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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FRED MARKHAM IN RUSSIA; OR, THE BOY TRAVELLERS IN THE LAND OF THE CZAR ***

W H G Kingston

"Fred Markham in Russia"

Chapter One.

A Trip to Russia proposed—Cousin Giles and his History—Preparations for the Voyage—Journey to Hull—The Steamer described—The Voyage commenced—A Fog at Sea.

"Thank you, thank you; it will be very delightful," said Fred Markham.

"It will be jolly, that it will!" exclaimed his younger brother Harry; and home they ran as fast as their legs could carry them to find their father and mother.

"Oh, father, father!—mother, mother!—may we go? May we go?" they exclaimed in a breath together. "Cousin Giles has asked us, and he says that he will take very good care of us, and that he is not joking; that he is in real earnest, and that, if you will give us leave to go, he wishes to set off immediately."

"But you have not told us where you wish to go to," said Captain Markham. "If it should chance to be to Timbuctoo, to the Sandwich Islands, or to the antipodes, I fear that I must refuse your request."

"Even should Cousin Giles be answerable for your safe return, I could not part with you for so long a time as would be required to go to either of those regions of the world," added their mother, smiling.

"But it is not to Timbuctoo, nor to the Sandwich Islands, nor to any place near so far off that Cousin Giles wants to take us," replied Fred eagerly. "It is only to Russia, and that is no distance at all, he says."

"Only to Russia!" exclaimed Captain Markham, with an emphasis on the only. "That country used to be thought a long way off from England in my younger days; but railways and steamers have worked a great change in our notions of distances. We must, however, hear what Cousin Giles has to say before we decide on the subject."

The lads had not to endure their uncertainty very long before Cousin Giles made his appearance, his somewhat weather-beaten countenance beaming with a glow of benevolence and vivacity which seldom forsook it. Now it must be understood that Cousin Giles was not really the young Markhams' cousin, any more than he was that of several other families in the county who called him by the same affectionate name. He was a lieutenant in the navy, but, having received a severe wound in battle, which incapacitated him, he considered, from doing his duty properly, he retired from the service, though he ultimately recovered sufficiently to travel about without inconvenience. As in the course of his professional career he had visited the sea-coasts of nearly every part of the world, besides taking journeys inland from them, while he made his observations on what he saw, he possessed a large fund of information. What was also of great consequence, he had a considerable talent for describing what he had seen. Besides possessing these qualifications, being the life and spirit of every juvenile party, and the promoter of all sports and pastimes in-doors and out of doors, he was a welcome guest, both, with old and young, at every friend's house which he could find time to visit. More than all this, he was a religious, honourable, generous-hearted man. He could not, therefore, fail to be a most desirable travelling companion for his young friends. He had been several times to sea with their father, who was himself a captain in the navy, and who had the greatest confidence in him.

"What is all this, my dear fellow, the boys are saying about Russia?" asked Captain Markham as he entered the room.

"Why, that I have bethought me of paying a visit this summer to the land of the Czar; that I want companions; that I like young ones, who will follow my ways better than old ones, who won't; that I enjoy fresh ideas freshly expressed, and am tired of stale platitudes; in short, if you will entrust your youngsters to me, I will take charge of them, and point out what is mostly worth seeing and remembering at the places we visit."

"I cannot refuse you, Fairman," replied Captain Markham. "Your offer is a very kind one, and the boys cannot fail to benefit by the excursion."

"Do not talk about that," said Cousin Giles, interrupting him. "Fred must undertake to keep a log, and note down all our adventures."

Fred, though somewhat diffident of his powers of composition, promised to do his best, and Mrs Markham begged that Harry might keep another note-book for her especial edification.

"All I bargain for," she added, "is to have descriptions of scenes written down as soon as visited, and ideas as soon as they occur."

"By all means, freshness is what we want," said Cousin Giles. "A short sketch made on the spot is worth a volume of after-recollections."

Thus the matter was speedily arranged. Before he left the house, their kind friend gave the young travellers a list of the things they would require. He would allow them only a small portmanteau apiece, which they could carry in their hands. He told them each to take a warm greatcoat, and a complete suit of waterproof clothing, including boots and hat. "Thus," said he, "you will be independent of the weather, and need never be kept in the house, however hard it may rain." He told them that, although the weather is frequently much hotter during the summer in Russia than in England, yet that at times it is as rainy, and cold, and variable as at that season of the year at home. Their Bibles, a history of Russia, and a volume of travels in that country were the only books he would let them take, advising them thoroughly to master the contents of the history and travels before they reached Saint Petersburg. He had got, he said, a good map of Russia, and a chart of the Baltic, which they were to study; as also a book called, *What to Observe; or, The Traveller's Remembrancer*, which is not only full of useful information, but also turns a traveller's attention to what is most worth remarking abroad. Fred Markham was about fifteen; his brother, a year younger. Both of them were fine, intelligent lads. Cousin Giles was not far removed from fifty, thin and sinewy, though strongly built, and not tall, with large hard hands, which gave a warm, cordial grasp to a friend and a firm one to a rope; his heart was like them as to size, but a great contrast to them in hardness—a more thorough-going, honest sailor never existed.

No merrier party ever left London than the three travellers who started by the mail train for Hull a few nights after the above conversation. They put up at the Railway Hotel, which Cousin Giles said reminded him of a Spanish palace. In the centre is a large court glazed over, with an ottoman instead of a fountain in the centre, and broad flights of stairs on either side leading to the upper chambers. The younger travellers had never before been in so large and comfortable a hotel. Their first care in the morning was to visit the steamer *Ladoga*, in which they had taken their passage to Saint Petersburg. She was a gaily-painted, sharp-built, fast-looking screw.

"She'll carry us there quickly enough, if at all," muttered Cousin Giles. "But she's not the craft I should have chosen."

She had only a small part of her cargo on board, and yet the master promised to sail on the following morning. The boys were incredulous.

"Modern cranes, system, and activity will work wonders," said Cousin Giles; and he was right.

By nine o'clock the next morning the vessel was ready to sail. They spent the interim in walking about the docks, full of vessels of all nations,—sixteen steamers, they heard, ran between Hull and Saint Petersburg,—in looking at the quaint old houses of the town, and in visiting the monument raised to Wilberforce,—a lofty pillar, the first object which greets the mariner as he returns home. At the base is a simple inscription: "Negro Emancipation, 1832."

"How far more worthy was he of the pillar than most people who have monuments raised to them; and yet how he would have despised such an honour, unless it induces others to labour as he did for the benefit of their fellow-creatures," remarked Cousin Giles. "Remember, my lads, this monument, and endeavour to walk in that great man's footsteps."

A lovely morning found the voyagers on board the *Ladoga*, and, after much pulling and hauling, clear of the docks, and steaming down the Humber.

Cousin Giles' face wore an expression of dissatisfaction as he found her deck crowded with huge, heavy iron machines and bales of cotton.

"This is nothing; we are often obliged to carry twice as much deck cargo," said the master. "Competition is so great, we must do everything to make the vessel pay."

"Were a heavy gale to spring up, it is your underwriters would have to pay, I suspect," answered Cousin Giles.

"Oh, you don't know what this vessel would go through," replied the young master.

"Humph!" remarked the old lieutenant; "I know where she would go to if you did not heave all this deck lumber overboard."

"I presume you have been to sea before?" said the master.

"At times," answered Cousin Giles quietly.

England sends large quantities of machinery of all sorts to Russia. The cotton had come from America to Liverpool, had been thence sent across the country by railway to Hull, and was going to supply numerous manufactories of cotton goods which have been established in Russia, and fostered by high protective duties. They are chiefly

managed by Englishmen, and the foremen are mostly English or German. Manual labour is cheaper than in England, as is the expense of erecting the buildings; but, as all other items cost much more, the Russians have to pay very dearly for the cotton goods they use. Even with the high duties imposed on them, they can buy English manufactures cheaper than their own.

In addition to the cargo on deck, there were twelve fine horses which an English groom was taking over for a Russian nobleman, who was to figure at the approaching coronation of the Emperor. The Russians set great value on English horses, and employ a considerable number of English grooms, many of whom raise themselves to respectable situations, as had the man who had charge of the horses in question.

There were several other passengers, some of whom were English merchants who had resided in Russia for many years, and from them the friends gained a considerable amount of valuable information. This Cousin Giles had particularly the art of eliciting from his companions, and Fred and Harry had abundance to do in noting it down. The cabins and saloon were both comfortable and handsome. The latter was lined with mahogany, had gilt mouldings, and the sofas which surrounded it were covered with cool, clean, antibilious-looking chintz, while in the centre there was a sociable table, with a skylight overhead. Everything, also, was provided by the young master to conduce to the comfort of his passengers.

On the afternoon of the day they sailed, the sky looked wildish, and the master prognosticated either wind or heavy rain. A thunder-storm played at a distance round the ship; the lightning flashed vividly, but scarcely a mutter of the clouds' artillery was heard; some heavy showers fell, then the weather cleared up. The stars shone forth brightly from the clear sky, and the waning moon arose and shed her silvery light on the calm water, over which the breeze played with just sufficient strength to crisp it into silvery wavelets. It was a night for meditation and prayer. Unhappy is the state of man who can look forth from the deck of a ship on such a scene and not feel gratitude to the Framer of the magnificent firmament above him,—whom it does not make more meditative, more prayerful, than his wont,—whom it does not cause to think of eternity.

The next day a bright silvery fog hung over the sea, yet so dense that no eye could pierce the bowsprit's length through it. The engines were therefore put at half their power, yet even then the vessel went nearly seven knots through the water.

The lads were delighted with the smooth, easy way in which the vessel glided on. They remarked it to Cousin Giles.

"You think it is very pleasant, because you see no danger, my dear boys," he answered. "Much the same aspect does vice bear to the young, while they shrink with fear from the storm of adversity. Now, 'a wise seaman dreads a calm near a coast where there are currents, and a fog far more than heavy gales of wind in the open ocean.' Put that down in your log,—it is worth remembering, as the lesson you have learned from a calm and a fog."

Chapter Two.

Cousin Giles finds an old Shipmate—Tom Puffing's Account of the Wreck of the *Victoria*—Miraculous Escape of Part of the Crew—God's merciful Providence displayed—Cousin Giles converses with the Crew—First Sight of Denmark, Elsinore, and its Castle—View of Copenhagen—Description of the Battle and its Cause—Sunday Service on board Ship—Voyage up the Baltic—The Gulf of Finland—Cronstadt and its Batteries—Why the British did not take them—The Czar's Mode of Manning a Ship in a Hurry—The Russian Fleet—Leave their Steamer and proceed towards Saint Petersburg.

Cousin Giles soon found his way forward, over the bales of cotton and piles of hay, followed by Fred and Harry, and entered into conversation with the crew. He had not been long there when an old weather-beaten seaman put his head up the fore hatchway. "Ah! Tom Pulling. I thought that I had caught sight of the face of an old shipmate," exclaimed Cousin Giles, stretching out his hand. "How fares it with you?"

The old man's countenance brightened as he returned the grasp warmly.

"Is it you, indeed? I am glad to see you—that I am," he answered. "I've a good berth now, though I've had knocking about enough since I sailed with you last in the *Juno*. I was cast away in these very parts some time back, and never had a narrower chance of losing my life, so to speak."

Cousin Giles asked old Tom how this had happened. The other seamen who were not on duty drew near to listen to the old man's oft-spun yarn, and our young friends stood by, eager to hear what he had got to say.

"Why, you see, sir," he replied, "after I was discharged from the old *Melampus*, I thought I'd try if a short-voyage steamer would suit me better than a man-of-war, seeing that I'd got a wife and family to look after; so I shipped on board the *Victoria* steamer, running from the port of Hull to Saint Petersburg. It was our last voyage that year. About the 6th of November, I think, we left the Humber; but we hoped to get to Cronstadt and away again before the ice set in. The weather was as fair as could be wished for, and with smooth water; so we all made up our minds that we were going to have a quick run of it. Howsomever, the wind breezed up a little on the second day, and by nightfall it blew pretty freshish, with a heavyish sea on. We had much the same sort of weather on the third day, and at night it came on so thick and dark that we could not see our hands held out before us. Still all seemed going on well. We supposed that we were steering a course through the Skaggerack, with a good offing from the land, when, just about the middle of the first watch, as the passengers were in the cabin, maybe thinking of turning in to their warm beds all snug, and talking of what they would do next day at Copenhagen, where we were to touch, without an instant's warning—bang! Crash!—loud shrieks and cries of terror were heard, the ship quivered from stem to stern as if her last moment was come. It was not far off, either; the sea came roaring up abaft and made a clean sweep over her. She had struck heavily on a rock of some sort, that was certain; but where we were, or how it had happened, no one

could tell. Every one was running here and there, crying for help, when there was no one to help them; some took to praying, some to blaspheming; terror seemed to have taken away their senses. I did think that all of us had seen the sun rise for the last time, for it was too dark by far to allow us to try and help ourselves; and, from the way the sea kept striking the ship, I knew full well she could not long hold together.

“Well, Mr Fairman, I’m not ashamed to say I prayed as I never prayed before; and, you’ll believe me, sir, I felt a comfort and an assurance of my Maker’s protection which also I had never felt before. As my ears caught the sound of the dreadful oaths of the blasphemers, I thought of the Day of Judgment. When that awful time comes, and the world breaks up like the ship, how will such men and many others, amid the clouds and thick darkness which will surround them, be able to pray? No; they’ll blaspheme on, as they are doing now, to the end. The captain, to do him but justice, behaved nobly. He did his best to keep order and discipline on board. He told the people that, if they would but remain by the ship, they all might be saved. He could not say, like Saint Paul, they would be saved. Few listened to him; some, however, stayed by his side and promised to support him. They had been on their knees asking support for themselves; whence only it can come, you know, sir. Others, on the contrary, got hold of one of the boats, and began to lower her into the water. The captain prayed and begged of them to desist, but they would not hearken to him. There were some of the crew and some of the passengers, and when he tried to prevent them they threatened to heave him overboard. At last they got the boat into the water, and eight of them jumped into her and shoved off from the ship’s side. In an instant, as he had told them it would be, the boat was capsized, and all hands were thrown into the raging sea. One poor wretch had on a life-preserver—he thought, at all events, that he was all safe, and that he could not drown; the rest had nothing to float them. For half a minute their cries were heard, and then they sank nearly all together, and his voice alone struck our ears, shrieking out for help, but no help could be given him. He was striking out for the ship, I judged; sometimes by his voice he seemed to have got nearer, but that might have been my fancy; then a sea came rolling by, and drove him farther off again. It was very dreadful to hear that poor dying wretch, and not be able to help him. He was a strong man, and for long struggled on; nearly an hour perhaps passed, but his voice grew fainter and fainter, and at last was no longer heard.

“All this time the ship was striking heavily, hammering away on the rock as if she was pile-driving. We burned all the blue lights we had on board, in the hopes of drawing the attention of some fishermen or other passing craft; but they only enabled those on board to see the horrors of our situation. Nearly four hours had thus passed, when a shout from the cook, who said he saw a signal, made us fancy help was coming to us; but in another minute we found that it was only the moon rising through a gap in the clouds. We all earnestly longed for morning, for till daylight came we could do nothing. The moon only served to show us more clearly the horrors of our situation. Piece after piece of the vessel was washed away, but still all those who remained round the captain were safe. At last there was a faint light in the east; it grew stronger and stronger, and there was twilight enough to let us see to the distance of a mile or two. About a mile off appeared a rock high enough out of the water to serve us as a refuge. The captain at once ordered a boat to be lowered, and all the women and children to be put into her, with five men to pull her to the rock. It was a work of no little danger to the poor creatures, but we at last got them all safe off, and with many a prayer watched them till they reached the rock. We had another boat, and there were fourteen of us remaining on the wreck. We all got into her, but we instantly saw that thus crowded she would be swamped before she could reach the shore. ‘Never mind, my fine fellows, I’ll stay by the wreck!’ exclaimed the captain, jumping on board again. ‘Who’ll follow me?’

“‘I’ll stay by you, captain,’ said I; and five others said the same. The rest shoved off, and reached the rock in safety, but the sea was too high to allow the boat to return. Then we seven souls were left on the wreck, which was every moment breaking up beneath our feet. The after-part of the vessel was soon completely gone—then we retreated forward; then the fore-castle—that soon began to break up, and we had to hold on amidships. We tried to keep up each other’s spirits by telling how seamen had often been preserved in worse situations even than ours, and most of us did not cease to pray to God to save us. The sea, after we returned on board the wreck, got up even more than before.

“At last a sea, still heavier than the rest, came rolling towards us. ‘Hold on! Hold on, my lads, for your lives!’ shouted our brave captain; but in a minute there was scarcely anything to hold on to. He himself was carried away some fathoms from the wreck. Our situation was bad enough, but it did not make us forget our captain. We would have done anything to help him, but there was not a rope we could lay hold of to heave to him. By God’s mercy he had on a life-belt, and he got hold of a piece of plank. Thus he kept afloat, and, working away with his feet, he was able once more to reach the wreck. His return—it seemed almost to life—cheered us up not a little. No long time, however, passed before another sea struck the fragments to which we clung, knocking them all to pieces, and sending us to float alone on the waves. One part only of the wreck remained above the water—it was the boiler. We all swam back to it, and clung on as well as we could; but we saw that, what with the cold and the sea, which kept breaking over us, we should soon be washed off again. ‘If we could but get inside the boiler, we might find some shelter,’ said the captain; but, try all we could, we could not make a hole big enough to get through. We were almost in despair. A fourth great sea came tumbling in on us. We all thought that it would prove our destruction; so did the captain. ‘Good-bye, my lads, good-bye!’ he exclaimed. ‘God have mercy on us all!’ On came the breaker, and for a moment we were all under it. When it cleared away, we were still holding on.

“Directly afterwards the engineer gave a shout of joy. ‘See what Providence has sent us!’ he cried out, as he held up a large pair of blacksmith’s pincers which that very sea we thought would destroy us had washed on to the boiler. ‘God intends us to save our lives,’ he added; for he was a pious man, and always acknowledged whence all blessings come to us. We set to work manfully with the pincers, and soon forced off enough of the top of the boiler to let us all creep in. We felt that it was firmly fixed on the rock, and here we were much more sheltered than before from the sea. Hunger and cold next began to tell on us. We had not before had time to feel either. One of our men had an apple in his pocket. He handed it to the captain. ‘There, captain,’ said he, ‘what is sent to one is sent to all. Serve it out, if you please, among us: if any one has a quid in his pouch, or a bit of biscuit, let him do the same!’ We all felt in our pockets, but could find nothing to eat; so the captain took the apple, and, cutting it into seven bits, each took one, and munched away at it as long as it would stay in our mouths. All the time we were looking out anxiously for a

sail, but nothing could we see but the dark, tumbling, foaming breakers around us. Not even the rock where our companions had got could we see. Noon passed, hour after hour crept by after it, the horrors of another night threatened us, and we began to give way to despair. Some of us talked of giving up, and dropping into the sea. The captain rebuked the grumblers sternly. 'You heard what the engineer said, my lads: "God intends to save our lives," and I feel now he was right.' Scarcely had he spoken when the engineer shouted out, 'A sail! A sail!' We all looked out eagerly. There was a fishing-boat standing towards us. In half an hour she had hove-to to leeward of the wreck. Her brave crew lowered their sail and pulled in towards us: but they could not venture very near, and it was no easy matter to get on board. All we could do was to wait till the seas washed over us, and then one by one we plunged in; and they carried us clear of the rocks, which would otherwise have knocked us to pieces. Thus we all got on board the little craft, and were carried safely on shore. The same fishing-boat had before taken off our companions from the rock, and they had then sent her to our assistance.

"Now you will like to know how the accident happened without any blame to the captain, or any one on board? The truth was that we had, as part of the cargo, a quantity of iron. This had set all our compasses wrong, making us twenty or thirty miles out of our course at least. I've often since thought, Mr Fairman, if we hadn't a true compass to steer by like the Bible, which of us would escape the rocks which lie in our course in life; and it's my opinion that those who do steer by it never get far wrong."

The young travellers thanked old Tom very much for his interesting narrative, and Cousin Giles spun a long yarn with him afterwards about old times. Cousin Giles had also a talk with each of the crew, and gave them some books and tracts, for which they were very thankful.

All Friday night the lead was kept going, for the master judged that they ought to have been in the very centre of the Skaggerack passage, which is very deep; but it told him that the ship was still in shallow water. The very same circumstance which caused the loss of the *Victoria* had happened to them. Their compasses, attracted by some of the iron in the ship, were not pointing truly. They had reason to be thankful that the error was discovered in time, or they might have suffered the same disasters they had lately heard described. When the fog cleared away, they found that they were off the coast of Jutland, twenty miles south of where they should have been. In the afternoon they sighted the Scaw lighthouse, built on a sandy point, with sand hills, and a ruined church on them—no very interesting object, except as being the first part they saw of Denmark.

