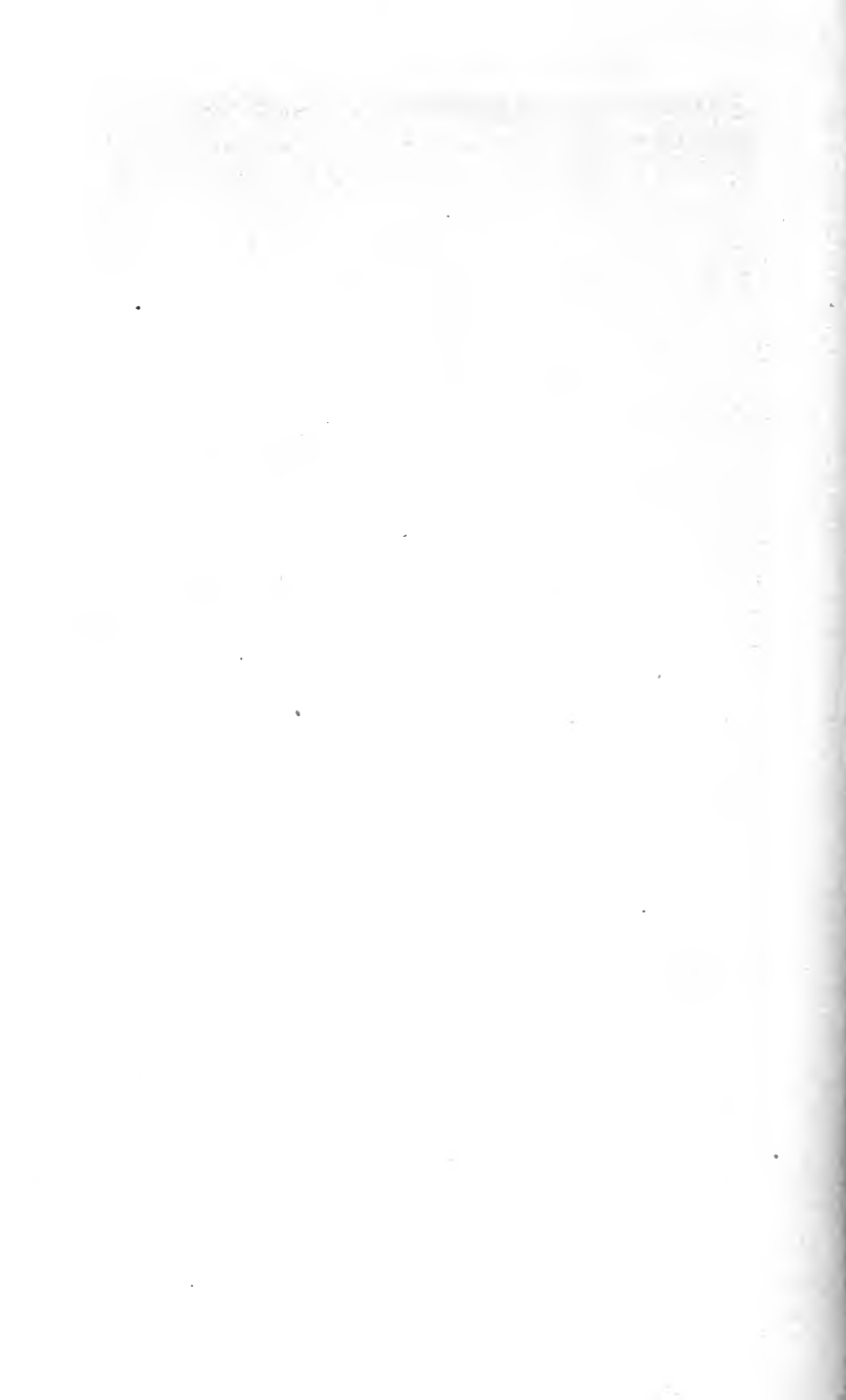
What it lacks in charm it makes up in mystery, for all forests are ghoulish. An impressionable man, walking all day along an endless ruddy forest ride, where the trees almost touch above his head, is constantly filled with terror, expectation, foreboding. For my part, I often fortified myself to expect I know not what—bears, wild men, bogies.

But the peasant who lives there has lived this life of terror, expectation, mystery, for generations. The forests have looked into him. He himself is a forest mystery, a thrall and vassal of the pines. Behind his eyes are endless dark forests.

Consider what the forest is to the moujik. Iron, you must know, and iron-moulded and manufactured commodities are almost unknown in Archangel Province. The moujik's cradle is a pine bole, scooped out like an ancient boat. It hangs with hempen ropes from a springy sapling in his mother's cottage. His coffin is but a larger cradle, a larger, longer pine scooped out, with an axe-hewn plank to cover it, and wooden pegs to nail it down. And between the cradle and the coffin, he lives surrounded by wood. A robust baby, he clammers out of his cradle on to the pine floor, also of grand axe-hewn planks too solid to wear into holes like other poor men's floors. He crawls about till he learns to run from one solid hand-carved chair to another, and at last takes his seat at the table his father made a month before the wedding. He crosses himself to the sacred symbols painted on birch bark. He eats all his meals with a wooden spoon—forks and knives are almost unknown in the forest. He eats off wooden plates, or out of wooden Russian basins. Even the salt-cellar is from the forest, and was plaited by his sister from reeds last year. He gets big enough to go out to the forest with his brothers and sisters, and they take birch-bark baskets and gather mushrooms or *yagodi*—all forest fruits are called *yagodi*, berries. Vania they call him, little Vania, Vashka when he looks a dirty little urchin. See him every day, in muddy little bare legs, hunting in the forest for berries,



A TYPICAL CORNER OF THE WOODEN VILLAGE





or chasing the cows who have gone astray there. He learns to walk nimbly on the uneven, moss-covered ground, and can even run among broken branches and thorns, and leap from one dead tree to another, or swarm up the straight grey-green trunks. He learns to trap rabbits and catch young woodcocks, knows the wolf's paw, the fox paw, the bear paw in the soft soil. The priest teaches him a little in the school about God and the Tsar, and the observances of the Church, and such education suffices for Vania. He is becoming a woodsman, The forest is the best school—but he never remembers how it was he learnt there. He came to know that when the sun set it was evening, and when it rose it was morning. He learned that the foliage of a tree takes shape according to the sunshine it gets and the time of day the sunshine reaches it, and when he is in the dark forest he knows by the shape of a trunk the way out. Every tree is a compass in itself. But so deep and subconscious is this knowledge that he does not look at trees at all. He does not know how he knows. Ask him the way out of the wood, and he will point in this direction or in that, as the case may be. But he would not be able to tell you how it was he knew.

As I said, the forests are behind his eyes as well as in front of them. The forests look into the simple soul, placid as a lake, and draw their own pictures there.

The time comes for Vania to marry, and he had better build himself an izba. It is of pine, and three friends help him to build it, while his father stands by and directs. They have no planes and chisels, saws, squares, joiners' tables and the like. All is wrought by the axe and every joint is axe cut, and every smooth surface axe-hewn.

The walls of the house and of the great stove are panelled. Vania hews out a sleeping shelf for himself and his wife above the oven. He makes unbreakable chairs to sit on and make merry, and a table, and finally, without other tool than his axe, builds a cart to take himself and his bride from the church, and he builds the shafts and the Russian collar arch to which the horse is yoked, all of wood—even the wheels are not faced with iron, and the harness is of wood and leather.

He is married at a forest church, itself forest made, built years ago by his grandfather and other villagers of their day. It is natural-shapen, a reflection in itself of the forest fir. Look at Pereplotchikof's picture opposite, you will see it is itself shaped like a tree—the cross is the topmost twig. It is not harmonious, not symmetrical—no, but then it is eye-measured; no rulers and lines were used in its construction, and not a plane or a saw in cutting the planks. Once Russian architecture was Byzantine, but the moujik has made this of it, he has made an architecture all his own and built thousands of wonderful wooden churches all over North Russia—again, he has looked at it with eyes in which are reflected endless forests.

Vania is wed, and at his father's house are casks of sweet beer and tubs of soaking mushrooms, and great carved bins of meal, and wooden platters full of cakes, and loving cups, and beer tankards—all of wood. Then what rejoicing, what drinking!

The time comes to scoop another cradle out of pine, and find a springy sapling to hang it from, a young fir or a young birch, and it is fastened from the roof.

Human life goes on a stage, and a little baby Vania



*Pereplachukoff*

THE WOODEN CHURCH



peeps into the light of day. There is a little cry, a new cry in the world and the father sees his baby. Little Vania is put in the new cradle, and it is indeed

“Hush a bye baby, on the tree top.”

Father Vania sits by the side and sings wonderingly, as his father long ago sang to him—

“Ba-you, ba-you, ba, ba, ba,  
Ba-you, ba-you, by, by, by.”

The new baby grows and watches his father carving on the floor—

“the Kremlin rare and rich  
He deftly cut and carved on lazy winter nights,  
As to rights  
Piece upon piece, he reared the fabric nigh complete”—

watching him—

“Just in act to drop ’twixt fir-cones,—each a dome,—  
The scooped-out yellow gourd presumably the home  
Of Kolokol the Big; the bell, therein to hitch,  
—An acorn-cup—was ready.”

One night, great grandfather Vania, that is, the father of Vania’s father, comes into the new house and prays to God. Then he tells them that his time is passing. He is an old man. To-morrow he will take a new log and build a coffin for himself, and he will cut a wooden cross to put above his grave. Grandfather Vania makes his coffin and puts it away till it may be necessary. Meanwhile it can hold rye-meal, or if there is little space in the old home, he can make a bed in it and sleep in it o’ nights. The time will come when he will rest there all night and not awaken the next morning. Old grandfather Vania will be dead. Vania’s father and Vania

and other villagers will carry the coffin to the grave, and the old man's body be committed to the ancient pine mould.

Then Vania's father, himself a grandfather, follows in the steps of Man down to the grave, and Vania ripens to his prime, and little Vania grows up and marries. All among the standing trees. Little Vania has a child, and the wheel of human life turns round a quarter-circle. So on, *da capo*.

The trees in the forest are born, grow up, are glorious, are old, are decrepit, fall down and die and sink into the moss and become earth, or perhaps become trees again, springing up in young baby trees. And the forest man likewise grows up, is glorious, becomes old, then decrepit, and he falls and dies and descends into the mossy soil. Much of his body returns to glorify God once more in tree and man.

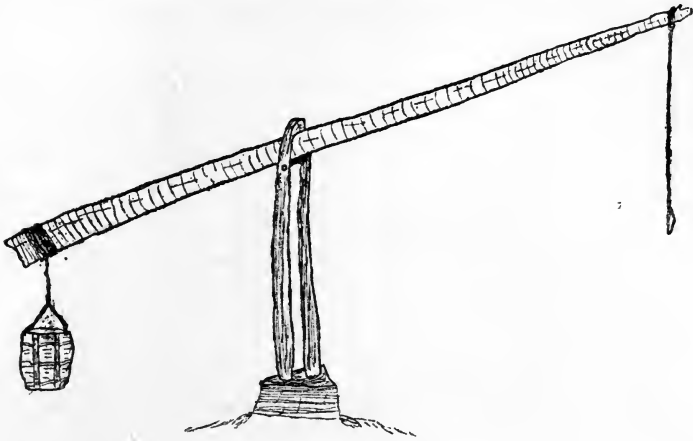
So much, and more, is the forest to the moujik.

I thought much of it along the road, and it seems the moujik is nearer to reality with all his home-made, axe-carved wooden things. He knows the origins of things, knows whence comes his wealth and happiness. God made the forests: God therefore gives him his cradle, his house, his church, his coffin. But when civilisation sends him manufactured goods instead of his own rude homely ones, I fear he will not trace them back to God. Earth is the great hostess of the human race, and the Sun is the host. And, strange to say, the moujiks are the better mannered guests. As for us Westerns, think what liberties we have taken with our hostess!

All I have said will, however, prove inadequate to give

a true idea of the Age of Wood. I ask the reader to imagine the log railings; the long thin trunks tied to uprights with bast. Nails are rareties, and even leather boots are made with wooden brads. The horse-shoe, though of iron, is fixed with wooden nails. The windows hang on leather or rope hinges.

A striking feature of the village is the draw-well;

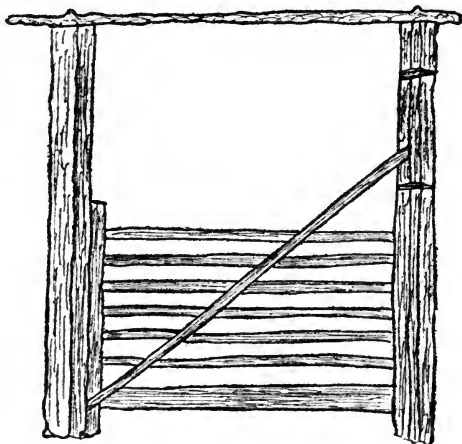


THE VILLAGE DRAW-WELL

it is a long pine trunk balanced on two firm wooden uprights. At one end hangs a wooden bucket, and at the other the pulling rope. The pine trunk is the length of an immense telegraph pole, and it stands out across the village street like the long arm of a crane.

Of course the moujiks could not understand my interest in their wood work, and were much more ready to point to the women's embroidery as something of interest to the stranger, and it was very awkward to sit sketching some common object such as a draw-well or a set of

railings. When I was near Yemetsk I sat on a bank and drew a gate, and a peasant came up and asked me the usual questions. When I told him I was English, he inquired whether there was going to be a war. He looked very solemnly at the gate I was drawing, and concluded that I was a spy making plans of the strategic position. He asked, very cunningly, had I permission



A GATE NEAR YEMETSK

to draw, and evidently wondered if it would be possible to sell me to the police.

Finally, I took out of my pocket a little penny lathe-cut needle cask, such as one can buy at any draper's shop in England, and this set the little man a-capering, so that he forgot all about my treasonable practices. "How was it done? Who did it? Is it your work?" He knew of no axe or knife that could carve so daintily. But it is not in daintiness that the Russian excels.

. . . . .





THE WINDMILLS OF LIARLA



From Yemetsk I got a ride on a pack cart to the settlement of Bereoznik and thence got to the monastery of Krasnoborsk in a pilgrim boat, myself again being taken for a pilgrim. The Dwina now showed white cliffs as at Pinyega. The forests decreased, the river grew narrower and shallower. We had a very lively time, what with the beggars on board, the hawkers, and all the "longen folk." There was an immense amount of music, and I could almost think I heard all the peasant songs of Russia. Some I heard so often that it was soon quite easy for me to sing them. Such a song was the following. I translate it with all its diminutives and endearments.

"On the rivery, the rivery  
On that little shorey,  
Darling Mary was washing  
Her white little feet.  
And over her head  
The grey geese were flying :  
Oh birdies, be careful,  
Don't trouble the water !  
Maroosa is washing  
Her dear little feet."

The lilt of the tune of this little song would win the heart even of one who cared very little for music. All the way from Liavlia I had been singing Kalmeek's song, "Oh, I am a maiden forlorn," but now I had another companion of my way. Maroosa, Maroosenska, as the ecstatic peasant calls his Mary when she is dearest.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THROUGH HARVEST FIELDS TO UST-YUG

**W**E arrived at Krasnoborsk in the early morning, and as this was still in Archangel Province, I hurried on to Kotlass, to cross the border and get into Vologda. I realised I had seen enough of Archangel for the time being. I was tired with tramping and longed to get to a town where I might take relaxation, and live on good things for a while.

But Kotlass was a wretched place, more like a remote Welsh market-town than a place of gaiety. I had been told it was a great agricultural centre, and I expected shops, a theatre, a High Street, lights, people. Instead of which, beyond just a large village, a collection of cottages in a big field.

I slept at the house of an ex-soldier who told me seriously that when he served on the garrison at Grosdny, the Jews ate a soldier every second day of Easter.

“Why ever did you let them do it?” I asked.

“Oh, we were revenged. We paid them back, you can be sure.”

A funny consolation I thought. This was one of the poor ignorant Jew-massacrers and pogrom makers. No doubt in this benighted rural town he sows, year in year out, much hatred of Jews by his absurd story.

Kotlass was too dull : I decided to put off my relaxations till I came to Ust-Yug, a large town on the River Sukhon, seventy versts to the south-east. I wished, moreover, to see what was happening in the province of Vologda.

I shall not easily forget my first morning after leaving Kotlass. My way lay through meadows, over corn-fields and ploughed land. All the country folk were in the fields, cutting and binding the barley. It was a vision of toil, so many bent women grasping the corn and sawing away with rusty sickles, then deftly twisting straw about the sheaves and placing them into stocks.

I had a heavy walk through mud, over rivulets and long, shallow ponds. On one occasion I had to undress and carry my things across shoulder-high, and I came nigh soaking everything even then. My goal was the village Posiegof, about sixty versts from Ust-Yug, and I followed the various directions of the moujiks. Twenty miles cross-country like this is immensely exhilarating. The fields seem never ending. One passes from one acre of toilers to another, one line of girls in red and white cottons to another line, to another line, to another and so on. And as I came up they would stop working and stare, or smile, or greet me, or giggle, or invite me to come and say some nonsense to them. This was another vision of Russia, the land of the corn-grower.

All along my way I had before my eyes the River Sukhon with its high rose-coloured cliffs, a very pleasant landmark after the mud banks of the Dwina. The forest had evidently long since been cleared, and the valley was extremely broad and fertile. Evidently the land supported many people, for I passed thirty or forty

hamlets in the fields—hamlets without roads, a strange anomaly.

At Posiegof, I had bread and milk at a large, dirty cottage, where there was only an old man and an infant. The man was too old and infirm to go to the fields, and the infant too young to be taken, and in the whole village there were no people left, but the too aged and the too young—a parlous condition of affairs, for if one of the houses caught fire, the whole village might be destroyed before the toilers returned ; as indeed did happen at the village of Paolovo, which I reached a month or so later.

From Posiegof, a muddy road goes to the village of Krasavchino, and I was all the afternoon and evening upon it. The day had been cloudy and my mood in harmony with the clouds, but now suddenly I was aware of fresh messenger winds, and looking up to the sky, I saw how the sun was harnessing white horses to all the dark clouds. The breaking up of the leaguer was wonderful. With it I broke into music, and sang any nonsense that came into my head as I marched along the road.

At Liavlia Pereplotchikof had taught me to bark like a dog, and barking and mewing became the most favoured of my accomplishments. This bark I practised all along the road, making Kholmagora bulls stand at bay with horns ready, terrifying the pigs, angering the dogs, and making the cats scurry away—barking with such verisimilitude as to deceive the whole farmyard. Of course I vastly amused the little dirty peasant children, though again I was running the risk of getting mistaken for the devil.

The reader will realise that I didn't go along the road with the solemnity of a village rector, or a blue-book

compiler, and that if I do not chronicle all the tramp's hilarities and absurdities as well as his serious observations and reflections, it is because there is worthier matter to talk about.

I slept the night at Krasavschino, at the house of an old woman who, before she went to bed, knelt before the Ikon and said long prayers aloud, and kissed the floor three times. She wore a long, white night-dress, which was somewhat unusual, for Russians commonly sleep simply in their underclothing. She slept on a mattress on the floor, but having some idea of honouring me, she had put me on a sheepskin spread over two forms. My bed was continually divided against itself, and then the insects in that bed, they were —— !

Next morning the old dame inquired whether I had slept well, and I told her the beetles had troubled me. But she seemed surprised. Evidently beetles didn't trouble her. She was used to them. However, when I proposed to pay her for my night's lodging and breakfast, she shook her head, "Oh no, God gives, not I." So perhaps I was somewhat unkind to criticise the accommodation.

I took the road again, feeling none the worse for not having slept, and I began to reflect on my hospitable treatment. I had a bag full of small change to take me through my tramp, and I had calculated to spend sixpence a day. But up to this point my living had cost me much less than that upon the average.

If one thing has struck me more than another in my Russian wanderings, it has been the unanimous hospitality of the people. It is possible to travel the length and breadth of Russia, and lodge at a different house

each night, and never once be refused food or shelter, though one should not have a farthing in the pocket. Often, as I have recounted, I have met pilgrims who have been tramping holily for years. Such life is far removed from that of the English people, far removed from that of any commercialised people whatsoever.

Freedom, which is so much vaunted is nowadays nothing more or less than *commercial freedom*, the freedom to organise labour, the freedom to build factories, the freedom to import machines, the freedom to work twelve hours a day instead of three, the freedom to be rich.

The Russian peasants are the poorest and most illiterate people in Europe, and withal the least discontented, the most hospitable and the most charitable. Let us see exactly what the Social Democratic Party wish to commit them to.

In the first place, they recognise that the moujik is poor because his labour in the field is all hand labour. He ploughs with the old wooden plough, and he reaps with the sickle and threshes with the flail and the winnowing fan. The Social Democrat says, "Bring in the American agricultural machines, and let the moujik stand a fair chance to earn the wages of the Canadian harvester. The work in the fields could be done by a fifth of the number of peasants; let the other four-fifths whom the machines displace go into the towns, and find work at the factories. There are a hundred million peasants in Russia, but the same harvest could easily be obtained by twenty million if they had machines. To-day each moujik earns twenty pounds a year; then, each of the twenty million would earn a hundred a year and be on a financial level with farmers in other countries."



Meanwhile, how about the eighty million who are to find work in factories! The factories of Russia are not short for labour even as it is.

“It must be the work of evolution, not of revolution,” admits the Social Democrat. Let us hope, in parenthesis, that if it does come, it will be in gradual evolution. “We should bring in at first a few machines, and build a few new factories. We should throw Russia open to commercial development. We should give the people technical and commercial education. We should open up the Crown lands, pacify the Caucasus, take off all restrictions on trade, and build new railways. The result would be that the money of the world would flow into Russia. It is not millions of capital, but milliards that would come in. Russia would be the new America. Not only would work be found for the eighty millions which the machines displaced from the soil, but we should be inviting immigrants to replenish the labour market. Without doubt, Russia has a greater commercial future than any other country in the world.”

Without doubt, and therefore let us pray God to strengthen the hands of the Tsar and of all reactionaries, and continually to replenish them with the old wisdom!

It is sad to think of tyrannical oppression, of young men and women executed or exiled. But think of the danger inherent in the oppressed and in the thoughts of these men and women. Think what they were ready for—

Ready to rush into all the errors of the West, ready to raise up the image of Baal once more, ready to rebuild the slums, ready to give the sweet peasant girls to the streets, ready to build a new Chicago, ready to make London an exemplar of blessedness.

They look towards England. They call our land civilised, not knowing that it long ago ceased to be civilised and became commercialised. "The English are free," said a Pinyega revolutionary to me. "We are still slaves." But we are all slaves. I put the question to him, "Which would you rather be, slave of God or slave of Capital?" But he could not choose because he knew nothing of the latter slavery. I quoted the words of Neitzsche to him with regard to the wedding of democracy and plutocracy—

"Once men played with gold, but now gold plays with men and has enslaved them."

But he could not understand what was meant. He went off to talk of the English Parliament, and the glorious traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race.

"What are those traditions?" I asked. "Just think! Once we were bold yeomen, we became a nation of shop-keepers; now we have become a nation of clerks and shopmen. Even our women have become clerks! Once we were content to live for life itself, for eating and drinking, marrying and bringing up children, now we live for a purpose, for a position in life, for an ambition. And marriage, which was once the significance of our life, has become merely the foundation of our pleasures."