Sunday morning, at five o'clock, the steward called to them to say that they were close to Elsinore. They hurried on deck, and found that they were passing that far-famed castle, where the ghost of Hamlet's father was wont to walk and tell its tale of horrors to any one it might chance to meet and had time to stop and listen to it. Seen in the bright glow of the morning sun, the castle had a pleasing, cheerful aspect, with nothing of the dark, gloomy, hobgoblin style of architecture about it, such as Mrs Radcliffe delighted to describe. It stands on a narrow neck of land a little to the north of the town, and is of a quadrangular form, with three Moorish-looking towers and a square one of modern style at the four corners. It is surrounded by a fosse and low ramparts, of a modern style of fortification. The royal family of Denmark came occasionally to the castle to enjoy sea-bathing for a few days. The Sound is here very narrow, the shore of Sweden being not more than three or four miles off. It was crowded with shipping, the place serving as a roadstead for Copenhagen, which is about twenty miles distant. In the forenoon they came off Copenhagen, but did not touch there. The nearest point to them was the Tre Kroner, or Three-crown Battery, as an artificially-formed island directly in front of the city is called. This is the point which, in the attack under Nelson, gave the British so much trouble, and cost so many lives. Beyond it, within a mole, were seen the masts of some shipping, and behind them arose towers and spires and public edifices, and trees, and houses of various shapes, springing, as it seemed, out of the water.

Cousin Giles gave the lads a description of the battle of Copenhagen, which was fought on the 2nd of April 1801. The destruction of the Danish fleet was a sad necessity. The attack was made on our old allies and natural friends, to prevent their fleet from falling into the power of Napoleon, who would have employed it against us. The Danes have not yet forgotten that untoward event.

For most of the day they steamed on with the shores both of Sweden and Denmark in sight. The usual morning work of the ship having been got through, Cousin Giles asked the captain if he ever had service on board.

"When we have a clergyman," was the answer.

"How often is that?"

"Once I took one over; but, to be sure, he was sick, and had to cut it short."

"Then, how often are you in port on a Sunday?"

"Not often in England, and sometimes in foreign parts we are so pressed for time that we are obliged to be discharging or taking in cargo on a Sunday."

"I am sorry to hear that. Sailing-vessels used seldom to be so pressed. But why do not you hold service for your people at sea, at all events?" said Cousin Giles.

"!—how should such an one as I hold service?" replied the master simply. "The men are accustomed to hear me swear at them and abuse them. They would laugh if I proposed to pray with them."

"Leave off swearing, and take to praying, then, my friend," said Cousin Giles solemnly. "Ask yourself which is the best of the two."

"I am afraid I should make but a bad hand at the prayers," said the master carelessly.

"Try," answered Cousin Giles earnestly. "But, my friend, if you will give me leave, I will hold a service on the sacred day of rest, and perhaps some of the passengers may join us."

"The passengers may, but I don't think you'll get many of my fellows to attend your service," was the reply.

"I will try, at all events, if I have your permission," said Cousin Giles.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," replied the master in a somewhat supercilious tone; but he was not a little puzzled to make out what sort of man Cousin Giles could be.

Cousin Giles on this went forward, and spoke to each of the men separately, in his own peculiar, kind way, and told them that he was anxious to thank his Maker and theirs for all the mercies they had so often received, and invited them to join him in that act of devotion in about an hour's time.

They all not only willingly but gladly assented to his proposal, and promised to go aft when they were summoned. Although the master had not discovered that Cousin Giles was a seaman, they had, and knew him to be a true man. He then returned aft, and spoke to the passengers in the same strain, and but very few refused to join the service. Two said they would think about it; one had an interesting book to finish; and another asked him if he was a parson, and said he only attended services held by properly ordained ministers.

At the appointed hour, to the surprise of the master, every seaman, engineer, and stoker who was not on duty came up to the wide deck over the engine, and most of the passengers assembled there likewise. Never was there a more attentive congregation. Cousin Giles read part of the Church of England Liturgy, and then spoke to them from the fifteenth chapter of Saint John's Gospel: "I am the true vine." Those who heard him said that he explained the subject well, and that what he said went to their hearts. The reason of this was, that he was deeply in earnest, and anxious about the souls of his hearers. The master began even to think that he was a parson in disguise.

The steamer passed several islands, and on Monday was running up the Baltic in a perfect calm, the hot sun striking down on her decks, with its shining brightness dazzling the eyes of the passengers, the numerous vessels they passed having their canvas hanging idly down against their masts.

On Tuesday morning they were at the entrance of the Gulf of Finland, and in the evening they were passing the island of Nargen, with the town of Revel, just rising out of the water, seen through their glasses beyond it on the starboard hand.

The morning of Wednesday broke cold and grey, but in the forenoon the sun burst forth and shone brightly; and the sea was rippled over by a westerly breeze, which increased every hour in strength, and carried before it numberless vessels of all nations and rigs, though the galliots of Holland undoubtedly predominated. About noon, in this numerous company, they passed the lighthouse on the island of Tolbukén, which was held by the English during the late war, and whence the British officers with their glasses could discover all that was going on behind the batteries of Cronstadt. At about half-past one, a gun fired across the bows of the steamer by the Russian guardship hinted to her that she must heave-to; which being done, some officers came on board to examine her papers and the passengers' passports, to drink the master's wine, or spirits, or bottled ale, and carry away any gunpowder or fireworks which might be on board. Ahead lay a large Russian fleet of line-of-battle ships, frigates, steamers, brigs, and schooners, now at length able to show their noses out of port; while a little way beyond rose those formidable batteries which had so lately, by their very appearance, been able to damp the ardour of some of England's naval chieftains. On the left side was the island of Cronstadt, with its fortifications, its town with its spires and domes, and its harbour, capable of sheltering a large man-of-war fleet; and on the right, opposite to it, were two circular batteries, which looked like huge white factories rising out of the water; only instead of windows, there were ports, while enormous guns in lieu of rainspouts crowned their summits, without even a parapet to hide their carriages. On the southern part of the chief island was a similar tower.

Most of the passengers had some favourite plan of their own for taking the fortress,—especially some commercial travellers, who were loud in their expressions of scorn at the want of success of Napier and Dundas, and the sad degeneracy of the British navy. Cousin Giles was much amused, and advised them to lay their plans before the English Government, and to offer their services as commanders-in-chief of her fleets and armies.

As the vessels steamed on, the travellers had on their left side the rocky and wood-covered heights of Finland, between which and the island of Cronstadt there is a narrow but tolerably deep passage. Through this passage, which was unknown to the Russians themselves, the English admiral proposed to send up a fleet of gun-boats and small steamers had the attack on the fortress been resolved on. On the right hand from this entrance into the Gulf of Finland they had had the province of Esthonia. They now had that of Saint Petersburg, the shores of which appeared high and well wooded. They by this time had reached what may be considered nearly the end of the Gulf of Finland; for, although above Cronstadt there is still a fine expanse of water, it is generally very shallow, there being only a narrow and intricate channel, worked by the strong current of the Neva.

Among the various craft they passed, they were much amused by the little Finnish schooners, which went careering on before the breeze, laden chiefly with firewood, or some other not very valuable cargo, for the Saint Petersburg markets. They were built of fir, with very little paint, very few ropes, and had very white canvas. Altogether they had, as Cousin Giles observed, an exceedingly fresh-water look about them. The Finns who manned them were, however, hardy fellows, and formed by far the best seamen on board the Russian men-of-war. The Russians are not good salt-water sailors; they have no taste for the sea, and are not likely to obtain it. Peter the Great tried to form a navy. He succeeded in building ships, but it was quite a different thing when he tried to find seamen to man them. A gentleman on board told the lads a story, and they much wished to know if he could vouch for its truth. The late Emperor Nicholas on some occasion wanted to send a line-of-battle ship in a hurry to sea. No men were to be found. The Emperor was indignant that anything should oppose his imperial will. He stormed and raged; but even to

appease his wrath no men could be made to rise out of the earth. At last his eyes fell on a regiment of dragoons who were defiling slowly by.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, as a bright thought struck him, “why should not those tall fellows make good seamen?” He called the colonel to him. “Colonel,” said he; “order your men to dismount, and do you and your officers lead them on board that ship, and get her under weigh immediately. There is no time to be lost. You’ll have something to learn, probably; but that does not matter—it is my will—do it.”

The poor colonel knew that there was no use expostulating. The men were ordered aloft—cocked hats, jack-boots, and spurs. Up they went, the upper ones with their dreadful spurs catching those following by eyes, or noses, or mouths; and the surprising thing was that any got up at all. There is, however, nothing that a Russian cannot do, in a way, when put to it. The topsails were at length loosed, the anchor was got up, and the ship was actually under weigh; but where she went to, or if she ever went anywhere at all, their friend could not exactly say.

All this time the steamer was passing among the Russian men-of-war. Some of them were huge, towering line-of-battle ships, and all of them, outwardly at least, were in prime order. At length the steamer ran in past a high white tower between two piers, the screw stopped, she was hauled alongside a wharf, and the voyage was ended. Instantly she was filled with men in grey and blue uniforms. They were custom-house officers, who came professedly to prevent smuggling, but in reality to collect any fees they could pick up.

The travellers now heard for the first time the incomprehensible sounds of the Russian language, while their eyes were amused with the various and strange costumes of the wild-looking shouting people who surrounded them. Some of the officers had shaven chins, but most of the people had long beards, and straggling hair flowing from beneath their caps; but, unattractive as were their countenances generally, they wore an aspect of good-nature and simplicity which made amends for their ugliness.

In a short time a little steamer came alongside the *Ladoga*, into which the passengers and their luggage were transferred, to be conveyed up to Saint Petersburg under charge of a party of the militarily-equipped custom-house officers. The little satellite shoved off from the side of the big steamer, the master stood on the taffrail with his hat in his hand, the passengers waved theirs; and thus they bade farewell, most of them for ever, to the ill-fated *Ladoga*. After leaving the mole, they passed along the wharves of the Imperial Dockyard, within which were collected a great number of line-of-battle ships and frigates laid up in ordinary, which, as Fred said, looked like idle sulky fellows shut up in a poor-house with nothing to do.

“Very fine ships,” said Cousin Giles; “but without the men to handle them, in spite of their long guns, they are like dogs with broken legs: they may bark and howl, and gnash their teeth, but they can do no further harm. We should not despise Russia, but we need not be frightened at her.”

Their helmsman, who stood with the tiller between his legs, with his hands crossed and hid in his “Bosom,” was a picture in himself. A low cap covered a head of shaggy reddish hair, while his thick straggly beard was of the same hue. His upper man was clothed in a coarse white jersey, beneath which appeared the tail of a red-striped shirt, while his widish green cloth trousers were tucked in high leather black boots. He was a fine big fellow, and had a seaman’s air about him, so that he might have served as a model of a Scandinavian rover ten centuries ago. There were a number of other, to the young travellers, strange-looking figures, helmeted, long-cloaked, thick-bearded and moustached beings, who, with piles of luggage, crowded the decks; and in this numerous company away they hurried towards the modern capital of the Czars.

Chapter Three.

Distant View of Saint Petersburg—How it is built—Enter the City of the Czar—Its Appearance at First Sight—Mount a Drosky—The Travellers reach their Hotel—Outline Sketch of Saint Petersburg—A Tour round the City—Its Palaces and Public Buildings.

“There it is! There it is! There’s the city—Saint Petersburg itself!” exclaimed the young travellers, as, directly ahead, appeared rising out of the water a line of golden domes, and tall spires and towers, glittering brightly in the sun, like some magic city of ancient romance. Conspicuous above all was the superb pile of the Isaac Church, the most modern sacred edifice in the city, and by far the finest; and near it was seen the graceful tower of the Admiralty, tapering up like a golden needle into the blue sky. Soon other buildings—hospitals, and palaces, and houses, and towers, either not so lofty or farther off—rose to view; but no land could be discovered on which their bases might rest. This vast city, they learned, was built by the imperial will of Peter the Great on a marsh, he hoping to make it a great maritime port. Every house in it stands on a platform of piles, driven far down into the soft ground. Before a building can be erected, it is necessary thus to prepare its foundations, often at an enormous expense.

The shores of the lake-like expanse along which they were steering were covered with woods, from among which peeped the gilt domes of the Imperial Palace of Peterhoff, and many other golden cupolas and spires, and marble-white towers, and walls of churches and monasteries, and palaces and villas, and also some stables, larger than any other edifice in the neighbourhood, belonging to the Grand Duke Michael. On a hill above them, a little distance to the west, appeared the unpretending villa of the late Emperor. It is exactly like a second-class country house. Here he used to delight to retire with his family from the cares of state, and to throw aside completely all imperial grandeur.

“Ah! Notwithstanding his overpowering ambition, his towering pride and haughtiness, that villa alone shows that he was a man after all,” observed a fellow-passenger to Cousin Giles.

The head of the gulf narrowed a little, but very little, as they advanced. A few buildings now appeared ahead, and

their friend was pointing out to the young travellers the walls of some barracks burnt long ago, and the ancient galley mole which sheltered the Russian galleys in the war with the Swedes, when on a sudden they found themselves among vast warehouses and manufactories, and tanneries and granaries, and the magnificent foundry and private residence of Baron Baird, who is by birth and education an Englishman. All the buildings are on the banks of the Neva, close to its very mouth. The steamer making several sharp turns among crowds of steamers and shipping of all sorts, they speedily found themselves in a region of colleges, and palaces, and churches, and other public buildings, the houses, which anywhere else would be palaces, each vying with the other in size and magnificence, and forming a vast street, the clear, rapid Neva flowing down the centre, with superb granite quays on each side of it. Nowhere in the world is there a finer street, though the height of the houses is lost from its great expanse. Along the line on either side arise marble columns and golden spires and domes innumerable, the two sides being connected by one bridge of iron—massive it must be to stand the ice—and several bridges of boats, which can be removed at the approach of winter; while in the centre of the stream were men-of-war and other steamers, and numerous vessels which had brought articles for the Saint Petersburg market. On the right side was the English quay, with a handsome building at one end, used as an English hotel. Farther on was the English church; and extending far away beyond it was palace after palace, many in the Italian style, the mighty pile of the Winter Palace being conspicuous above all, though in the far distance; and yet numberless other proud edifices were to be seen reaching to the same distance from it on one side as they do on the other. The travellers had little time to observe these wonders before the steamer brought up at a floating white and gold temple-looking building moored at a granite quay. Elegant as it looked, it was only the custom-house examining shed. Under a graceful arch, which united a little office on either side, the luggage was arranged, and bearded heroes in military costume dipped their hands amid the clean linen and clothes. Their behaviour, however, was civil; and, having taken possession of all the books they found, with the exception of Bibles, which they gave back, they made a sign that the boxes might be closed. The luggage was then turned out through a gateway into the clean wide road, where there stood, as eager and vociferous as any Irish carmen, ready to seize on it, a number of drosky drivers. There are two sorts of hack droskies in Saint Petersburg. One is somewhat like a small phaeton with wide wings; the other has what Cousin Giles called a fore-and-aft seat, on which people sit with their legs astraddle, the driver sitting perched on the end of it. The horses, which are harnessed with ropes in shafts, are wiry, shaggy-looking animals, and have high wooden bows arched over their heads, with the idea of keeping them from stumbling. The drivers are no less strange to English eyes than their vehicles. They are long-bearded, shaggy-haired, keen-eyed men, with low-crowned, broad-curling brimmed hats, wider at the top than at the head. They wear long blue cloth coats, crossed at the breast, and fastened round the waist with a red cotton sash. Their wide trousers are tucked into high boots, and at their back hangs a square brass plate with their number on it, serving the purpose of the London cabman's badge. They are, indeed, under very similar regulations.

Cousin Giles chartered three of these vehicles to carry themselves and their luggage, and the lads laughed heartily as they found themselves seated astride on one of them, rattling along the quays and over the bridge to the English hotel, among hundreds of similar vehicles and long-coated, bearded people, who looked as if they did not think there was anything strange in the matter at all.

The Miss Bensons, the kind-hearted landladies of the hotel, could just manage to accommodate the travellers; and they soon found themselves lodged in very clean rooms, and as comfortable as at any hotel in England. After the fresh sea air they found the heat very great, and the houses felt like stoves; indeed, they heard that the weather had been excessively hot for some days. They, however, had come up with a fresh breeze, which increased almost to a gale, and effectually cooled the air.

Cousin Giles was not a man to let the grass grow under his feet; so, as soon as dinner was over, he and his young companions sauntered out to take in, as he said, as much of Saint Petersburg as they could that evening. Just above the city the Neva divides itself into several branches, which form a number of marshy islands, on which islands Saint Petersburg is built. The streets have been laid out to accommodate themselves somewhat to the turnings of the river; so that they are not at right angles to each other, as might have been expected, though as much regularity as possible has been observed. The most central spot is the Admiralty Square, a vast, irregular, open space, with the river on one side of it; and near the river stands, on a vast block of granite, a colossal equestrian statue of Peter the Great, with his arm stretched out in an attitude of command. Forming the different sides of this vast open space are some of the finest public buildings in the city: the Admiralty with its golden spire, the beautiful Isaac Church with its superb granite columns, the Winter Palace with its long rows of richly ornamented windows, the War Office, the Senate House, and many others. At one end, with a crescent of fine buildings before it, which contain the War Office, stands a lofty column of polished granite, consisting only of two blocks of stone, it is said. It is called the Alexander Column, and is dedicated to him as "the Restorer of Peace to the World." He is so called by the Russians in consequence of the part he took in the overthrow of Napoleon. On its summit stands a green bronze statue of the Archangel Michael, holding the cross of peace in his hand. From the space before the Admiralty radiate off the three longest and widest streets in that city of wide and long streets. The centre one and longest is called the Nevkoi Prospekt, or the Neva Perspective. The names of other two may be translated Resurrection Perspective and Peas Street. The larger streets in the city are called Perspectives. Even the cross streets in Saint Petersburg are mostly wider than Bond Street, and often as wide and long as Regent Street. Many canals intersect the city, and enable bulky goods to be brought to within a short distance of all the houses by water; so that heavily-laden waggons are never seen ploughing their way through the streets, as in most cities. There are no narrow lanes or blind alleys either, the abode of poverty and pestilence, within the precincts of the palaces of the wealthy and great. Here, truly, poverty and rags are removed out of sight; but still they do not cease to dwell in the land. While our young travellers were standing looking at the Alexander Column, their fellow-voyager, Mr Henshaw, joined them. As he had been much in all parts of Russia, he was able to give them a great deal of interesting information.

"I would advise you first to get a general view of the city, and then study details," said he. "Get a knowledge of the plan of the city, and the mode in which it is constructed; then examine the outside of the more important buildings; and, lastly, visit their interiors when they contain anything worth seeing. The first thing you should do to-morrow morning is to ascend the Admiralty tower; the scene from thence, as you look down into the streets, teeming with their countless multitudes, is very interesting, while you will also obtain a perfect bird's-eye view of the whole city

and surrounding land and water. We will now, if you please, take a stroll along the quay beyond the Winter Palace. There are many objects in that direction worth remarking."

Cousin Giles gladly assented to the proposal, and, returning to the river, they continued eastward along its banks, passing the front of the Winter Palace. Near to it they stopped to look at a magnificent pile, called the Hermitage, which is about as unlike the residence of a dweller in the wilderness as anything in nature can well be. Mr Henshaw promised them a sight of the interior another day, and told them it contained some of the most magnificent rooms in the world, and was full of fine pictures, rich articles of *vertu*, and numberless valuable curiosities.

"It was called the Hermitage by the Empress Catherine," said he, "because she, purposed to retire thither from the cares of state—not, however, to live the life of an anchorite, but to revel in that indulgence of all the objects of sense to which her inclinations prompted her."

"But come along," said Cousin Giles; "we agreed not to spend our time on details till we had mastered the geography of the city."

So they continued their walk along the quays. Next to the Hermitage, and joined to it by a passage over an arch which spans a canal,—like the Bridge of Sighs at Venice, only smaller,—they passed the Imperial Theatre, and then a succession of fine residences of nobles and private persons, and lastly the Marble Palace of the Grand Duke Michael. It is so called not because it is built of marble, but because it has marble pillars. Across a street, on the same line, stands a fine pile, which looks like another palace, but in reality contains only the stables and offices, residences of servants, etcetera, belonging to the Marble Palace. Among the palaces they passed was a huge white one, with a very ugly portico.

"That," said Mr Henshaw, "was presented by the Emperor Alexander to the Duke of Wellington, when he became a Russian field-marshal, that he might have a house to inhabit should he ever visit Russia. On his death it reverted to the Russian Government. Opposite to this row of palaces the Neva is very wide. A branch of it runs away in a more northerly direction, forming an island which has been covered with fortifications, and is called the citadel. In the centre stands a church with a lofty golden pinnacle. Beneath it lie buried the Russian Czars. Here is also a cottage, built by Peter the Great, where he used to reside while watching the progress of his navy and the uprearing of the now mighty city, called after his patron saint."

"From a history I have been reading, I find that Peter was not nearly so great a man as I fancied," observed Fred.