"But soon," he said, "your women will be having the vote." He had smiled incredulously at my declamation, so I fired an answer at him. "In England, we can only vote which road we shall take downhill, but here in Russia you have still the option of rising or falling, or staying where you are."

It is my belief, moreover, that the Russian peasant is peculiarly unsuited for town life. He degenerates

badly, he reveals an extraordinary tendency to criminality and an abominable sensuality.

Ten miles from Ust-Yug there is a great linen factory, and a prosperous village round about it, and I came to the place at the time the employees were filing out for lunch. They were all peasants, just commercialised—one saw at once the loss in tone and character which comes when the toilers on the land go into the factory; the brutality of the men, the loose gait of the women. I met a foreman who spoke English—it was a German factory—and I told him what I thought of the sort of English and American life that Europeans want to bring to Russia. He said something about the evils attendant upon civilisation.

“But,” I said, “Russia *is* civilised. England has been quite civilised for five hundred years. She is becoming commercialised, and commercialisation is decivilisation. What are called the evils of civilisation are the evils of commercialisation.”

“I think I agree with you,” he said “but I am in it. It’s something I’m definitely committed to.”

I left him and went along my way nursing these thoughts, and at the same time rejoicing that it was possible for some of us, though in it, to be not definitely of it, to be in fact out of it, we tramps.

The fields for a mile beyond the factory were covered with a white linen facing, spread out over the grass to bleach in the sun. I presumed it was a stage in the manufacture of linen collars and shirt fronts—heaven’s passports.

. . . . .

In the evening I came into Ust-Yug, a fine town of

many churches and fifteen thousand people. The sun shone brightly and was reflected on the hundred domes of this remote city, and as I climbed to the height on which it is built, I looked over a hundred miles of country, and the valleys, where like silver ribbons, lay the Sukhon and the Yug.

After some days rest I proposed to go up the valley of the Yug to the townlet of Nikolsk.

## CHAPTER XXX

### TRANSFIGURATION EVE

**T**HERE are very few inns at Ust-Yug, and I put up at one of the best of them. I obtained a room with bed and table for sixty-five copecks. "Haven't you brought any bedding?" the landlady asked. "You look a strange person. However, I ask no questions."

I suppose she took me for an escaped convict.

I ordered the samovar, put down my pack, took off my cloak and went out into the town to buy cookies. The reader can hardly imagine the delight with which a poor tramp chooses jam tarts when he has the chance. I hadn't had anything dainty to eat for weeks.

Ust-Yug has one or two fine bakers' shops and I purchased a big bagful of apple sandwiches, jam puffs, sweet scones, *plushki*, enough to supply a whole tea-party. I also bought a pound of the best white bread, sweet and friable like cake—this bread had raisins baked in it—and I took all home and made a spread.

Whilst having tea, I began reading a Russian "penny dreadful," which the last occupant of the room had left behind—it was a story of Dick Carter, the American Sherlock Holmes. It is strange with what avidity all the educated Russians, read blood-curdling detective

stories. Carter, Holmes, and Nat Pinkerton are the three most popular heroes of contemporary fiction.

Tea done, and it took a long while, I asked the way to the banya, the hot-bath shop, and my landlady held up her hands with sorrow. "If you'd only come this morning," said she, "you could have washed here. We all washed, because this evening is the Transfiguration. But the town banya is bad; it is a black banya, and you come out dirtier than you go in. It is a shame to the town. Men and women wash within sight of one another too, and that is a great scandal. They say the dressing-rooms are so soaked with steam that the people undress in the corridor and the street, so as to keep their clothes dry. You'd much better wait and wash here. I'll make it warm for you if you like."

I told her I wanted a regular hot bath, because my limbs were stiff with walking, and my feet hard and blistered.

My landlady looked me up and down with suspicion, and then asked, "Where do you come from?"

"From Archangel," I replied.

"My Lord!" she exclaimed, "From Archangel—and where are you going? . . . To Moscow? And on what business?"

"Just to see the country and the people," I replied.

She waved her hand as much as to say, "Don't be uneasy, I shan't betray you," then added aloud, "I suppose you have a passport,—a political person, no doubt, however, I ask no questions. Are you married? I suppose you have a lot of little ones at home who will smother your face with kisses. Keep away from the police, young man. But if they catch you, don't tell

them you slept here. This is a licensed inn, and I should get into trouble. There is the banya, in the second lane on the right. I'll send a girl with you to show you, and God preserve you."

I tried to convince her that I was an entirely proper and legal person to be upon the road. But my efforts were in vain, for though she acquiesced in my story she was only keeping up a game of make believe. "I am English," I said. "I come from London and speak English. You see I don't speak Russian well."

"Yes, yes, she replied." "Your Russian has an unfamiliar sound, a Moscow accent, so to speak. It is very clever, very cunning. But I penetrate you, young man; I penetrate you. First you said you came from Archangel, then you said you came from London. How do you reconcile these statements? But no, do not speak! Not a word! Do not commit yourself. I am not your judge. Besides, I will not be incriminated. I believe every word you say. You are a follower of Tolstoy. You are returning from a pilgrimage to Solovetzki. In your time you have travelled in England, and have picked up the English language. Your wife and children have gone before in a carriage."

I shook my head.

"What! You yourself said so, else how should I know. You must stick to one story, young man."

. . . And so on. I left her and went to find the banya. Very few houses indeed in Russia are fitted with a bath-room. Every one goes out to the banya. Every town has its banya: Moscow and Petersburg have hundreds of them; the villages have their little banyas. There are general bath-houses, and family bath-houses. The

general is divided into men's department and women's department, and the family ones are large bathrooms to which one may take one's whole family. A Russian in the town often takes his wife and children to one of the latter, and they do the whole business of washing themselves simultaneously.

The Russians are singularly lacking in shame, especially with regard to the naked body. In the wash-halls of Moscow one may frequently see a hundred people all naked at the same time, and all strenuously washing themselves, all strangers to one another, and perfectly unselfconscious. It is probably because the people are almost all of peasant origin. The bath, moreover, is a religious function. The banyas have their Ikons, and the people, though naked, all wear their baptismal crosses round their necks. Washing is akin to praying, and one must certainly wash before going to Church Service : it is enjoined by the priests. Cleanliness is certainly *next* to Godliness in Russia.

"How much does your banya cost?" I asked the man at the door. He seemed rather flurried, as if at an unexpected question.

"They are different," he replied. "Some cost a penny, some twopence, some threepence; there is that which we reserve for generals, and that is sevenpence."

"What! Isn't there a place where all can bathe together?"

"There is, but it is not very proper except for moujiks. It is very crowded, because to-night is the feast of the Transfiguration, and everybody wants to wash before going to church. There are men there and women and children."



“What! you don’t mean to say men and women are bathing in the same room!”

“Yes,” he answered with an apologetic smile. “How Lacedæmonic!” I thought.

“Well, put me in the generals’ apartment,” I said aloud. “I suppose you *can* do that.”

I paid him sevenpence and he led me to a cell, gave me a bundle of oak twigs with which to beat myself, and a handful of loofah-like fibre for soaping purposes. He opened the door and I walked in.

The first thing I did was to exclaim in Russian, “*O Gospody, Bozhe moi!*”

It was so hot, so dark. Even in the place where I was supposed to undress the heat was atrocious. My clothes were soaked with steam and perspiration even before I could get them off. I stripped in double quick time, climbed to one of the heating shelves, lay down and gasped.

Perhaps it was hotter than other compartments, just because it was dearest, and was reserved for generals. I couldn’t stand the heat, simply because I was a parvenu.

How the place burned! It was so hot on the stone floor that I feared my skin would come off. Then, when I climbed up to the shelf the wood was scorching. The idea of beating myself with oak twigs in that heat!

When I got over the heat, there was a greater astonishment in store for me. From where I lay on top of my steaming shelf, I could see right over the top of the partition which separated me from the next cell. What was my astonishment to see two people come into view

holding buckets of soapsuds and great handfuls of loofah. I heard a noise of children somewhere : it was evidently a family party. I climbed down from my point of vantage.

Hardly had I done so when there was a knock at my door, and a man came in and said,

“Hail brother! would you be so kind as to do me a service? I am a stout man and cannot easily wash myself behind. If I kneel down, will you scrub my back . . . I don't mind doing the same for you.”

We did make the exchange, he purveying the lather—the hottest and most abundant lather I have ever seen. When the wash was over he wished me many good things and congratulated me on the Transfiguration.

I hastened to complete my ablutions, pouring bucketful after bucketful of water over my head. There was no shower bath.

Whilst I was doing this, the door opened again—it would not lock—and in came three children, two boys and a sort of Little Red-riding-hood girl with a red cape on. Behind them were the father and mother and the bath-man. There was such a mist of steam they didn't see me at first, but the little girl called out in a squawky voice.

“Oh-h, there's a *man* in here,” and they all scuttled out.

I barricaded the door and then took my towels and tried to dry myself. Drying was in vain. I put a few things on hurriedly. My clothes simply wouldn't go on me; they were soaked with the steam of the room. I took my coat and waistcoat on my arm and evacuated the position. Then I chaffed the bath-man. I told him

I had found that the generals' compartment overlooked the neighbouring cell, and that, though both were sold as private rooms, the occupants were visible to one another.

"That's nothing," said he, and waved his hand.

"A special privilege of generals, eh?" I asked.

He grinned, and said it was nothing compared to the five copeck division. There they had curtains.

Russians in some respects are not out of Eden.

Now I went to get a shave, for I had a month's hair on my face. Not much perambulation brought me to a shop where it said "parikmacher"—peruke maker, barber—Russians borrowed the institution of the barber and the name with it. Time was when there were no barbers, and wife or mother cut the young man's hair or trimmed his beard when that was necessary.

There was no one in the shop, but after a few minutes, a young woman came out and said the barber was away and wouldn't be back till the morrow.

"What a pity!" I said. "I was wanting to be shaved before going to church."

She looked at me apologetically. She was a nicely dressed townswoman. I suppose she was the barber's wife.

"Perhaps I could shave you," she hazarded.

"Could you?" I asked.

"Perhaps I can, if your beard isn't too strong. Is it a strong one?"

I couldn't say whether she'd find it strong or not. So with a smile she walked up to me and felt it.

"Oh no, it's not too strong," she said, "sit down, I'll do it. I can shave very well."

I did sit down and was shaved. Most enchanting experience—her little soft fingers tripping over my face and neck and lips, my head meanwhile resting against her shoulder. . . . Obviously, it wouldn't do to have women barbers!

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE HAND IN THE IKON MOVES

**W**ITHOUT my beard, I must have appeared transfigured myself. I felt as if I had slipped a dozen years off my back, and the girl smiled at the difference she had wrought.

I found my way to the Cathedral of the Assumption, a building of the thirteenth century, the goal of many pilgrimages, preserving as it does, the blessed relics of St John of Ust-Yug, and a wonder-working Ikon. The church was full to overflowing—quite a crowd of peasant women, clad in brightest red and yellow, were praying on the steps outside. Not that one could not enter if one desired to do so. There is no unseemly selfishness in a Russian church. No one ever looks askance at a poorly dressed person who wants to get to the front to kiss the Ikons. I went in.

The scene was beautiful. "Transfiguration" comes about the same time as the "Invention of the Cross," and the floor of the church was strewn with green pine-branches. The clergy marched to and fro in their magnificent garments, and away up in the gallery where the choir stood, round the dome, the music raged as if the whole church were lifting up its face and its voice in praise. There was every grade of wealth and clothes in

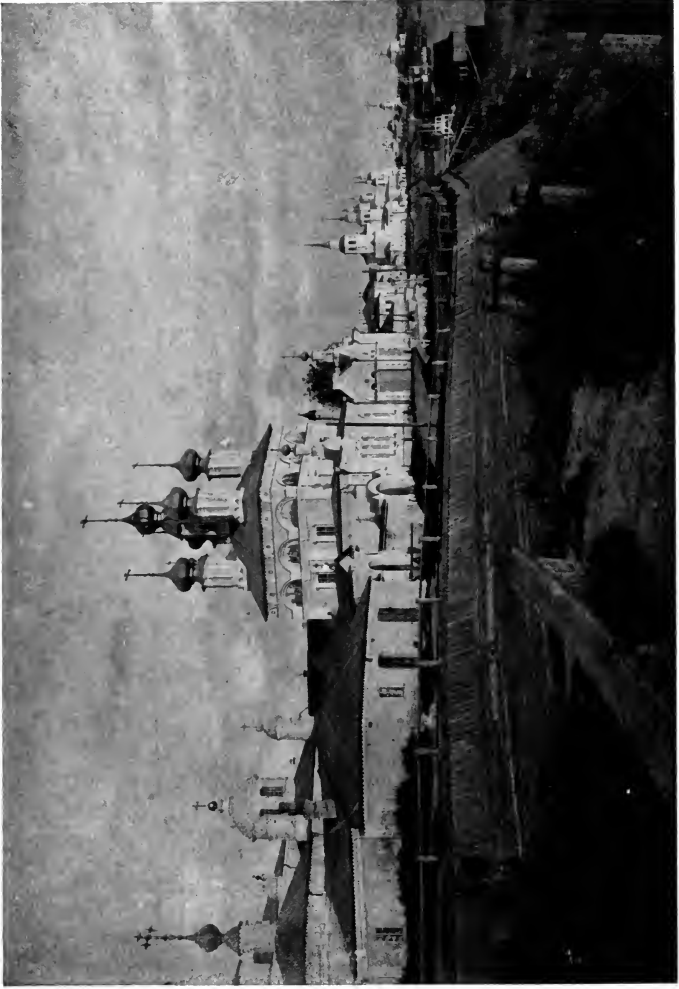
the cathedral, but I expect I was the only person thinking and criticising.

After I had been there ten minutes, there was a movement in the church. A young priest came forward ; he was very handsome, and was clad from head to foot in an iridescent silvery gleaming garment—the symbol of the Transfiguration. In his hand he held a camel hair paint brush. After him came a little boy in a white surplice carrying a tiny cup of holy water.

The priest came and stood among the people and faced the altar—so symbolising the fact that Jesus came to live in man's place upon the earth and to take the same life and sufferings as men. It was a beautiful idea, this silvery-raimented priest coming down from the gorgeous Ikons and standing among the people ; it was God, made man.

The priest and the boy kneeled for a few minutes and then stood up, the one holding the camel-hair brush, and the other the vessel of holy water. There was a movement in the congregation, and then the people began to go up for blessing. Very slowly the whole assembly filed past the priest and the boy. Each as he came stood facing the priest, and the latter dipped his brush in the water, and then painted a cross on the forehead of the worshipper, receiving from him in answer, a kiss on the fingers that held the brush.

He stood perfectly motionless in his transfiguration robes, so that he looked like an angel that had just alighted. Or rather, he looked like a figure that had miraculously stepped out of an Ikon. When he moved the arm that held the brush, he did so without stirring another muscle in his body. The expression of his un-



THE TOWN OF UST-YUG





changing countenance was to my eyes, full of nobility. He must have been chosen because of his face.

I also took my turn and went up to him, and received the blessing of the Cross, and kissed him. It was as if I had gone up to an Ikon picture representing the Transfiguration, and hands had come out of it blessing me, and a church miracle had been performed.

Then the faith, the strength of the ritual! Religious feeling rolled in me as if I were a great organ. I returned from the blessing, and took my stand amongst the blessed, crossed myself, and continued to watch the procession filing past the priest.

Ah, it was delightful to watch the worshippers going to him. Old men and young men, well-dressed town people and country moujiks, *babas*, old peasant women, the village girls and boys, dear little girlies of fifteen or sixteen in clean cotton blouses, and with brown kerchiefs round their sunburnt faces, soldiers marching one after another in clean white tunics with red badges on the shoulders, and looking much smarter than they ever do on parade. They all took their turn and were blessed, and gendarmes kept the order officiously. Presently it appeared that all the worshippers had gone past, one or two straggled up at intervals. There was three minutes grace, and the priest stood motionless, like the recording angel at sundown, waiting for the last repentances. No one more came: he kneeled again and prayed, and then rejoined his fellow-priests—rejoined the Gods in the Heaven behind the rood-screen. Man had become God once more.

The Holy Orthodox Church is wonderful; truly it tempted me this wonderful night. It is the only fervid,

living church in Europe. It lives by virtue of the people who compose it. If the priests were wood, it would still be great. The worshippers are always there with one accord. There are always strangers in the churches, always pilgrims. God is the Word that writes all men as brothers in Russia, and all women as sisters. The fact behind that word is the fountain of hospitality and good fellowship.

At the threshold of the church were old Ikons and a box of relics. I was particularly interested in two pictures, one of heaven and the other of hell. The latter depicted a great serpent coiled round the worlds ; angels with long prongs were thrusting the damned down its throat into hell.

The representation of heaven reminded me of the books of my " Old Believer " friend. Heaven seemed to me not unlike a theatre, with the Holy Family on the stage. It was evidently not a place of Equality, Liberty, Fraternity ; some people were given much better places than others. The historical saints were given ample room. They were put in the stalls, so to speak, whilst the *tiers état* was glad to find a place in the gallery. For the peasant, heaven is a crush. Heaven is going to be not unlike the crowding on the pilgrim boat. On the Last Day, all the Ivans and Vassilys will be together before the gates, staff in hand, pack on shoulder. Before them will gleam all the domes and spires, flashing in the rays of the last sun, like all the monasteries and cathedrals and churches of Russia massed together. And they will be full of religious enthusiasm and social excitement. How happy they will all be, and they won't pick any holes or find any faults in the arrangements.

Very, very few moujiks will go to hell; they fulfil all the requirements for heaven. They don't even expect to be treated badly on the Judgment Day. A just man seldom comes to serious trouble even in Russia, and the moujik does not idealise his heaven. It is only just a little better than his native land. It is his native land, without business and without vodka. But it is going to have plenty of officials and police, and some people will be barins and sit in front, and others be slaves and stand behind.

The time has gone past when the superstitions of the peasantry were regarded as contemptible, and when bowing to the sacred symbols of religion was considered idolatrous. Idolatry means,—to explain the inexplicable, to define the Infinite, to give to God a form, a local habitation and a name. We of the West have set up words and bowed to them, and worshipped them, and in the matter of idolatry, are more worthy to be stoned than to throw the first stone.

Homely men of dull intellect, staring day after day at Nature, learn more of the truth and wonder of life than sharp-witted townsmen in the hubbub of commerce. Moreover, we nurse no delusions now about Britain's great role among the nations. Our role is commerce. The civilisation we boasted we had to give is given, and a poor veneer it was. It was under cover of the march of civilisation that commerce stole a march on us. Literature, art, religion, philosophy—all have been swamped by commerce. Missionarising the heathen means in the long run, simply baptising into commerce.

I say this because Russia is not organised, not made

into a splendid machine, not "developed," and human kind has a freer life there. Human kind has a chance there. I would say to young Englishmen standing at the threshold of life and listening to seductive or compelling voices, "don't be deceived, don't enter the machine, don't give away your souls and your manhood. Step out of it, and become tramps and wanderers; if you have no money, throw yourselves upon God and Nature. Out of every adventure and privation you will arise only the stronger, the more resolute, the more ready. . . ."

Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to enter into Russian life entirely, and become one with it. The Western stranger, the intellectualised and spoilt person will enjoy the freedom of it, will drink deep of the truth of it, but often when he would fain participate in its glories he will find himself only a looker-on. It would be a long time before one could settle down to the life of a pilgrim going from shrine to shrine, or to the life of a hermit in the woods.

I was looker-on at a splendid spectacle at Ust-Yug. It was on the second day of my stay there; the going out to meet a great wonder-working relic, that was going to stay in the town some days, the bones of some great Russian saint, being taken south to Vetluga from one of the monasteries of the North. It might be going there to shield the town from cholera, for as I heard, Vetluga was the northernmost town where the dread disease had appeared.

All the inhabitants of Ust-Yug trooped out of the town to bring the Ikon in. It was a gala day. A great procession started from the cathedral, with gorgeous Ikons borne by the Ikon-bearers, before whom went the church

beggars, Diogenes-like, holding lighted lanterns though it was broad day. The lanterns were as big as gig lamps, and were lit by candles. Behind them came an endless array of banners depicting all manner of Old Testament and New Testament story, stories of the saints, stories in the Church's history, stories of the miraculous appearance and disappearance of the various holy Ikons, and so forth. Then came the waifs and strays, carrying flowers and flags, and with them the convent nuns, all in black with faces veiled. There came the choirs of the monasteries of Archangel and of St John the Baptist, singing without accompaniment. Then clergy from the hundred churches, all fully robed, and after them the higher clergy, all walking, and then the bishops, behind them gilt crosses borne aloft, and two more choirs, then more clergy and a military band; after which again Ikons, and a vast concourse of following people. Such a procession is for religion somewhat as the Lord Mayor's Show in London is for commerce.

The streets were all lined with soldiers and police, and they, and all the crowd looking on were bare-headed. I hurried with all the rest towards the place of the meeting. I soon found we were on the North road, and I surmised that the Ikon was coming up by Ust-Kurya from Krasnoborsk, or perhaps even from far-famed Solovetz.

At a point about half a mile outside the town, our procession met the other procession, which was coming from the opposite direction, escorting the Ikon to the meeting place. It was another field of the cloth of gold, but with what a populace round about! Ust-Yug had emptied itself. There must have been fully ten thousand people gathered there.

The military band played an unearthly music whilst the coffin containing the relics changed bearers, and there was a great rush of moujiks to lend a hand to the carrying. At length I saw it rise into view above the heads of the crowd. It was an ancient case, covered with faded red cloth, itself as ancient as the Ikon I should say, and they bore it on long wooden poles, as the Ark of the Covenant was carried in the hosts of the Israelites, and literally hundreds of peasant men and women pressed in and were able to give a hand to the triumphal carrying. They shouldered the dead bones, as a populace might a great hero just returned from the wars, with singing and shouting, and waving of handkerchiefs and flags, and the roaring of bands. The men and women who had reached the sacred Ikon and touched it were wild with happiness, and I saw tears of joy coursing down their red cheeks. The Ikon moved forward, and the crowd underneath bore it gladly, as if they would like to take it at a run.

Christ coming to the world now, famous as He has become, would scarcely have a greater crowd about Him pressing to touch the hem of His garment.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE IKON IN THE HOME

**T**HE Ikons in the churches, in the cathedrals and monasteries and shrines are the symbols of the saints and of God. The Ikons in the homes are the symbols of the Ikons in the churches ; they are the symbols to which authority has been delegated ; they are the representatives of the original Ikons, as all crosses may be understood as representatives of the original Cross on Calvary.

Every Russian home has its Ikons, and every Russian wears below his shirt his baptismal cross. The Ikon claims the home and the man for God, it indicates God's ownership, God's original right. It is in religion what the trade mark is in commerce. So the Russian world—

“ is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

The candle before the Ikon is man's finite life shining against the background of the Infinite.

In every Russian room there is an Ikon, even in railway waiting-rooms, banyas, public houses, doss-houses, prison cells and houses of ill-fame. It occupies what is known as the front corner of every room, that is, the corner towards the rising sun ; it is not strictly proper to sit

with one's back to it, indeed peasants' tables are often so arranged that it is impossible to sit with one's back to it, the table is jammed up into the Ikon corner so that it appears as if the Ikon themselves are sitting down to the meals. Before eating, one bows to the Ikon and crosses oneself three times and one repeats the ritual after the meal and then adds "Thank you" addressing the master of the house.