"Hush! Hush! That is treason here," answered Cousin Giles. "To his valet he certainly was not great, as Carlyle would say, though he was a very uncommon man. But we should not judge of people by what they appear, or even by what they are doing, so much as by the results produced by their doings. Now Peter contrived, certainly by no very romantic or refined means, to produce a great number of very wonderful results. He caused this great city to be erected, he built a large navy, he taught people to navigate it who had scarcely before seen a vessel bigger than a Finnish schooner, and he contributed to imbue a population sunk in barbarism with a desire to assimilate to the civilised nations of Europe, while he introduced many arts and sciences before unknown into his country. Considering his powers and the little support he could obtain from his countrymen, I must say I think he worked wonders. He was, therefore, certainly what the world calls a great man, though he had great faults, and many littlenesses and contemptibilities. I acknowledge, also, that many far greater men have lived, and are at present alive, and that there will be many more."

"You have defended Peter, and I think on the only grounds on which he can be defended," said Mr Henshaw; "his private character will not for a moment bear discussion."

"Certainly not," answered Cousin Giles; "remember, Fred, and Harry also, that I do not say that he ought properly to be called great, if he is to be judged by the law of Scripture, nor do I wish you to consider him so. Who is there, indeed, who can be so called? But he was great according to the received maxims of the world, by which maxims other men with as little desert have received the same title."

"Before we return, I must take you to the Summer Gardens, where you see the trees beyond the Marble Palace," said Mr Henshaw. "I wish to show you the statue of Kryloff, the Russian Aesop, as he is called."

The Summer Gardens are surrounded by an iron railing, and contain long rows of fine trees, and gravel walks, and seats, and statues, generally of a very antique form and taste, happily now exploded, with heathen deities' hideous faces, such as are to be seen in old prints. In the centre of a small open space, surrounded by trees, stands the statue of Kryloff, a fine, bronze, Johnsonian-looking, sitting figure, much larger than life, with a book and pencil in his hand. The pedestal on which he is placed has on each side figures of animals, in deep relief, illustrating his fables. There is the stork and the wolf, and there are bears and apes, and cats and dogs playing violins and violoncellos and other musical instruments. Several mujicks (peasants) were gazing at the figures with intense interest, apparently entering fully into the spirit of the artist.

On their return along the quays, they stopped to look at the long bridges of boats which cross the Neva in the summer. A portion of each can be removed to allow vessels to pass up or down the stream; but by a police regulation this can be only done with one bridge at a time, and at a certain fixed hour of the day, so that the traffic across the river receives no very material interruption. Near the end of one of them, on the opposite side of the river, they observed a handsome edifice with a fine portico before it, and two granite columns, ornamented with galleys carved in white stone. This building they found was the Exchange. Farther westward of it they observed other magnificent buildings, which they learned were the Corps of Cadets,—the name is applied to the building itself,—the Academy of Sciences, the University, the Academy of Arts, and several others,—all covering a vast extent of ground nearer the mouth of the river. By the time they reached their hotel they were tolerably tired, and, to their surprise, they found that it was nearly ten o'clock. Even then there was a bright twilight, though it was too dark to enable them to

distinguish more than the grand outlines of the city.

Chapter Four.

The Russian Passport System—Baron Verysoft—Mr Tobias Evergreen—His Gratitude for the Baron's Politeness—The Difficulty of reading Russian—The Travellers at a Nonplus—Russian Signboard—Fred and Harry lose themselves—Meet with Tom Pulling—How Tom and his Messmates managed to find their Latitude and Longitude, and to steer a right Course for Port.

The next morning our travellers were reminded that they were not in a free country, in which a man may come and go as he lists without let or hindrance, but that certain very stringent regulations respecting passports must be conformed to before they could attempt to do anything else. Most condescending gentlemen, "commissionaires" they called themselves, undertook for certain considerations to get the work done for them; but Cousin Giles declined their services.

"I have no doubt that we shall be able to get through the business ourselves perfectly well, and we shall see something of the way the Russians manage these affairs," said he.

He intended to visit the mercantile house on whom he had a letter of credit, and he had also several letters of introduction which he wished to deliver as soon as possible. To his bankers, accordingly, they first drove, and they had no difficulty in finding the house. The merchant who acted in that capacity was very kind, and gave them all the information they could desire as to what they should do about their passports; he also wrote down for them a list of the names of the houses at which they had arranged to call. Their first duty was to visit the Alien Office, to take out their permission to reside or travel in Russia. It is in the south-eastern part of the city. The gentleman who presides over it goes by the name of Baron Verysoft among the English, from the peculiar suavity of his manners. Mounting a flight of stairs, they found the Baron at one end of a handsome room, more like a drawing-room than an office, with a number of persons seated round it, all waiting to undergo the ordeal of his friendly inquiries. Nearly all civilised nations were there represented,—English, Germans, French, and Spaniards. Among them they recognised some of their fellow-passengers. The simple, round, good-natured face of one of them they were glad to see. His name was Mr Tobias Evergreen. He was very civil to the lads on board, and seemed to take a great interest in them. Cousin Giles said he did not think he was quite the man to benefit by a journey in Russia; but one thing was certain, he was not likely to make the police very suspicious about his movements. Besides the strangers, there were two or three clerks in uniform, whose sharp, piercing eyes kept glancing round on the visitors, and narrowly scrutinising any fresh arrivals. They seemed to have little else to do beyond this, but to mend their pens, and to make occasional notes in some huge books before them. A number of people had to go up to the table of the Baron, and to reply to his questions; so our friends were compelled to exercise their patience till their turn came. Mr Evergreen spoke a few sentences, which he said was French. Cousin Giles also knew a little of that language, but Fred was able to understand it, and to speak it tolerably well. At last Mr Evergreen's turn came, and they followed him up to the table.

The Baron, in the blandest and most courteous way, inquired Mr Evergreen's name and country; whether he was married or single; what was his object in travelling; the name of his banker; how long he purposed remaining in the country,—to all of which questions he gave answers which seemed perfectly satisfactory to the Baron; and he then volunteered several particulars of his private history, at which the Baron bowed and smiled, as the lads observed he had bowed and smiled at several persons before, while he went on making notes in his book. Perhaps he did not understand a word Mr Evergreen said, or, what is very probable, he was not listening to what did not concern him, but was habitually too polite to let this be discovered. Mr Evergreen had then to sign his name several times in a book, and then the Baron bowed very politely, handed him his passport to take it to the passport office and various police offices, to be signed and countersigned again and again. Mr Evergreen on this bowed to the Baron, and the Baron bowed again. Mr Evergreen would have continued bowing before so great and benignant a personage had not the Baron summoned our friends to approach, Mr Evergreen meantime waiting for them.

They quickly got through the business, and the Baron gave a bow to Cousin Giles, which, if not so profound as those he gave to Mr Evergreen, was much more cordial, and seemed to say: "We understand each other; you are a man I can trust."

When they got outside the door, Mr Evergreen was loud in his praises of Baron Verysoft.

"Nice, charming man!" he exclaimed; "so civil, so kind to me. Don't you think I ought to ask him to dinner, now? It would be but a proper attention in return for his civility."

"He would have to fulfil a very large number of dinner engagements if all thought as you do; but I suspect few people are so grateful for his attentions," answered Cousin Giles.

It was some time before Mr Evergreen could be persuaded to give up his idea.

"The credit of our country is at stake," said he. "Well, well, I suppose I must do as you advise, and let the Baron form his own conclusions of us."

After all, the terrible passport work was got through with much less trouble and expense than Cousin Giles was led to believe would be the case. One of the head clerks at the passport office, a Dane, who spoke English perfectly, assured him that if he went himself he would get the documents signed at once without bribery. The Government fees were very low, and beyond these he paid nothing. He was afterwards told that the Government wished to produce a good impression on the foreigners who were expected in the country to be present at the coronation, and had therefore issued directions to expedite the delivery of passports.

About this time, certainly, new regulations were made with regard to the passports for natives, and many of the old and most obnoxious ones were altered. Till now, a Russian, if he wished to move from one town to another, could not do so without giving several days' notice to the police; and if he wished to leave the country he was compelled to beg permission to do so three months beforehand. Now, by getting any well-known person to be responsible for any debt he might leave unpaid, he was able to travel abroad at the notice of a day or two—indeed, as soon as the governor of his district would issue his passport. Of course it was a question how long this improved system was likely to last. Even now, both foreigners and natives could only get passports from one city to another; and thus Cousin Giles had taken out one for Moscow, but would be obliged then to take another to go farther into the interior. All the passport arrangements having been made, the travellers agreed to leave their letters of introduction, as a drizzling rain had come on, and would prevent them from enjoying the views presented by the city. When, however, Cousin Giles came to examine the paper of directions given by the banker, he found that they were written in the Russian character. Now as the Russian letters, although some of the capitals are somewhat alike in shape, have a totally different sound to the English, or indeed to any other European language, he could not read a word.

“Never mind,” said he; “perhaps our drosky drivers, our ishvoshtsticks, can read it.”

He showed it to the two men, who bent their heads with profound sagacity over the paper, letting the drops of rain from their shovel hats fall down on the document, nearly obliterating the writing; and then they called another of their profession to their council, but the united wisdom of all three apparently could make nothing of the inscription; for, at last returning it, they shook their heads very gravely, and shrugged their shoulders in a most significant manner.

“I daresay we shall fall in with some one or other who can speak English before long,” said Cousin Giles, who was never long at a loss on an emergency.

He accordingly stopped one or two people, whom he addressed with a polite bow in English and French, but they shrugged their shoulders and passed on. At last they met a German who spoke English, and he very willingly directed the ishvoshtsticks where to drive.

While Cousin Giles was paying one of his visits, and as it was near the luncheon hour at the hotel, he advised Fred and Harry to return there, promising soon to follow them.

“We can find our way there easily enough!” they both exclaimed; “we know exactly what to say to the ishvoshtstick—Angliskoy Nabergenoy—that’s it—the English Quay. Oh, we shall get along famously.”

Saying this, they jumped up on their fore-and-aft drosky, and, giving their directions as well as could any Russian, they thought, away they drove.

They were then in the Vasiliefskoi Ostrof quarter, or on Basilius Island. This is the name given to the large island which is to the north of the main channel of the Neva. Here is the Exchange, and many public buildings before mentioned, and here most of the English merchants reside. They drove on, remarking a variety of novel and curious sights on their way; but, forgetting to take due note of the direction in which they were going, they passed along the quay, and over one of the floating bridges, and then through some fine wide streets. They were amused with the guards stationed at the corners of streets in every quarter of the city. They were mostly thin, tall, lank men, in long coats reaching to their heels, with huge battle-axes on long poles in their hands, and helmets on their heads. What use they were of it was difficult to say, for they certainly could not have run after a thief, much less have knocked one down. The signs, also, in front of the shops appeared very ridiculous. Instead of the display of articles made by an English tradesman in his windows, there were large boards over the doors and windows, and their sides, and under the windows, painted with gigantic designs representing the chief articles to be found within. Huge gloves and stockings, and cravats and pocket-handkerchiefs, and boots and shoes, and coats and trousers, and hats and caps, and knives and forks and spoons—indeed, it is impossible to enumerate all the articles thus represented.

“Those are what we may call Russian hieroglyphics, Harry,” said Fred; “I daresay, now, that the Egyptians had something of the sort in their shop windows before they knew how to write.”

“It is a capital sort of language,” replied Harry, “because, you see, the mujicks, who do not know how to read, and we, who don’t understand Russian, both understand it equally well.”

“The best universal language,” remarked Fred. “If something of the sort were established regularly in the world, it would save a great deal of trouble. But I say, Harry, where have we got to? I am sure we have never been here before.”

They had been so amused that they had not remarked the change in the style of architecture of the streets through which they were passing. They were now in a region of low houses, although of considerable size, mostly on one floor, very few having two storeys.

“I am sure this is not the way to the English Quay.”

Harry, who sat in front, on this began to pull the ishvoshtstick by his badge, and then by his sleeve, to make him stop. The fellow either would not or could not understand that they wanted to stop. At last he pulled up, and looked over his shoulder.

“I say, Harry, do you remember what they call the English Quay? For, on my word, I have forgotten it,” exclaimed Fred in some little dismay, feeling very like Mustapha in the tale of *The Forty Thieves*, when he forgets the talismanic words, “Open sesame.”

“I’m sure I don’t know exactly, but I’ll try and see if I can’t make the fellow understand,” answered Harry. “I say, you

cabdrivowitch, cut away to the English Quayoi!”

The man shook his head and sat still, as much as to say, “I don’t understand you, my masters.”

“What’s to be done? He doesn’t seem to think my Russian very first-rate,” said Harry.

“I say, old fellow, we are very hungry, and want to get back to our inn to luncheon,” cried Fred, imitating the action of eating.

A bright idea seemed to have seized the ishvoshtstick, and, whipping on his horse, he drove rapidly onward. Harry thought that he had fully comprehended them. He pulled up, however, very soon before a door, over which were painted pieces of meat and sausages, and rolls, and bottles, and glasses. Evidently it was an eating-house, but the lads would not avail themselves of its accommodation, for two reasons—they did not know what to ask for, and they had no Russian money in their pockets; they therefore shook their heads, and signed to the driver to go on. The man evidently thought them very unreasonable and hard to please, but obeyed. It was soon clear to them that they were getting to the outskirts of the city, and they were about trying to make the man turn back when they saw three figures approaching, whom by their rolling walk and dress they recognised even at a distance as English seamen. When the men drew near, the lads were delighted to find that one was their shipmate, old Tom.

He hailed them with a cheerful voice, and told them that, having met two young friends belonging to a ship at Cronstadt, he had got leave for them to accompany him to see Saint Petersburg.

“But I say, Tom, can you tell us where we are?” said Fred.

“That’s just what we were going to ask you,” replied old Tom. “We’ve got out of our reckoning somehow, and we know no more where we are than if we had got into the Pacific without a chart or compass.”

“What is to be done?” exclaimed Fred; “this stupid fellow does not understand a word we say, and though we have told him to drive back to our hotel he won’t go.”

For a long time all hands consulted together. One proposed one thing, one the other. By this time two or three other ishvoshtsticks had stopped with their vehicles near the strangers, but could no more than the first comprehend where they wanted to go.

“If we could but get back to the large square with the big statue in it of Peter on horseback on a rock, we could find our way to the inn easily enough,” said Fred.

Old Tom thought a moment. “What, the chap who is holding out his hand?” he asked.

“The same,” answered Fred.

“Then I have it!” he exclaimed with exultation. “Jem, just do you go down on all fours, and serve me for a horse for a minute, and we’ll soon see what will happen.”

“What! Do you want me to carry you there, Tom?” asked Jem. “I’d do it willingly if I knew the way, but I think we should get there faster if we all walked on our two legs.”

“No, no!” answered Tom; “I want you to act the big horse, and I’ll do the rider.”

“Oh, ay, I see it all now, mate,” said Jem, going down on all fours, while old Tom, who, though serious-minded, was very much of a wag at proper seasons, leaped on his back, and stuck out one arm as Peter’s statue is doing.

“Now, Jem, rear up on your fore legs as the big horse is doing, and we shall come the statue to an affigraphy,” he cried.

The representation of the statue of Peter was unmistakeable. In an instant the ishvoshtsticks comprehended what was required, and, clapping their hands with delight, while they burst into loud laughter, made signals to the seamen to jump into a drosky, and away they drove as fast as their horses could go, in the very direction from whence Fred and Harry had just come. In about a quarter of an hour they saw the tall golden spire of the Admiralty directly ahead of them, and shortly afterwards they rattled into the vast open space in which it stands, when the ishvoshtsticks pulled up close to the very statue of Peter.

“Now, starboard your helm, my lads, and steer a westerly course,” sung out old Tom to the drivers. They did not understand what he said, but they saw the direction in which he pointed along the quay, so they all drove off again as rapidly as before. Harry pulled at their driver’s badge to make him stop in front of the hotel, where they found Cousin Giles looking out for them. He had not been very anxious about their safety, for he guessed that they had lost their way, and would probably find it again before long, while, as he said, it would teach them to keep a better reckoning in future. Old Tom and his companions could not be persuaded to come in, for they said that they must make the best of their way back to Cronstadt. They made Cousin Giles laugh heartily by their description of the mode they had hit on for making the ishvoshtsticks understand the point to which they wished to be conveyed.

Chapter Five.

Bird’s-eye View of Saint Petersburg from the Tower of the Admiralty—The Isaac Church—Politeness of a Russian Officer—The Hermitage Palace—Portraits of the Czars—Magnificent Hall—Superb View from it—Jewels—Relics of Peter the Great—The Winter and other Palaces—Bridge of Boats—Exchange—Church of

Cousin Giles and his young companions had climbed up to the summit of the Admiralty tower on a fine bright morning, when they could enjoy the strange scene which this aerial position presented to their eyes.

“Let us take it in properly, and map it down in our memory,” said Cousin Giles after they had looked round and round, then to a distance, and down into the open spaces and streets below them, with their moving crowd of men, and horses, and carriages, of high and low degree, dashing and tearing here and there as if the lives of monarchs and the fate of kingdoms depended on their speed. “First, look to the east; there we have the rapid, clear Neva, flowing out of Lake Ladoga, which in our mind’s eye we can see in the distance, though it is too far off to be seen in reality. Then, in the same direction, near the outskirts of the city, the river branches off into several channels, making a delta like that of the Nile, and forming a number of islands of various dimensions—some so large that a considerable portion of the city to the north of us stands on them, others containing only a few gardens and villas. The country surrounding the city seems barren and desolate in the extreme, either an arid steppe or a stagnant marsh telling of the agues and fevers afflicting those dwelling near it. To the north, however, not many versts from the city, rise the hills and woods, and fields and orchards of Finland, inhabited by the finest peasantry of the Russian empire. To the west appear the shining waters of the head of the Gulf of Finland, with the fortifications of Cronstadt in the far distance, and a fleet of men-of-war before it; while higher up is a whole squadron of gun-boats, which were lately built and fitted out in a great hurry to meet those England had prepared to send into these waters. Across the head of the gulf, looking down on Cronstadt, peep forth amid a mass of green foliage the golden spires and domes, and white-walled palaces, and Swiss-looking villas of Peterhoff, beyond which, and far away as the eye can reach to the southward, and very, very much farther on, one great desolate steppe or plain, bearing for miles and miles scarcely a tree higher than a gooseberry bush, or a hill boasting a height of greater elevation than a molehill. Now let us bring our eyes nearer to our feet, to the mouth of the river. We see it crowded with steamers and every variety of craft of moderate size of all nations, and yet we know that the greater proportion of vessels which bade to the city do not come higher than Cronstadt. The large barges and lighters which we see moving up and down the river convey their cargoes to and from that place. High up the river, above the bridges, is another collection of vessels, and several are to be seen moving up and down the different channels; while the canals, which meander through the city in various directions, are literally jammed up with barges, chiefly unloading firewood. The canals pass down the middle of the broad streets, many of which are fringed with trees. At the mouth of the river, on the south side, is Mr Baird’s iron factory, where steam-engines and iron machines of all sorts are made; near it is his private residence. He is now a Russian baron, and is much esteemed by the Emperor. A little higher up is the new naval arsenal, with long sheds, where gangs of workmen are employed in chains, and through which runs a canal. Some men-of-war steamers are moored off it. Others are seen in different parts of the river, their guns commanding the quays; so that, should an émeute ever take place, the communication between the various quarters of the city would speedily be cut off. Groups of shipping are visible at different parts of the quays; but no ugly warehouses or stores of any sort are in sight, and their cargoes are quickly spirited away to other unaristocratical parts of the city. Here the mansions of the noble and wealthy have taken possession of the whole length of the quays. The first building of importance on the north side, opposite Mr Baird’s works, is the Corps of Mines. It is of great extent, and contains a museum stored with models, illustrating every branch of civil and military engineering, as well as some beautifully executed models of various descriptions of mines. Then come in succession, and nearly in the same line, the magnificent edifices containing the Academy of Arts, the University, the Academy of Sciences, the Corps of Cadets, and, lastly, the Exchange. Some of these buildings cover as much ground as many of the largest squares in London. Above the Exchange is Petersburg Island, which is covered with a strong fortification, called the Citadel. It contains a church called Peter Paul, built by Peter the Great, and which has a spire exactly like that of the Admiralty. On the island is also the cottage which Peter the Great inhabited while the foundations of his wondrous city were being laid. Beyond it, to the north and west, can be discerned some of the smaller channels of the silvery Neva, flowing among gardens and orchards, and green waving woods, with villas of every description of architecture, more suited apparently to the climate of the sunny south than to the cold atmosphere of this bleak region. Between the base of the building on which we stand and the northern portion of the city we have described, runs the main channel of the river. It is crossed by several broad bridges, resting on a chain of huge boats or barges, which can be removed when the approach of winter gives signs that, by means of the quick-forming ice, the inhabitants will be able to cross without their aid.