If you sleep in a Russian home, the Ikon with its little lamp before it looks down upon you all night and guards you from evil. It teaches little children not to be afraid of the dark, and even nihilistic students come to regard the Ikon and its little night-lamp with tenderness, for they look back to so many occasions when they wakened on dark nights and felt frightened because of some dream, and then looked at the lamp and the Ikon and were quieted and fell asleep again.

In reverence to the Ikon you remove your hat upon entering a room—it is the sign that God is in the room amongst you and about you. The reverence accorded to it by the Russians is the reverence of one who asks himself no questions, and who accepts without doubt the emblems of religion set before him. Certainly the Ikon is a power, it gives an atmosphere to its room. It owns the room, or rather it is a Presence in the room. It reminds, it restrains. Outside are the sun and moon and stars, the beautiful creation to remind; inside, the Ikon takes their place. The value of the Ikon to the Russian is inestimable, in innumerable ways it is of service to him in the consecration of time and place and deed. Is it his birthday; he burns an extra candle before it, and holds a prayer-meeting under its auspices.



Is his daughter to be married: he gives an Ikon to guard the future home. It is perhaps because its service is so often invoked that no thought of its necessity ever occurs; it is because all day long occasion is found to appeal to it that its power is so great.

The whole use of the thing flashed upon me one day when I was in Little Russia staying at the deacon's house. I was whistling a London tune, and a man said sternly to me "Remember God." Someone pointed to the Ikon. I had been committing sacrilege, or invoking the devil, or something of the sort. Let me note in passing that the Russians, though the most musical people in the world, cannot whistle—it is probably because it has been counted irreligious.

I inquired what other restrictions on my behaviour there might be, and was answered that all the homes were as private ante-chambers of the village church, that in passing from the church to the home one's reverence remains unaltered, and that all lived in the remembrance of the immanence and nearness of God. If it appeared that God was forgotten in a song, in angry words or actions, or in anything contrary to the law, the master of the house should in the name of the Ikon, reprove the forgetful person.

So the Ikon is the "God in the midst" with eyes for highest and for lowest things—it is a more live, religious symbol than the Roman Catholic crucifix or rosary, but withal it is something beyond these, something unique. It is so powerful that it suggests itself as the spirit of the room; take away the sacred picture, and you leave the dead body of what was once a living, breathing room.

It might be asked "Is then the unconsecrated English

room relatively dead?" Certainly the Russian gets much by his Ikon that is wanting in a foreign room. Likewise by his hundred and seventeen holy days in the year he gains something similarly unique. In England to a week, are one holy-day and six week-days; the Russian calls his Sunday "Resurrection Day" and has probably two fast days in his week.

The peasant rejects the secular calendar, even in the arrangement of his agricultural year. He reckons the day before or after a festival or a fast. There is, moreover, scarcely a day in the year that has not its popular name. Ancient customs of bygone Nature worship are also interwoven with Christian chronology, such as the welcoming of Spring in the second week after Easter, and the blessing of the beer in the middle of August. All children are named after one of the saints, and most of them receive in addition some earthly nickname.

Visitors to Russia, if they are observant, will see an unvarnished wooden cross set up wherever a house is in course of building. This also is an Ikon, and it will not be removed till the house is built and the priest comes and performs an opening service.

Then the ritual of the sign of the Cross is most potent in Russian life. It is prayer without words, the assigning of implicit faith. The only words the moujik adds are sentences of supplication or of praise, as "Oh Lord have mercy!" or "Glory be to Thee, O Lord!"

"Nothing is within our powers; everything is beyond our powers" says a character of Gogol. "Nothing is possible without aid from on high. Prayer concentrates the faculties. A man crosses himself and says 'Oh Lord

have mercy,'” then he rows on and reaches the shore.” Pereplotchikof told me a story of a peasant servant who had taken a place at Moscow, and his master kept two pet wolves. The servant was called by his mistress, and came suddenly upon these two wolves stretched in the passage like sleeping dogs. He was quite familiar with the physiognomy of wolves, and so was struck with terror. He had to pass them to get to his mistress’ room. He hesitated a moment, crossed himself, and then ran for it.

I have seen engine drivers come down the platform at railway stations to bow to the Ikons before proceeding on their way. Cab-drivers, even with fares, will stop before monasteries or churches, and cross themselves. Indeed it is not proper to pass a church without crossing oneself, and even in degenerate Moscow one is struck by the people crossing themselves in the electric trams as the latter shoot past the sacred places.

If a peasant yawns, he makes the sign of the cross over his mouth to prevent the devil getting in—which is in itself a little sermon on the dangers of boredom. The good old peasant-wife puts cross-sticks over all empty dishes or jars in her pantry, and these too are Ikons. And if her husband is out, and his plate of soup is left for him, she makes the sign of the cross over it before going to bed.

So by a thousand little gleams of ritual, we see how the Russian has interwoven Christian religion with life. He truly lives as “ever in his great Task-master’s eye,” only he would not call God a task-master. The Russian people are one in their unanimous loyalty to one idea and thereby they have become all—brothers. With

far more justice can it be said of the Russian people than of the English, they are a church—unless commerce is our church.

In England are churches and houses; in Russia, churches and consecrated homes! And though God is everywhere, we feel He is absent from unconsecrated places. It has been the consecration of things already holy, that has insinuated the subtle error of distinguishing between the things of God and the things of man. The giving of a tenth of our goods to God has led us to regard nine-tenths as our little own; the dedicating to God of the lives of priests has left the laity undedicated; the consecration of churches has placed our houses outside the church.

Was it not vain then, to consecrate at all?—will not *all* things in time have to be consecrated, and in our thoughts brought up to one level of holiness just because of these initial consecrations?—our days each be given its special holiness; our homes, whether in slum or park, be consecrated to be known as ante-chambers of the church? If so, the Ikon is much already gained: it consecrates the home, the first of those unconsecrated things to be remembered as holy; it reminds the Russian that God is not locked up in the church, that He is even in his own parlour. In all finite and material things it reminds him of the Infinite and the Spiritual.

I, for my part now, wherever I may have an abiding place and a home would always have some Ikon in my room. The Russian says that the Ikon face should have little beauty or interest; he thinks the rude axe-hewn cross the best symbol of all. But in all my wanderings

except those that were merely tramping expeditions, I have taken with me my Ikon—not a Russian picture, but a copy of Millet's "Angelus." It has been in Little Russia, in Moscow, and the Caucasus, and back to England, and has looked out on all rooms and superintended my writing and reading. It is looking over me now. In its grey depths one can lose oneself, can forget words and thought-words, and kneel in the great grey temple of the Innermost. It may not be in the "front corner," but he who looks to it looks into Infinity. It ever calms and puts into their places noisy thoughts, it is ever a reminder and a restrainer—a giver of peace, and of those "still-creation-days" that give strength for combats new.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### TRAMPING UP THE YUG VALLEY

I WAS ferried from Ust-Yug across to the south side of the river Sukhon, and then walked along the sandy shore to the estuary of the Yug. It was a hot summer day, and the sun made the harvest fields resplendent. I commenced my tramp down a broad and fertile valley towards Nikolsk, two hundred miles to the south.

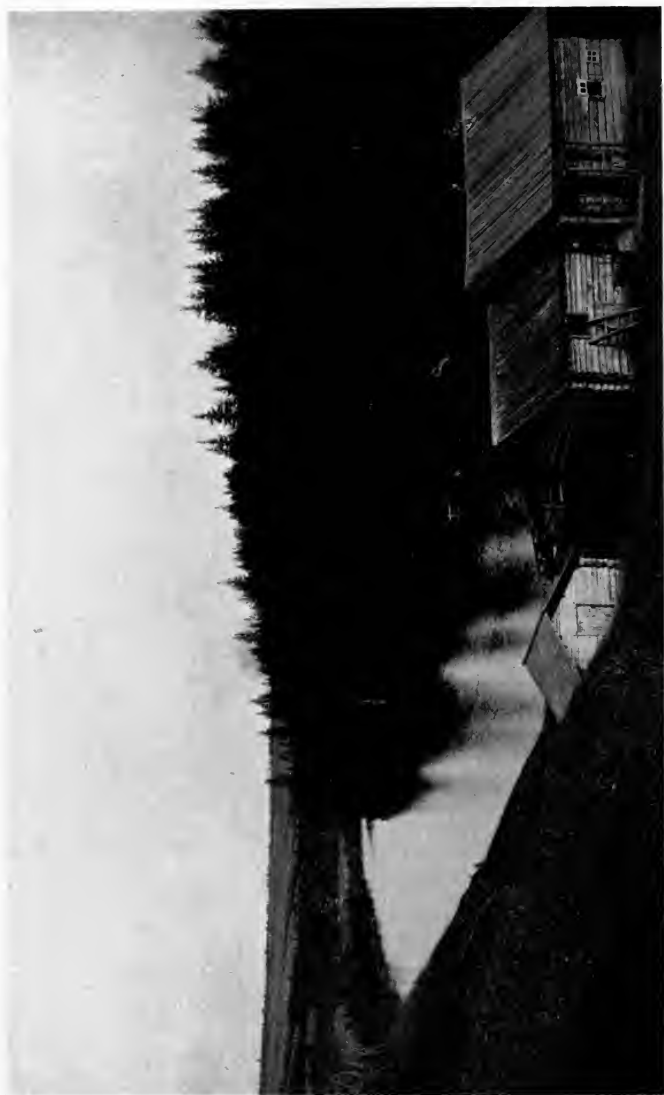
There were many villages, for the land supports many people, and the forest lies only on the far horizon. It is still the country of the peasants, there being no large property owners and no country seats. Each village has its own land, and the villagers work upon it in the communal system. Each village also has its Government assessor or tither, and he determines the amount of the harvest that shall go in lieu of taxes. Each settlement that I came to had a notice up, stating the name of the place and the number of people and houses, as for instance,

PESTOVO

66 souls

24 houses

Evidently in this census, children were not taken account of.



A BEAUTIFUL CORNER FIVE VERSTS FROM UST-YUG





I had a glorious summer walk, my feet healed and all my limbs and body ready for any adventure. No adventure was forthcoming, however, and after about twenty-five miles, I sought shelter for the night. My plan in that matter was to go to the cleanest house in the village. Often outside appearances are very deceptive, and this evening when I made my choice, the woman of the house warned me off.

"You can come if you like," she said, "but it's not good. There are so many bugs that I'm afraid they would destroy you. Go to the end house of the village, that is the only place where there are no bugs."

I was only too thankful to follow her advice, and I sought out the end cottage of this long village—the name of the village, by the way was Zerakhimy. Here the mistress was for some reason, on the roof, and her skirt and petticoat were pulled right up as far as they would go and tied up underneath her arms. We had a short conversation in shouts, she speaking the broadest dialect of Vologda Russian I've ever heard. In fact her Russian was to mine as the broadest Cumberland Border Scotch is to Claphamese. But we understood one another, and I got a night's lodging, and there were no bugs—she had got rid of them somehow with borax. But still, the beetles!

Shall I have a beetley page? There is so much that I have forborne to say about beetles, just to escape having beetles in every chapter. They have been my constant foes and companions. Let me write down here the sorrow that they gave me. Even at Ust-Yug, before having that jam-tart tea, I killed one hundred and three—I always count when I begin killing—and at night

before going to bed, I killed one hundred and forty-three. I once used to collect beetles, but I have never been able to take up a cockroach in my hand. The idea of beetles crawling on me in my sleep is terrifying, and has given me many wakeful hours and realistic dreams. I have covered every portion of my body, limbs and face, and yet am sure hundreds have been on me in the night. There were hundreds of them, there were thousands. They swarmed on the walls and on the floors. They were in the wooden dishes, in the soup, in the bread, in the mushroom tub. They dropped from the table to the floor. I remember as I write, a room at a place called Annie in Kostroma Province. I was in a new cottage where, on the new white pine ceiling there were not hundreds, but thousands and tens of thousands, like the stars of a summer night with the milky way and all the constellations. Cockroaches they were, big and little, but mostly big, and they had long shivering antennæ. I have seen them on the holy Ikons. I have seen earwigs on the Virgin's nose. But the Russian does not mind. I have even heard it said that a house that has no beetles is not quite proper. By the way, there is a perennial literary joke about cockroaches in bad cabbage soup. It began in Gogol, and the pages of Tchekof are fairly speckled with the theme. . . .

When I remarked to my host that he seemed to have plenty of beetles, he took up my hat which I had left carelessly on the table, and shook at least a dozen out of it, and then added that it was a sign of a good harvest, and the bread-corn was ripening, "Glory be to God!"

He and his wife were a very naïve and simple couple—childless and lonely, strange to say, and I evidently gave

them a very happy evening telling of my travels. When I told them that London had six or seven millions of people, and was more than twice the size of Moscow and St Petersburg put together, they crossed themselves and asked God for mercy. The woman stared for some time without addressing a word to me, ejaculating hoarsely at intervals. "Oh Lord have mercy, Oh Lord have mercy." She was conceiving a notion that I was some very important person in disguise, a Grand Duke or a general, or a brother of the Tsar perhaps.

Next morning the man proposed to drive me nineteen versts for one rouble fifty (three shillings and sixpence) and I overheard his wife say, "Oh, be careful, don't ask him too much, don't bring any unhappiness down upon us."

After a while I said to the man :

"You know the word 'certificate' ?"

"Yes."

"Oh, well, I have a certificate from the Governor of Archangel."

"There, you see," said his wife.

"And I can have the Zemsky horses at three copecks a verst."

"Oh !"

"You see," said his wife. "That's the sort of person he is ; you'd better be careful."

"So if I want to, I can do the journey for six greeven—one and fourpence."

The peasant reflected some minutes.

"Or I myself could take you for that money," he hazarded.

But I had no anxiety for any equipage, certainly not

any that had to be paid for, and I signified my determination to walk.

Whereupon they felt very happy, and their doubts were cleared. "Come again, Stéphán," said the man, holding my arm and endeavouring to kiss me, his wife meanwhile nudging him to remind him to be less familiar, "Come again, but give me a kiss before we part, on the lips, *polna*, full, full. . . ."

I always draw the line at being kissed.

It would have been absurd to have been carted along, that fresh and sunny morning. I never felt more fit for walking, and had marched ten miles before eight o'clock, and turned neither to the right nor to the left, nor had I lingered by the way. I then came to the village of Mikhninsk, where stepping into a little cottage to get a pitcher of milk, I met a strange character.

A sickly looking youth was sitting in a chair, plaiting bark boots. At his feet were two babies playing with the bits of bark. Evidently the rest of the household were in the harvest fields. He asked me to sit down, and there I sat, waiting his pleasure. We did not speak for ten minutes, and during that time I came to the conclusion that he was either the village genius or the village idiot. He was evidently of my own age, but thin and wretched, wearing a wisp of straw-coloured beard; his forehead was large and furrowy, and he had a pair of large shadowy eyes that at once marked him out as an unusual person.

So it turned out. He was a peasant member of the *intelligentia*, a consumptive, too weak to do field work, and having all his force and energy in his head. He broke the silence by asking if I had any books with me.

Such a question was not the breaking of one silence,

but of several silences. I looked at him in astonishment. What sort of books did he mean, detective stories, church stories, socialistic pamphlets?

"Anything, no matter what it is," he replied.

I handed him a Russian topographical journal—the magazine of the "Society for the Exploration of Northern Russia," and he received it eagerly.

"What will you find to read in that?" I asked.

He was thumbing the pages.

"The History of Pitch-boiling," said he, "that is good. I want to know about that, I want to know about everything. We have a little circle in the village. This village is not like any other village hereabout: we concern ourselves with serious matters. We read together, we have even heard of London and England, give me something about England."

"What have you read about England?"

He took from a shelf near the Ikons a dozen or so books and circulars, his little hoard of literature—

Kropotkin's "Field, Factory and Workshop," in Russian.

"The Wealth of Nations," Adam Smith, also in Russian.

"The Diseases of Cows."

"Remedies against Drunkenness."

"The Human System."

Müller's "Exercises."

"The Elements of Physiology," and one or two leaflets on the uses of medicine.

"You are a doctor," I suggested.

He smiled.

"I cure," he said.

"But you can get no drugs hereabout."

" I boil the grasses," he replied.

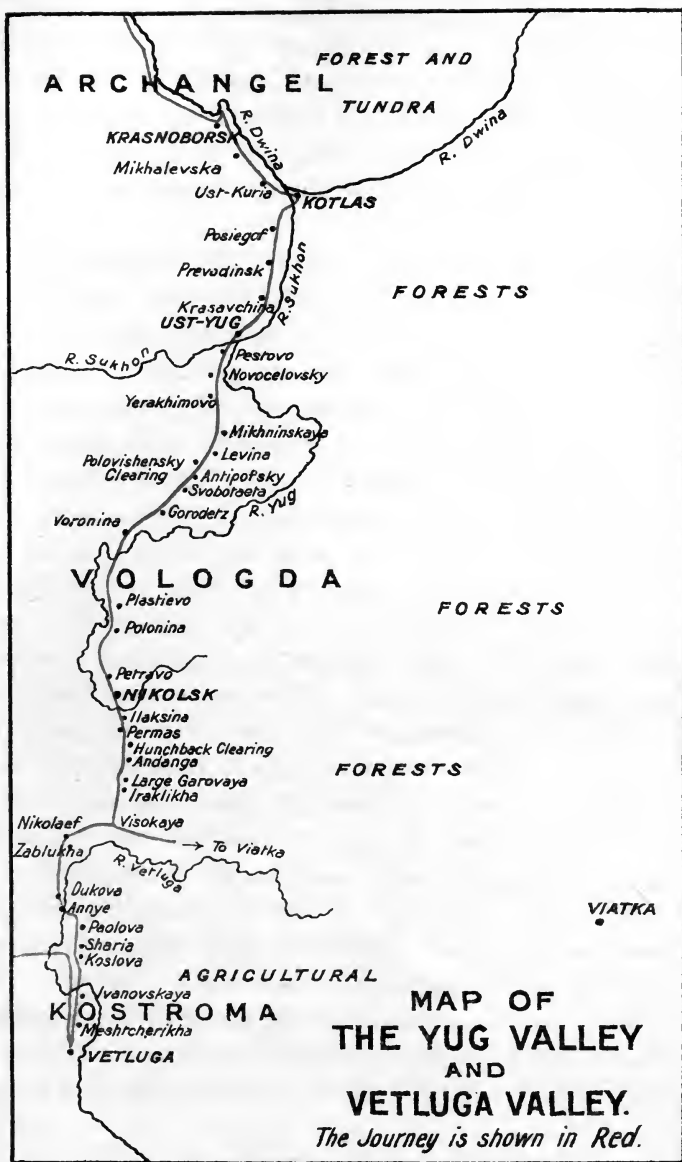
We then had a conversation on England and the Protestant religion, and he showed himself to be strangely intellectual but extraordinarily eager and fanatical. He even said, " All religions amount to the same thing in the end," which shows how emancipated he was. But his greediness to talk and exchange ideas told me how famished he was for intellectual comradeship. Several times, when I proposed going, he came across to me and clung hold of my arm, saying :

" No, no, don't go yet ; don't go, I entreat you ; give up your pilgrimage and make your home here."

I did not accept the invitation, but stayed until the afternoon, when I went on to Levina. At Levina, women were sowing the winter rye in the track of the harrow, women with aprons full of grain who held with one hand and threw out with the other in rhythmic sweeps.

I passed on through several villages, and tried to find harbour for the night, but failed because all the inhabitants were in the fields. The succeeding day was to be a *prazdnik*, and therefore everyone was working late. At last, at Podvolotchia, fifty versts from Ust-yug, I met a sleepy old gaffer, who bade me welcome. Even whilst I waited for his other folk to come in, it had already become dark. I was now far out of the land of the white night, and what is more, the season had changed. I forget the first time I saw the moon after leaving the land of the midnight sun, but here she was beautiful and clear and round. I saw her rise into a dark sky made gentle by mist ; she was pacific.

I went out into the road before going to bed. It was







a wonderful night. The moon was just above us, and the pine-built village looked portentous, solemn. The two-storey houses and the church were gigantic. And even the little buildings and all the wooden carts and harvest implements obtained a grandeur in the new light, as if they had been wrought with a more ancient and original power than is manifested in these days.

Next morning it was raining. I had slept on a mattress, and had not been disturbed once in the night. I was therefore ready for walking, but the road looked uninviting. I went out to get some sugar for my tea, slipping from one door to another, and then when I had found an old dame with half a pound to spare, I returned ; and I watched my hostess kneading a barley bannock with dried mushrooms, thereby preparing a *peerog*, a pie, though an English person would scarcely call it such. The sleepy old gaffer sat staring at her, and took snuff every ten minutes. He was the dirtiest peasant I remember. Snuff-taking generally means dirtiness, and fortunately it is a rare habit. One interesting thing the old man told me, it was that tea-drinking, though at present so universal, is only a modern custom among the Russian peasants ; and the samovar, though a national institution, was not heard of a hundred years ago. Then only rich persons drank tea, and the peasants did not even care for it. It was a court dish. Now, not to possess a samovar or to go without tea, is to be worse than a beggar. The woman then explained to me that it was impossible to eat rye bread, because it was a fast : the mushroom pie was a substitute ; would I like some ? I had a little with my tea ; it was what the Russians call

"*originalny no vsotaky vkusny*," original, but all the same tasty. For my part, I prefer the fast dish to the ordinary.

I was asked to stay all day, but I did not look forward to a long dull day in a dirty izba, and, if the worst came to the worst, I had no objection to rain. I had a thick cloak and rubber overboots and a waterproof knapsack—why should I fear rain?

But it was a strange tramp. It rained all day without remission, and for twenty miles there was not a single human habitation. I had entered one of the largest forests in Russia—indeed Vologda Province is the most forested in Europe, it has more pines than even the province of Archangel. I passed out of the jurisdiction of the town of Ust-yug, and entered that of Nikolsk. Ust-yug is rich and small; Nikolsk is poor and vast—and the roads of the district of Nikolsk are perhaps the worst in the empire. It took half an hour to walk a mile on them. Splash, splash, up to the ankle, up to the knee, stuck, fixed, slipping, stumbling . . . the road was made up of young birch trees planted in the mud and ill-balanced. Treading on one end of one of these little trunks, one suddenly lifted up the other, which aimed mud like a catapult, oneself meanwhile sliding into the bog. Some of the logs floated: in parts where young rivers rushed across, they had frankly floated away and left a miry bed behind. They were broken, they rolled and slipped, they sank, they jumped—and from the indifferent heavens came the steady sulky wet.

Wet, wet. I found a hut in the forest and sat crouched under the roof waiting for the rain to stop, and I sang songs, but as if provoked by my merriment, light came

into the sky, and it rained harder. And what a little sky there was, no view, no horizon—only in front of me stretched the long road like a vista of switchback railway.

I got out of the hut and walked three miles more, and then took rest and shelter in the forest itself under a bearded hoary fir, where the earth and moss was dry and crisp as if it had not rained for months. The branches of the trees met overhead in the blackness of an overhead London fog. I took off my cloak and hung it up to dry, and sat down on a pile of soft moss, and wrote letters to England, or cut shapes out of birch bark just to while away the time.

And the whole of this long wet solitary day, not a man passed me, and I heard not even the tinkling of a cow-bell. I might have slept the whole night in the forest, but the idea of damp and of bears deterred me, and in the afternoon I braced myself together and took the road again. There was one way of avoiding the slough, that was, by walking in tight-rope style on the long trunks placed lengthwise to keep the lateral ones in order. Thus did I walk ten miles, and at length, after long expectation, came to Polovishensky Clearing, a patch of rusty grass and two fields of wretched rye as yet uncut, unripened. The forest stood around it like a leaguer; black, forbidding. One imagined that it held in leash wolves, who were ready at a word to rush at the few wretched izbas and destroy them and their human kind, so giving the forest back its own.

Here fortunately there was a Government Post-House, or I had looked for poor hospitality among such wretched peasants. For in Russia, as elsewhere, extreme poverty means extreme dirt. It was dark night when I opened

the door and looked in—one never knocks in the country—and asked could I have a lodging for the night. There was a small company present. I asked for the samovar, for eggs, for *peerog*. It was my only meal since morning, and I felt I could do myself justice.

I remember little of my evening at Polovishensky beyond a little man to whom I made some remarks about the state of the road, and after everything I said he answered with the same phrase, “*sovershénno právilno*—altogether correct. Later, a man began playing the balalaika, and the same man shouted in applause Brrravo! Brrravo! He pronounced the word in a way that suggested that a firework had just been let off, something like a rocket that hesitates a moment on a railing, and then in a flash, tears through the air into the sky.

In my note book I observe I wrote next day: “I slept last night in a mix up of human kind—but slept. . .”

The next day was as rainy, and I walked twenty or thirty versts through the forest to Svobodaïta, where there is a broad clearing. The road thither is just a sluttish cart track, into which all the forest streams poured as if it were a river.

At Svobodaïta all the village children came out and called, “Here comes a God-praying-one, *Bogomoletz*, here comes a pilgrim,” and, of course, I easily obtained lodging for the love of God. There was one shop in the village, and I went to buy some things. The value of the goods I should put at five shillings for the lot. There was sugar, Ceylon tea, baranka biscuits, honey biscuits, cotton, there were rusty sickles, and some white bread

three weeks old, which was offered at two pence a pound. It had come from Nikolsk, and was bought on special holidays. The moujiks didn't mind its staleness; they knew it was good wheaten bread, and the idea kept it fresh long after Nature had left it stale. The old crone who kept this shop added up eighteen and five in her head, and made it twenty.

I slept in a room with a big family. The babushka spread a sack on the floor for me, and though it was hard, it rested my tired limbs. The flies first appeared at this village. I had not been troubled by them before. Now they were going to vex me more and more. They bit me more effectively than any other insect, but then they were not like English flies.

There were as many beetles as ever, and next morning a piece of bread, which I had left out by mistake, was turned into coral by the sharp holes they had bored into it.

I had much fun with the little children at this house, Nat-kow and Van-kow, toddling on the floor; I barking with great effect, and making them search for the dog, and creating much anxiety by frightening the cat. Nat-kow and Van-kow and father and mother were all clad in homespun linen clothes that the aged grandmother had woven for them at the loom. I much admired their everlasting jackets.

The sun came up and conquered the rain and dried up the mud, and I took the road, though with stiff limbs, and walked to the village of Gorodetz. Gorodetz is large enough to be called a town; it has moreover, a market place and three churches. There are many shops, and the peasants are rich. There are manufactured

goods for sale, but they are all dear, since the railway is two hundred miles distant. There is an interesting black wooden church at Gorodetz, the shape of a steam roundabout, and beside it, exposed to wind and weather, are church bells on poles.

I looked over all the Gorodetz stalls for a pair of boots, but could find nothing to suit me. The two days on the log road had ruined my footgear, and as the sun dried everything this morning, I already began to feel new blisters caused by a breaking of the leather. They were Caucasian mountain boots made of wood and leather, and very comfortable as long as the wood remained unbroken. No Northern cobbler understood them or I would have had them mended.

“You’d better buy a pair of *sapogi*, high jack-boots,” said a bootmaker, “and leave these with me, and I’ll use them for going to and fro from the banya.”

I did not buy *sapogi*, for whoever went a pilgrimage in jack-boots? But I examined *valenki*, felt boots, such as Tolstoy recommended to vegetarians, and *lapti*, the plaited birch-bark boots. But I could not imagine myself comfortable in either, so I resolved to go barefoot for the time being, and hoped to obtain a pair of ordinary leather boots in the town of Nikolsk. At Liavlia we had all accustomed ourselves to walking barefoot, and besides, my feet were now well hardened by the tramping I had done. I became a *boziak*, for that is what the peasant calls a barefooted tramp.

I did not go far this day. Outside Gorodetz I found a pleasant grassy bank by the side of the stream in a coign of the forest, and there I had a washing morning.

I washed out all my linen and spread it in the sun to dry, and whilst it was drying, I watched the clear fresh stream dance down in the sunlight over the pine roots. I had been feeling very disgusted with my tramp, especially with the last two days' mud and rain, but now I had found a green isle, a pleasant place, and I realised how good it was to have lived through, and to live.

Now once again the woods were behind me ; there was an expanse of Nature, and the trees no longer hid everything from me. The new landscapes were very charming, diverse with sandy meadow, fresh flowing river, and dark forests shown on slopes of hills. My eyes looked out on Nature with the eagerness of one who has just risen from a sick-bed. The world was full of delightful summer freshness, rest and quietness.

I slept that night at the house of a retired ship's-carpenter, who had been to the war. He told me he had been in England three years ago—in Shanghai ! Which after all, is not England. He was in the fleet that fouled the Hull fishermen. He told me everyone was drunk and mortally afraid—he himself had never seen the sea before.

The old sailor was a gentle greybeard. I had met him in the street, and he had evidently thought to use me as a shield. For presently in came his wife, a veritable Tartar. As we were in the dark I couldn't at first make out whether she was a man or a woman. She had a deep bass voice, she stamped and swore, smoked a cigarette, and wore high jack-boots and knickers. She might have been a gendarme from the way she rated the poor sailor. She was fifteen or twenty years younger than he, and not a Russian, but a Lett. The old man

had picked her up at Riga, and I doubt whether she was a reputable character there.

She spoke Russian with a strong German accent, and her ragings filled the room, so that one might have thought oneself in a low Warsaw lodging-house. Poor old grey-beard! he called me "sweetheart" every time he spoke to me, and I called him "Uncle." "Wouldn't you like some tea, sweetheart?" he asked.

Then the woman snubbed him, saying the samovar was drawing outside, and she threw away her cigarette and lighted another. By the match light I caught a glimpse of a nicely cut masculine face of an intellectual type. However, when the lamp was lit, it was clear that she was a woman. All through tea-time she kept up her angry raging, but now she turned from Uncle to God, and abused the Almighty right and left, now on the score of the weather, now about the crops, and at last on account of her stupid lazy old husband. She was evidently a Protestant. Uncle was Orthodox, and he had a round hundred of holy pictures on his walls, and he crossed himself religiously and asked God for mercy.

I slept in my own cloak on a sheepskin on the floor, but it was a night of restlessness. Next day I was up and away at four in the morning, and I crossed the Yug river by a plank to plank swinging bridge, a bridge made by the villagers by tying logs together with rope. Two people could not go abreast, and there was a roped handrail with which to balance oneself. I stood on the opposite bank of the river just at the dawning, and watched peasant women drive their cows into the water, prod them with sticks, and swear at them till they swam across. A grand sight it was, to see twenty head of



cattle in mid-stream, their heads stretched up out of the water. When the cows had accomplished their swimming the women followed by the plank bridge.

That morning there was a heavy thunderstorm; I still walked barefoot. The villages were in such a state that it occurred to me there might well have been life-belts on the railings. Russian life-belts are inscribed with the words, "THROW THIS TO A DROWNING MAN." I was forced to put my boots on again, and I climbed up hill and down hill on slippery red mud. In the villages I waded.

So through the long settlement of Plasievo on to Polonina, and there I threw away my leather boots and took to *lapti*. I stayed at the house of a man who took me for a Pole, a strayed "political," but who said he feared no man, and would harbour me. He made me a pair of birch-bark *lapti*, measuring my feet to give me a good fit. He sold me also a pair of *portanki*, or coarse linen putties to wind round my legs. He had a great roll of birch bark in the kitchen, and he deftly cut it into strips and commenced plaiting, whilst his wife put me out a meal of pickled mushrooms and potatoes boiled in their skins.

It turned out however, that I did not continue my journey until next day, and then my host showed me how to put the *lapti* on, swathed my legs with the *portanki*, filled the boots with soft straw, stuffed my feet into them, and bound both boots and linen to my feet by means of thin rope. I felt myself a moujik. My legs were converted into bundles. Sitting at the table having tea, I felt as little control over my legs as Guy Fawkes on a barrow. But time came to move, and I put my pack on

my shoulders and took my stick and left the izba. The peasant family looked at me with approval.

I did not, however, altogether approve of myself. I am accustomed to walk briskly, but now it was no longer possible to walk other than slowly. To run or jump was out of the question. I was thirty per cent. more Russian than I had ever been before. I was in Russian boots, and such boots have a low gear. I understood the slow march of the pilgrims, for now I entered into their own metre. Step by step forward, two miles an hour, steady, easy, perfectly uneager and patient . . . so the pilgrim goes to the shrine, and so I should have to go now henceforth—or I would throw the things away, and buy a pair of leather boots in Nikolsk ! But I went all the rest of my journey in *lapti*, and even came into Moscow in them on the day I re-entered Western life.

The whole of my first day in *lapti*, I only walked fifteen miles, and these at the slowest imaginable rate. Anyone walking at such a snail pace would attract ridicule in England. I enjoyed my walk however, and I reflected on the difference of the speed of life in England and in Russia. The increase in the facilities for travel, and for getting about quickly, have not increased our leisure time, our fallow time. How good for human kind in England and in the world, if all journeys were done on foot, and if for instance, a family going to the sea-side walked there, or went in a cart, and if John o' Groats and Land's End were famous monasteries, whither hundreds of thousands pilgrimaged every year.

I met this day a pilgrim just getting home after a twelve hundred miles tramp. He had set out even before the winter snows had melted, and now in mid-August,



THE AUTHOR'S BIRCH BARK BOOTS IN WHICH HE TRAMPED THE  
LATTER PART OF HIS JOURNEY



in two or three days he would be home. He showed me holy pictures that he had brought from the monastery of St Seraphim, below Nizhni Novgorod, St Seraphim kneeling on a column of air, and praying for the health of a young man who was sick. The picture signified that the young man had seen a vision of St Seraphim, his name-saint. Another picture showed the same saint sitting outside his hermitage, feeding a starving bear with bread. In the latter picture, St Seraphim himself was clothed in *portanki* and *lapti*.

In the evening I came to Petraovo, and there I met an ex-soldier in the street, and he invited me to his house for the night.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### OLD AGE IN THE VILLAGE

**I**T is a delusion to think that old age is respected in the village: it is not respected. Even the village priest gains no extra authority by his age. The old man is of less account than the stripling.

The glorious man is the young man, the strong man. No one thinks of honourable old age; no one retires from work till his limbs fail him, and then his life is one of dishonour. The old man who cannot take his share in the work of the fields, but who needs to be fed, is an encumbrance, he is a worn out tool. If he were a horse, the family would kill him, and since they may not kill him he is more despicable than an old horse. The old man is ill-dressed, ill-fed. When you come upon him in the village you see old age undisguised, in all its ugliness.

At the house in Petraovo I met a poor old man, the father of the ex-soldier. He was nearly blind, and had been forced to give up work a year ago. Now there was great pain in his head, and he continually heard a voice inside his skull as if a wind were blowing there—a window broken in the old house—I thought, recalling Andreef's "Life of Man."

He was shrivelled up to the size of a child, as one might see, for he was only covered by a ragged Oxford shirt,

and a pair of cotton knickers—the shirt clung to his little body, and probably belonged to one of the young boys of the family, the knickers also ; he had no “ youthful hose, well saved,” of his own.

The soldier and his family had much work in the fields before nightfall, and they left me with the old grandfather, and we talked together. It was great gladness for him, for nobody ever talked to him, or listened to him, or paid him any attention now, and no one hoped anything but that he would soon be in his grave. We had a long, dull talk on England ; he thought England a province of Russia. He asked such questions as “ Does wheat ripen with you ? Are the peasants poor ? What proportion of rye do they grow ? Have you Jews ? Is the rate of wages high ? ”

My simple answers pleased and warmed him ; he asked me for a match and lit an old pipe. He came very close to me and grasped me by the arm. The floor was covered with hay and new hops ; he kneeled down on it at my feet, and looked up at me with eyes that saw nothing, and asked in a quavering voice—

“ Do you think I shall die soon ? ”

I said I thought not. He evidently wanted to live, and feared death. He clung to life, if only for such a chance as the meeting with a stranger like myself.

“ I shall die soon,” he went on. “ My head aches all day ; there is a whistling sound in it. I have great pain. They want me to die too, and they beat me, beat me—since I can do no work they beat me. Last night I made myself a coffin, and they said ‘ Hurry, or you’ll die before the coffin’s made,’ but now I have made it, and I live on, and it waits for me. They make me sleep in it every

night, and sometimes I think I shall be sleeping one morning, and they will say I am dead. That would be dreadful."

He pointed to a box which was lying near the stove : it was filled with hay and straw, and evidently made a comfortable bed as peasant beds go.

When the family came in and the samovar was prepared, no one offered him tea, but presently they went out again, and I filled him up a cup, and gave him more sugar than he had had for years. He accepted greedily ; took out the surplus sugar, and secreted it inside his shirt. When he had finished he thanked me and blessed God, crossing himself devoutly.

He slept the night in the coffin, and I wrapped myself in my cloak and lay on the hay and hops on the floor. " Surely," I thought, " death would be better for him now. But he has no conception of the dignity of the grave, and no care for it, though in life his wretched life squirms in a litter of hay and straw."

In the morning I gave him tea again, and after it he knelt by the grate a long while, trying to light his pipe with a splinter of fir wood, just as the day before he had knelt beside me when he was talking—old, old !

Once he was a handsome young man like the soldier his son, but now all the beauty has vanished, and the spirit has gone. Part of the roof has fallen in, in the old house ; the wind blows, the rats are in the nursery, an old crone crawls down the creaking stairs ; soon she will open the door, and leave it open, and go away. Then, now and again in the night, the door will slam—

I wrapped up my legs in my linen *portanki*, put fresh



straw in my *lapti*, and took the road once more. About two miles outside Petraovo a moujik took my *lapti* off, and put them on in orthodox style. He laughed, and bellowed with laughter that anyone should not be able to put his own *portanki* on. He then gave me lessons in the art of walking in *lapti* and restrained my English briskness. I must walk more leisurely.

Nikolsk was only nine miles ahead, and as I proposed staying one or two days there for washing and repairs, I did not hurry. I spent so much time on the way that it was four in the afternoon before I reached the town.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### ARRESTED FOR MY OWN GOOD

**N**IKOLSK is a forlorn little townlet three hundred and forty two miles from Kostroma, and four hundred and sixty-two miles from Vologda, the capital of the province. Its population is three thousand, of whom five hundred are banished revolutionaries and strike leaders. A few old houses with carved and painted thresholds and window frames, some green-roofed ; a sprinkling of little shops, and a wee market place—that is Nikolsk. You can walk round it in half an hour.

It is, however, an important town, and the Council of Nikolsk, the Zemstvo, has sway over an immense territory. The Councillors, they say, are mostly illiterate, and sign their names with crosses. Fortunately the pines need no policing.

But if man made the town, and the Devil made the country-town, Nikolsk is a fair specimen of the latter's handiwork. It is a little hell—a place where the only interesting profession is that of the policeman. It reminded me of that town in Gogol's comedy, where the postmaster, finding life tedious, spends all his time reading the letters, where the police attend the places where crimes are committed, simply to receive their fees from the criminals, where the patients in the hospital are

three in a bed and all drunk, and the Governor is a robber. "Government," as Motley said, "exists solely for the benefit of the Governors."

From my first coming into Nikolsk I was a watched man. I have since learned that pilgrims as a rule, make a detour to escape the place, for they know it is quite inhospitable and that all the food there is twice as dear as it ought to be. So when I came in there was considerable curiosity. People came to their windows and peeped, and police dodged about street corners watching my movements.

The more they looked at me the less they liked me; top half gentleman, lower half peasant. I was very strange. No doubt they thought I was a dangerous character.

I must say I was perfectly unsuspecting. I had no idea that the police were watching and stalking me, and that orders and counter-orders were being given about me, and that it was decided to capture me at dusk. But when afterwards I found myself tracked down, and asked to accompany a gendarme to the office of the Chief of police, I understood how I had been watched.

For I spent a long time in Nikolsk before I found a shelter, and I ate a meal at a baker's shop, and spent half an hour at the post-office. I even wrote letters which I afterwards discovered that the police had opened. I tried to find shelter at at least six private houses—there were no inns in the town—and I wandered in and out, up and down every street and lane, and out of the town at both ends and back again. Only suddenly when I had almost despaired of finding shelter, someone beckoned to me from a window and invited me inside. And when

later I was taken to the office of the *ispravnik*, I saw they had it all noted down.

For my part, I had been exceedingly glad to find a lodging at last. The townspeople had all been abominably suspicious or fainthearted, and would not even open their doors to talk to me. All was locked against the outsider. It was a friendly-looking woman who at length had signalled to me and told me to come in.

I climbed up a rickety back stairway, and groped my way to the room from which the woman had called me. My gladness was mollified when I saw the accommodation—in one room a chair, a balalaika and a pistol, and in another a table, a form and a chair. At the table two men were sitting, eating a meal; the woman still stood at the window as if watching for someone.

The men surveyed me up and down. One was a young fellow about twenty, a Little Russian, and the other a Great Russian of about thirty-five. The latter was apparently the guest of the other. The young man stared at me, and asked me the usual questions. He evidently found my answers very extraordinary, and I heard him whisper several times to his comrade the words—

“A case, isn't it. There really is something in this.”

“You'd better take off those baskets,” said he to me, pointing to my *lapti*. “Make yourself at home. Have a glass of vodka.”

My refusal to have vodka somewhat disconcerted him. “Then take something to eat,” he said.

There was cod on the table, not on any plate, not even in paper, but flat on the wood, and beside it a litter of cold potatoes boiled in their skins. There was a basin of ugly-looking mushrooms, and a half-finished bottle of

vodka. I was not tempted, and the sight of the men pulling the fish apart with their fingers, and eating the potatoes dirt and all, and skin and all, was revolting.

I said I would have some tea.

“ Ah yes,” said the Little Russian, rubbing his temple contemplatively with a forefinger “ that must be brought. Marfa, inquire about the samovar. It may be late, but you won’t mind waiting.” Marfa made a grimace and went out. Then the Little Russian introduced his comrade in the following words—

“ This is Fedor Matveitch Potemkin, leader of the choir, and I am a singer. That is our profession. Speak to him as to a bosom friend. He is a noble man, and learned beyond us. Show him some of your learning, Fedka.”

Fedka grunted. He was a dark, well-dressed drunkard, with a concentrated expression in his eyes. He looked as if he were secretly enraged.

The Little Russian continued.

“ Have a potato ; you must be hungry. You won’t have one ? Don’t like them, eh ? Well, what is it you want ? The Samovar—oh yes, I had forgotten. What is that box you’ve got ? A camera ; show it me.”

He showed it to the choirmaster. They examined it. “ It’s no use,” said the latter, “ worth nothing ; no good here anyway.”

“ Oh but it is,” said his companion. “ You’re wrong, Fedka. What’s it for ? How does it work ? ”

I explained to him the working.

“ How much does such a thing cost ? ” the Little Russian asked.

"I bought it in London," I replied. "You couldn't buy it here. But in Moscow you might get it for thirty or forty roubles."

He raised his eyebrows and looked at his friend. They stared at one another in silence and I knew they were wondering how they could best steal it. I was in a den of thieves.

Marfa came in and whispered something. .

"Go and borrow one somewhere," I heard the Little Russian tell her.

"What is it?" asked the choirmaster. "Haven't you got a samovar now?"

"No Fedka, I've sold it; sold it for one and sixpence, and it cost twelve shillings. The fact is, we were moving into new lodgings. I thought we should move, and to save trouble in moving, I just sold the samovar. Money is easier to carry than a samovar. But now it turns out that we're not moving. So that makes ten shillings dead loss. And I couldn't well afford it. *Byeda!* A calamity! Just think of it."

"That's not good," said the choirmaster.

The Little Russian waved his hand despairingly.

"You ought to buy it back," his comrade added.

"I shall; yes I shall buy it back. It must be done at the first opportunity. I'll sell something else and buy it back."

He looked at me with a new interest. "You want a pair of boots," he said. "I'll sell you a pair. These, for instance." He tapped his own high jack-boots, "better, no man ever looked upon. I'll sell them to you for forty shillings."

I demurred, pointing out the fact that they were too

small for me. This was an indisputable fact, and he didn't even offer to measure; he agreed.

"Well then," he said, "as a traveller you must be in need of maps. Look here what I've got."

He went into another room and brought a tattered geography book, and offered to sell me loose maps. He explained three or four maps incorrectly. It was evident he could not read, for he described a chart of the night sky in June as a map of Greece.

"I won't say a price," he urged mysteriously. "But what do you offer?"

He spoke friendlily, as if indeed I were an old friend of his, but I saw by his face that he was capable of making a quick change of front. He chose to get angry, because I would not buy his tattered maps and several times appealed to his companion for moral support. He called Marfa again, and told her to fetch a bed for me to sleep in.

"You're tired, of course?"

I said I didn't want to sleep before having tea. In myself I determined that I wasn't going to sleep there on any account. The mattress, for one thing, was filthier than that of a moujik, even of a dirty moujik. For another thing I reckoned on losing some of my things if once my eyelids fell upon my vigilance.

"Oh, Devil take me," said the singer. "Go Marfa, and borrow a samovar somewhere or fetch in some hot water, that's the same thing."

"Now look here," he added, addressing me. "I'm out of money at present. You want some boots. You won't buy these that I'm wearing. I'm a bootmaker. Give me an order."

" You said you were a singer."

He waved his hand. " Joking apart, I'll make you a pair for eight roubles, for eight roubles down, taking the money in advance, and that is a fair bargain."

I did not answer.

" You agree," he suggested.

I shook my head.

Some minutes later a cat came into the room ; a mangy creature with one eye—the other had been wickedly poked out sometime, probably by the Little Russian, I surmised. When presently I tried to call it to me, *kss-kss-kss*, the bootmaker offered to sell it me for a shilling.

No samovar came. The woman who had brought the mattress had gone to watch at the window again. I had determined not to spend the night in this den and was asking myself how I should manage to get away, when suddenly someone called up the stairs in a strident voice,

" Vashka is coming."

The two drunkards looked at one another with consternation, and the woman who had been watching, ran out of the room.

" What does it mean ? " asked the choirmaster.

" I don't know," said the other, " there's no reason for his coming."

" He knows we've got this man in here ; that's it, cunning dog, he's smelt him out. I say, friend, the *gendarme* is coming. Your little tale won't do now. You'd better just slip out of the window and run for it."

I did not, of course, feel alarmed.

" Hide the photographic machine," said the Little



Russian. "Let me hide it for you. If he sees that, he'll take it." But I refused to hide my camera. There was more likelihood that they would themselves steal it or lose it or break it. I really welcomed the interruption. I hoped to goodness the gendarme would arrest me, and order me to follow him. In that way I should get clear of the drunkards. I did not fear the police, for I had in my pocket the recommendation of the Governor of Archangel.

The drunkards looked at the gendarme solicitously and anxiously. "What is it, Vasya?" said the Little Russian. "Why have you come to-day? Drink a glass of vodka with us!"