“We will now turn and face to the south. To the right is the long line of the English Quay, with its numerous handsome and substantial mansions, which in any other city would be called palaces. Then comes the great square or rather space below us, bordered by huge piles containing the chief public offices in the empire. Standing amid them, yet not pressed on too closely, rises the proud structure of the new Church of Saint Isaac, with its four granite-columned porticoes. Then radiating off directly before us are the three widest and longest streets perhaps in Europe: first in magnificence comes the Neva Perspective, and then comes Peas Street, and the Resurrection Perspective; but running out of them are also streets of great width, composed of houses of numerous storeys and undoubted pretensions to grandeur. The Neva Perspective is the most interesting. On the right side of it stands the Kazan Church, which it was intended should be like Saint Peter’s at Rome; but, except that it has a wide-spreading portico with numerous columns, it is in no way to be compared to that magnificent structure. On the same side is a building, or rather a collection of buildings, which at a distance have no very imposing appearance. This is the great market of Saint Petersburg, or the Gostinnoi dvor. It consists of a series of arcades, in front of stores of two or more storeys, forming the outside boundary of an extensive region of squares, which have likewise arcades running round them, the area being filled with garden produce and rough wares not liable to be injured by weather. Here every article, either for use or consumption, which the lower orders can possibly require, is to be found, from a hat to a cucumber, or a pair of shoes to a leg of mutton; but, as our friends were about to visit the place, it need not now be further described.

“At the very end of the street could be seen the terminus of the Saint Petersburg and Moscow railway, the iron road itself running far, far away to the southward across the flat and marshy steppe. On either side of this prince of streets, the Neva Prospect, and in many streets branching from it, could be seen a number of lofty and magnificent palaces with here and there golden-domed churches, and many public buildings, convents, and monasteries, and

wide walks fringed with trees, and canals carrying produce from far-off countries into the very heart of the city. Let us have one look more before we descend at Peter's Statue, not bigger apparently than a child's toy, and the Alexander Column, and the golden domes of the Isaac Church, and the huge Winter Palace, and the Hermitage, and the Imperial Theatre, and the long line of palaces facing the quays of the Neva beyond them; then we have to-day witnessed a sight not easily forgotten.

"Saint Petersburg, as it stands on its millions of wooden piles, the liquid, rapidly-flowing Neva, the moving, living crowd of uniform-clad inhabitants—men, women, and children, coaches, droskies, and horses, infantry and cavalry, Cossacks of the Don on their ragged ponies, and skeleton-looking guards with their glittering halberds at every corner. Those at home may gain a fair notion of the scene from Burford's Panorama, but they will soon forget it, while we shall remember it all our lives: there is nothing like the reality to impress it on our minds." So said Cousin Giles as our friends began to descend into the world below.

"We must now visit some of these places in detail," said Cousin Giles as they stood in the square outside the Admiralty gates. "Where shall we go first?"

"To the big new church!" exclaimed Harry. "I want to see if it is as fine inside as it is out."

To the Isaac Church accordingly they steered their course. On their way they encountered a party of British naval officers, whose ship was lying at Cronstadt. Several of them were well-known to Cousin Giles, and they gladly accepted his invitation to visit the church. When, however, they got to the gate in the wooden paling which still surrounded it, the porter signified to them that without a ticket they could not be admitted. Even a silver rouble could not soften him. He looked at it wistfully, but for some reason was afraid of accepting the bribe. Just as they were going away in despair, a tall, gentleman-like officer stepped through the gateway. He looked at them for an instant, and then inquired in French what they wanted. Cousin Giles explained.

"Oh, I will soon arrange that, I doubt not," he replied, returning into the enclosure. He quickly came back, and begged them to enter. "After you have seen the church, if you will come to the Hermitage, I will be there, and shall have great pleasure in showing you over it."

Cousin Giles and the commander of the English ship and the other officers bowed and thanked him, and accepted his offer. He then left them, and they mounted the long flight of steps which leads up to the southern portico. It must be understood that there are three similar porticoes, with lofty granite columns, constituting the chief beauty of the exterior of the building. The roof is supported by massive columns: they, and every part of the walls, are covered with the richest marbles of every colour, highly polished. In the centre is a dome, near the summit of which, as if it were watching over the worshippers below, is seen a dove, floating apparently in air. The effect is good, whatever may be thought of the taste which would allow so sacred an emblem to be thus introduced. The great attractions of the church are a row of malachite pillars on either side of the high altar. Their appearance is very fine; the malachite is, however, only veneered on copper, of which the pillars are composed. There are also numerous pictures of saints, which at first sight appeared to be of the richest mosaic, like those of Saint Peter's at Rome, but on examination they proved to be only on canvas; perhaps they are placed there till the real mosaics are ready. The three brass doors of the church, covered with figures in the deepest relief, are very fine, as is also a large window of stained glass.

Cousin Giles observed, that the richness of the decorations put him in mind of Saint Peter's at Rome; but, both in respect to size and elegance of design, it is much inferior.

The party having satisfied their curiosity, set off across the square to the Hermitage. Their new friend the colonel was at the door to receive them, and, conducted by a guide in the imperial livery, they mounted a superb flight of steps, which led them into a series of magnificent rooms, the walls of which were covered with some of the finest pictures of the great masters. In the centre of each of these rooms were exquisitely-shaped vases of malachite and other valuable materials.

The colonel, in the politest manner, pointed out to the party the pictures most worthy of admiration. Cousin Giles was particularly struck by two holy families, by Raphael, painted at different periods of his life, very different from each other, and yet both equally beautiful.

There are a number of very large pictures in the halls, the favourite subject of which is the retreat of the French from Russia, and the burning of Moscow. This subject is treated in every possible manner. There are also a number of large pictures of the battles in which the Russians have been victorious. They are not fond of keeping up a remembrance of their defeats. There was a good picture of the late Emperor, with his haughty brow, fierce eyes, and determined lips, the very impersonification of self-will and human pride, now brought down to the very dust; but, haughty as was that brow, the expression of the countenance gave no sign of talent or true genius. It was indeed wanting. He had the sense to take advantage of the ideas of others, and the determination to carry them into execution. The colonel stopped to look at the picture, but there was no smile of affection on his countenance. There were also full-length portraits of many Czars, and among others of Paul, which had a rollicking, half-tipsy look about it, very characteristic of the man. The crown was on one side, and the buttons of the waistcoat unfastened, if not, indeed, buttoned awry. Intoxication or insanity was clearly portrayed by the too faithful artist. It was a way of speaking truth in which courtiers are not apt to indulge.

The colonel led the party through a number of halls, each more vast and more beautiful than the former. The walls of one were of white and gold, of another blue and silver, and of a third of a pinkish hue; but the most beautiful of all was the music hall. The pillars which supported the roof were white twisted with gold—a most aerial flight of steps leading to a gallery above, with a second row of pillars. It was more like a scene described in Eastern romance than what one expects to meet with in the solid reality of life. The windows of the hall looked out on a fine view of the Neva, with the citadel before it. The colonel caught the eyes of the British officers looking at it.

"Ah!" said he, taking the hands of the commander and pointing to the fortress, "that is the place you would have had to take if you had come here in the spring; but, believe me, my dear sir, I receive you much more willingly in this friendly way than I should have done at the point of the bayonet."

The colonel spoke in so frank and cordial a way, and with so much grace in his manner, that he completely won the hearts of his guests. They all warmly pressed him to come on board, their ship, promising to show him everything about her. He replied that he would gladly have availed himself of their offer, but that he was compelled to go to Moscow to make preparations for the coronation.

Two fine old soldiers, tall and upright, with huge moustaches, and breasts covered with decorations, stood guard at the entrance of the treasury. It contained jewels of every description, and curious productions of rare art, such as a prince in the *Arabian Nights* might have been told to bring from a far distant country before he could hope to win the hand of some lovely princess. Among them was a clock under a glass case, consisting of a golden tree, with a peacock, an owl, a cock, a mouse, a stream of running water, and many other things. At each hour the peacock unfolds his tail, the cock crows, the owl rolls his goggle eyes, and the mouse runs out of its hole. But far more interesting than all the crowns of gold, the robes of silk, and the precious gems, are numerous articles manufactured by the great Peter, and the tools with which he worked. Among others is the chair on which he sat—a very rough affair, spy-glasses of huge dimensions, and walking-sticks innumerable—some thin-made switches, others thick enough to knock down a giant, with every variety of handle, ending with the old man's crutch, a complete epitome of human life.

It would be impossible in our journal to mention all the magnificent pictures collected from every part of Europe, and the vast numbers of interesting curiosities.

This beautiful palace, as has been remarked, was built by Catherine, that she might retire to it after the cares of state, and endeavour to forget them among its varieties and objects of interest. That she attained the ease and happiness she sought, is more than doubtful.

"Depend on it, my lads," observed Cousin Giles, "that powerful but bad woman was far from happy amid all the luxury which wealth could give her. Nothing but a good conscience, void of offence towards God and man, can bring happiness, and that she had not got."

The Winter Palace is next to the Hermitage. Though much larger, it is far less interesting, as the interior was burnt down in 1837, when many fine paintings and articles of value were destroyed. It is said that in the old palace there resided not less than six thousand persons, some living in huts constructed on the roof, whence no one thought of disturbing them. Some thousands no doubt reside also in the present building.

That moon-stricken monarch, Paul, built a palace for himself, in the hope that within its fortified walls he might be safe from the attacks of his enemies. So eager was he to have it finished, that five thousand men were employed on it daily. To dry the walls, iron plates were made hot and fastened against them; but what is done in a hurry is generally ill done, and such was the case in this instance: the cost was three times greater than it need have been.

Scarcely had the unhappy Emperor inhabited his new abode three months, when he fell, pierced by the daggers of assassins, in the centre of the very fortress he had fancied would prove his security.

The Hermitage having been thoroughly lionised under the auspices of the polite colonel, the party steered a course across the bridge of boats to the Exchange, a large building with a fine portico and a flight of steps facing the river, on the north side, at the eastern end of Vasili Ostrof, and with a fine open space before it. It was presented by the late Emperor to the mercantile community of Saint Petersburg, whom he wished especially to conciliate. In front stand two granite columns, decorated with the prows of ships cast in metal. On a close examination of the building, our friends discovered that it was covered with stucco, which in many places was already crumbling away, as is the case with many other edifices of high and low degree in this rapidly constructed city. Cousin Giles and his friends were hesitating about entering when they were overtaken by Mr Henshaw.

"Come in," said he. "The merchants here are happy to see strangers; they will not knock your hat over your eyes, as the frequenters of Change Alley are wont to do to intruders."

They followed their friend, and found themselves in a vast hall full of long blue or green-coated gentry, with flowing beards and low-crowned hats, intermingled with others in modern European costume—some looking round in expectation of a correspondent, others in earnest conversation in knots of twos or threes, busily engaged in buying or selling, a word deciding the fate of hundreds of fat oxen now feeding securely in their native pastures, or of thousands of tall trees growing in the primeval forest thousands of versts away. They were much struck by observing an altar on one side of the entrance, with candles burning on it, and the picture of a saint, black, as usual, and in a golden habit, before which the native merchants bowed and crossed themselves as they passed onward to transact their affairs. Here were collected representatives of all nations, and from every part of Russia—a strange medley of physiognomies, tongues, and costumes; but so habitual has become to them a modulated tone of voice, that, in spite of the hundreds speaking at once, a gentle murmur alone is heard through the hall.

Among the foreigners the Germans probably preponderate, but the English hold a very high position: in no community abroad are British merchants more deservedly respected than those engaged in the Russian trade. Cousin Giles and his young companions made the acquaintance of several, and found them most pleasing, gentlemanly men. Mr Henshaw took them to see the portraits of the present and the late Emperor, hanging up in an inner room of the building. The present Czar is a slighter and shorter man than his father, and with a far milder expression of countenance. The picture of Nicholas speaks of undaunted courage and determination, and at the same time of a relentless and almost a ferocious disposition.

"I am glad he was not my master," exclaimed Harry; "how hard he would have hit if he had begun to flog one!"

Leaving the Exchange, they returned to the south side, and then crossed another long bridge of boats, and afterwards a smaller one, to the Citadel. Here their object was to see the Church of Peter Paul, where Peter the Great, and all his successors, including the late Emperor, lie buried. After they had entered within the strongly fortified walls, an avenue of birch trees took them up to the church, with its lofty gilt spire. The richly painted roof is supported by massive square pillars, covered with pictures of saints, as is the pulpit. The altar blazes with gold and silver, and huge silver candlesticks. The faces and hands of the saints are all black, and peep out of holes cut in sheets of gold or silver maiked to represent their robes; thus the artist has very little labour in producing a picture. The tombs of the Czars are grouped on either side of the high altar. They are plain sarcophagi, are usually covered with black velvet palls, very simple and unostentatious. On the walls and pillars are suspended various trophies taken in war from the enemies of Russia. Over the windows, as Harry observed, were some "huge jolly cherubs—that is to say," he added, "fat heads and nothing else to carry behind them; so it is no wonder their cheeks get blown out."

"We have seen enough lions for one day," said Cousin Giles as they left the fortress. "Fred will have work enough to write up his notes as it is."

After dinner, Fred read out to Cousin Giles and his brother the remarks he had made on the various scenes they had witnessed in their walks and drives through the city. They will be found in the following chapter.

Chapter Six.

Remarks from Fred's Note-book about Saint Petersburg, and the Habits and Customs of the Russians.

The streets and places of Saint Petersburg are very badly paved: the holes and ruts in them are full of mud when it rains, and of dust in summer weather; some parts are covered with blocks of wood, like the streets of London. Did the English learn the system from the Russians, or the Russians from the English? Other streets are paved with little round pebbles, very unpleasant to walk on. The side pavements are often narrow and very uneven. The frosts of winter much unsettle the flagstones.

The policemen at the corners of the streets look as if they were all cut from one model, like a child's tin regiment of soldiers. They are all tall, thin, lathy fellows, in long greatcoats, with huge moustaches and long-handled halberds; their faces as long, solemn, and grave as if the weight of the empire rested on their shoulders.

Mr Evergreen, who had joined us near the hotel, had a cigar in his mouth; no sooner did the guard see it, than he made furious signs to him to put it out.

"Dear me, he'll march me off to prison, and perhaps to Siberia!" exclaimed our verdant friend, hastily throwing the cigar on the ground. As we passed, I happened to turn round, when I beheld the long guard stalking rapidly towards the still burning weed; he seized it, and, placing it between his lips, coolly marched back to his sentry-box, where he continued smoking as if it were his own lawful property.

These guards are said to be great rogues. I suspect he would have dowsed his glim in no little hurry if one of his officers had hove in sight.

Passed a troop of Cossacks of the Don, mounted on the most rugged, roughly-caparisoned little steeds, looking as if just caught wild from the steppes. They act as the cavalry police of the city. They are little dark fellows, and wear fur caps with red tops to them, long brown caftans or coats, and yellow boots; having in their hands long tapering lances, with which they would, doubtless, prick a man in a street disturbance, or on any other occasion, with the slightest possible compunction.

When we first arrived, the houses, and even the streets, had an oveny smell, which showed us how hot it had been and must often be in summer. The westerly wind has now cooled the air, and made it very pleasant. The Russian wheaten bread is excellent, very light and pure, made up in long loaves or oblong rolls. We were shown a loaf which came from Moscow, made in the shape of a basket with a handle. A housewife returning from market hangs half a dozen of them on her arm. The bread of peasants is very different; it is made of rye, very brown—almost black, very close, heavy, and sour. They are, however, very fond of it, and so are even the upper classes, who seldom make a meal without taking some.

The streets, as one drives about, seem interminable,—long wide avenues of trees with gardens and places extending away at right angles in all directions. What dreary, hopeless work for a poor fellow on foot on a hot day, who has lost his way, to find it again!

They are here called lines, like the avenues of New York, Cousin Giles says. One is directed to the fifteenth or sixteenth line. Most of the private residences here are in flats—few people have a house to themselves. The entrance is either at the side of an archway, or from a quadrangle round which the houses are built.

At the north end of the iron bridge stands a shrine, with the picture of the Virgin Mary on it, before which tapers are constantly burning. Every one who passes, belonging to the Greek Church, takes off his hat and rapidly and energetically crosses himself; drosky drivers, soldiers, peasants, rein up their horses, even going at full speed, and perform their acts of devotion. People on foot stop and bow and cross themselves,—some scarcely breaking off a conversation, while others kneel before the altar and continue some minutes, if not in prayer, at all events in the attitude of devotion. This end of the bridge turns on pivots, to allow vessels to pass up and down.

In the streets are seen a number of pigeons, whom no one disturbs. The Russians have a superstitious veneration for them, believing, I fancy, that they are inhabited by the souls of their departed relatives. We, however, had a pigeon pie at the hotel. Fruit is very dear here. We were asked a silver rouble for a basket of strawberries, almost spoilt, and two roubles for a melon.

We saw some excellent figures of native costumes. Three roubles were asked for each. One of the late Emperor cost four roubles, the additional rouble being put on in compliment to his Majesty. It would be disrespectful to sell even a dead emperor at as low a price as a living subject.

In every quarter of the city, over the police stations, at which the thin halberd-armed guards are posted, are watch-towers. A man is stationed at the top, which is fitted with a telegraph, to give notice either of a fire or a flood. Fires may occur any day—floods in the spring chiefly, from the rapid melting of the snows of winter. Red flags tell of coming floods; black-striped balls by day, and lamps by night, of fire.

An omnibus, probably built in England, passed us with four horses; a postilion, dressed in a drosky driver's hat and long coat, rode the leaders, while another man in a similar costume sat on the box to steer the wheelers. The omnibuses are painted black or dark red—very sombre-looking conveyances, making one think of prison-vans or hearses. Some of the little country carts are curious-looking affairs. They are built with ribs, and look like a boat with the stem and stern cut off; the hind wheels are kept on by a bow, one end of which comes out from the side of the cart, and the other presses the axle.

We remarked the washing stages on the Neva. In the centre is a long opening, at which the women stand and dip in the unfortunate garments to be cleansed, and batter them with a mallet.

There are also large stages with buildings on them for swimming baths. On one we saw "Swimming School," written in German. A foot regiment passed us with black-and-brass helmets, dark-drab long coats, black belts and scabbards. They had a very sombre appearance, but were fine-looking fellows, evidently fit for service.

A number of wood boats are unloading at the quays. They are huge flat-bottomed barges, of white planks slightly fastened together. They are broken up and burnt like their cargo. The wood they bring is chiefly birch, and is cut up in pieces fit for the stove. The canals are crowded in some places with these boats. A number of vessels, chiefly Dutch, were unloading at the quays close to the Winter Palace; but not a particle of mercantile dirt or litter was to be seen. Carts came and quickly transported the cargo to less polished regions. It took us just two minutes and a half to walk rapidly from one end of the Winter Palace to the other. That does not seem much, but let any one try how much ground he can get over in that time at a walk, and it will give him a good idea of the extent of the building.

Droskies can be hired at a very cheap rate. For less than sixpence one may go from one end of the city to the other, and that is no trifling distance.

The peasant women whom we have seen in the city are dressed in rough greatcoats and boots, with coloured handkerchiefs tied over their heads and under their chins. Their appearance is not attractive.

On Sunday we went to the church of the English Factory, of which Dr Law has been minister for many years. The outside is like a house. The residence of the minister is under it. There is also a library attached to it. The church itself is a very handsome hall. The ladies sit on one side, the men on the other. Several persons in Russian uniforms were there. Their parents probably were English, and, though they have entered the Russian service, they are allowed to adhere to their own form of worship.

We find the Russian language perfectly unpronounceable. It is said to be like Hindustanee; for instance, a stick is *palka* in Russian, and *palkee* in Hindustanee, and there are numerous words equally alike in the two languages. It is very rich, we are told. There are but few words expressing the same thing. In English we say a man, a dog, and a tree dies; the Russians say a man dies, or rather departs, a dog perishes, a tree withers. This shows that, heathens though they were when their language was invented, they must have believed in the immortality of the soul.

The late Emperor disliked drinking and smoking. If either a military or civil officer was known by him to have been intoxicated, from that moment his promotion was stopped, if even he escaped being dismissed immediately from his office. The Emperor passed an edict prohibiting smoking in railway carriages. On one occasion, the Grand Duke Michael, who was going a short distance with a party of friends by the train, appeared on the platform with a cigar in his mouth, but threw it away before stepping into the carriage. This he did to show his respect for the Emperor's edict, for no one would have ventured to stop him had he smoked on. Even then most of the imperial family smoked, as does the present Emperor.

Log-huts, very similar to those used in Canada, are the usual habitations of Russian peasants. They are found close up to that mighty city of Saint Petersburg. A groove is cut in the length of the log, into which the log above it is let. The interstices are filled with moss. They are considered far warmer than any brick or stone houses. Sometimes they are boarded over, and when painted gaily have a cheerful aspect. Ordinary plank houses are used in summer, but would scarcely be habitable in winter.

When people during the winter are travelling in Russia, they do not use hot bricks or water-bottles, as the Canadians do, for their feet, but wear very thick fur boots, made of ample size, so as in no way to impede the circulation of the blood. A tight boot is painful and dangerous, and many a person in consequence has lost a foot, even his life. When walking, India-rubber goloshes are worn, which are taken off when a person enters a house. A very large thick fur cloak, in which a person is completely enveloped, is worn when travelling. It is thrown down in a corner as soon as a person enters a house, where it lies like a heap of dirty clothes.