Vasya shook his head seriously. He really couldn't be on friendly terms with them at present. He wouldn't even accept a cigarette. He came straight up to me, and putting one open hand on my shoulder, ejaculated—

"Please, your passport."

I gave him my Archangel letter, and he looked at it upside down.

"What is this?" he asked.

I explained.

"You'll have to come at once to the office of the *Ispravnik*. He won't keep you long."

"Surely it's not necessary," said the two men; "he's done no crime. Let him stay. We will be surety."

"It's only a form," said the policeman.

"You'll wait till I dress," I said. "I may be some time, as I have some difficulty in putting these on." I pointed to the *portanki* and *lapti*. He agreed. Then from my knapsack I took a clean collar and tie, and an English jacket, and made myself as important looking

as possible, combed my hair and put on my linen putties and birch-bark boots.

"You'll be free in an hour," said the Little Russian. "You'll come back, of course. The samovar will be ready. We'll have a game of cards. You play Preference? No, oh then we'll play *vindt*. Don't take your things; leave your cloak and your camera and your heavy sack."

"No. I think I'll take everything," I said. "For who knows, perhaps I may be in prison all night, perhaps I may be sent out of the town—God only knows what may not happen."

The policeman took up an indifferent attitude. If I left my things, that was my affair. I did not, however, leave anything, for I was perfectly sure I should not return.

I told the gendarme that I was travelling to see the country and the people; that I was a member of the "Society for the Exploration of Northern Russia"; that I had special permits, and was not Russian but English. He was evidently impressed.

"Were not these people thieves?" I asked.

"Thieves and murderers," he replied, "the worst people in the town. If I'd left you there, they'd have stripped you. Lord knows what they wouldn't have done. You can be very thankful to me. Observe that I refused to be won over to their side. I refused a glass of vodka."

"You shan't be a drink the worse because of me," I said. This reassured him.

"But what an inhospitable town, where all doors are shut but those of the houses of thieves! I tried at least six places before I entered there."

"I know," said the policeman. "I saw you. I have been at several houses myself. The fact is, you slipped in here at the bootmaker's unexpectedly."

"He *is* a bootmaker then?"

"Yes; that used to be his profession, but he doesn't make boots now. He only steals them. You'd have had a bad time if I hadn't come up. I arrested you for your own good."

"That's a bit unusual, isn't it?" said I.

The upshot was that the *Ispravnik* found me a safe lodging, and invited me to dinner next day. At eleven o'clock at night the same policeman who had arrested me was ordered to escort me to my lodging and save me from any molestation.

"The choristers will be waiting for us," said the gendarme. "If they ask you any questions, don't answer. They'll owe me a big grudge for taking you away from them. They won't like it. I shall go in danger of my life. But I couldn't bear to think of their robbing you in the night. I had to save you; it was as God ordered."

"But if they're such dangerous characters why don't you put them under lock and key?" I replied.

The gendarme sniffed. "If we put all the rabble in prison there would be nobody left."

"Your occupation would be gone?"

"Yes, we should have to become moujiks and plough the fields, just to get the bread in."

I laughed.

As we walked through the dark town, the policeman kept looking nervously around him as if in expectation.

Presently I saw the two choirmen lurking ahead. The Little Russian came up.

“What’s the business?” he asked. “What has he done?”

“He will be sent out by *étappes*,” replied the gendarme.

“How?”

“Under convoy to Ust-Yug.”

We marched on hurriedly, and they walked at the side.

“But where is he going to-night?” asked the Great Russian.

“He is going to the guardhouse, and is leaving the town at once.”

“That I don’t believe. But what crime has he committed?”

“Go away,” said the gendarme; or you’ll get me into trouble. There’s an officer at the corner.”

They obeyed, and as they slunk off the Little Russian smiled and whispered—

“Don’t fear. We’ll see you as you go out. Is there anything you’d like us to look after for you. The police are all thieves.”

I said not, and the policeman grinned and shook his head. Three minutes later we had arrived at the post-house.

“Now we’re fairly safe,” said the gendarme. “If you’d stayed there they’d have stripped you and turned you out naked into the street. As it is you’ll have to be careful. They’ll find out where you are and ask to see you. They’ll try to climb through the window. But you are safe if you refuse to see anyone, and bar your windows.”

I was put into a decent bedroom, and the gendarme departed. I obtained a samovar and had tea. Afterwards, when I was preparing to go to bed, the gendarme returned again.

"The Ispravnik sends his compliments," said he, "and asks you to dinner to-morrow. Please understand he does not command you to come. You are fully at liberty not to go, and no harm will follow if you do not come."

I said I would go.

The Ispravnik was a well-fed, well-groomed rotund little fellow, who eyed me with an immense amount of amusement, when he saw me come into his apartments in *lapti*. I must say his merriment was rather trying to my nerves, for it is not possible to walk briskly up to one's host and shake hands when one is shod in such boots. I came forward slowly, like a doubtful peasant. The worthy official had the advantage of me in a pair of soft Vienna shoes.

"It's the truth, I swear to God, the very truth," said the Ispravnik, turning to his wife, "top half *dzhentelmán*, lower half moujik." *Dzhentelmán* is a word borrowed from the English: it takes its stand with such amazing borrowings as "Komfortabelny," "ekstraordinaree," "fife-oklok."

"The top half has to walk at the rate the bottom half wants," said the official. "But now to dinner; that's the chief thing, and then tell us all your doings."

We made a meal of bright red beetroot soup, roast salmon and sweet *peerog*. It was the fast of the Assumption, but the official didn't live like a poor peasant.

For my part, I wasn't sorry to taste a good meal after a month of milk, rye bread, potatoes and mushrooms. My host purveyed wine and found himself a cigar ; the women left the table, and we were left to converse of Russia.

It is a subject no Russian ever gets tired of. Russians in their hearts all love Russia ; even her defects and her sorrows, and they despise the West. Hence this criminal-tamer or menagerie-keeper or bribe-taker, or organiser of corruption, or whatever may have been his rôle in this benighted little town, warmed and glowed with pleasure as I sang the praises of his native land.

" You are right, you are right," said he. " Russia will hold itself together when everything else has fallen to bits. It will be a great nation when Germany and the West are forgotten."

" But not till then ? " I urged with gentle mockery.

" But not till then," he applauded. " Akh Fedka, bring us in another bottle of port."

My host grew merry, and told me many anecdotes of life in the town, told me the various stories of myself that were already abroad in the town. For my coming had really caused a great deal of emotion. Most people said I was a robber escaped from banishment, but now that I was the guest of the governor, they would say I was an emissary from St Petersburg.

" But emissary from St Petersburg, or robber, or English correspondent, it's the same thing," said he, " the same thing. I've known men who were all three."

We laughed over the passport system. " God made man in four parts," said the Ispravnik, " body, soul, spirit, and passport ; and when Adam jumped up from



THE CHURCH OF HOLY CROSS OVER THE RIVER SUKHON





the soil, God tapped him on the shoulder and said sharply, 'Passport,' and Adam picked up his passport lying beside him, and saw his name 'Adam' written there, and the year of his birth *One*, and the name of his village *Eden*, and God read it and saw that it was good, and He charged him to take care of it."

"Strange things happen through passports," said my host. "Here is a story. Two men going to penal servitude met in the convict train and exchanged passports; one was an old man going for three years, and the other a young one going for twenty years. By exchanging passports they exchanged punishments. The young man gave the older one thirty roubles in consideration of the extra years, but of course the latter did not mind, and indeed he died shortly afterwards, with nearly twenty years unserved. God won't make him serve those twenty years after death. Hell is the same heat for all; for Ivan the Terrible, or Borgia, or Oliver Cromwell. That's why I say 'Have a good time!' Though, of course, who believes in hell nowadays?—Only the moujiks."

I asked him how the moujiks lived in the province; he was of opinion that half of them went on pilgrimages, and the other half lived poorly, because there was not enough labour on the fields. If the rye harvest was good, the peasants were happy and full, but if it failed, they were unhappy and empty.

"Why don't they grow gardens full of kitchen vegetables, and so safeguard themselves against failure of the crops?"

"Just because they have no sense of property. No one will grow a garden because everyone else would poach on it. Potatoes and cabbages are always regarded

as common property, like water and air. The people prefer to breed pigs."

"What sort of country lies south of Nikolsk?" I asked, for I had little idea of what was to be seen in Viatka or Kostroma: "What sort of moujiks?"

"Don't ask," said he, "don't ask. I've never visited them. It's the land of the squires. I don't visit the moujiks, I visit the squires. They say there's unrest in Kostroma, and cholera, and what not, but it's out of our ken. We should know more if we were on the railway."

It is unnecessary to record more of our small talk. We parted on the best of terms, and on the morrow I set out upon my tramp once more.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE FOREST OF ANDANGA

**I**T is sweeter to remember than to forget. In the town everyone would have us forget, but in the country we always remember again. Beautiful flowers look up from under bushes by the roadway ; beautiful suns and moons look out of strange skies, and often it seems that I have been upon the same new road a thousand years ago, and all its view is half familiar. The scene propounds an enigma, and the flowers look up half smiling to see if I am answering it.

What is travel-melancholy ? It is to feel that the world which every one swears to be new is merely an old one renovated and re-garnished. But out of that melancholy there springs a glory, for we learn that there is something in our souls of which this world is unworthy, something in this world which is only fit to be trampled under our feet. " Therefore, with angels and archangels . . . "

The world affords no more adequate scope for our spirit than St Helena did for Napoleon. Napoleon may indeed play draughts with his gaoler, or pore over a book, and so forget for a moment, but whenever he looks up and remembers, he is irreconcilable. The religion of the tramp is that he is always irreconcilable ; that he always cherishes the memory of his mystery ; that, although he is far from his kindred, he never forgets

the seal on his bosom that tells him he belongs to a royal house. We tramps, we irreconcilable ones, are the orphans of kings.

What is beautiful is every little rite that reminds us of our mysteries. Along the road to Andanga, little Parnassus flowers gleamed in the forest moss, and the clouded sulphur butterfly, red-spotted on each wing, flitted to and fro, whilst high overhead the sun played with the clouds, or gleamed on the frowning tops of the pine trees. I was in a broad forest. For four days after leaving Nikolsk, I tramped through the primeval wilderness. Gigantic pines and birches and planes sprang straight and clean a hundred feet out of the sandy earth. The road was walled in with them, and so closely were they packed together that all their crests intertwined and overlapped, causing a great darkness under them. Along the rotten wooden roadway were hundreds and thousands of little black clustering toadstools falling to bits and looking like ruined cities.

I passed through the village of Permas, and at thirty-five versts from Nikolsk, came to Hunchback Clearing. Here the wood changed in character, and I came upon a cramped forest of aged birch and fir, each trunk shrunken as if with age, and many firs warped and withered like the weird sisters on the heath. It was an evil wood. The peasants were quite right in telling me it was haunted by crooked witches who changed little children into polecats. It is also haunted by beasts of prey.

“ Why did you hurry in so early ? ” asked an old woman of her children at Hunchback Clearing.

“ We saw a she-bear in the dusk,” they answered.

I had myself a lively fear of she-bears, and a lively

trust that they wouldn't come my way when I laid myself down in the dusty forest leaves to sleep that night. There was an awesome silence and an intense darkness. I made my bed at the foot of a wooden cross that had been set up in the forest by a peasant who had seen there a vision of our Lady of Kief. Evil spirits might be expected to fight shy of the Cross; robbers would regard it as sanctuary, and I trusted that wild beasts would not come so near the road in search of prey.

I lay down gently and wrapped myself in every inch of my cloak, and stretched myself out and listened. Not a sound, not a creak, not a breath! Only an odour of decay and of pine mould. My limbs were so tired that I had not the slightest inclination to move them. They sank into the softness, resting all their weight there, and despite the idea of vigilance suggested in my mind, my eyes kept drawing down their curtains. My last thought was, "If a bear comes, it will be no good climbing up a tree."

Once in the night I awakened, and heard far away on the ground, *pad, pad*. Then near me, at my ear, was a little scuttle—some mouse hurried away. Far away, *pad, pad*, then *ssss—sh*, a long rustle. What might it be! I listened in breathless terror. Nothing more followed, till suddenly, just over my head, sounded the gurgling of a goatsucker. What was this bird of evil omen doing at so late an hour?

But again sleep conquered all thoughts, and I lay placid in the arms of the earth. A beautiful, sweet night, and even despite my waking thoughts, my dreams were gentle.

"To Mary Queen the praise be given  
*She* sent that gentle sleep from heaven."

No doubt I was preserved by our Lady of Kief, at the foot of whose cross I had lain.

The breath of the morning was odorous and frosty. There was no resting in comfort again after the twilight of dawn.

Three miles walking brought me to a hut in the wood, and there I had breakfast at the hands of a Lithuanian woman. She was one of a number of colonists that the Russian Government has brought over, and settled in the forest with a view to developing these desert regions. They are sent from the Baltic Provinces, are given a certain amount of stock, and they receive a regular money allowance from the Government. A costly and unproductive experiment, I should say; for the rye does not ripen, and there is scarcely enough grass to feed the cows. But the hardy Lett is thrifty and clean, and if anyone can wrest sustenance from wild Nature, he can.

Another long day in the forest, and no companions but the trees! I noticed for the first time that the season was changing. August had given way to September and Autumn had breathed on the forest. The leaves on the birch trees had turned pale. The chestnut-coloured vapourer moth danced in the sunshine or floated on the breeze, and yellow leaves were continually falling. The rushes in the muddy ditches were brown and withered even in the water. The woodcock shrieked unpleasantly from the forest. Summer had gone.

I came to Andanga—eleven houses in a yellow wilted clearing. Next day, still in the forest, I passed on to Garavaya clearing, where I arrived late in the dusk, feeling very tired. It was a small and very dirty village, and it seemed impossible to obtain a decent lodging

for the night. At length, at a little izba, where an aged grandfather was lulling a child to sleep,

“Oo-e, oo-e, oo-e, oo-e, Oo  
Lu, lu, lu, lu, loo.”

I was directed to a place where there was a spare room. I put up at a little cottage packed with dirty children. The host was a wild-haired mass of animated mud, but he spoke very civilly, and showed me into an empty room. His wife brought in two armfuls of hay, and I slept on the floor. It was an old disused room, and its windows were all broken. On one wall was a rusty gun. The room was not used because it was cold, and it was difficult to get glass to mend the windows. As it was, I should have been warmer asleep in the forest itself, for this draughty room was in a clearing, and the breeze wafted forest dampness to and fro.

Next day I passed into the province of Kostroma, and left behind me wooded Vologda. On a hill at Iraklikha I looked back over the forest I had traversed, and saw many leagues of tree-tops beneath me. The sky was altogether cloudy, and, far away, the clouds rested on the dark trees. I felt like the man who, in Turgenev's dream story, is taken by a spirit over the untrodden highway of the roof of the forest. Myriads of boughs and stems waved up to me.

Then, looking eastward, I saw fair Kostroma ; merry woods, wide cornfields, green hillocks, the broad valley of the Vetluga, and all the signs of plenty in a smiling land.

. . . . .  
This was in the week of the Festival of the Assumption :

a time of rejoicing after *Spozhenki*, the Fast of Our Lady. In that week comes the harvest home, the blessing of the bread and of the beer, and other old customs. At Visokaya, the next village on my way, I witnessed the bringing home of the last sheaf of the rye harvest.

I was at a cottage where one could scarcely breathe for the odours of hops drying. Five or six ropes were stretched across the room like clothes lines, and armfuls of hops dangled from them. Hops also hung from pegs on the walls, hops were on the floor, hops in the barn. My host told me we were going to hold the festival of the blessing of the bread and of the beer, and that the women were already out in the fields, binding the last sheaf with embroidered cloths and decorating it with ribbons. Presently we should go out to meet them; the priest would be there, and the sheaf would be brought home with songs. In the afternoon, the women would bake pies from the first of this year's meal, and the men would drink healths in the first of the new beer.

The worthy man had already tasted enough intoxicating liquor for the day, but he informed me that by evening there would scarcely be a sober man in the village.

"I was a sober man for thirty years," said he, "but I learned to drink when I went to the war. It was a bad day when I began. I don't know why I started it. Perhaps it was because we were so far away from home, or because we were losing. If the war had been nearer home we should have won, and we should have been sober."

There were three or four men, neighbours of my host, sitting round the samovar by the open window through which the morning sun was shining. Someone in the



street shouted a message: Weren't we coming out! most of the other villagers had already gone to the fields. My companions boisterously agreed, and we left our half-finished tea, and hurried to the place of the ceremony.

Visokaya is a very large village on a hill, with a white church that dominates everything. There are three roads going down the slopes of the hill: one to Viatka, another to Vetluga, and the other to Nikolsk. The low wooden houses cling to the steep hill slopes, and the high white parish church stands four-square, a stone edifice, upon the very summit.

We went down the Viatka road, and there, in a field on the left, saw a crowd of villagers with sickles, and many women holding straws of rye. The sheaf was bound, and the priest had just arrived with the holy water. There was a buzz of conversation. The sun gleamed on the golden corn, on the red and yellow cottons of the peasant women, and the bright shirts of the moujiks, the yellow *lapti* and the bright blades of the sickles.

Presently there was a movement and a silence. Ikon bearers arrived with sacred banners, and two men brought a cloth-covered reading desk, on which was a book of the Scriptures; then came a little surpliced boy to hold the basin of holy water. The deep voice of the priest sounded out in a short prayer. The moujiks prostrated themselves, and then rose with many cries of, "*Slava Tebye Gospody!* Glory be to Thee, Oh Lord!" The sheaf was brought by the women, and the priest sprinkled holy water upon it, and flung holy water into the air, sprinkling and blessing the people. Then came sacred music, and it seemed to me the sacred gradually slid into the secular, as bearing the sheaf high, the peasants

filed into a procession, and replaced their hats on their heads. There was a roar of merry singing ; harmonious, disciplined ; and a march of triumph back to the village. Every one carried ears of corn and sickles.

That afternoon I tasted new bannocks made with the first of the meal, and beer from the first of the hops.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE COMPENSATIONS OF ILLITERACY

**T**HE moujiks are sociable and brotherly ; they do things together, sing together, pray together, live together. They like meeting together in public places, in churches and markets. They like great parties at marriages and funerals, and prodigal hospitality at all festivals. They like to wash themselves together in the public baths, and to work together in field and forest. They are more public than we are ; less suspicious, less recluse. They would never live next door to anyone and not know all his family and his affairs. They always want to know the whole life and business of a stranger moujik, and the stranger is always willing to tell. They do not shut themselves in ; their doors are open, both the doors of their houses and the doors of their hearts.

This simple charity is the peasants' heritage. It is what we have lost by our culture. It is a golden virtue, better worth preserving than all other prosperity. Consider how it is we have partly lost it, and how the peasant may lose it also if the ministers of progress are not careful.

Carlyle once observed that the book had now become the church. Men entered into books as formerly they

entered churches. This is profoundly true, but it is not a truth of which to be necessarily proud. The book has been a great separating influence. It has taken us away alone. It has refused to be shared with others. It has taken us from our parents, our wives, our husbands, our friends. It has given us riches, and not necessarily given the same riches to others. It has distinguished us ; it has individualised us. It has created differences between ourselves and our fellow-men. Hence our pride, our suspicion, our distrust. Churches are not of stone. A church is composed of two or more people gathered together with one accord. The great ideal of a nation has been to be one church, but books have been the disintegration and ruin of that church.

In Russia there are no books. The Church supplies the place of all books—I am, of course, speaking of the peasantry. Instead of every book being a church, the church is the book.

Hence the delight in every tiniest portion of Church ritual ; hence the full attendance at the churches ; hence the delight in the service and in the music. Hence the wonderful singing, that is accomplished without organ and without books of the score. If Russian choirs astonish Western Europe, it is because Russians have loved to come out and sit together on logs in the village street, and sing for hours, night after night. If they learn to play the balalaika well, it is because they all make balalaikas themselves, and play upon them together from boyhood to old age.

Because the peasants have no books to read, they are all forced to read the book of Nature. They do not hear

the imitation of the nightingale, therefore they listen to the nightingale itself. They do not look at "real life," as depicted in novels, therefore they look at real life without the novels.

If the moujik had books, he would build higher, larger houses, so that he might have a room into which to retire and read and have silence. But as it is, he lives in one room, and likes to see all his family about him and as many of his relatives and friends as possible. He rejoices to give hospitality to pilgrims and tramps bringing stories of other lands and other provinces. He rejoices in keeping open house and in visiting. To such an extent has hospitality gone that not only is open house kept, but *open village*. There is a whole system of festivals throughout the North, and the villages take it in turn to keep open house for the inhabitants of all the villages round.

All this is due to the fact that the peasants have what we should call spare time. Because they do not read, they have time to enter into many more relations with their fellow-beings—for spare time, after all, means spare life.

As I have said before—in Russia you may study conditions of life which were once the conditions of England. You can see what England has left behind. Here in the life of this mediæval peasantry is a veracious picture of our own past. It is more instructive than any book.

One is told that in London every shop had formerly its sign. I believe this was due to the fact that the great mass of the people could not read. To-day in Russia, all shops have their signs. Outside the baker's shop,

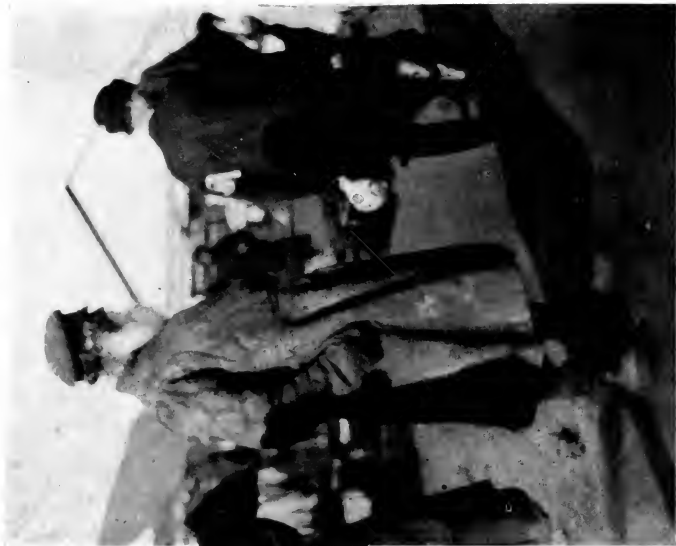
beside his printed name, printed name by the way, often quite unintelligible to himself, is a very lively picture of white loaves and rolls, biscuits, krendels, baranki, cakes. Outside the fishmonger's is a large picture of fish, outside the butcher's of meat, outside the poulterer's of chickens and game, outside the tea-shop, of a samovar, teapot, glasses and saucers, and so forth. Houses are painted red, green, yellow, blue, so that the peasants may easily differentiate between them, or explain the way. Trains are sent off by bells at the station, because the peasants can't read the time-tables. The first bell, one chime, is a quarter of an hour before the train starts ; the second, two chimes, is five minutes before ; and the third, three chimes, means the train is starting. At post-offices men are employed to write letters for peasants, or read them, at a fixed tariff.

For addressing an envelope	.	One farthing (copeck).
„ writing a postcard or a short letter	.	Five farthings.
„ writing a long letter	.	Ten farthings
„ reading a letter aloud	.	Three farthings

Then every pillar-box has a picture of a letter shown on it, so that the moujik may know it is the place in which to drop his postcard or his envelope.

Because the peasant cannot read, there are no hoarding advertisements staring at his eyes, whether he wants to see them or not. This, surely, the eye-sick Londoner must regard as a tremendous compensation of illiteracy

But the greatest compensation of all is that through his illiteracy, the peasant is nearer to reality. He does



THE KOSTROMA MOUJIK



VARVARA SERGEVNA AND THREE PEASANT CHILDREN





not read about life, he lives ; he does not read about death, he dies ; he does not read about God, he prays. He has his own thoughts, and they are not muddled up with other people's thoughts. His mind is not a confusion of a thousand disconnected ideas ; he reflects in his soul the deep beauty of Nature itself.

I fell in with a squire's son at Visokaya, and he invited me to drive him with along the road to Viatka, and I agreed. With him I vented this subject. He was one of the intelligentia.

"I'd teach them all to read," he said, "print books cheaply and spread them broadcast. Look at the great masters waiting to be read, Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, Dickens, Nietzsche. Think what boundless profit the moujiks might have, what new ideals, what development, what delight ! Then, modern writers would also get more money for their books."

I disagreed, because in England, free education has nearly killed good modern literature. In the estimation of new literature, the majority is always wrong—in the estimation of the classics the majority are always sheep. Therefore I say, keep the majority out of it till the minority is quite sure it can take care of itself.

"You talk of Nietzsche for the masses," I said. "Do you not know that passage—'That everybody is allowed to read, spoileth in the long run, not only writing, but thinking. Once Spirit was God, then it became man, and now it is becoming mob——'"

"Oh," he replied, "but in Russia, even the lowest read Nietzsche and understand. Why, in Moscow the boys in the schools call themselves Dionysian or Apollonian

just as in yours they call themselves Whig and Tory."

"As in ours they call themselves Oxford and Cambridge," I replied, and I saw he hadn't understood me. But that is what Nietzsche meant by spirit becoming mob.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### A THEOSOPHIST

**T**HE road to Viatka is desolate and forested. It follows the Vetluga rivulet south-east into Kostroma Province, then turns north and dips into Vologda once again. Finally it reaches the agricultural and semi-eastern province of Viatka. It had been my intention to proceed to the capital of the district and thence walk by Yaransk to Nizhni, but the heavy autumn weather coming on, I realized that the mud would be too much for me. After staying a night at the Squire's residence near Gagarina I returned in a waggon to the Vetluga Road.

But I will tell of my night at Gagarina, the first I had spent among gentlefolk since leaving Archangel. The house was a well-built one in a nook of the estate. I perceived that I had come into the region of landowners where the peasants do not possess much land of their own, and are obliged to do heavy service on the Squires' land and for little wages. The house was a well-built one, of two storeys, and having in front of it a creeper-covered verandah. Inside, all was luxury and comfort. The rooms were spacious and well-furnished; the floors polished. In the hostess's withdrawing room there was a carpet, an English fireplace, artistically shaped and coloured arm-chairs and divans, a writing-desk, some

shelves of books. It was an oblong room ; there were no ikons in it, though at one end hung a delicate white crucifix and at the other a life-size portrait of Madame Blavatsky. The one window at the crucifix end lighted the room inadequately. The other rooms of the house were comparatively uninteresting, the English bathroom, the well-appointed kitchen, the dining-room where the samovar was always steaming, the men's bedrooms full of half-finished joinery, knick-knacks, and the refuse of hobbies. Mme. Odintsef's drawing-room was the one that showed me I had come to an interesting house. For like Beekof's room at Archangel it was the expression of an individuality. And Beekof's room was the expression of the soul of a hunter of bears, whilst this expressed that of a hunter of ideas. Mme. Odintsef wore it as she would wear a beautiful dress.

My hostess knew English better than I knew Russian, and so for the first time during the summer I heard myself speaking my own tongue, heard myself with a little surprise. Mme. Odintsef had taught herself English in order to read the works of Annie Besant. Mrs Besant's picture also hung upon the wall, and I understood that my hostess was a theosophist. It was not the first theosophist I had met ; there were several in the little town in the far south where I had lived. Pereplotchikof himself flirted with theosophy, and said it was at any rate a satisfying hypothesis.

Mme. Odintsef took very kindly to me. Her husband had no interest in philosophy, and preferred to spend his evening developing some photographs that his son had taken. So I was left many hours with my hostess, and we talked of Russia and Theosophy and England. She

was one of the most powerful women intellectually I have ever met. Her broad pallid countenance fresh and clean as marble expressed strength in every curve. She was not unlike H. P. Blavatsky herself, and to add to the resemblance she made cigarettes with one hand with great dexterity whilst she talked.

She showed me her books. She had not more than thirty altogether. I remember chiefly :

“ The Wisdom of Lao-Tse,” translated into English.

“ Wu Wei,” translated into English.

“ Bhagavad Gita,” translated into English.

“ Four Great Religions ” and “ Esoteric Christianity,”  
by Mrs Besant.

“ Dead Souls,” by Gogol.

“ The Meditations of the Monk Ignatief.”

“ Shakespeare’s Works,” translated into Russian.

“ The Poems of Blok and of Balmont.”

The first books were all theosophical, the others Russian. What interested me more than any other thing was the belief she held that Russia was about to receive a new revelation. She regarded Blok and Balmont and Andréef and Biely the foremost writers in Russia to-day, as the forerunners of some wonderful new incarnation.

“ Have you not observed,” said she, “ a singular feeling of expectation in the air as if some great one were about to rise ? There is a hush of expectancy in Russian literature. The poets of to-day are all waiting to step into a procession. The pageant waits in silence as just before sunrise the city lies arrayed for the glory of the day. Someone shall arise, majestic, silent.”

“For instance,” she went on, “do you not observe a hush and a murmur of promises in this poem of Balmont?”

She read a beautiful poem in Russian. I remember a verse.

“There are some voices discordant and angry,  
Which trouble the soul,  
*There are some voices gentle and murmuring,  
In which eternity dreams.*”

We turned over the pages of Alexander Blok together, a delightful poet of Modern Russia. One of his books is called “About a Beautiful Lady,” and it tells of a vision of the beauty of the world which comes to him unexpectedly when he is looking at a dawn, when he is in church, when he is talking to his beloved. Another book of like character was his “Unexpected Joys”—gleams of wonder seen in ordinary things, perhaps best explained by that line of Browning:

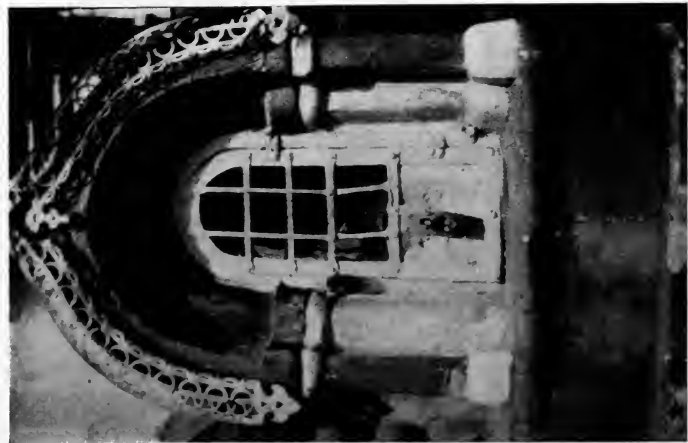
“Then God’s own smile came out, that was thy face.”

We read together a poem called “Holy Russia”:

“Thou art unusual, Russia, in thy sleep;  
Thou retest in a mystery.”

Russia sleeps in her broad spaciousness whilst whirlwinds of snow pass over the land—beautiful poetry, unfortunately not communicable.

Mme. Odintsef also possessed some of the works of Viacheslav Ivanoff, a great Russian essayist, whose works should be translated into English soon. In his writings also is the hush of expectancy. In his great work, “From Star to Star,” he asks the important question, “Is



A WALL-ICON, ROSTOFF THE GREAT



PILGRIMS LEAVING THE SOLOVETZKY  
MONASTERY HOSTEL, ARCHANGEL





the soul of Russian symbolism romantic or prophetic ? ”  
The following sentences are extremely suggestive :—

“ Romanticism is grief for the unrealisable. Prophecy is grief for the unrealised.”

“ Romanticism is the red of evening. Prophecy is the red of morning.”

“ Romanticism is hatred of Fate. Prophecy is love of Fate.”

“ The Temperament of Romanticism is melancholy, of Prophecy it is choleric.”

“ For Romanticism the golden age is past, for Prophecy it is to come.”

“ Modern English writing, except that of Mrs Besant, is Romanticism,” said Mme. Odintsef.

“ And Tolstoy ? ” I asked.

“ Oh, Tolstoy, I don't like him,” she replied. “ He also is retrospective, romantic.”

“ Gorky ? ”

“ No, no ! ” She made a wry face. “ He seeks material ends, and doesn't even expect these. He doesn't feel any promises except of pain. He is all autumn. Tolstoy is summer, he comes before decay. Tolstoy went before Gorky. The great Russian writers are winter and spring. they promise life and blossoms—but mostly winter. As Neitzsche says they have no to-morrow, they only have a day after to-morrow.”

“ Tchekhof ? ” I inquired.

“ Tchekhof is late autumn,” she replied with a smile.  
“ Turgenev is midsummer, and Gogol all the year round.”  
We talked of symbolism.

“ For the mystic all life is symbolism,” said she.

"Life is a telegram of which we struggle to understand the cypher. Our actions are all rites, our words all mysteries. Words rise and set in our minds like suns of various hues. The world before sunrise is a word as yet not understood. Men, animals, scenes, flowers, change their shapes and positions as in a kaleidoscope turning, and they ever take new forms making new words. If we cannot accommodate ourselves to new forms and new words we become unhappy. The theosophist is calm, because he knows *that* which changes, but which is the same, whatever form it takes.

"Only they curse God who worship idols," I ventured.

"They curse the *name* of God, God Himself they cannot curse. They are unhappy because they worship shapes, and all shapes are transient. Passion is affection for form. Love is truly for the spirit beneath form, for infinity—infinity, that is formlessness. Idolatry is passion. Love is infinite; passion finite."

Then our conversation entered into a barren argument which lasted till late in the night. I held that as our minds were graded to a finite world we could form no conception of infinity; that the idea of infinity was the confession of the impotence of the mind; that the word infinity was a stop gap. She held that she was aware of infinities intuitively, that her mind was graded to the All.

The reader may imagine our dialectical hide and seek in this labyrinth.

Next day and the day following we might have continued this argument without fruit, for I had an open welcome to stay as long as I liked. It was a great pleasure to my hostess to talk English and talk of her

philosophies. It was also a great pleasure to me, for her conversation was most interesting and she was a wonderful woman. But I hadn't time for sojourning, and it is the easiest thing in the world to outstay one's welcome in the house of a mystic. *Two* soon becomes one too many. I had seen Madame Odintsef, priestess of wisdom, Hypatia, Theosophist, and I know her as a wonderful woman. Some day I shall revisit her and spend another day.

Meanwhile I departed from Gagarina, a mystic perhaps just too self-conscious, assenting eagerly to what my hostess had said, "All life is symbolism, our actions are all rites, our words all mysteries." And a verse of Baudelaire was continually on my lips.

"La Nature est un temple où les vivants piliers  
Laissent parfois échapper de confuses paroles.  
L'homme y passe à travers la forêt de symboles,  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers,  
Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent  
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité—  
Vast comme la nuit et comme la clarté,  
Les couleurs, les parfums et les sons se répondent."

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE CONVERSION OF THE ONE-EYED WATCHMAN

**T**HERE was one peculiarity of Mme. Odintseff's establishment that I ought to mention—her one-eyed watchman, Fedka. All through the night this worthy kept blowing his horn, and several times in my sleep I was wakened by the idea that someone outside was giving a signal.

As I parted from Mme. Odintseff's, Fedka stood at the gate, horn in hand, and I recognised the instrument of torture. He was talking to the waggoner who had offered to take me to the Vetluga road. The waggoner knew him, and when I was aboard, he told me his story. Once Fedka had been extremely drunken, and now he was a reformed character, a perfectly sober man in fact. Like Vania, of whom I told in my Caucasian book, he had been cured by a priest by miracle, and much in the same fashion.

Fedka, once in his old loose days, fell down dead-drunk in the village street, and dropped asleep. When he wakened up, what should he see at his feet but a little red book, on whose cover an Ikon was fixed. Inside were little holy pictures, and some blank pages for writing in names. Fedka knew well enough what it was: it was a book in which to write the names of dead persons, that one might not forget to pray for them. It did not

belong to Fedka. God only knew to whom it might belong.

Fedka was much alarmed, and his mother told him it was a sign from heaven that he would die if he didn't take God's warning. "Take it to the Pope," said she, "and see if he doesn't say the same." Fedka went to the priest. "Yes," said the latter, "it is a sign, Fedka, that God does not want to lose you. It is a sign for you to turn away from your sins. You must resolve to lead a new life."

Fedka resolved. And first of all, he would give up vodka. The Pope prayed for him, and then Fedka prayed, and he promised to keep sober for three days. "On the third day you will receive your wages" said the Pope. "Bring them to me and let me bless them, so that you will not spend them on vodka."

On the third day, Fedka, still sober, brought his money, and it was very hard for him to pass the vodka shop, but he did pass, and the priest was much pleased, and made Fedka buy a special candle and light it before the Ikon of Nicholas the Wonder-worker. "Now your life is beautiful, Fedka," said the priest. "As the candle shines before the holy Ikon, so your sober life shines in the presence of God."

The priest took Fedka's money, and sprinkled holy water on it, and said to Fedka,

"I have given your money to God," and Fedka looked very blank, because he thought he was going to lose those bright roubles. But after a prayer the priest gave the coins back to Fedka, saying, "God has now given the money into your charge, Fedka, to spend for Him. This money is now sacred. You must spend it for God, and do

good. But if you spend it for the devil and do evil, then a great curse will fall upon you."

Fedka promised to spend it well, and promised to be sober for a whole week. The priest said, "But Fedka, if your strength fails, you come to me and give me back that money, and I will return it to God again, and give you different money to take to the vodka shop, and I will release you from your holy promise. For it is better to be drunken than to break faith with God."

But Fedka overcame all temptation, and came at the end of a week and promised for a fortnight, and at the end of a fortnight, and promised for a month—all on the same conditions; and when he received next month's money, he took it to have it blessed. "He still takes his money," said the waggoner, "and his last promise was for three years."

"He is then a completely reformed character?" I asked. "He has never been untrue to his promises?"

"No," replied the waggoner. "Now he walks with God."

"And why does he blow his horn so often?" I asked.

"He has to blow it every half hour through the night, just to show he isn't asleep, and so as people shall know where he is if there should be any disturbance."

Several stories the waggoner told me of village life. One was of a woman whose son had been sent to Siberia for forging notes—"I don't know why they took him," she said: "his notes were as good as the others; no one could have told the difference."

A day's jolting in a lumbersome waggon laden with

produce going to Nikolsk ; but it was not unpleasant, and I was glad of the extra rest for my feet. I parted company with my man at Nikolaef on the Vetluga road, and there sought out lodging for the night.

I was not fortunate. I think I had the worst night of all my tramp. For one thing, no men were at home ; every man had gone to visit some one else, because it was still the beer festival. The women did not care to have a strange man in the house when their husbands were out. " My man will come back at midnight, drunk," said one ; " you'd better not come here." And that was what was said to me at at least a dozen houses. Perhaps that would not have weighed so heavily with them but that I came from the south, having turned back from the Viatka road, and all travellers from the south lay under suspicion of cholera. For the first time in my journey I had come face to face with the danger of cholera. I was now in a district of epidemic.

The lodging I found and put up with at last was the hottest, dirtiest, most verminous of my whole journey. I scarcely slept a wink all night. I lay on some straw on planks. The flies bit terribly—their numbers were probably explained by the attraction of the hops drying in the room—and I was obliged to try and hide every inch of my feet and legs and hands and face to escape them. I couldn't do it. I tossed and turned, and at about midnight, one of the planks under me gave way and fell down with a crash.

I lay on one plank and listened to the flies buzzing, and cursed their biting. Where now was Mme. Odintseff's mysticism ? The five daughters of my hostess lay together on a straw mattress on the floor like Maeter-

linckian princesses, and as they had undressed in the dark, I did not care to strike a light. At length, however, fly-bitten to desperation, I lit up, dressed myself, stepped over the princesses, and stalked out.

I rested in the cold barn. At daybreak I went indoors again, hoping to get a wash, but there was no place to wash oneself. One of the young women was lighting a fire, but as there was no chimney, the room was full of smoke ; one could not see across it.

I said to the *baba*—"Your room is a shocking, dirty, unhealthy hole. If cholera comes, you will be one of the first to suffer, mark my words. You've got odd ends of vegetables rotting in the corners, filthy rags everywhere, the pig and the chickens running in and out, and the flies flustering around as if someone were dead of plague."

But she only sniffed. The slut !

Later in the day, I saw her going down to the stream to do some washing. I felt inclined to say "burn, not wash," and when I saw her dabbling the filthy cotton rags in the stream, the lines occurred to me—

"Oh tell me nymphs, what power divine  
Shall henceforth wash the river Rhine."



## CHAPTER XL

### THE CHOLERA

**I**T became increasingly difficult to find hospitality as I approached Vetluga, for the moujiks feared the dreadful infection of cholera. Poor pilgrims like myself must have suffered much hardship this summer, travelling through the panic-stricken districts.

Every village that I came to in the province of Kostroma was placarded with the notice—

*Drink no unboiled water.*

*Eat no green vegetables or fruit.*

*Wash often, and certainly before meals.*

*Don't get excessively drunk, either on vodka or beer.*

*Don't befoul the public streets.*

Which were wise enough if the peasant could read it. Illiterate peasants would ask what it meant, and they would get such dangerous answers as "It means the cholera is here," and "They say the cholera-fiend is coming. It will be necessary to look out for him." The danger of being taken for the *Kholershtchik*, cholera-bringer, had become a very real one for me. Wherever I went, the peasants looked upon me with suspicion. I heard stories, moreover, from all over Russia, of cholera murders. A typical example is the following: it came

to me in a letter which I received at Sharya. A man was driving a cart from the country into the town, and he gave a lift to a poor wayfarer with a pack on his back. They travelled some way together, and then the waggoner inquired what the other was carrying. The wayfarer, who was an old road-stained, wrinkled, weary man, replied in a sepulchral voice—

“ I am bringing the cholera to Vladikavkaz.”

And thereupon he began to sprinkle a powder over the side of the cart. The peasant who was driving, received the reply in silence. He was much troubled at heart, and it certainly did not occur to him that his passenger was a madman. So it ensued that after some prayers and wrestlings of the spirit, he drew his knife and murdered the old man, and drove the dead body to the police station and told his story.

All the while I had been sojourning in the cool Northern provinces, Cholera and Plague had been ravaging and terrifying Southern and Central Russia. The peasants regarded it as a curse, and the whole question of infection or death was a matter of arbitration between God and the Devil.

The most effectual charm against cholera, or cure when you took it, was holy water, and though one believes a good many of the stories of faith-healing nowadays, it was rather pathetic that their holy water was unboiled. The simple folk go with kettles and saucepans and pails and water-jugs to bring home the sanctified water, which is really only taken from the running stream and prayed over ; and that water, which has certainly washed all the defilement of the countryside and city, they use as if it were a precious disinfectant. One may see them

in the churches, crossing with it, washing in it, drinking it. If someone gets ill, he drinks it as medicine. It is sprayed on the walls and the floors, and even upon babes as they sleep at night.

All water must be boiled in Russia. For my part I did not touch water the whole way of my journey till I came to Moscow and I never touched tea without being sure that it had been made with boiling water. So great is the suspicion of unboiled water, that if you drink it by chance you at once expect illness of some kind, and even if the water be fairly pure, a faith miracle of a negative order is possible. Once I drank a glass of water at a wayside drinking fountain in the province of Rostof-Don, and I felt so ill that I was mortally afraid of cholera. Since then, all the drinking fountains have been supplied with boiled water. Indeed, in many towns, rather than let the peasants drink cold water, public samovars have been set up in the streets, and hot tea has been on supply free.

Then the peasants fear the cholera, not so much because they may die a loathsome and painful death, but because the holy rites of the Church burial will be denied them after death. For it is not allowed to take the infected bodies into the churches, and the dead are taken and buried in remote places. To be denied the pomp of burial, and to be shut outside the ancestral graveyards is evidently to go post haste to hell. A woman said to me, "If any of ours should take the cholera, and I thought they would not be buried at church, I should hide the fact that we had cholera. Rather we should all die first!"

There was such panic among the people that an in-

quisitorial doctor risked his life in reporting a case from a village, and it was often necessary to bring armed men to effect the removal of a "case" to the hospital. At Veronezh an extraordinary riot occurred. A priest, followed by a doctor, followed in turn by nineteen mounted police, attempted to remove a cholera-stricken person to the hospital, and a mob of peasants from the harvest fields rushed upon them with scythes and sickles and what not. They let the priest pass, but threw themselves with fury upon the doctor, whom they accounted an agent of the devil. The law came off second best in the skirmish, though the prisons were filled on the morrow. And I have heard that the infected woman was borne away to the hospital and died there.

At Vladikavkaz, my Russian home, there was great fear of the cholera, and also great terror of the denial of the Church's rites. The old grandmother whom I mentioned in my first chapter, especially feared it; and the daughter said that if the old lady took the disease she could not and would not declare it to the authorities. To go to the hospital was simply to die; she would rather nurse her mother herself. At Vladikavkaz also, my Sharya letter informed me, there had been much heart burning over the question of different treatment for rich patients. It was said, and probably with reason, that a different treatment was meted out to the rich than to the poor. When the rich man became infected he was not removed to the hospital: when he died, the family paid money to get a certificate that he died of some other disease. To die of the cholera was a disgrace, even in a rich family, and denial of church burial was looked upon as a great calamity by all classes. When

I was in Vetluga, there was a great stir over a wealthy merchant who had recently died, and I watched the funeral procession, and saw the questioning angry faces of the crowd who looked on. Three doctors had been called to the death-bed of the merchant ; one had said his disease was cholera, and the other two had perhaps been bought to pronounce it otherwise. Certainly, had it been a poor man, everyone well knew that the cholera hospital and almost certain death, would have been his lot.

Then in all the towns were constant church services and religious processions—a great revival. Anyone travelling in Russia might experience the life of mediæval Europe in time of plague, and really understand how the people of England felt in the dreadful year of 1665, or of Europe in the time of the Black Death. For Russia is a land of deep, unaltered piety. Every day in thirty or forty towns the holy pictures were taken in procession with sacred banners and the relics of the saints. The bishops and the priests held services in the four extreme points of the town, and sent their prayers to east and west, south and north, flinging the holy water in these directions, and as it were, disinfecting the very air we breathed.

## CHAPTER XLI

### HOW THE GOVERNOR CONFESSED HIMSELF A FOOL

**I**N passing out of the sway of the Zemstvo of Nikolsk into that of Vetluga, I entered a most populous region. The road was a continuous line of villages and one was never out of sight of human habitation. I had come to the land where wheat ripened. The further south I tramped, the more fertile were my surroundings and the more numerous were the dwellers upon the soil. I passed out of the provinces of peasant proprietorship, and entered those of the wealthy landowners—I wish I could say into those of a strong and healthy peasantry. Kostroma is a harassed province. As far as I saw, there was too great a gulf between the wealth of the masters and the poverty of their retainers. The situation of the squires would be made much better if they paid their labourers more money and allowed the individual peasant more land of his own. As it is, there is a kindled feeling of discontent in the province, and nowhere has agrarian propagandism made more progress.