Spitting is as common among all classes as we hear that it is in America. Carpets have only of late years been introduced into the houses of the opulent, but people spit over them just as they did over their brick floors. A refined sort of spittoon has been introduced, with a high handle. By touching a spring the lid flies open, and drops again when made use of. Uncle Giles says the inventor would have done better to have invented some means of breaking his countrymen off a dirty habit; perhaps, however, the hot air in the rooms, and the sharp air outside, may have something to do with it.

The English here say that the habits of social life among the Russians have very much improved since they mixed with them: I do not know what view the Russians take of the case.

Thirty years ago, palaces and public offices were alike dirty in the extreme; but the Emperor Alexander, after his visit to England, introduced great improvements. Now the public offices at Saint Petersburg, at all events, are kept fairly clean. I do not think, however, that the housemaid has got so far south as Moscow; it is too holy a place, in a Russian's idea, to make cleanliness necessary.

An English friend told us that once upon a time he went to pay a visit to a great man, who lived in a great house. The entrance-hall was unspeakably dirty; round it, against the walls, were a number of ottomans, on which slept numerous shock-headed, sandal-footed, long-coated, red-shirted serfs, with their master's fur cloaks rolled up as pillows. The next hall was scarcely cleaner. The third was gorgeously furnished, but no neat-handed housemaid, apparently, ever entered to sweep the floors or brush away the cobwebs. An ante-room was a shade better; while the great man's private chamber looked really comfortable, as if he had imbibed a sufficient regard for cleanliness to keep himself out of the dirt.

Perhaps with the same object the late Emperor introduced foot pavements in Saint Petersburg. Formerly foot passengers had to pick their way from stone to stone among rivulets of mud. English ladies used to be much admired for the propriety of their walking dresses; now, on account of the undue length of their gowns, they kick up so great a dust that it is most unpleasant to walk behind them. Uncle Giles says, "Perhaps they do it to keep off danglers." Russian ladies never think of walking in the city—the streets of Saint Petersburg, in truth, do not tempt them; in spring and autumn they are thick with mud, in summer with the finest dust.

The ladies of Russia are, like those in other countries, very fond of lap-dogs, and give very high prices for them. The groom who came over with us brought two dozen, shut up in hen-coops, and expected to get 20 pounds at least for each of them.

The wealthy Russians generally give enormous prices for luxuries. Our captain on one voyage brought over some oysters, which sold, he told us, at fourpence each. They are not to be found in the Baltic. He made about nine hundred per cent, by them. Saint Petersburg is very ill supplied with salt-water fish; there are neither lobsters nor flatfish.

It is generally supposed in England that the very finest tea is to be found in Russia, brought all the way overland from China. This an English friend assured us is a mistake. There is certainly very good tea in Russia, but what costs there ten shillings is not superior to what can be bought in England at from four to five shillings. Very large quantities of very bad tea are smuggled over the German frontier, a large proportion probably having come round from China by sea, and not considered good enough for the English market.

Our friend on one occasion, being on his way home overland, having missed the diligence, had to stop a day at Tilsit, a place celebrated for the Articles of Peace signed there between Napoleon and the Allies. While wandering round the town, he saw large storehouses with chests piled upon chests of tea. He asked where all the tea was to go. Some people would not answer, but others told him that Russian merchants came and bought it, and carried it away over the frontier. Large quantities used to be smuggled through Finland, which has different custom regulations to those of Russia. A light duty only was charged on tea in that country, but how to get it into Russia was the question. To effect this, logs of wood were hollowed out, filled with tea, and floated down the streams. Carts loaded with casks of apples entered the country; inside the casks were chests of tea. This sort of smuggling just suited the taste and enterprise of a Russian peasant.

Once upon a time, the cart of an unfortunate smuggler broke down in front of the Emperor's palace. Not only did the cart break, but so did the casks of apples, and out rolled the chests of tea. The affrighted smugglers fled, and left their property to the police, whose samovars did not probably smoke the less merrily in consequence. At all events, the *contretemps* opened the eyes of the Emperor somewhat to the folly of having high restrictive duties with a frontier so enormous as that of Russia; but, whatever were his plans of reform, the war and death cut them short. Large quantities of tea are at the present time imported into the neighbouring German ports, for the acknowledged object of sending them into Russia.

Of course, as is to be expected, there is much bribery and corruption in all departments of Government. An officer of the Guards, Count —, was appointed chief of the Custom-house. He had not much practical knowledge of business, but he resolved to make amends for his deficiency in that respect by looking into things with his own eyes. Once upon a time the daughter of one of his subordinates was married, and he was invited to the feast. Now, on so important an occasion, if a man has not a house of his own large enough to entertain his guests, he borrows one from a friend. On this occasion the father of the bride borrowed one from an official in his own department. When Count — entered, he admired the furniture and the rooms, and everything in it.

"Of course you have hired this; to whom does it belong?"

"It belongs to my friend So-and-so; he has lent it to me," was the answer.

"Ho, ho!" thought the Count. "So-and-so must have a fine private fortune, or else he must have the knack of fingering large bribes."

He consequently watched the unsuspecting So-and-so very narrowly, and soon discovered that he had fingers of a most tenacious description, which easily accounted for his handsome income. So-and-so, to his surprise, found himself one fine morning dismissed from his office, and compelled to retire into well-merited poverty and disgrace.

The Russians are at all times civil to strangers, and even during the war none of the English who remained were ever insulted by them. The English merchants, indeed, who have long resided in the country, were allowed to move about

as they liked, and several even resided at Peterhoff, in sight of the British fleet. The only people who ever said a word against them were some Prussians, whose direct trade was injured by the war. Prussia herself, however, benefited by the transit of goods across her frontier.

The mode of heating houses has been very much improved of late years. The best houses have now fireplaces, as well as stoves, which add much to the ventilation of the rooms. The stoves are made of brick; they are peculiar to the country, and may be called air-stoves. The fresh air is introduced by pipes from the outside, and, passing over the stove, is conveyed in other pipes through the house. The air also passes over a plate of iron, which is sprinkled sometimes with plain water, or by the more luxurious with rose-water. By depressing or elevating this plate, a current of air is sent through the room.

All the rooms have double windows; the inside one is removed in summer—not the outside one, as in Canada. If the air was allowed to get in between the two windows, the glass would become permanently covered with frost. To prevent this, a glass panel, which opens at both ends, is introduced between the two windows, and through this the room is aired. Great care is taken not to begin to heat the rooms till the second window is put in, or the glass in this case also would become coated with ice, and would remain so all the winter.

The Russian peasants are very economical in their mode of cooking. They are horrified at seeing the broth in which a leg of mutton is boiled thrown away, as is too often done in England. They will make a dish out of almost any of the herbs of the field, or of birds, beasts, or creeping things. They make all sorts of fish soups, of which they are especially fond; so, indeed, are the rich. All classes have an especial affection for the black rye bread of the country. We found it very sour, though I daresay habit might make one like it. All classes use porridges of every description. Buck-wheat is used for this purpose, as also to make cakes, as in America. What we call manna croup is also used in a variety of ways. A favourite fish among the higher classes is the sterlet, a sort of sturgeon; soup is made of it, but it is very expensive.

Good as some of the police regulations are, others are very absurd. If a person is wounded or otherwise injured, no one may go near him; for, if the wounded man should die, the person who went to help him would be carried off to prison, and certainly be tried for the murder. An acquaintance told us that one day in winter he saw from the window of a hotel, where he was standing with a friend, an English lady driving in a sledge; at that moment a heavy sledge drove against it, upsetting it, and severely injuring her. A policeman was on the point of seizing her sledge, and would have taken it and herself to the police office, where, to a certainty, she would have died. There was not a moment for thought. His friend knocked down the policeman and then ran off, while he jumped into the sledge and drove off to a hotel, whence he sent for the lady's husband. The lady was ill for many weeks. He never heard anything more of the knocked-down policeman, who probably, after picking himself up, was content with the capture of the heavy sledge which had committed the mischief.

We find that by going to Saint Petersburg we have lost two hours of time, but, as we hope to return home, we shall get it back again. The Russians, it must be remembered, in their love for Conservatism, keep the old style of time, which is about ten days behind the new. This rather puzzled us at first.

Skating is not in vogue in Russia; indeed, the ice so soon becomes covered with snow, that there is very little opportunity afforded to indulge in the pastime. The Montagne-Russe is the great out-of-door pastime. Huge hills are formed of ice and snow, and placed in a line, one beyond the other. People climb up to the top of the first with little sledges. A gentleman sits in front and guides the sledge, a lady holds on behind, and away they go down one hill, the impetus carrying them up the other, or a considerable way up it, and thus the whole line is traversed. So fond are the Russians of the amusement, that they have, even in summer, wooden mountains with greased roads, which answer the purpose of ice.

Chapter Seven.

Journey to Moscow—Russian Railway—Passengers—Mr Evergreen and his Hat-box—Refreshment Rooms—Scenes on the Road—Polite Spy—First View of Moscow—Unromantic Mode of Entering it—Hotel Chollet—The Chinese City—The Kremlin—The Great Bazaar—Cathedral of Saint Basil—The Holy Gate—Great Bell of Moscow—Tower of Ivan Veleki—Wonderful View from the Summit—The Tulip City.

“And now, my boys, we may pack up and be off for Moscow,” exclaimed Cousin Giles as they reached the Gostiniza Benson, after settling all the preliminary passport business, without which no one, either of high or low degree, subject or foreigner, can move from one city to another in the empire of the Czar. There is no great difficulty in this passport business, and no great annoyance; but still it is apt to ruffle the temper of the most mild and patient men, to have to spend the whole of one day, during their stay in each place, in performing a task which might well be dispensed with, not to speak of having to disburse several roubles on each occasion; it is not, therefore, surprising that everybody who writes about Russia should grumble at the system, and occupy many pages in abusing it.

The Moscow railroad station is at the end of the Nevsky Prospect. The travellers reached it soon after ten o'clock. Only one train started in the day, so that to miss it was to lose a day. The building is a fine one. It is entirely under Government superintendence, and the stationmaster, and ticket-clerks, and porters, and policemen, and guards are all in military uniform; it makes a person very much inclined to behave himself. A passenger must get to the station in good time, for there are all sorts of preliminaries to be gone through. One cannot jump out of a cab, rush to the ticket-office, sing out, “Porter, bring along my luggage!” jump into a carriage, and away to Edinburgh or Holyhead without a question being asked;—oh no! People do not go ahead quite so fast in the kingdom of the Czar. Before a ticket can be got, the passport must be shown at one office, where it is stamped; then one goes over to another office, where it is examined and the ticket granted,—all in the most deliberate way, rather trying to a person who fancies that he is late. Then the luggage must be taken to another place, and a ticket bought for it, and paid for according to the number of articles; then it must be delivered over the counter at another place; and lastly, the

perplexed traveller is allowed to go on the platform and select his seat. The carriages are very long, the entrance, after the American model, being at each end, where there is a platform, a passage running down the whole length of the carriage, so that people can pass from one end of the train to the other. The second-class have seats arranged in rows like those in a church, and are not very comfortable for a long journey; but the first-class are more luxurious: at each end there is a small ante-room, then a saloon with ottomans round it, and the centre compartment is full of large, luxurious arm-chairs, far enough apart to allow long-legged men to stretch their legs to the full. The windows are large, and of plate glass, which, as Harry observed, would be very convenient if there was anything to look at out of them. Our friends had arranged themselves in one of the centre compartments, and the lime of departure was at hand, when Mr Evergreen made his appearance on the platform in a state of great agitation, first turning to one moustached fierce-looking official, then to another, appealing in vain to know, as it appeared, what had become of parts of his luggage.

“Does any one know the Russian for hat-box?” he exclaimed. “Hatboxichoff! Hatboxichoff!” he cried in piteous accents. “Dear me, dear me—there are all my writing things in it, and my letters, and my money, and my best hat, and my gloves; and I shall be sent to prison as an impostor, and not be able to appear decent at the coronation, and have no means of paying my bills, and be starved, and—”

At that moment he caught sight of Cousin Giles’ face. His countenance brightened up. “Oh, Mr Fairman, I am so glad to see you!—can you help me?” he cried.

Cousin Giles asked to see his luggage ticket, and, finding that the same number of packages which he possessed in all were marked on it, assured him that there could be no doubt his hat-box was safe.

Thus assured in his mind, Mr Evergreen took his seat. The ticket is a long strip of paper, with the names of the chief places on the road marked on it, and the fares to each of them. The passengers having taken their places, the military officials waved their hands, and the long train began to move.

The view as they left the city was not interesting. Some large red-brick houses appeared above the low huts in the outskirts, with a large reed-bordered lagoon, and a wide extent of dead level covered with low shrubs or rank dry grass. The distance to Moscow is about five hundred versts, nearly four hundred miles, and for the whole of that distance there is very little improvement towards picturesque beauty. Now and then, to be sure, they came to woods of birch or fir, but the trees were small and widely scattered; still the chief feature was a dead flat covered with scrub.

Russia, however, is very far from being a barren and unfruitful country. There are large tracts near its numerous rivers which yield an abundant harvest of all descriptions of corn, and there are forests full of the finest trees, whilst fruits of many descriptions also are produced. This particular road, however, gives a stranger a very unfavourable impression of the country; still there were many things to interest our friends. About a mile, it seemed, from each other were little oblong wooden cottages, with a square enclosure in the rear and a platform in front, all so exactly alike that Harry said they looked as if they had been taken out of some Dutch brobdignag toy-box and placed along the road. In front of each hut, as the train passed along, appeared a guard, presenting arms with an iron-headed pike; and so exactly did one look like the other that Harry said he was certain there must be some spring underground which made them all pop up as the train passed along. There must be at least five hundred along the line—every hut, man, cap, pike, and greatcoat formed after the same model; there were guards, also, at all the signal stations. Whenever, also, the train stopped, a fierce-looking guard, in the uniform of the French gendarmes,—bright-blue coats, helmets, and silver ornaments,—stood immovable as sentries before each of the carriages, to prevent people from doing anything they ought not to do: altogether there seemed to be a very wholesome discipline established along the line. At all the stopping-places there were a number of Swiss-looking cottages, apparently newly erected; while the bridges and palings, and flights of steps and banisters, and refreshment booths, and vast long sheds in which heaps of logs were piled up, all looked as if they had been made in Switzerland, and were exactly like the models which come in neat white wooden boxes to England from that country of mountains and snow. They were very neat, and pretty, and picturesque, but certainly did not look as if they belonged to the place.

At every station there are refreshments of some sort. Our friends observed fruits, raspberries, strawberries, and peaches, though of an untempting appearance and very dear; and also cakes of various forms, bread, beer, and of course quass.

At all the larger stations there are large, long, handsome refreshment rooms, equal in appearance to those at the large stations in England,—there is one for each class. At one of these they stopped for three-quarters of an hour, when a good dinner was served at about half-past four. They did not note the name of the place, but Harry suggested that it must have been *Chudova*, which was one of the principal places on the road.

Chew!

“Oh, oh, Harry!” exclaimed Fred as he heard his brother’s atrocious pun.

The tea is excellent at these places; a tumblerful costs ten kopecks, but a regular tea costs thirty, about fifteen-pence; indeed, the charges are much the same as in England. Probably at home, more substantial and better fare is to be got at the same price.

As soon as the train stops, out get all the passengers, and a very motley assemblage they form as they pace up and down on the platform. Uniforms of all sorts predominate, from the modern-coated, richly-laced officer of the Emperor’s guard, to the sombre-dressed rank and file of the line. There were Circassians and Georgians, and Cossacks of the Don and Volga, and other remote districts, in blue and silver coats, fur caps with red tops, and wide trousers, and yellow boots, and gauntlets on their hands, and jewelled daggers, and chain armour, and carved scimitars, with black, flashing eyes, and thickly curling glossy beards and moustaches, their language as well as their

appearance telling of far-off southern regions, which have succumbed before the arms or the diplomacy of Russia. Then there were Armenians and Persians, men of peace, intent only on making money, with high-pointed fur caps, long gowns, full, dark trousers, and waists belted not to carry swords, but inkhorns; and Tartars with turbans, and rich shawls, and gold-embroidered slippers; and priests with low-crowned, broad-brimmed hats, beneath which straggled huge quantities of long light hair, and long green coats, and crosses rather ostentatiously shown at their breasts. There were traders, too, from the northern cities of the Empire, dressed in long dressing-gown-looking coats, more properly described as dirty than clean, and high boots, and low-crowned hats, and beards of considerable length and thickness; while the humbler classes, the mujicks, evidently delighted in pink shirts with their tails worn outside their trousers, and fastened round their waist with a sash or belt. These wore caps, and high boots, and long coats, like the rest; indeed, the inhabitants of Russia may be said to be a long-coated, boot-wearing population. There were women passengers, but there was nothing very peculiar in their appearance. The upper classes wore bonnets, and the lower had handkerchiefs tied over their heads, or caps, with thick-padded cloaks. They all had brought huge leather pillows, and cloaks, and shawls, to make themselves comfortable in the carriages.

No sooner did the train stop than all the men lighted their cigars and pipes, and began to puff away most assiduously. Our friends were much amused at seeing a servant bring his master, an old gentleman, his pipe at every station. It was the servant's business not only to light it but to draw it up, and the cunning rogue took good care to get as many whiffs out of it as possible before he removed it from his own mouth.

"That's what I call smoking made easy," said Harry. "I've heard of a man being another's mouthpiece, and this old gentleman seems to make use of his serf for the same purpose."

Some of the priests wore fur caps and dark gowns, and others had on broad-brimmed hats and green gowns, with dark overcoats; some had several crosses on their breasts, frizzy or straggling hair being common to all. One of them, who was in a first-class carriage, pulled out a comb and began combing his beard and hair with great assiduity—an operation more pleasant, doubtless, to himself than to his neighbours. There was a fine Abasian officer—Abasia is a province bordering on the Caucasus, conquered by the Russians. He wore a black fur cap with a red-and-white top to it,—night-cap fashion,—a white coat with cartridge cases in the breast and trimmed and lined with fur, a silver-lace belt round his waist, white gloves with fur backs, and green trousers with a silver stripe down the legs; yellow boots, a curved scimitar behind, and a richly-jewelled dagger in his belt in front completed his costume. He was a very fine-looking fellow, and was most evidently aware of the fact. He was on good terms with every one, and laughed and chatted with all the officers of rank. Such were some of the companions our friends had on their journey.

Mr Evergreen said that he considered it his duty to taste the tea at each stopping-place, to ascertain whether it was really superior to any to be found out of China. At some places he took only a tumblerful, but at others the samovar, with the little teapot on the top of it, and a small china cup were placed before him, with a tumbler also. Those who have not drunk tea out of a tumbler may be assured that it is by far the best way of taking it to quench thirst. The Americans put a lump of ice into it, which keeps bobbing up against the nose while the hot tea is being quaffed—also a very agreeable fashion. The result of all this tea-drinking was, that poor Evergreen could not manage to close his eyes when night came on, and the rest of his party went to sleep. After some hours had passed, he was accosted by an officer in uniform.

"Ah, sir, I see that sleep has fled your eyelids," said the officer in very good English.

"Oh, yes; but I can do very well without it," replied Evergreen, delighted to have some one to talk to; "there is always so much to think about and interest one in a strange country."

"Your first visit here, I presume?" said the stranger.

"Never out of England before," replied Evergreen.

"What do you think of affairs in general in this country?" asked the stranger.

"Very large country—very fine country—inhabitants very polite. Big city Saint Petersburg. People may not say exactly what they think, I hear; but that's nothing to me, you know," observed our friend.

"Oh, that's quite a mistake, my dear sir," replied the stranger; "people may say exactly what they think, I assure you: no one interferes with them. Now, for instance, in the friendly way in which we are talking, one man might unbosom himself to another of his most secret thoughts, and no harm could come to him."

"Very pleasant state of society; exactly what I like," said Evergreen, who thereupon, taking the hint, launched forth on several little bits of his own family history, with which he was fond of entertaining any casual acquaintance.

The strange officer appeared to be listening attentively, and finally offered to call upon Evergreen and to show him the lions of Moscow.

Cousin Giles awoke while the conversation was going on, and was exceedingly amused at what he overheard, especially with the warm way in which Evergreen accepted the stranger's offer. After the latter had made numerous inquiries about Cousin Giles, and Fred, and Harry, he got up and went into another carriage.

"Wonderfully polite man that was who came and talked to me last night," observed Evergreen in the morning, after the passengers had rubbed their eyes and stretched themselves. "I wonder who he can be. A man of some consequence, I should think."

Among the passengers were some merchants from the north, who had never before been at Moscow. They had for some time been putting their heads out of the windows, and as they caught sight of a few gilt domes and gaily-coloured roofs, and some convents scattered about, which was all that was visible of the holy city, they began

crossing themselves and bowing most vigorously. This ceremony lasted till the train rushed into the station. The luggage was handed out as each person presented his ticket, and Mr Evergreen found, to his delight, that his hat-box was safe. A vast number of ishvoshtsticks presented their tickets, and offered their droskies for hire, and, two being selected, away the whole party rattled through broadish streets, paved with pebbles, up and down hill, among gardens, and green-roofed houses, and pink, and yellow, and grey, and blue walls, till they reached their hotel.