At Zablukha, the next village on my way, a peasant said to me, " You have come to see how people live in Russia—I'll tell you—worse than anywhere else under the sun. The *pomestchiks* oppress us like a calamity. They make us work for them and starve us in return. We live poorly and then the cholera comes and kills us.

What the *pomestchik* needs is this—" he tapped his axe significantly.

At another village I heard evil tales of the police and their bribe taking. A gendarme questioned me about my papers at Shansk, and I observed him make the peculiar revolting sign which means "Pay me some money and I'll say no more about it"—the rubbing softly together of his thumb and first finger, winking with one eye the while. He was like Turgenev's official, who liked a summer day because "then every little bee took a little bribe from every little flower." But I showed him my recommendation from the Governor of Archangel and he fell back into attitude of salute with the forefinger of his right hand on the seam of his trousers.

The Governor of Kostroma, as I heard, neglected all his duties in order to hunt the revolutionary: he had lately been tricked into a resignation in an extraordinary manner. This is how I heard the story.

The Governor had exerted himself chiefly in the capture of revolutionaries and the bringing to book of all who had in opinion or in action sided against the Tsar in the national upheaval that followed the Japanese war. Day in, day out he harried the social democrats, and left all other business to get accomplished as it might—at the hands of his underlings. He spent six or seven hours each day with his police, and each evening took up a pile of documents waiting for signature, and without looking at their contents dashed his name in ink across the foot of them.

The consequence was that the reins slipped out of his hand and there were a great number of ridiculous and even scandalous happenings in his province. His regime

grew notorious for its blunders and its scandals. Government ceased to be a blessing and became a burden to the land. There was great discontent among the commercial classes, and even among the state officials themselves. They had, moreover, little hope of amelioration in affairs. Unless the Governor could be cured of his hobby or superseded by someone else there could be no diminution in misrule. It is an extremely difficult matter to show a high official the error of his ways, and more difficult still to fix the blame on the right shoulders when an unpleasant governmental blunder has been perpetrated.

But in this case a young clerk hit on a lucky device to work the ruin of the Governor, or at least bring him into discredit at St Petersburg. He composed the following declaration and laid it among the miscellaneous documents waiting for the signature of the Governor, confident that like all the others, it would be signed off-hand when the great official returned in the evening hot from the chase. And this was the declaration:—

“ I, Pavel Vassilievitch T. . . . Governor of the province of Kostroma, do hereby declare that I am an unfit person to carry on the offices of Government, and request that I may be relieved of my present duties.

“ My mind has unhappily been turned by the prolonged and dangerous activities of the Social Democratic and Revolutionary party, directed against the life of our beloved Tsar and the well-being of our Empire. I have given all my energies to the rooting out of all Liberal and modern tendencies in the Government of Kostroma, and such a demand has that made upon my faculties and health that I fear advancing age is now closing over me.



“I have committed many stupid and egregious blunders, and have been directly responsible for a loss to the Treasury of over a million roubles during the past year as will be seen from the instances tabulated below. I have allowed unlimited corruption among my civil subordinates to the great harassment and vexation of the commercial people, and I have by several ridiculous ukases caused the Tsar’s Imperial Government to fall into disrepute. I have arrested by accident persons of high authority and distinguished birth, and have let many notorious rogues obtain high official places. I append a list of the more notable mistakes of which I have been guilty.”

The daring clerk had disguised his writing, but he had the greatest confidence in his plot. His confidence was not misplaced. The Governor took the documents as by custom, and one by one struck off upon them the proud dashing signature which to his mind expressed his own greatness and his loyalty to the Tsar.

The Declaration was taken, folded, placed in an official envelope, and forwarded to M. Stolypin at St Petersburg. Affairs in the Government of Kostroma went on as usual.

A few days later the Governor was surprised to receive a brief letter from the Imperial Government ordering him to present himself at St Petersburg. No reason was given, and the Governor regarded the letter as somewhat mysterious. He rather thought it might have been forged by Terrorists, and that there was a plot to assassinate him *en route*, and he took the precaution of sending someone disguised as himself by an earlier train.

When he arrived at the capital, he was astonished to find himself coldly treated by the underlings of the Palace: there was opposition and disgrace in the atmosphere and he could not account for it. There was nothing in the mal-administration of his province that could be proved against him personally, and he was even entitled to gratitude for his unsparing efforts to purge his people of all hostility to the Government.

He waited in ante-chambers, and fumed and chafed and pulled his impatient moustachios, and scratched his stupid head. It was disgraceful, to be kept waiting. The very gold buttons were tarnishing and his uniform becoming dull. In an hour or so he would be feeling a criminal himself. At length he was granted an audience and came forward as boldly as he could into the cold presence of the Minister of the Interior. He stood a minute or so trembling like a school-boy before a headmaster, and turning over in his mind the prospect of disgrace and possibly of banishment to Siberia, but for what crime he had not the ghost of an idea.

Presently Stolypin turned over some papers and handed a document to the Governor, and inquired if the signature were in his writing.

"It is," said Pavel Vassilievitch with conviction, staring at the handsome scrawl.

"It is," said he, and then glanced to see what he had signed. He turned pale, aghast—it was the Declaration. And trembling like an aspen, he added, "But I could not have signed this."

"How do you mean? It is your handwriting, is it not?"

"I must have signed it by accident," answered the Governor.

“ Signed it by accident ! What do you mean ? ”

The Governor in confusion stammered out that he was so busy that really he paid little attention to what he was signing. And then, seeing the wrath rising in the face of his distinguished chief, and fearing that even the worst things might result from the interview, even disgrace and banishment, hastened to add, “ But of course, after this I cannot retain my post. I realise that I shall give in my resignation.”

Stolypin dismissed him, and a few days later the retirement of Pavel Vassilievitch T. . . . was officially gazetted, and by some mysterious channel the ridiculous document which trapped him into disgrace found its way into the public press, and brought the poor Governor a punishment even greater than the disgrace of banishment, the laughter of a people——

I hoped that when the new Governor was appointed, Kostroma would fare better.

## CHAPTER XLII

### ROAD ADVENTURES

**A**T Dukova, one of many villages in a populous district, I fell in with two waggon loads of revolutionaries who had regained their liberty after having been confined some years in the town of Nikolsk. They had hired waggons to take them to the Vologda railway. They alighted at a large farmhouse, and ordered the samovar at the same time that I was going from house to house trying to find lodging for the night. They were an uproarious party of young men and women, in tremendous spirits because of their regained liberty. I was feeling rather anxious because of the cholera scare that caused people to be afraid of strangers, and I suppose one of the girl-students noticed my plight, for she beckoned from the window and asked me to come in. The farmer would take me for one of their party. Nothing loth, I walked straight in and sat down amongst the company. The girl-student had taken me for a pilgrim, and in the dusk it was impossible to see my face. I was asked the usual questions, but I did not reveal the fact that I was an Englishman. My *lapti* proclaimed me a Russian peasant, and it amused me immensely to hear cultured Russians addressing me as if I were a peasant, a person totally devoid of intellect. The men made room for a moujik: the girl said, " Sit

down, little father, thou must be weary ; drink some tea. Whence comest thou ? But no need to answer, I see before thou speakest thou'rt a Vologda calf." She imitated Vologda dialect and giggled.

I felt defrauded of my rights. One doesn't mind being taken for a peasant by a peasant, but to be mistaken by one of one's own class, and a girl too ; and to be thee-d and thou-d in that way was intolerable. I could not deny myself.

" I'm not a Russian," I replied. " I'm English."

This she regarded as some enigmatical utterance such as peasants are for ever making when other people laugh at them. There was, however, a momentary silence in the room. Presently when a lamp was lit they all stared at me, and a strange constraint fell upon their speech. They saw I was no peasant, but they were afraid I might be a police agent sent to spy upon them and try to overhear their plans for the future. I increased their suspicions when I mentioned the name of one of their fellow exiles to whom I had talked at Nikolsk. But I managed, after all, to convince them that I was honest, and we all talked open heartedly and gaily before half an hour was over.

" I'll tell you," said I, " what you thought I was ; you thought I was a police spy. But you can be quite sure that the Russian Government will not employ men to go about in a garb like mine, whilst it is quite easy to bribe some of you yourselves."

" What do you mean ? " asked a young fellow, indignantly.

" In every thirteen there is a Judas, an Azef, or a Father Gapon. Your worst enemies will come disguised as

students and revolutionaries, but not as peasants or pilgrims."

They looked very sorrowful at that and nodded their heads. They knew it was only too true.

One very amusing thing happened just before the exiles departed. It showed the students' ignorance of the country and the road. They asked how much the farmer wanted for the use of his samovar—the students themselves had provided tea, sugar, bread and so forth. "Fourpence," said the farmer, meaning fourpence for the whole party. But the exiles took it to mean fourpence each, and actually paid it all round, fourpence for two glasses of hot water. The old farmer perceived their mistake.

The expression of his face whilst he received the money, fifteen copecks from each, was a study of repressed emotions. He saw I didn't pay. I smiled.

"All right, grandfather," I said. "I don't belong to the party. I'm on the road. You've got enough money."

The old man grinned. Some of the others, especially one who was a Jew, wondered if they needed to have paid. The exiles went away in their waggon. I stayed the night, and slept on a wretched bench. Next morning I said to the old farmer—

"Well grandfather, am I to pay you anything?"

"No, no," he said, putting one arm on my shoulder. "You're poor, I expect. I take no money from you as I ask for mercy."

The road was dry and straight, the day thrice beautiful, the *lapti* lay comfortably on my feet, and I accomplished many miles, sleeping next evening at

Osinovka. Thence I passed through desolate country to a village on a hill where I saw a strange sight. This was at Paolovo. The whole village had been burned away during the hay-making season, and now over the charred ruins the population was engaged building new houses. Man, woman and child seemed to be at work, and they swarmed over the ruins like ants over an ant-heap that has been kicked over.

The fire broke out one morning in July when everyone was in the fields cutting hay. Only the aged and the infants remained in the houses and there was no one to come and give the villagers notice. A high wind raged, and in two hours forty-one houses were burned out. The heat was so fierce that no one dare come near. Several babies perished, and one woman who tried to get indoors and save her child died also. Very little was saved; only a few infants, Ikons and samovars, and the fire burned every house north of the one in which it started. South of that house all the village was saved. But not only were houses burned, but the post-station, the trees, the telegraph poles, the vodka shop, the church—all went down in the great blaze.

It was a great calamity, but it was borne cheerfully and the families were all housed either in the remainder of Paolovo or in the neighbouring hamlets. Two families living in one room! It is a close pack.

I slept in one of the houses of Paolovo, and there were two families housed in one room there, and yet they did not refuse me hospitality. They even gave me one of the best corners to sleep in. But in that room there were two old men, one old woman, one married woman of about thirty, another of about eighteen, the latter had

a baby at her breast, the two husbands, a girl of about fourteen, and four other children. I am sure they didn't consider their position a hardship, though of course they regarded it as inconvenient. They all undressed and lay down on mattresses on the floor or on the oven—without a shadow of shame or self-consciousness. But then true peasants are like that all the world over; they are "healthy animals."

Again my night's lodging and samovar and rye bread was offered me for nothing, but as ever, I paid for my bare food. Peasants are not in a position to give me food for nothing: poor peasants who may easily starve before the winter is over.

Next day I arrived in Vetluga.

I had hastened on, taking advantage of a harvest cart, but when I got to the town it was difficult to find lodging. Dressed properly, I should have got into a hotel; dressed unmistakably as a peasant or a pilgrim I should have found shelter at a low inn. No one in a private house would listen to me; the people were too feared of cholera. At length, however, I did find shelter, but in about the worst establishment in the place.

I obtained a little square room with a table and a truckle bed. The bed had a dirty red mattress covered with a muddy blanket. The table was a two-legged one, originally four-legged, and had to be fixed against the window ledge. Then on the uncovered floor and on the tattered walls were aged insects. I did not think of sleeping, but wrote letters by a little oil lamp on the two-legged table. Downstairs was a restaurant and beer-house open till four in the morning, and I went down about midnight to see what was going. A man was playing on



a guitar to three or four drunkards. I sat and listened. Presently the musician was singing in a maudlin voice—

“ Ah if you only knew how my heart aches.  
The grief deep down, the torturing sorrow,  
The pain of love, the grief of my soul ”—

when we were disturbed by shouts and screams in the private apartments. The musician paused a moment and then continued his song, but I went quickly out, for the noise seemed to come from my room.

On the stairs a tall man was struggling with one of the serving-men. He had occupied the room next to mine and had fallen foul of the waiter for looking through the keyhole. Apparently the tenant had been infringing the regulations of the hotel by having company after the proper hours. The waiter's curiosity had been stronger than his sense of duty.

When I came on the scene the occupant of the room seemed to be getting the worst of it, for the waiter had his head down and was pommelling it. Then a woman who was apparently a friend of the former, ran to his assistance and began clawing at the waiter's eyes. The customer got up, and seeing me, appealed to me and shouted—

“ It's the police we want, bear witness how this villain set upon me, a spy, look at his face, look at his gallows face—not a Russian, a Georgian spy I swear to God, a type, I swear to God. I'll have the police on you if I have to spend a thousand roubles.”

The waiter seemed cowed.

The customer stared at him in anger for a moment, then lifted his hand and rushed at him inflicting a

thundering box on the ear. The struggle was resumed and the woman screamed for help. This time it was the customer who had the upper hand, but a few minutes later another waiter rushed up the stairs and set upon him. I thought it might end in murder and tried to intervene. But the woman above, who had apparently lost her head with terror had rushed to the bedroom and come back with a pail full of soap-suds and slops. I was fortunate enough to understand her intention and skipped back just in time to save myself a soaking.

There was a spluttering and a howling, but at that moment three gendarmes came in and settled the dispute by seizing the whole party and marching them to the police station.

"Wait," said the customer. "If I'm to be arrested, at least let me dress myself properly. How can I go before your superior in this state?" He pointed to his bedraggled garments, and tipped one of the policemen.

He was allowed to dress, but the waiters were to be taken as they were. In ten minutes the customer emerged, dressed in a beautiful black morning suit, high collar, soft black hat and gilt-handled walking stick. The gendarmes now paid him marked attention. "Is there anyone else you'd like me to arrest?" asked one of them. "Yes; the inkeeper and his wife," he replied.

The innkeeper and his wife were arrested.

"Anyone else?"

The customer looked at me.

"I'm not coming," said I, "so it's no use naming me."

"He's got no soap-suds on him, so he wasn't fighting," said the gendarme.

“ Ah, that’s true. Well, we don’t want him. Arrest him if you like. Who is he anyway ? ”

But the police would have nothing to do with me, and there being no question of arresting any one else, the party went off to settle their differences at the police station.

I went into the beer-room. The musician and drunkards had gone. All was silence. The other waiters had gone to bed. The girl who served out the beer had disappeared. A robber might have made a big haul with ease if he had stepped in at the door the gendarme left open.

## CHAPTER XLIII

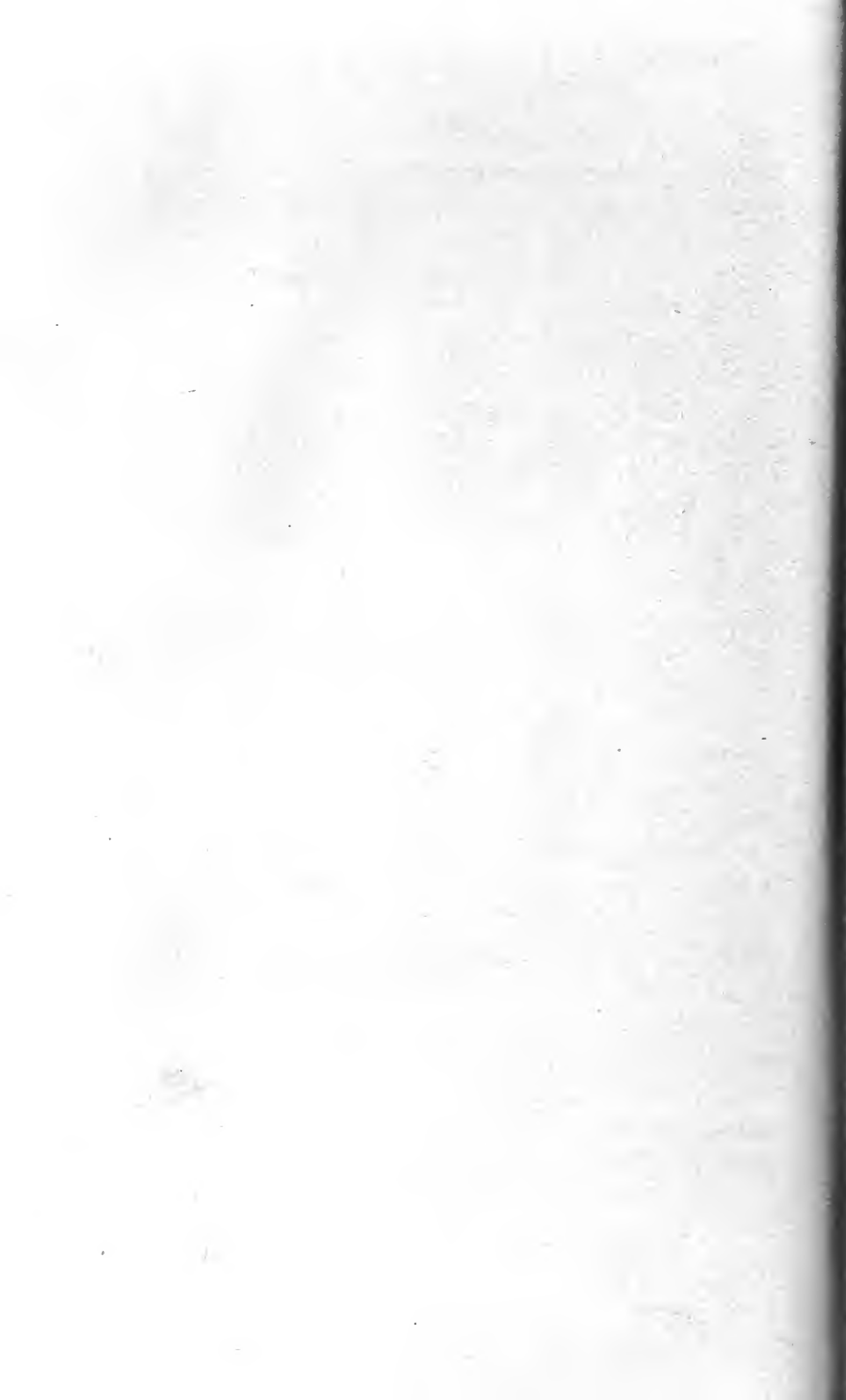
### ROSTOF THE GREAT

**A**T Vetluga I concluded my tramping, and indeed the harder part of my travels. The summer drew to an end and autumn descended with its floods. The harvest was gathered in. Now in corners of the fields the villagers worked with flail and fan. Presently the threshing would be over, and there would remain before the winter, only the vegetable harvest. On the 14th September comes the festival of the Raising of the Cross, and then as the peasant says, "Autumn moves to the meeting of winter" or as the priest interprets it, "Life, having taken its harvest, moves towards Death." Then commence the "Cabbage evenings." "At Holy Cross," says the moujik, "the first lady in the land is Mrs Cabbage." In the evenings they all stub cabbages and sing songs.

For a fortnight the peasants give themselves over to the gathering of peas and turnips and the grinding of the new corn. During that fortnight I reached Moscow. I had intended going by Varnavin to Nizhni, but I concluded that I was leaving behind "Undiscovered Russia" and entering the populous, railway-developed regions of the Upper Volga. Now southward, agriculture flourished; landowners grew rich; factories became more frequent, and industrial Moscow reached out its



THE CHURCHES OF ROSTOF THE GREAT



long railway arms. I determined to make a detour to Rostof-Yaroslav and spend some days of quiet in that ancient and holy city ; there to weigh up my gains and losses before I reached Moscow.

Rostof-Yaroslav is in my opinion the capital of Holy Russia. It's soul is that of Nesterof's picture.<sup>1</sup> It outbreathes an ancient holiness.

I arrived there one Saturday evening. The town was still and quiet ; the shops were all shuttered and padlocked and looked like so many disused stables and barns ; there were no cabs in the streets, no trams. Even the people were out of sight, being either in their homes or at church.

Great, cold white churches stood high in the evening light like stone pavilions, and abiding places of Gods visitant upon the earth. Above them, wrapped in mystery, ancient rusty domes brooded. In the ancient belfry of the cathedral, the choir of bells for which Rostof is famous hung moodily as if brooding over withheld messages. Their silence intensified the stillness of the town.

I walked inside the pink-washed weather-beaten Kremlin, where three old churches slept like hens that had retired for the night. I passed in and out by ponderous gates that swung-to heavily and rustily, and found myself in deserted squares and alleys where life-size pictures of the saints stared at old stalls from the walls of close-packed churches.

Rostof the Great, Rostof-Yaroslav, once a capital of Russia, but now a city of only nine thousand people, is the Canterbury of North Russia, preserving as it does,

<sup>1</sup> See frontispiece.

twelfth-century shrines and the relics of many saints. I surveyed from an old church wall its three and thirty churches, and its thousand or so wooden and stone dwellings ; its avenues of trembling birch trees ; its winding, crooked streets and old-fashioned market-places. Down below me, immense domes of tarnished green or rusty brown sat close, and slept over the fair white brows of little churches ; above my head stars peeped out of the evening sky ; and far away to the horizon, listless and placid, lay Nehro, the lake of Rostof, the clouds' looking-glass. It was a fair scene.

I found my inn, a ramshackle tavern with a dozen bedrooms for commercial travellers, artists, pilgrims, and I obtained board and lodging at half a crown a day. I realised, by the comparative cleanliness of my room and the absence of the creeping things of the earth, that I had reached a more civilised region.

Mine host was a strange character. His pet hobby was keeping canaries. He possessed five hundred of them, and the inn was more of an aviary than a tavern. Great cages in which were enclosed small trees hung on all the walls, in the bar, on the landing, in the host's bedroom, and the birds hopped from branch to branch, and fluttered to and fro, and chirped or sang twenties at once. The good man was somewhat of an eccentric. He was continually striking some tragic or theatrical pose, and when he spoke, it was in a hollow oracular voice as if he were addressing humanity at large. He introduced the canaries to me in this style—

“ Behold this cage ! For these birds I received from the show at Moscow, a medal engraved with the head of Nicholas ; looks like gold, but is only copper.”



He was so charmed by my interest in his hobby that he promised to visit me at Moscow.

“Mountain cannot come to mountain, but man can come to man,” he said.

After supper I heard him sermonising one of his guests in these words - -

“Seest thou that young child? Look upon its face; it is an angel. Such also wast thou once. Therefore do no evil, but live for God and the Truth.”

In my dark bedroom a little lamp was burning before the Ikon of St George the Victory-bringer. My window looked out over the Kremlin walls at the ancient cathedral belfry where now the dark bells had settled down to sleep.

I lit a candle. “Vasya,” I called out, “bring me a samovar. I should like some tea before I go to bed.”

“*Khoroshos*,” said Vasya, “all right; a little samovarchik, that’ll be no trouble.”

A quarter of an hour later he came hurrying in with the heavy bubbling urn, smoking and steaming and humming like some important machine—. Poor Vasya! He slipped in the doorway and fell down with a crash. The samovar capsized, pouring its scalding water right across the floor and tumbling out red charcoals spluttering and hissing.

The boy picked himself up ruefully. I thought it was a dreadful calamity, but he appeared to find it “*nitchevo*—a mere nothing,” he said waving his hand. His look seemed to say “It often turns out like this; it’s the way we’re served in life.”

“Oh you boots,” I heard the innkeeper scolding him. “You clumsy soldier’s boots!”

Sunday was a bright new day. I was awakened by a flood of sunlight—my window had no blinds. When I rose and dressed and looked out of the window, all the churches seemed alive and awake also. Through the night they slept, but in the morning they were up again and were eager for life once more.

Presently commenced a hubbub of little tinkling bells. I walked out into the streets and found them thronged with peasants, for Sunday all over Russia is a great market day. The peasant crowd was a grand sight. Outside my inn there were at least a score of wooden carts drawn up; the vehicles of country folk who had driven in to market. The rude home-made waggons lined every wayside, whilst the drivers in their best boots and old muddy corded trousers and variegated scarlet or purple blouses swilled beer at the many taverns. The *babas*, the peasant women, sat on the curb or under the covered-ways of shops on sacks or on boxes, dressed in multi-coloured cottons. They looked at one another with their broad country faces, and gossiped or sat silent and scratched their bare legs. Meanwhile what chaffering went on round stalls of old clothes, barrows of little cucumbers, yards of Russian basins! Bright-faced peasant girls had baskets of live fowls—each hen and duck and goose having its legs tied together and feeling in a very flurried state. A man went past me with two young foxes, vicious sharp-nosed little foxes smothered in dust and mud, and by no means willing to be hawked through the fair.

There is no great broad way at Rostof as at Moscow or Nizhni. The market is conducted in little alleys and

closes, in and out and round about ; you never see much of it at a time. The sun stands on top of the Cathedral wall as if it had climbed there—it looks down, flooding half a little court with light and leaving half in shadow. The many coloured crowd moves betwixt light and shadow, and ever so low down if looked at from above. What is it they are all flocking round ? Kvass, sweet beer, old iron, old oilstoves and tarnished samovars, bits of looking-glass, ancient boots, piles of *lapti*, boxes of secondhand nails, Blakeys, little white sucking pigs destined for Michaelmas tables—nothing more important—and the church domes preside above it all, and seem as it were to authorise it.

Someone has said you cannot see Moscow for the churches, and another has said you cannot see it for the Germans. Old Moscow is annulled by the money of its cotton millionaires. But here in Rostof there is no superimposed civilisation to get past, no English clothes, no Western conventions. Russia stands before the eye as it was, as in its heart it must always be, the land of the peasants. It was not for connoisseurs of art that Russian churches were built, and not for people of artistic temperament that its services were devised. It was for a people who are as little children.

I went into the Cathedral and I found it a picture gallery. And its Marys were adorned with haloes of roses. There also, flocked the peasantry and prostrated themselves in speechless adoration. Of all that buying, apparently secular crowd, not one omitted to attend a portion of the service and salute the symbols of religion.

Outside the Cathedral, Ikons are framed in the Church

wall, and hundreds of peasants come one by one and cross themselves there, the slow threefold cross for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I stood a long while watching them, ashamed to level my camera at such piety.

Then for peasant dearnesses, witness the hand-painted Ikons of Rostof, or the iron doors of the Kremlin divided into little squares, and each square having its little picture and legend—very ancient pictures now, and scarcely seen because the colours have faded, and because the gateway is so dark. The reader will see an example in a photograph I have given. The gates come together like barn doors and lock in the middle—the photograph shows one gate only; at one side is the pink-washed Kremlin wall and on the other the dark passage. Of the little pictures the most distinct and most amusing is perhaps the crow in the centre sitting on a branch of a tree. The legend says “I sing only to relieve my sorrow.” Other pictures that I made out on other gates were—

A sort of Humpty Dumpty; an egg with legs, with the legend “At length he climbed to the top.”

A Bear holding a sword and saying “Who shall take away my weapon?”

An Eagle and a Cannon, inscribed “I fear neither the one nor the other.”

A Fox in a trap—“The Caught fox steals no more geese.”

Many peasants came and looked at these pictures and made jokes such as “Oh ho, a fox: he’s caught, eh neighbour? That’s good for the fox, eh?”

When I returned to the inn the master said to me,



THREE LIARLIA FRIENDS



OLD GATEWAY OF THE KREMLIN, ROSTOF THE GREAT



“ You’ve been regarding our town ; it is what has been called a fine town. Does it please you ? ”

I assented that it did please me. I liked its holiness.

“ Yes,” said mine host, “ the Devil came here, but was feared of the crosses and turned back. But that was before my time. It’s not so holy now. Plenty devils come. *You* might be the Devil himself for all I know.”

“ You have my passport,” I remonstrated.

“ No, no,” he replied, shaking his head and looking very serious, and staring at me as if really suspicious, “ No, no. Saints come without passports ; they need none. But the Devil always knows where to find a passport if that’s likely to be any use to him.”

I laughed.

“ But,” said he, “ you are interested in holiness. That proves you are not holy yourself.”

“ Yes, yes,” I assented. “ I am interested in people holier than myself, people like you for instance.”

He grinned.

“ There’s a cunning one,” said he. He was silent a few moments and then asked me if I had visited many holy men on my journey.

“ No,” I said. “ But are there any particularly holy ones here—any hermits ? ”

“ Any that lie in chains and cure diseases by touching with the hand ? Yes, I can tell you of one : he lives in a clearing near Semibratovo, sixteen versts away. He has taken a vow of silence and will never utter a word again till he dies. Go. Perhaps he will cure your feet, for I perceive you are sore through wearing such hard *lapti*. He is called Isidore, named after the saint whose wonder-working relics are preserved here. Whatever

miracles the relics work Isidore can work himself, the peasants say."

"Is he in any way ordained by the priest? Do the priests countenance him?"

"Oh no, he is simply a peasant. Priests have often gone down to converse with him but when they saw his healing powers they were obliged to confess he was holier than they."

I visited Isidore and found him an emaciated old man with shaggy grey hair and long finger nails. The house in which he lived was a simple izba, foursquare of pine, and the only furniture worth mentioning was a three-legged stool and a table. Isidore lay flat on his stomach in front of a huge birch-wood cross which had been erected in the Ikon corner. He was clothed in ragged cotton shirt and trousers, and through the rents his aged bare brown flesh was visible. Black chains weighted him down so that it looked as if he had been cast into a dungeon to die. He lay prostrate because probably it was easier to bear the weight lying down, and even so, the heavy links must have cut deep dark grooves in his frail body.

"Hail!" I cried.

He answered nothing.

"Again Hail!" But Isidore took no notice, and might well have vowed deafness as well as muteness. He might have been dead for all the sign he gave of noticing my presence.

"Come away," said a woman at the door. "He is with God."

I followed out obediently.

"What did you want?" asked the woman.



" Oh, I just wanted to see him," I replied.

" Did he turn to you ? Did he make any sign ? "

" No, nothing at all. He might have been dead."

" He knows without your saying what you have come for, and had it been well he would have turned. As it is, he is with God, praying for the moujik. He is suffering that we may not suffer, praying to make up for when we fail to pray."

" How old is he, Auntie ? " I asked.

" He is seventy-eight years, Glory be to God ! "

" Then he will die soon. Tell me, what will happen when he dies. Will he be buried like other moujiks ? Will he have a special grave ? "

" We shall all take his body to the grave. But his grave will not be holy. The pope wills it otherwise."

" And the chains ? " I asked. " Will they be buried with him ? It would be difficult to take them off now."

" No, they will be taken off. Another man waits for them. They are never buried. Holy Isidore had them from Holy Stephen, and he had them from Holy John. But the cross will be put over the grave."

## CHAPTER XLIV

### HOLY RUSSIA <sup>1</sup>

**I**N a village in the forest I saw a girl who had died on the road to Solovetz ; a pilgrim. She was a wonderful flower, pure and holy, sent to breathe where none prized her beauty. She sprang up out of the dark secret earth of humanity. She perished and returned to the darkness. Nature did not prize her and Russia did not grudge her to death.

In Russia there are many such women. They flourish and perish, and flourish again like flowers upon the roadway of existence. They are the strength behind the Russian nation, the spirit of its beauty. They are born in poor men's houses. Strong women rear them : strong men look down upon them. They spring up slenderly ; they work within the house ; they toil upon the fields ; they feed cows, rock cradles, chop wood, bake bread ; they gather in the harvest ; they pray many times a day ; they go on long pilgrimages ; they marry and bear strong children and again they pilgrimage and they die. During all their life they never forget God, they never sully themselves, they are never tempted by evil. Simply and tranquilly they live, their eyes full of light because their hearts are pure. Because of them the woodsman is strong and happy. Because of them

<sup>1</sup> See frontispiece.

Russia is strong. Because of them the sun shines freshly and the birds sing. Because of their holiness men are allowed to be secular.

For as a priest once said to me naïvely, "Man is a Kremlin wall, and the woman is the church inside. The Kremlin is the army of warriors who have put their women inside. The men fight the outside world, but inside the women pray. The woman is the more sacred and precious part of the race. Better five men perish than one woman. That's why a husband protects his wife, and why all men wish to protect women—because the women are holy." And the strength and beauty of the men outside depends on the prayers of the women within.

Russia herself, as has been observed, is a woman-nation. She is the Western-man's wife, the womb of nations. Because of her holiness and simplicity, we may be worldly wise and live in towns. She gives us bread, and gives us prayers. She is the contented one. She is our steady, beating heart. For woman is an inner and more sacred consciousness, a temple within our souls, a place of refuge from the outside world. Woman is a church. Coming into her presence we lift our hats and compose our souls. Russia also is a church, a holy place where the Western may smooth out a ruffled mind and look upon the beauty of life.

The devils could not destroy Peer Gynt because of the women behind him ; Peer Gynt in all his worldly career was saved by the faith of Solveig kneeling in his forgotten forest hut. Ibsen was symbolical. He meant that the commercialised man was saved from damnation by the peasant girl behind him. Woe for Europe when it has brought all her peasants to the towns, when the

Solveigs are no more and Holy Russia has vanished away.

The strength of the young man may be seen in his eyes where behind the mysterious veil of the soul one sees his women kneeling. The man forgets God in the town and lives evilly. Then one by one those kneeling women rise and flee, till the man's house remains desolate. As long as one woman remains he is saved to life, but when the last is gone he is devoted to death. The money changers have full possession of the temple. His soul has ceased to be a church and has become a tavern, and now behind the curtained windows of his eyes a mysterious company sits over the wine.

Sometimes it seems to me that in any man lives all mankind, and that every man going to and fro upon the earth represents a self within myself, and that because each other man is living his peculiar life I can live mine freely. I live my little life and give my little contribution to the grand harmony, in the faith that all other people are fulfilling their parts and making their due contributions. And England also lives its peculiar life in the faith that other nations are living their peculiar lives.

England needs Russia living on the soil in holiness and simplicity, needs it living so, as a man needs a woman, for the food she gives him and the prayers she offers.

One evening I was in a little convent church with other worshippers. We all stood in a group about the priest and held candles. At one point in the service we lit the candles, at another we extinguished them and then afterwards lit them again. The church was dark and

quiet ; black-veiled nuns read the lessons, nuns sang. In front stood the Ikonostasis a-glitter with candles ; at each side stood the dark-robed nuns. We were a score of worshippers at vespers. Behind us in the background, waited two peasant women with babies to be baptised. At one point we were all kneeling, the priest, the nuns, ourselves ; and I had a vision of Holy Russia, of the holy one who sits at home and prays whilst we more secular go abroad into the world. I saw all the sisters and brothers who have vowed themselves to God, the holy peasants toiling in the fields, a hundred millions of them submissive unto God, the peasants pilgrimaging to shrines, the Ikon lamps a-burning, the communion services, the Remembrance Days and meals with the dead, the fasts, the festivals, glorious Easter, the monks praying for the departed, the priests performing rites in empty churches, the hermits, the village saints, the ascetics who have loaded themselves with chains, those who have sworn themselves dead to the world and taken the oath of silence, the holy pictures prayer-transfigured, the wonder-working Ikons and precious relics full of influence, the holy monks who kneel eternally in the presence of the Mystery.

And I was glad of these because they expiated my more worldly life ; glad for Europe because they were Europe's background. Not in vain did the lamp burn, the peasant pilgrimage, the ascetic labour in chains, the monk kneel. In the soul of Europe, in the shadowy temple, the monk kneels and the women kneel. If ever they are forced to rise and depart Europe will be lost.

Russia is the night to which spiritual forces return

for refreshment; and kneeling in the convent church I realised that our day was so bright because that night was so dark—the brightness was so full of gladness because the darkness was so full of holiness.

But the progress of socialism or of civilisation does not wish darkness anywhere. It abhors darkness and cries “More light, more light! It is like a character in one of Andréef’s plays, a man who says “Light up all the halls and every corner and passage, and let there not be even a shadow or a dark place anywhere.” Progress defines itself as the lighting of lamps till there be no darkness anywhere—enlightenment. “Let us have no dark corners,” says a philosopher, “make the home public, make it all public.” But if they do completely lighten the West—there will still remain, I believe, that shadowy background, Russia, where the *benighted* moujik kneels in secret—the saving grace of Europe.

Again, Russia is the dark virgin earth, the secret mysterious soil. Whatever is beautiful in Russian art or literature and in the lives of the intelligentsia, owes its strength to the peasantry and the Church. God sees in secret and rewards openly. Whatever strikes root downwards bears blossom upward. Whatever goes down into the deeps riseth again into the heights, and whatever is high is supported by all that is low.

Each night we sleep and lie bathed in mysterious refreshment, and the following morn we rise to a perfect world. God who seeth in secret rewardeth openly.

The seed falls into the dark soil and communes with Nature and finds its colours and its beauty—anon it blossoms. God who seeth in secret rewardeth openly.

There is not a prayer of the peasant that is without

avail, not one moment of his communion with God that shall not add a lustre to the rose, not a rite that is in vain, not a sacrifice superfluous. God will not judge us for our pleasures, they were paid for in advance; our happy life is not to be expiated in other realms, it is itself a reward, a glory, a thanksgiving. Holy Russia is our peace with God.

I arrived at Moscow at the time of the first sting of the autumn weather and the people stared at me mightily. I took a seat in the open market at Sukhareva and bought myself a pair of leather boots. A beggar came up and begged from me my old discarded *lapti*.

"Oh no," said the peasant girl, "he is a *dalny barin*, a far-goer; he goes belike to the monastery of St Seraphim beyond Nizhni."

I gave the beggar five copecks instead and kept my birch-bark boots. For *lapti* in which I had travelled several hundred miles were a curiosity.

I put up at an inn near the Cathedral of St Saviour. And whom should I see some days later but Varvara Sergievna, Alexey Sergeitch's sister, whom I had met at Liavlia. She shared rooms with a girl-student just three doors away from me. There I met two other students who had obtained their release from banishment, and whom I had met at Liavlia. Pereplotchikof also was in Moscow and greatly interested in my writing of Holy Russia and in my tramp. He showed me over his studio and gave me pictures for reproduction.

As I heard, the Russian Government was releasing almost all the Liavlia folk and they were coming to Moscow. Alexey Sergeitch, however, they would not

release, and even refused his petition to be allowed to go to banishment in Paris. There were too many revolutionaries in Paris already. Pereplotchikof proposed a "Liavlensky" evening some time ahead, when all who had met in that happy village should have a supper and an evening of gaiety together. I knew many people in Moscow, both old friends and new ; I even had my dinner with Varvara Sergievna and her little circle at the University Club on the quay. What crushes these dinners were, and what immense pots of soup were brought on to the tables straight off the fire ! Pereplotchikof introduced me to the artists and the Bohemian life of Moscow.

But what am I writing ? This is not the Undiscovered, though even here the unknown peeps round the corner of the known, and the sacred breathes everywhere through the secular. *Slava Tebye Gospody !*



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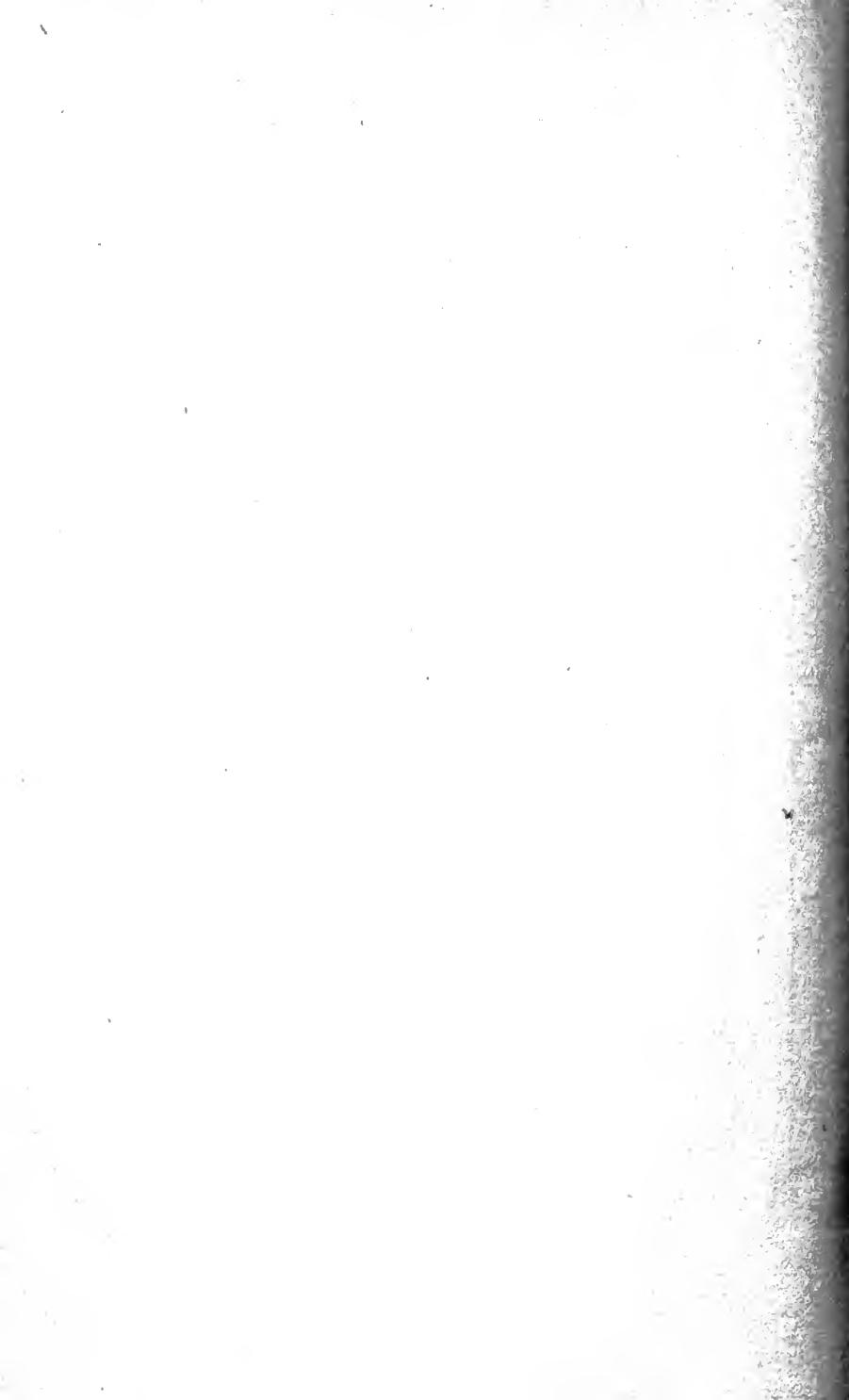


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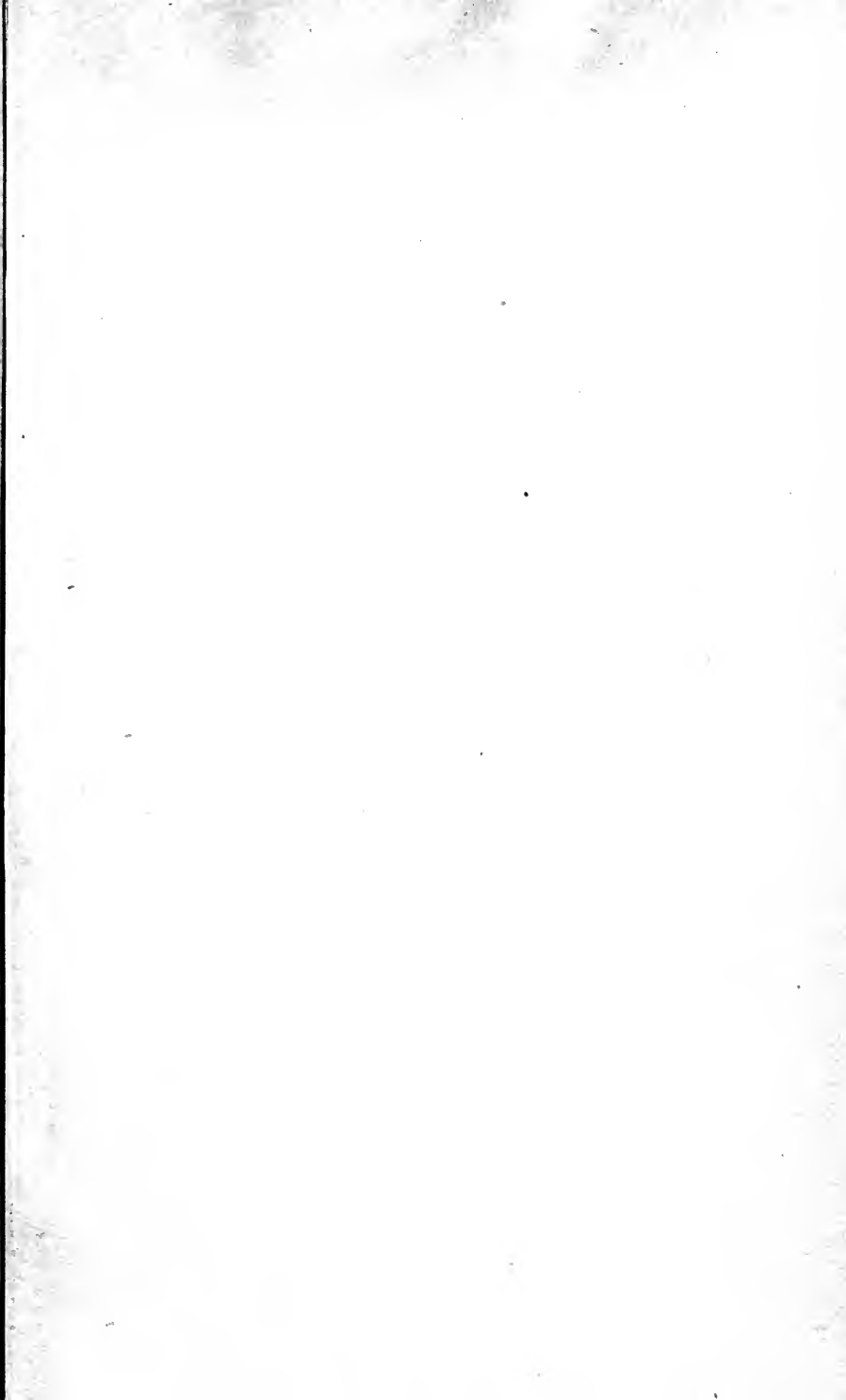
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