They had been recommended to go to that of Monsieur Chollet, in the Grand Lubianka, and they had no reason to regret their choice. Nowhere could a more civil, active, attentive landlord be found. Every language seemed to flow with the greatest ease from his tongue. He would be talking to three or four customers in German, and English, and Italian, addressing his wife in French, and scolding his servants in their native Russian, answering fifty questions, giving advice, and receiving accounts, all in one breath. He did all sorts of things better than any one else. He went to market, came back and cooked the dinner, mixed the salad, and in another instant appeared dressed as if for a ball, and took his place at the head of the table. His dinners were very good, somewhat in the German fashion; and his rooms were very comfortable, and excessively clean for Russia.

As soon as our friends had dressed and breakfasted, they sallied forth to gain a general view of the city. Evergreen said he thought he ought to wait for his new acquaintance, who had promised to call; but an English merchant, who happened to overhear him, assured him that he must not be delicate on the subject, as the person in question was simply one of the guards of the train, and that he was employed by the police to pick up any information he could about passengers.

“Had he thought you a suspicious character, you would certainly have been honoured by a visit from him,” he added.

“Dear me, if I had said anything treasonable, I should have been whirled off to a dungeon to a certainty,” exclaimed poor Evergreen, shuddering at the thought of the danger he had escaped.

Moscow is one of the most romantic cities in Europe—indeed, there is no other to be compared with it; but our friends had entered it in so ordinary, every-day a manner that at first they could hardly persuade themselves that they had reached a considerable way towards the centre of Russia, and were really and truly in that far-famed city.

“Now, my boys, we will steer a course for the Kremlin,” cried Cousin Giles, having taken the bearings of their hotel as they walked along the street called the Grand Lubianka.

Their course was nearly a straight one. In a little time, crossing an open space, they found themselves before a line of fortified walls, and a gateway, such as they might have expected to see in a picture of China or Tartary, with strange-looking eastern turrets, and domes, and roofs rising within them.

“This must be the Chinese city we have heard of,” said Cousin Giles.

So it was. It is a city within a city. It has three sides, the walls of the Kremlin making the fourth. They passed through the gateway and found themselves in a narrow street, the buildings on either side of them having a still more Chinese appearance. On the left was a little church, with numerous parti-coloured domes, and minarets, and towers, and outside staircases leading nowhere, and railings, and balconies, and little excrescences of roofs, altogether forming an edifice much more like a Chinese than a Christian temple. Close to it, on the left, they saw a long open space, just inside the walls, crowded with people of the lowest order, with booths on either side. This was what may be called the rag fair of Moscow. The booths or shops contain all the articles either for dress or household purposes used by the mujicks. The sellers and purchasers were all talking and laughing, and haggling and chattering away as if the affairs of the nation depended on what they were about, and yet probably a few kopecks would have paid for any one of the articles bought or sold. At the end of the street the travellers came to the entrance of the great bazaar of Moscow, and as they looked down its numerous long alleys, glazed over at the top, they saw lines of little shops,—jewellers, and silversmiths, and makers of images, and hatters, and shoemakers, and tinmen, and trunk-makers, and other workers in leather, and head-dress makers, and blacksmiths, and toy sellers,—indeed, it would be difficult to enumerate all the various trades and handicrafts there represented, each trade being in a row by itself. Each shop was little more than a recess, with a counter in front of it, before which the shopmen stood, praising in loud voices their wares, and inviting passers-by to stop and inspect them. No time, however, was spent at the bazaar, for across a wide open space appeared a high pinnacled wall, with a line of curious green-pointed roofed towers, with golden crescents surmounted by crosses on their summits, and two gateways up a steep slope. Over the walls appeared a confused mass of golden and blue-and-silver domes, and spires, and towers, and green roofs, and crescents, and crosses, and gold and silver chains, glittering in the sun, altogether forming a scene such as is pictured in the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* or other Oriental romances, but such as one scarcely expects to find within eight days' easy journey of sober-minded, old, matter-of-fact England.

“That must be the Kremlin,” exclaimed Fred. “Well, it is a curious place!”

“There can be no doubt about it,” observed Cousin Giles. “And that gate to the left, under the high tower, with the lamp and the picture over it, must be the Holy Gate. Let us go through it. It leads us at once, I see by the map, to the terrace overlooking the river.” As they went down the place towards the river, they found themselves before a fine bronze group on a high pedestal.

“Oh, those must be the statues of the two patriots, Posharskoi, the general who drove away the Tartars, and Minin, the merchant who devoted his fortune to the support of the army with which the victory was won. We will read about them by and by,” said Cousin Giles.

As they stood there, on their right side were the walls of the Kremlin, on their left the front of the bazaar, while some way beyond appeared a most extraordinary-looking church, the Cathedral of Saint Basil. It has nine domes or cupolas,—one large one in the centre, and eight round it, each one painted of a different colour, with various ornaments; some are in stripes, some in checks, some red, some blue, some green, while the structure on which

these domes stand consists of all sorts of ins and outs; windows, and stairs, and pillars, and arches—all, too, of different colours, green, and yellow, and red predominating. Harry looked at it for a minute, and then burst into a fit of laughter.

“Well, that is the funniest building I ever saw,” he exclaimed. “It looks as if it was built up of sentry-boxes, and Hansom’s cabs, and dovecots, and windmills, and pig-sties, and all sorts of other things. It was built, I see, by Ivan the Cruel, and it is said that he was so pleased with its strangeness that he put out the eyes of the unfortunate architect, to prevent his ever building another like it.”

“Pleasant gentleman he must have been,” observed Evergreen. “A new way he took to reward merit.”

“Rather an old way,” said Cousin Giles. “I do not think that any sovereign would venture on such a proceeding now-a-days.”

Putting off their visit to the bizarre little cathedral, they turned to the right through the Sacred Gate. Mr Evergreen did not observe that every one passing under it took off his hat, and very nearly got a prod from the sentry’s bayonet for his neglect of that ceremony. The story goes, that the picture over the gateway was unscorched by fire, and that the lamp continued burning all the time the French were in occupation of the city, untrimmed and unattended. A newly-recruited regiment of soldiers, without arms, were marching through, and it was curious to observe each man in succession doff his cap and cross himself as he passed the spot. High and low, rich and poor, all do the same. The only persons who neglected the duty were some wild-looking, dark-eyed lads, whose marked features and olive complexions at once proclaimed them to be Zingari or gipsies, of whom a great number are found in Russia. Moscow is said, like Rome, to stand on seven hills, of which that occupied by the Kremlin is the highest. It is not, however, as much as a hundred feet above the Moscowa, which flows in a horseshoe form directly to the south of it. It is enclosed by four walls of irregular length—that at the west end being so short that the space it occupies is almost triangular. Round the walls are about eighteen towers, which vary in shape and height, though they all have high-pointed roofs covered with green tiles. Outside the walls are gardens with grass, and trees, and gravel walks. In the interior, on the south side, is a magnificent esplanade and terrace overlooking the river, and the strange jumble of coloured buildings which compose the city. The rest of the ground is occupied with a collection of churches of all shapes and sizes and colours, and towers, and convents, and palaces. One palace, however, surpasses them all in beauty and size, though its shining white walls and richly-carved façade and general bran-new appearance look sadly out of place among all the venerable, grotesque, many-coloured, odd-shaped, Byzantine edifices which are dotted about in its neighbourhood. It looks like some huge intruder into the place, which all the old inhabitants are collecting to put forth again; or like an emu in a poultry-yard, at which all the parti-coloured cocks and hens and ducks are crowing, and cackling, and quacking, in a vain endeavour to frighten him out. It required more than one visit to the spot before our friends could learn the geography of the place, and distinguish the numerous churches of all sizes, and heights, and shapes, and varieties of outside and inside adornment. The chief, called the Cathedral, has its walls painted with subjects taken from Scripture, which to the purer taste of Protestants appear shocking and blasphemous. However, our travellers did not then attend to the details of the strange occupants of the Kremlin. Their object was to obtain a comprehensive view of the city from the summit of that gaunt old monster, the Tower of Ivan Veleki. They first, however, examined the huge bell which stands on a pedestal at its foot. This bell was once suspended on the top of a tower, which was burnt, and the bell in its fall had a little piece broken out of it. When they got up to it, they found that this little piece was far too heavy for any ten men to lift, and that the gap it left was big enough for a man to walk through.

The door of the old tower was open, and they mounted a well-conditioned flight of circular steps towards the summit. Having climbed to the top of the first flight, they passed through a door into another tower, where there hung a peal of huge bells,—one more vast than the rest, which, on being struck, gave forth a wondrously musical sound.

“I should not like to be near that fellow while he was ringing,” cried Harry; “he would make noise enough to deafen a rhinoceros.”

They did not stop to hear those famous bells, but climbed on till they stood high above all the surrounding edifices. As they gazed forth from the narrow stone balcony which ran round the dome, they beheld rising on every side a sea of spires, domes, cupolas, minarets, towers, and roofs of every conceivable colour, shape, and size, not altogether unlike a vast garden filled with brobdignagian tulips, but with more hues than any tulip bed ever possessed; and, in addition to the many-coloured tints of the rainbow, there appeared numberless balls of burnished gold and silver, glittering brightly in the sun.

Cousin Giles first ascertained their position by his compass. Turning to the north, they observed in that direction fewer churches, but numerous villas and lines of wood, with the arid steppe beyond them. To the south-west arose the Sparrow Hills, those celebrated heights whence Napoleon and his then victorious army first caught sight of that magic city which they deemed was soon to be the reward of all their toils, but yet which, ere many days had passed, was to prove the cause of their destruction. In the same direction the Moscowa was seen flowing down towards the city, to circle round a portion of it under the walls of the Kremlin, and then to run off again at an acute angle to the east. To the south, on a plain near the banks of the river, rose high above other buildings the red towers and walls of the Donskoy Convent, several other convents, carefully painted of different colours, being scattered about.

“The birds which have their nests there can have no fear of mistaking their proper abodes on their return from their morning flight,” observed Harry, who generally formed quaint notions on what he saw.

Directly below them were the numerous and strange gold, and black, and blue, and green domes of the churches of the Kremlin,—its dark-green pointed towers, its wide gravelled esplanade, the roofs of its vast palaces and public buildings, its belt of turreted walls and gardens with their green lawns and shade-giving trees; but stranger still was the city itself, with its thousands of coloured cupolas, turrets, domes, spires, roofs, and walls. To define this strangeness more clearly, there were domes of bright-blue, with golden stars and golden chains hanging from the

golden crosses which surmounted them. There were some domes of size so vast that they looked like huge mountains of gold; some were of dark blue, and others of green and gold; some were black, and others shone like burnished steel; some were perfectly white, others grey, and others of the lightest blue, scarcely to be distinguished from the tint of the azure expanse amid which they reared their heads, except by the golden ball and cross and glittering chains above their summits.

Again, some of the domes were of red and green stripes, and some of bright yellow, and pale yellow, and red; and some towers were surmounted by gigantic crowns, open and outspreading, as well as globe-like. The roofs and walls also exhibited a strange difference in their tints, though green, and red, and black, and grey, and brown predominated among the first; while the latter were white, and buff, and green, and blue, and deep red, and pink. Truly it was a strange scene, such as they had never before beheld, and could scarcely hope to behold elsewhere.

They returned to the top of the tower again in the evening, just as the setting sun was throwing his glory giving rays across this richly-jewelled expanse, which shone forth in a perfect blaze of light, coloured by every hue of which the rainbow can boast.

It is difficult to imagine the vast number of domes and cupolas which meet the eye in this strange city. There are said to be a thousand churches, though probably there are not so many. Few of these churches have less than five domes, and some have ten. Each tower also has a dome on its top, surmounted by a golden cross and chains. A large proportion of these domes are covered with gold, and some with sheets of silver; the others are either black and white, or of the various hues already described. Moscow may, indeed, most properly be called the Golden City. The only rule which the church architect here appears to observe is, to endeavour to make every new church as dissimilar as possible to every other existing in the city, in colour, shape, and size; yet they all evidently belong to the same style.

Altogether the venerable Kremlin and the buildings it contains, with the mass of coloured edifices which surround it, form one of the strangest architectural jumbles in the universe.

Chapter Eight.

Visit to the Imperial Palace in the Kremlin—The Granovitaya. Palata—The Terema, or Ancient Palace of the Czars—Cathedral of Uspensky Sabor—Rarity of Good Paintings in the Russian Churches—Public Discussions on Religion—Traps for the Unwary—Procession of Russian Monks—New Church of Saint Saviour—Preparations for the Coronation—Cathedral of Saint Basil—Sealing up Doors of Shops at Night—Shopmen bowing to Saints—Bazaar—Chinese City—Russian Vehicles.

Our friends got a good general idea of the city during the first day of their residence in it. The next day they obtained tickets of admission to the Imperial Palaces in the Kremlin, through a gentleman to whom Cousin Giles had letters. They were accompanied in their visit by some French friends of his. They were first shown the private rooms of the Emperor and Empress, which had just been refurnished for their reception after the coronation. All these rooms were on the ground floor. In the centre of each was a large square pillar, supporting the storey above. These pillars, with several screens and curtains in each room, made them appear small and positively cosy, such as may be found in the house of moderate size belonging to any lady or gentleman of somewhat luxurious habits. English people would probably have chosen a more airy situation for their private abode than the ground floor; but from the lowness of these rooms they are more easily warmed in winter, and from their being vaulted they are cooler in summer. After visiting the private rooms, their guide conducted them up-stairs, when they passed through several fine halls, similar in grandeur to those in the Hermitage at Saint Petersburg, and along galleries filled with pictures of very doubtful merit.

Through an opening in the new palace they walked into one of the old palaces called the Granovitaya Palata. The second floor is occupied entirely by the coronation hall of the Emperors. It is a low, vaulted chamber, the arches resting on a huge square pillar in the centre. Here the Emperor, clothed in royal robes, for the first time after his coronation, sits in state, surrounded by his nobles, eating his dinner.

“Ah, I see emperors have to eat like other people,” observed Harry when he was told this. “I wonder, now, what the new Emperor will have for dinner.”

By far the most interesting building in the Kremlin is the ancient palace of the Czars, called the Terema. It is complete as a residence in itself, but the halls and sleeping-rooms are remarkably small compared to those of the huge modern edifice by its side. The walls from top to bottom are covered with the most strange arabesque devices which imagination could design—birds, beasts, and fish, interwoven with leaves and sea-weed of every description. In each room a different tint predominates, although the same style of ornament is carried throughout, and the same colours are to be found in each. Thus there is the green room, the blue room, and the yellow room, and many other coloured rooms. The ornaments on the banisters, screens, railings, and cornices are great wooden heads of beasts—lions, or tigers, or monsters of some sort. The part of the walls enclosing the stoves are of curiously coloured tiles; indeed, the whole building is a most bizarre, strange place, a perfect specimen of a Byzantine palace. In variety of colouring it is something like the Alhambra, but, though equally wonderful, it is barbarous in the extreme compared to that celebrated edifice of Southern Spain. Our travellers climbed to the top of this strange little palace, and went out on the roof, whence they looked down on a whole mass of golden and coloured domes and minarets, a considerable number of them belonging to the smallest and most ancient church in the Kremlin. In the Granovitaya Palata is a window, at which the Emperor shows himself on state occasions to the troops, drawn up on the parade. It is one of the windows of the Hall of Justice, and here suppliants used to be drawn up in a basket, to present their petitions and to hear judgment pronounced.

“It would have been a convenient way of getting rid of a troublesome petitioner to let it and the petitioner come

down together by the run, as you would say, Cousin Giles," observed Fred, laughing. "Some such idea was probably in the minds of the inventors of the custom."

From the old palaces the party proceeded to the Treasury. It is beautifully arranged, and full of arms and armour of all ages—the coats, and boots, and hats, or crowns, or helmets, and swords, or battle-axes of all the Czars who ever sat on the throne of Russia. Some of the crowns, or other head-pieces, are literally covered with jewels, placed as close together as the setting will allow. Most of them are rather curious than elegant; indeed, they nearly all look as if they belonged to a barbarous age and people.

Among other curious things there is a globe, studded with jewels, sent by the Greek Emperor to Prince Waldemar, and the crown of the King of Georgia, the diamond crown of Peter the Great, and the throne on which Peter and his brother, both children at the time, were placed when he was crowned. There is a curtain at the back, behind which their mother stood, and, putting her hands through it, held them in, and guided them to make the proper signs at the right moment, which movements caused much wonder and admiration among the admiring multitude.

In the armoury is the chair of Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. It is like a litter, somewhat rudely constructed, or rather can be used as a chair or litter by turns, having poles at the side by which it is carried. There are some battered-looking kettle-drums, one belonging to the same monarch. They were part of the spoils taken by Peter the Great at the celebrated battle of Pultova, when the Russians at length gained a victory over the Swedes, and Charles himself, hitherto victorious, was obliged to seek safety in flight. The most curious articles in the Museum are, however, the carriages, specimens of which are preserved from the earliest times in which they were used. They are, as may be supposed, huge, lumbering, gingerbread, lord-mayor-looking affairs. In some the coach-box is several yards from the body, and the hind seat is as many from it at the other end. There is a patriarch's carriage, like a huge square trunk, and the travelling carriage of Catherine, which has a table in the centre, and is very like a modern saloon railway carriage. It is placed on runners instead of wheels, and could only have been used in winter. Probably in her day the roads would not have encouraged summer travelling.

From thence the friends went to the Uspensky Sabor, the cathedral church in which the Emperors are crowned. The lofty roof is supported by four round pillars, covered from capital to base with sheets of gold and paintings. There is not a particle of the church which is not thus ornamented. The effect is rich in the extreme, at the same time bizarre and barbaric. There are five cupolas, with the faces of saints looking down from each. An artist was making a drawing of the interior, introducing the coronation—as it was to be. The picture was for the Emperor. The outside of this church is ornamented with subjects totally at variance with anything like a pure taste. There are several other churches near it, all of which were being enclosed so as to form a spacious court, where the ceremony of the Emperor's coronation was to take place. Every available space was being filled with galleries to hold spectators. Through this court he was to walk from the cathedral to the palace.

The party then visited all the churches in the Kremlin in succession. The interior walls are mostly covered with gilding and pictures of saints, from base to cupola. In some of them, which are dimly lighted with tapers, priests, in their gorgeous vestments, were chanting, with fine sonorous voices, the evening service; incense was being waved, and people from all sides were rushing in and bowing and crossing themselves, and as quickly rushing out again. The Russians of the Greek Church seem to think that much virtue exists in visiting a number of churches or shrines in quick succession on the same day; and certainly Moscow offers great facilities to the performance of this ceremony, for a person cannot go many hundred yards in any direction without meeting with a church, or chapel, or shrine of some sort. The churches in Moscow do not generally possess any fine paintings, the pictures of their saints showing merely the faces and heads. But there is one church, that of Le Vieux Croyants à la Ragosky, which has a fine collection. The priests of that church, being intelligent men, value it properly.

A gentleman who joined our friends gave them several bits of interesting information.

The small old church in the Kremlin was being renovated; nothing but the whitewashed walls remained. They found that the gilding and paintings which appeared so rich in the churches were merely fastened to wooden or canvas panels, and placed against the walls, so that a day was sufficient to turn a barn into a magnificent cathedral. He pointed out that the gates were of different sizes. The largest was for the admission of the Patriarch when he came to the church, the smaller for that of the ordinary members of the community.

"Exactly," said Harry, "like the Irish peasant who has a big hole in the door for the pigs to walk through, and a small one for the chickens. All people are much alike."

Religious liberty is very much curbed in the country; but they were told that every Sunday, at the Church of the Assumption, an open discussion on matters of religion takes place, chiefly, however, among the persons who wish to pass for savants. The priests seldom or never attend. It is suspected that these discussions are encouraged by the Government, not from any abstract love it possesses for truth, but for the sake of ascertaining the opinions of those who attend them. If the governing powers suspect, from any of the opinions he utters, that a person is likely to prove dangerous, his movements and words are ever afterwards narrowly watched till he is caught tripping, when he is without further ceremony marched out of harm's way into Siberia.

As the party were walking round the Kremlin, they passed, outside the Arsenal, a number of guns of all sizes, many of them very beautiful.

"All those guns were taken from us," observed one of their French friends to Cousin Giles. "How curiously things change in this world! Now, in early days our two nations were cutting each other's throats, and yours was friendly to Russia; then lately we have been fighting side by side against the Russians. Now, behold, here we are walking freely and at peace within the walls of this ancient capital."

Thus discoursing, they descended into the gardens on the west side, and proceeded towards the Church of Saint

Saviour, then in course of erection.

Their French friend smiled again: "Ah, this church, now, is building to commemorate the retreat of the French from Russia," he observed. "The Russians may well boast of what they did in those days, and we are not likely to forget it."

The church is the finest in Moscow; the exterior is of white stone, ornamented with groups of figures in the deepest relief. The architecture is of the purest Byzantine order. The interior presented but one vast vault of brick, without pillars or any other support but the walls to its vast dome. Part of the walls were covered with wood painted in imitation of marble, to show the effect of the proposed style of ornament. It is in the form of a Greek cross. The altar is at the east end. The church is warmed by means of several large stoves, whence pipes are carried inside the walls all round the building, with vents at intervals, out of which the hot air can be allowed to escape. Broad flights of stone steps lead up to the entrances, which are on three sides. Cousin Giles altogether preferred the edifice to that of the Isaac Church in Saint Petersburg.

As our friends were returning homeward, a religious procession passed by. It consisted of a long line of priests walking two and three abreast, in somewhat irregular order, bearing banners of gold and coloured cloths, fringed and bespangled. They were chanting loudly, but not inharmoniously. Most of them had long straggling locks, which waved about in the breeze, and gave them a very wild appearance, which was increased by the careless, independent way in which they walked along.

The Russian priests seem to consider that, like the Nazarites among the Jews, an especial virtue exists in the length of their hair. As the procession passed through the streets, the people rushed out of their houses, or crowded to the turnings, eager to see the sight. There they stood, devoutly bowing and crossing themselves, though it was difficult to say what particular object claimed this respect. Altogether the procession, from the wild look of the priests, their loud voices, and the gaudy banners waving in the air, had much more of a heathen than a Christian character.

Vast preparations were at this time making for the expected coronation. The spires and domes and walls of all the churches and public buildings were being covered with laths, on which to hang the lamps for the illumination of the city.

Magnificent arches were being erected all round the large square opposite the Imperial Theatre; but they were of wood, and, though painted to look like stone, here and there bits of the pine peeped forth, showing the unsubstantial nature of the highly-pretentious fabric. Workmen also crowded the churches, furbishing up gilt candlesticks, refreshing the features of saints, adding rubies to their faded lips and lustre to their eyes, cleaning and polishing in all directions. Cousin Giles said it put him in mind of being behind the scenes of a theatre,—carpenters, painters, and gilders were everywhere to be seen; their saws and axes, their trowels and brushes seemed to have no rest; nor could they afford it, for they were evidently much behindhand with their preparations. Such furbishing, and painting, and washing, Moscow never before enjoyed. The whole circuit of the walls of the Kremlin, and its numerous towers, as well as the buildings in the interior, were covered, from pinnacle and parapet to the base, with a network of laths; so was the Cathedral of Saint Basil, and, indeed, every edifice in the neighbourhood. When the whole was lighted up, they agreed that the spectacle would be very fine, but they began to doubt whether it would be worth while to return to the city for the play itself after having witnessed all the preparations.

Cousin Giles told his companions that it is said that, when the Empress Catherine used to make a progress through her dominions, the peasants were driven up from all quarters towards the high road, and that wooden houses were run up just before her to represent thriving villages. As soon as she had passed they were pulled down again and carried on ahead to do duty a second time, the mujicks, meanwhile, being compelled to pace up and down before their pretended abodes, as Swiss peasants do before the pasteboard cottages on the stage.

People in Moscow were looking forward with eager expectation to the event of the coronation, and it was supposed that half the great people of Europe would be there. It did not appear, however, that the inhabitants were so anxious to see them for their own sakes as they were to let their houses and lodgings and rooms at hotels at exorbitantly high prices, every one expecting to reap a fine harvest out of the pockets of the gaping foreigners.

The most curious church, perhaps, in the world—the most outrageously strange of all the bizarre churches of Moscow—is the Cathedral of Saint Basil, which stands close to the river, at the north end of a broad, open space outside the walls of the Kremlin, and which space is bounded on the other side by the Bazaar. It is in the most *outré* style of Byzantine architecture. There is a large tower somewhere about the centre, running up into a spire, and eight other towers round it, with cupolas on their summits. There is also a ninth tower, which looks like an excrescence, in the rear. Each of these cupolas and towers is painted in a different way, and of different colours; some are in stripes, others in a diamond-shaped pattern, others of a corkscrew pattern, and some have excrescences like horse-chestnuts covering them. Then there are galleries and steps, and ins and outs of all sorts, painted with circles, and arches, and stripes of every possible colour.

"Well, that is a funny church!" exclaimed Harry, as Fred ran off to find the keepers to show them the entrance.

"An odd epithet to bestow on a church," observed Cousin Giles; "but I cannot find a better."

Underneath the building there is a chapel, which has no connection with the upper portion. A flight of steps led them into the building. Each of the nine domes and the pinnacle covers a separate chapel, which is again divided by a screen into two parts—one for the priests, the other for the worshippers. From each of the domes above, a gigantic face of the Virgin, or of some saint, looks down on those below. The huge, calm-eyed faces gazing from so great a height have a very curious effect. In the interior of the pinnacle a dove is seen floating, as it were, in the air. Every portion of the interior walls of this strange edifice is covered with the same sort of richly and many-coloured arabesque designs seen in the old palace, while a sort of gallery runs round the building, with an opening into all the chapels.

"A capital hide-and-seek place," exclaimed Harry. "Why, Fred, I would undertake to dodge round here all my life, and you should not catch me till I had grown into an old grey-headed man."

"You might find a more profitable way of spending your earthly existence," said Cousin Giles; "yet I fear many people come in and go out of the world, and yet are of very little more use than you would thus be in their generation."

"Oh, I know that, Cousin Giles; I am only joking. I want to try how useful I can be when I grow up, and how much good I can do."

"You can be useful in many ways, even now," observed their friend. "You are useful if you set a good example to those with whom you associate. You are doing God service if you show others that you are guided by His laws, if you act in obedience to Him, if you confess Him openly before men. All this can be done at every period of life. The old and young can and must do it, if they hope for a happy hereafter, if they love the Saviour who died for them; but more especially the young can do it, while health and strength and clear unworn intellects are theirs."

Just after they left the cathedral, the bell of Ivan Veleki tolled forth the hour of evening, and numbers of shopkeepers, long-coated and long-bearded, rushed forth from their booths, and commenced a series of bowings and crossings, looking towards the Holy Gate of the Kremlin, which was directly in front of them. Having performed this ceremony for some time, they faced about towards another shrine at the north end of the square, and went through the same ceremony. By advancing a little into the open space, they could get a glance at another picture of some saint, when they bowed and crossed themselves as before. When their evening's devotions were thus concluded, they went back to close their shops. Having put up the shutters, or closed the folding-doors which enclosed the front, one man held a candle, while another, with seal and sealing-wax, put his signet, with the likeness of his patron saint, to the door. No padlock or other means of securing it were used. Some Jews and Tartars, not possessing the same confidence in the protecting power of the saints, put padlocks on their doors. Very curious affairs these padlocks are. They have been copied from the Tartars, or rather from the Chinese. The key is a screw: by taking the screw out, the padlock shuts; by screwing it in, it opens. As the shrines which claim the poor Russians' devotion exist in every direction,—indeed, they cannot walk twenty yards without seeing them,—while they run along on their daily avocations they are continually bowing and crossing themselves. The pictures of the saints which adorn these shrines were probably intended to remind people of their religious duties; but, like other unwise human inventions, which do not take into consideration the evil tendencies of the human mind, they have led to a system of degrading idolatry, while the simple truths of Christianity have been superseded by a flimsy tissue of falsehoods. Although the members of the Greek Church are iconoclasts, or image-breakers, and allow no actual images to be set up on their altars, it must be owned that they pay just as much adoration to the pictures of their saints as the Roman Catholics do to the statues of theirs.

One of the most amusing places our friends visited in Moscow was the great bazaar in the Chinese City. They made frequent trips through it, although their purchases were neither very extensive nor expensive. They bought some slippers made by the Tartars of Kazan, of gold and silk and silver thread, beautifully worked, and some ornaments of silver and steel made by the same people, and wooden bowls and spoons used by the peasants, as well as their leather purses and cotton sashes of many colours, and winter boots of white felt, and the head-dresses worn by the women, and a hat such as is worn by ishvoshtsticks, and many other things, all helping to illustrate the customs of the people. Among them was a samovar or tea-urn. It is in shape like an ancient urn. In the centre is a cylinder with a grating at the bottom. The water is held in the space between the cylinder and the sides of the urn. It is filled with water, and then a small piece of ignited charcoal is dropped into the cylinder, which is filled with black charcoal. A chimney is then placed above the charcoal, which now ignites and boils the water. By adding fresh charcoal and more water, a supply can be kept up for hours together. A frame fits on above the chimney, on which the teapot can be placed, to keep it warm, while a lid, called a damper, is used to put out the fire.

These samovars are used on all occasions, and are especially valued by the peasants at their picnics or open-air tea-parties, of which they are very fond. They purchased also several prints of the city, and some very amusing ones descriptive of the battles between the Russians and the Allies, or the Turks or Circassians, by which it appeared that the accounts received by the rest of the world must be totally incorrect, as in all instances, at the Alma, Inkermann, in the Caucasus, the Muscovites were signally victorious, their enemy flying like chaff before them.

The Chinese City, or Kitai Gorod, to the east of the Kremlin, was one of their favourite resorts. The name is most appropriate; and certainly it is most unlike any place in Europe. It is enclosed on three sides by a thick buttressed and round-towered wall, the upper part of which projects considerably; and altogether, from its strange style of architecture, it looks as if it had been imported bodily from some city of the Celestial Empire. The fourth side is formed by the east walls of the Kremlin, of which the Kitai Gorod appears to have been an outwork. The interior contains two long streets, and several smaller ones, besides the truly Oriental bazaar, already spoken of, with its numerous narrow lanes, running under one vast roof, dirty and mean, and crowded with shops of every possible description. Tea-sellers, with their Chinese signboards; paper-sellers, ironmongers, and perfumery and spices, silks and cottons, and shoes and hats, and trunk-makers and workers in leather,—indeed it is useless to enumerate all the trades there carried on. There is generally a row or half a row of the stalls of each trade together. As visitors pass along, the long-coated dealers rush eagerly forward, and with bows and grimaces endeavour to induce them to become customers. Here also the dealers in the holy pictures, or images, as they are called, are to be found. These pictures have the faces and hands only shown, the rest being covered with a casing of gold or silver. They are of all sizes, from two feet to one or two inches square; but as even for the smallest our friends were asked four roubles, they declined buying any of them. Here, also, are sold cups and censers, and all sorts of utensils used in churches. The travellers, however, were little disposed to become purchasers.

Near the bazaar stood, ready to start, three or four diligences—huge black machines, having a vast boot behind, a roomy inside, and a large, comfortable-looking *coupé*. They were bound for Nishni-Novogorood, where a large fair was taking place. Several rough-looking carts followed them, piled up with goods for the same destination. The fair of Nishni is the largest in Russia, perhaps in the world, at the present day. Here the merchants from the west meet the

traders and producers from the numerous countries bordering Russia on the east, as well as from all the Russian provinces, and exchange their various commodities. Here transactions are arranged not only for the present, but for the following year, and many a farmer undertakes to deliver timber, and flax, and hemp still growing thousands of miles away, or hides and wool yet adhering to the backs of his cattle or sheep on the far-off prairies, or thousands of sacks of wheat yet ungrawn, at Saint Petersburg, Riga, or Odessa, with every certainty of being able to fulfil his contract. Our friends were so interested with the account they heard of Nishni that they were eager to visit it. Russian carts are curious vehicles, made without a particle of iron. The wheels are kept on by various contrivances; some have bits of wood from the projecting edge of the side, into which the ends of the axles fit; others have bows of wood from the perch, which fit on over the axle where the linch-pin should be. The carts used for conveying passengers are covered with an awning of black canvas, and look as if they were water-tight, with a fair possibility of being made comfortable.

The travellers had many other things to see, both in and about Moscow, but they resolved not to delay longer than necessary, as they were anxious to study more of the manners and customs of the people in the interior; and they therefore made preparations for their further progress into the country.

Chapter Nine.

Departure of Exiles for Siberia—The Russian Howard—Vast Exercise House—Tartar Mosque—The Sparrow Hills—Burning of Moscow—Magnificent View of the City—Ennobling of Merchants—The Schoolmaster in Russia—Decay of the Old Nobility—The Donskoy Convent—Russian Monks—Their Interpreter—Palace of Petrofsky—Encampment near Moscow—Preparations for the Coronation Fête—Public Gardens—Zingari Singers.

Early on Sunday morning our travellers left their hotel to witness a painful though interesting sight, the departure of the convicts condemned to exile in Siberia from the Ragoshky Gate of the city, where they bid farewell to their relatives and friends. They are first collected from all parts of the neighbouring country in a large prison near the city, till they amount to a sufficient number to form a caravan. Our friends met the melancholy band; clanking their chains, they moved along at a slow pace through the city. Numbers of people, chiefly of the lower orders, rushed out of their houses, and presented them with loaves of bread, biscuits, tobacco, sugar, money, and other things likely to comfort them on their dreary pilgrimage. After they had been thus exhibited to the public, they stopped at a wooden shed, where they were to rest before taking their final departure. There were about fifty of them, old men and youths, and even women, some of them young, poor creatures, looking miserable, heart-broken, and forlorn.

The men were dressed in coarse linen shirts and trousers, and the high boots generally worn by peasants. Half the head was shaved, and few wore hat or cap to conceal the sign of their disgrace. Most of them were heavily manacled, some few only being free of irons.

In the centre of the building was a platform, on which were piled up the prisoners' knapsacks and bags of provisions. Round it the gang stood grouped. While they were there, many persons entered to bring them offerings of money and food. At one end of the platform was spread out a large handkerchief, on which the gifts were placed. As each person, after bowing to the saint which hung in front of the doorway, deposited his or her piece of money or loaf of bread on the handkerchief, one of the prisoners, who seemed to take the lead, cried out with a loud voice, "Unhappy ones, thank the donors!" The whole party then bent their heads at the same time, and replied, "Thanks be to you, kind and benevolent sir," or "mother" if a matron was their benefactor. After this, the visitors being requested to leave the shed, the gang was marshalled by the man in command, who spoke in a savage voice to the prisoners, and by his significant gestures was evidently in the habit of striking them.

The escort consisted of six mounted lancers and about thirty foot-soldiers. At a sign they stepped out together, and, while many a sob and groan was heard from the crowd, they commenced their six months' dreary march towards Siberia at the rate of about twenty versts a day.

Russia has not been without its Howard; indeed, perhaps that great man infused his spirit into the bosom of the benevolent Dr Haaz. He, like Howard, devoted his means, his talents, and energies to ameliorating the condition of the unhappy prisoners. He had frequently urged on the authorities that the manacles employed were too heavy for persons of ordinary strength, but they would not listen to him. At length, the better to be able to explain the suffering inflicted on the poor wretches, he had them put on his own limbs, and trudged the whole of the first day's march alongside the party of exiles. The state to which even this one day's march reduced him was so strong an argument in favour of his assertion, that he won his cause; and after that the chains, except of the greater criminals, were much lightened.

A few carts, containing stores and some prisoners who were unable to walk, followed the melancholy cortege.

"In England many guilty ones escape punishment, but in this country many innocent ones suffer, I fear," observed Cousin Giles as they returned to their hotel, very tired after their morning's walk.

The travellers were told, that persons of rank condemned for political offences are carried off secretly by the police in closed carriages, without the power of communicating with their friends; that frequently they thus disappear, and no one knows whither they are gone. A small dark carriage, with thick blinds, may be seen, strongly guarded by horse-soldiers, proceeding towards Siberia, but no one knows whom it contains.

The travellers attended the service in the British chapel, where Mr Gray officiates, and they were surprised to find it so well filled. There were several persons in Russian uniforms—Englishmen, or the sons of Englishmen, in either the military or civil service of the Czar, who are allowed to worship God after the mode of their fathers. By the laws of Russia no Russian may change his religious profession, but any stranger entering the country may worship according

to his belief—as may his descendants, although they become naturalised Russians. If, however, a stranger marries a Russian woman, the children of the marriage must belong to the Greek Church. Laws, however, cannot change the mind; and not only has the Greek Church been split into numerous bodies of sectarians, but there are many who totally dissent from it, an account of whom our friends afterwards heard.

Sunday they made a day of rest.

Monday morning they again commenced sight-seeing. The first place they visited was the building near the Kremlin having the most extensive roof without arches in the world, and in which the Emperor is accustomed to manoeuvre several regiments of cavalry and infantry together. People at the farther end look like pigmies. The ground was now covered with lamps, in preparation for the illumination. Their next excursion was to the Tartar quarter of the city, where there is a Tartar mosque. The Tartar dwellings are low cottages in wide courtyards. The mosque was of much the same character, only there was a pigsty at one side of the yard. In their search for the mosque they entered several courtyards, where the women, old and young, in striped dressing-gown-looking robes, hurried away to hide themselves from the strangers. At the usual early hour the muezzin mounted to the roof of the mosque, and in a loud voice summoned the faithful to prayer.

“It is sad,” observed Fred, “to find people in the centre of what is called a Christian land who are totally ignorant of a Saviour.”

“Very sad indeed,” replied Cousin Giles; “but if we look at home we shall find sights still more sad. In London itself there exist thousands of Englishmen who not only have never heard of the Saviour, but do not know of the existence of a God. Every year is indeed working a change, and diminishing their numbers, through the exertions of christian and philanthropic men; but when you grow older it will be a subject worthy of your attention, and you should not rest till all in your native land have the gospel preached to them.”

On their way back they bought some of the rush shoes worn by the peasants. They are made of rushes which grow on the banks of the Volga. They are more like sandals than shoes, being fastened on with thongs round the ankles. Their cost is about twopence a pair.

After dinner they drove to the Sparrow Hills, about five miles west of the city. The road was execrable, full of ruts and holes. They passed the palace of the Empress-Mother, which has some handsome gardens. They saw also an asylum for the widows and children of decayed merchants. It is a wide, extended building, with a church in the centre. Russia contains numerous charitable asylums, generally well conducted. They are, however, not to be compared to the numberless ostentatious charities of which our beloved country, with all her shortcomings, may justly boast. Their carriage took the travellers to the top of the Sparrow Hills, which are of no great elevation. They slope steeply down to the Moscowa, which, after passing the city, takes a sharp bend close to their base, and then runs back again towards the southern end of it. The view was indeed superb. Below them, on the plain across the river, was the Donskoy Convent, with its red walls and lofty towers, several other convents being scattered about here and there. To the right, on the wooded and sloping banks of the Moscowa, were the Emperor’s villa and many other handsome buildings; and before them the Holy City itself, its numberless golden and silver domes glittering brightly in the sunshine, like a mighty pile of precious jewels from the far-famed mines of Gokonda. On the left, on a wide-extended down, were seen the white tents of fifty thousand of the choicest troops of Russia, assembled to do honour to the Emperor at his coronation, or to signify to the people the power by which he rules.

“I should very much like to go and look through that camp,” exclaimed Fred; “I want to see if all they say about the Russian troops is true.”

“We will make a point of going there to-morrow,” replied Cousin Giles. “I have no doubt the visit will be an interesting one; but, for my part, I do not expect to be so interested as I am at present. The whole of Russia cannot, perhaps, afford a sight more beautiful than the one before us. Here it was that Napoleon, after marching across Europe, first beheld the superb city which he hoped in a few hours to make his own—the bourn he so eagerly sought—the prize of all his toils! How grievously, yet how righteously, was he disappointed! As he, swelling with pride and elated with triumph, was gazing at the city from the west, the Russian army, having already devoted their beloved capital to destruction, were marching out on the opposite side. In a short time the city in which he trusted to find shelter for his troops during the winter burst forth into flames, and a very few days saw him defeated and a fugitive, and his magnificent army a prey to the rigours of the climate and the remorseless Cossacks. History cannot afford a more dreadful picture than the retreat of the French from Moscow, or a clearer example of the retributive justice of Heaven. Not many years afterwards the Russians, as allies of the English, paid a visit, as conquerors, to Paris. The French, united with the English, were lately on the point of returning the compliment, by looking in on Saint Petersburg. Heaven grant that neither of them may ever come to London in any guise but that of friends. To commemorate the retreat from Moscow, the Russians are now building the Church of Saint Saviour, whose golden domes we see so conspicuous not far from the towers of the Kremlin,” observed Cousin Giles, pointing it out with his stick.

After gazing on the interesting scene for some time, the travellers returned to their carriage.

In the evening a German gentleman, long resident in Russia, to whom they had been introduced, gave them several important pieces of information.

“The late Emperor Nicholas was well aware,” he told them, “that his power rested on very precarious ground, and that, though a despot in name, he knew that he was in the power of his own nobles. To liberate himself, he endeavoured to weaken, if not to destroy, the old nobility—first by leading them into all sorts of extravagance, and then by creating a new order between nobles and peasants, who should feel that they owed their elevation entirely to him.

"For this purpose he created what he called the Guild of Honourable Merchants. Every merchant of the first guild who had paid a tax of 150 per annum for ten years without failure was eligible to belong to it. The Honourable Merchants are free from all imposts, conscriptions, etcetera, and pay no taxes. Another mode Nicholas took of ruining the old nobility was to establish a pawn bank, where they could at all times pledge their property. By encouraging their extravagance, many were unable to redeem it, and, being put up for sale, it was bought up by the Honourable Merchants and other members of the trading community. The late Emperor also wished to encourage education. By an ukase he ordered that all children throughout the country should be educated. To effect this object every priest is bound to have a school attached to his parish church. In consequence, a considerable number of children do learn to read; but the ukase cannot make them go to school, and in many instances the priests are so ignorant and careless that these schools are of very little use. The present Emperor, it is said, wishes to encourage liberal institutions. He has erected municipalities in the towns. In the courts of law three officers are chosen by the Crown, and three by the municipality, with a president who acts as judge. He is anxious also to abolish serfdom; but to do so at once, without violence, is dangerous. He is, however, effecting his object, which his father also entertained, by slow degrees. When an estate is sold, all the serfs become free, and in this way a considerable number have been liberated. No serfs can now be sold: a person may inherit an estate and the serfs on it. (See Note 1.) Many of the great nobles would willingly get rid of their serfs if they could. On one of their estates, perhaps, they are overcrowded, on another they have not a sufficient number to till the ground or to work their mines; yet they have no power to remove the serfs of one estate to another, while they must find means for their support on the spot where they were born. If the peasants were free, they could literally have more power over them, because they could then turn them off their estates, and compel them to seek for employment where it is to be found. Nicholas, by several of his enactments, has enabled his son to rule with less difficulty than would otherwise have been the case. By the ruin of some of the principal nobles he has saved him from the worst enemies of his ancestors, who so frequently proved their destroyers; and by the creation of a wealthy middle class, every day improving in education and numbers, he has formed a strong body who find that it is their interest to support him. When it is no longer their interest so to do, the whole fabric of Russian government will crumble to the dust."

The first excursion our friends made the next morning was to the Donskoy Convent. It stands on a flat near the Moscow, and is surrounded with high brick walls, flanked by lofty towers, all of bright red-brick. It has entirely the character of an ancient fortress, erected to withstand the rapid incursions of an enemy's cavalry, though unfit to hold out against a regular attack. The church, standing in the centre of a wide, open space, is a lofty pile, with the usual gilt dome; but the residences of the monks are low, unpretending buildings, on one floor.

A young monk, in a long dark robe, a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, and dishevelled locks hanging over his shoulders, came forth, and politely offered to guide the travellers about the convent. Cousin Giles had engaged a young Englishman to act as their interpreter, and he very much increased the interest of the scenes they visited, and their means of acquiring information.

The monk led them into the interior of the church, which consisted of a vaulted chamber divided into two parts by a large wooden screen. The carpenters and gilders and painters were busily at work, painting and refurbishing up the ornaments; but the scene brought forcibly to the minds of the travellers the preparations for a new play at a theatre. The monk told them that the large church was so cold in winter that it was shut up, and that there was a small one, well warmed with stoves, where they could at that season worship in comfort. He then led them through the burial-ground, which they found crowded with the tombs of noble families, and other inhabitants of Moscow and its neighbourhood. This is the most fashionable burying-place of that part of Russia, and consequently people are very anxious to have the remains of their friends placed there, so that, though they could not enjoy good company when they were alive, they might at all events after their death have such satisfaction as it might afford.

The ground was laid out with walks; the tombstones were of every possible strange device, and crowded together in a way which would have been far from pleasing to some of the more aristocratic inhabitants in their lifetime; but the monkish sexton in his own graveyard read the lesson to visitors, often uttered before, that death is a leveller of all ranks, and no respecter of persons.

When the travellers thanked the young moppy-haired monk for his attention, he replied that it was his duty, as it was his pleasure, to show his convent, and seemed in no way to expect any remuneration. The Imperial family, it is said, have no affection for the monkish orders; indeed, the feeling of dislike is mutual. They predicted the overthrow of the Russian armies in the Crimea, and the death of the Emperor—the wish probably being the father of the prophecy.

In their way through the city the travellers entered an Armenian church. It was ornamented with pictures of saints, like those of a Roman Catholic place of worship; but the pulpit was in a conspicuous place, as if preaching was not altogether neglected; and there were chairs inside the altar railings for the Patriarch and other ecclesiastical functionaries.

The style of ornaments about the church showed that the Armenian community were either not wealthy or not disposed to spend much money on the edifice. It, however, spoke of a purer faith than that of the Greek Church.

After dining, our friends set out, and drove along the high road to Saint Petersburg, towards the Petrofsky Palace. Every part of the way, from the Kremlin to the Gate of Triumph at the entrance of the city, was lined with scaffolding and seats, in preparation for the coronation, to enable the lieges "to see great Caesar pass that way" from his palace of Petrofsky, where he was to reside three days before entering the Holy City to undergo the ceremony of his coronation.

The Gate of Triumph, which forms the northern entrance to the city, is built of stone, after the model of one at Rome, but with a taste which would make a Roman stare. All the statues and ornaments about it are painted of every variety of colour, so that it has the appearance of a wooden structure put up by the rustic inhabitants of some country village to welcome the lord of the estate.

The Palace of Petrofsky is itself a curious sight. It is a huge pile, of a bright red colour, intermingled with white, and covered with every conceivable device in the way of ornament. It has circular walls projecting out in front from the main building, in shape and colour very like lobsters' claws, and there are the brightest green roofs, and numberless domes, and cupolas, and minarets, and towers, and spires, covered with burnished gold, which make one suppose that a very rich man must live within. On a wide, open space in front of the palace, wonderfully grand preparations were making for a fête which was to be given to the people on the occasion of the coronation.

At a short distance before the palace stood a magnificent pavilion, intended to hold the Imperial family. A little of the woodwork yet unpainted showed that it was not a solid structure of stone. No people can equal the Russians in making the false pass for the real. On either side of the pavilion were others, each of a different style of architecture, for the use of the chief nobility of the realm. Before them, at some little distance, were two theatres, in comparison with which the magnificence of the old fair-going booth of Richardson would have grown dim. They might be called theatres, but they were only the semi-part of the theatre; the open common, with the blue sky overhead, was the space intended for the audience. Then there were several Montagnes Russe, but, instead of being made of ice and snow, they were built of wood. They consist of high elevations, facing each other, with a slope between them; people ascend to the top by steps, where they find cars of wood. They place themselves in the cars, and then are sent sliding down one slope with such force that they are propelled up the opposite slope.

But this was only a small part of the entertainment prepared for the people. There were fountains which, instead of throwing up jets of cold, insipid water, were to spout forth incessantly into huge tanks a stream of the much-loved vodka, from which all around might draw forth and drink to their hearts' content.

What more perfect idea of a terrestrial paradise would a thirsty mujick seek for than did these preparations afford him? How munificent and kind must he have considered the Emperor who could provide such an entertainment for him, especially when near to the fountains of vodka there were spread out long tables and benches, covering some acres of ground, which it was said were to be loaded with provisions, of which all-comers of humble rank might partake!

The travellers had to drive in and out among the tables, and they pictured to themselves the jovial, happy crowd who would soon be assembled around them, enjoying themselves, and drinking long life and prosperity to their Czar—a perfect picture of an Arcadian banquet. Farther on were large booths, containing the kitchens where the provisions for the vast multitudes were to be cooked; and there were also other sheds, where the bread, and meat, and grain of all sorts were to be stored. All this feasting and amusement was to last three days, and no one seemed to be able to estimate how many thousands of persons would attend the rural banquet.

"Alas!" exclaimed Cousin Giles, "this may be a certain way of winning the momentary applause of an ignorant mob, but it is a miserable way of gaining the love of a people, of improving their character, of instructing them in their duties, by thus pandering to their lowest tastes. I suspect that it will not even secure the object desired. What a contrast does it afford to the way our own enlightened sovereign takes to win the affections of her people!"

"We had the fireworks at the peace," observed Fred; "they were only to please the mob."

"Yes, to be sure," said Cousin Giles; "that was an old-fashioned way of letting the people know that peace was concluded. They could in days of yore, when newspapers were rare, have scarcely known it without; now such a proceeding is quite unnecessary. A large sum was squandered which would have been much better spent in enabling our artisans in the dockyards, thrown out of employment by the peace, to emigrate; besides which, it was said that numbers of people were kept working on several Sundays to get them finished in time. If such was the case, a national sin was added to a national folly."

Cousin Giles' conjectures with regard to the uselessness of the feast prepared for the mujicks were realised. No sooner each day were the tables covered, than the mob rushed forward and bore off whatever they could lay hands on, so that the later comers had nothing to eat; while fountains of vodka refused to supply sufficient liquid to quench the thirst of the vast multitudes which thronged round them. There was, therefore, far more complaint and grumbling, than love or gratitude exhibited towards the supposed provider of the entertainment—the Czar.

About half a mile farther, in front of this scene of barbaric festivity, across the plain, over fields which had been beaten down to supply an open space of sufficient extent, was seen a sea of white tents, forming an encampment which at that time contained fifty thousand men, to whom many more were afterwards added.

Before them was a line of artillery, the muzzles of the guns turned towards the spot where the mujicks were expected to assemble—significant, as a cynical friend of Cousin Giles observed, of the way in which people in the parts there are governed. He may, however, have been wrong in his conjecture.

The travellers drove towards the tents, in front of which they found the bands of all the regiments practising together. They made a great deal of noise, but the music was not so good as they expected.

They got out of their carriage, and walked into the encampment without let or hindrance. They felt a curious sensation as they found themselves among the troops of those with whom their countrymen had so lately been engaged in deadly strife. Not only were they secure from receiving any insult, but they were treated everywhere with the greatest courtesy.

One thing is certain, that although a large amount of barbarism remains in Russia, the army, in certain respects, has attained a high state of civilisation. The younger officers are invariably well educated, and generally polished in their manners. The material comforts of the men are much attended to in many regiments, though not perhaps in all, and they have been brought into a good state of discipline.

The tents were arranged in long lines, with broad, well-gravelled roads at intervals between them, with a drained

footpath on either side. The encampment, it must be confessed, looked very far neater and cleaner than that at Aldershot. Why should we refuse to give our late enemies their due, or to acknowledge our own shortcomings? It is far better that the rising generation should know that Englishmen are not perfect, and endeavour to correct the national faults, than to go on blindly fancying that we are superior in all things to all other nations on earth.

Our friends, with their guide, first walked into a sergeant's tent. He and his comrade were very civil, and begged them to take a seat. His regiment had not been in the Crimea, but they had heard what brave people the English were. Even those who had been opposed to them felt no enmity towards them; very much the contrary—they had learnt to respect them.

The Russian officers who had been in the Crimea, it was said, whenever they met with any English officers who had been there also, were more than usually kind and attentive to them. The men's abodes, into which the travellers went, contained sixteen persons, and very close packing they must have found it in hot weather. In cold weather they are thus kept warmer, and, if called to stand to their arms on a sudden attack, a large body of men can be instantly brought together. The soldiers were generally fine-looking, intelligent fellows; many of them as fair, and quite as clean-looking, as Englishmen. Some of the regiments, raised in northern latitudes, were composed of fine, dark-bearded men, while the officers were generally good-looking and gentlemanly. These, however, were crack troops, and were certainly very different from the slouching, loutish-looking recruits to be seen when no public exhibition is intended.

Highly pleased with this visit to the camp, they drove back to the city. On their way they stopped at some public gardens, where their guide told them a celebrated band of gipsies were going to sing. Harry declared that the place was called Waxhauloff. Certainly the name did not sound unlike that word. There was a garden, brilliantly lighted up with coloured lamps, and at one end there were scenic preparations, probably for a desperate sea-fight on a pond, for there was a lighthouse in the foreground and some ships in the distance; and the bills signified that this was to be followed by a superb display of fireworks. There was also a large music hall, where a number of people were collected, listening to a very good instrumental band. The object of the travellers, however, was to meet with the civilised specimens of the race of Zingari or gipsies, whom they would find there. They were not long in discovering them as they moved about among the crowd. There was the same swarthy hue, black, burning eyes, and cunning, quick expression of countenance which distinguish them in every part of the world. The women were somewhat fancifully, but not fantastically dressed. This costume varied little from that common in Europe. It is only on festive occasions that they wear the dress of their people. The men had on surtouts, with belts round their waists, and light-coloured trousers. They were remarkable for their small well-formed heads and sharp Jewish countenances. Cousin Giles said he should call them Arab Jews. One of the women, who was fairer than the rest, and somewhat picturesquely dressed in a red mantle, seemed to attract some attention, though when her features were seen near they bore the gipsy characteristics.

After some time the interpreter succeeded in finding the chief of the gipsies, and in drawing him aside to where Cousin Giles was standing. The interpreter told the gipsy chief that Cousin Giles was an Englishman who took great interest in the gipsies of all countries, and that he would like to hear about his tribe. The gipsy replied that he was much flattered; that he was the chief only of forty or fifty people, but that they were all well off; that they lived in comfortable houses, and had conformed to the religion of the country; that he had been offered a sum equivalent to a thousand pounds to each of his band to go to Paris to sing in public, but that they were well off in Russia, and did not wish to move. Some of his people at times became very wealthy, and some of the women, who had fine voices, went on the stage, while others married men of rank. There were many tribes of gipsies in Russia who were altogether of an inferior grade. They still lived in tents, and wandered about the country, and were chiefly horse and cattle-dealers. A few followed still less creditable occupations. His tribe, however, held no communication whatever with them.

It occurred to Cousin Giles that the life of the wandering gipsy was perhaps more creditable than that of his brethren in the city. The conversation was brought to a close by the gipsy and his band being summoned to the platform.

The band consisted of fifteen women and eight men. The women were seated in a semicircle; the leader and another man, with guitars in their hands, stood in front of them; the rest stood behind. Some of the women had guitars. One of the girls sang a solo very well, the rest of the band joining in an extravagantly wild, fantastic chorus; the leader, meantime, skipping and turning and twisting about in the most absurd and inelegant manner. They sang several songs in the same style, some more wild and extraordinary than the first, certainly not suited to a refined taste. Yet this place was evidently a fashionable resort; the entrance-money was very high,—a silver rouble and a quarter,—and the company were all well-dressed, well-behaved people, evidently ladies and gentlemen, chiefly the residents of the neighbourhood, a fashionable suburb of Moscow.

The houses in the neighbourhood were evidently built only for summer use, for they were all, though differing in shape, of a Swiss-cottage style. The travellers had been so busily engaged all day, that, having satisfied their curiosity by seeing the gipsies, they had no inclination to remain for the pyrotechnic display, and therefore, going in search of their carriage, they drove back to Moscow.

They had now seen a good deal of the outside of the city—not all, perhaps, that was to be seen, but enough to give them a very fair general idea of it. There were many convents, and churches, and colleges, and hospitals, and other public institutions, which they had not had time to visit; and then there was the great event which was to take place in a few weeks, the coronation of the Emperor, at which it was expected that the representatives of all the nations of Europe would attend; but our friends preferred seeing somewhat of the interior of the country to waiting for it, and they therefore resolved on setting off at once, and returning, if possible, in time for the occasion.

Since the period spoken of the serfs have been emancipated, and these laws are no longer in force. The peasantry are, however, subject to the fearful conscription, and are liable to be torn from their homes to serve in the armies of

Chapter Ten.

Journey in a Tarantasse—Monotony of Scenery—Description of Population in Russia—The Mujicks or Peasants—Their Habitations and Mode of Life—The Religion of Russia—The Priests—The Landed Proprietors and their Habits and Characteristics—Civil Officers of Government—The Army and its Organisation—Russian Officers—A Breakdown—A Russian Inn—The City of Vladimir—Nishni-Novogorood—Its Great Fair—Addressed by a Stranger—His Mysterious Conduct.

Away rattled the tarantasse, with our travellers inside, through the gates of the Holy City of Moscow towards the town of Nishni-Novogorood, where the great annual fair of Russia was then taking place. The rough vehicle bumped and thumped and jumbled along at a rapid rate over the uneven road, in a way to try the nerves and bones and tempers of those inside; but none of the tumblifications they endured had the effect of disturbing the equanimity of their tempers, or of dislocating their joints, each bump of unusual violence only making them laugh more heartily than ever. Once clear of Moscow, the road was tolerably smooth in most places, and the body of the carriage moved easily along between the two long poles to which it was slung. Such is the principle of the tarantasse. The body of the carriage may be of any form or size. It may have come out of Long Acre, or it may be a little waggon covered in with a tarpaulin. The important part is formed of the strongest and roughest materials, so that it is not likely to break, or, if it does, any peasant on the road can mend it. Cousin Giles had hired one of the common sort. It was, in truth, a little waggon with a tilt over it, and made very comfortable with a good supply of straw and leather cushions, for which the Russians are famous. All travellers carry them. They serve for their seats by day and their couches by night. Our friends had brought a supply of provisions with them, so that they were entirely independent of inns, which are very bad throughout the country.

The party in the tarantasse consisted of Cousin Giles and his two young friends, of Mr Allwick, their interpreter, and of Mr Evergreen, who had begged leave to join them. Cousin Giles would rather have had a more sensible companion; but he was so good-natured and so ready to sacrifice his own convenience to that of others, while his quaint and simple observations afforded so much amusement, that he was more desirable than many persons with superior pretensions.

The road was very unpicturesque, running chiefly between forests of birch and fir-trees, with few or no hills to vary its monotony. The journey, however, was far from uninteresting. They passed various parties of traders with their waggons going to the fair; also a group of exiles on their way to Siberia, already weary and footsore, though they had performed but a short portion of their long journey. There were woodcutters in the forests, and peasants in the few patches of cultivated ground which here and there appeared. Mr Allwick, too, had travelled over the greater part of Russia, and gave them much information about the country.

"I divide the population of Russia into five classes," said he, "with the Czar, forming a sixth, at their head. First come the *mujicks* or peasants, who form the great mass of the population; then come the *svestchenniks* or priests, who are mostly sprung from them, and are often looked upon as but slightly their superiors; the third class are the *pameshtchiks*, the landed proprietors and serf owners. In the fourth class may be included the *chinovinks* or civil functionaries; and the *grajdanuns* or citizens; while in the fifth may be reckoned the military of all ranks.

"Of the mujicks or peasants, upwards of two-thirds are serfs or slaves. The other portion have either purchased their liberty or have been liberated by their masters. They are completely under the control of their masters, who can flog them or imprison them, but may not take away their lives nor remove them from the land on which they were born. An owner may, however, let his serf out to some other master for hire. The greater number of servants in Saint Petersburg and Moscow are serfs belonging to landed proprietors, who receive a part of their wages. Many serfs follow trades, and some have become wealthy merchants. Some have purchased their freedom for large sums, but in other instances masters have refused to grant their serfs their freedom, who thus, though rolling in riches, remain with the chains of slavery round their necks, liable at any moment to be called back and compelled to do their lord's bidding, even in the most menial capacity. They have the general faults of slaves, being cringing, cunning, and delighting in falsehood; but they are intelligent, kind-hearted, and merry, and honest when property is entrusted to their charge. Their dress consists of a cap, a long sheepskin coat in winter, and a cotton one in summer, a red-striped shirt, worn outside their very full breeches, and high leather boots on grand occasions; but usually they wear on their feet willow or birch-bark sandals, their legs being swathed in rags of all sorts. A vest and sash of some gay colour is also worn; so that altogether their costume is picturesque, though much less so than that of Swiss or Spanish peasants. Their cottages are built of logs of pine, laid one above the other, the ends being notched to fit into each other, exactly like the log-huts of Canada, and having always a porch in front. They are roofed with straw. They contain two apartments, with a huge stove of brick built into the dividing wall. In each room there is a very small window. In a conspicuous place is seen the picture of the saint worshipped by the family, hung against the wall, sometimes glazed, and always having a lamp burning before it. The first act of each person who enters the cottage is to salute the image; indeed, the same veneration is paid to it as was paid to the household gods of the ancients. The temperature of these abodes ranges, both in summer and winter, from 70 degrees to 80 degrees. They are lighted at night by a pine stick stuck into the wall. As the interstices between the logs are filled up with hemp and other combustible materials, fires are very common, and whole villages are frequently burnt down. In order to extinguish these conflagrations, each serf is bound to bring some particular implement—a ladder, a pail, or an axe; and, that he may not forget his duty, the implement he is charged to bring is painted on the board with his name, which is placed in front of his hut. Thus, as soon as the signal is given that a fire has broken out, so many serfs rush forth with ladders, so many with pails, and so many with axes, towards the scene of conflagration.

"The serfs on an estate are allowed a certain portion of ground and materials for building their cottages. They labour three days in the week for their owners, and three days for themselves; so that, when the soil is good, they can easily

provide themselves with the necessaries of life. But, at the same time, they are entirely in the power of unjust stewards or cruel masters, who can make their lives miserable, and quickly bring them to ruin. It must be owned that when serfs are well managed they are often contented and happy, and have no wish for freedom.

"Some proprietors are anxious to free their serfs, so as to be able to move them from one estate to another, or to get rid altogether of the charge of keeping them. The well-known Count Sheremetieff, however, who owns some of the richest merchants and shopkeepers in Saint Petersburg, will not consent to emancipate any one of them, although some have offered him large sums for their freedom. He is content with a small annual payment as tribute. When he dies, however, if his successor is avaricious, their condition may be very much changed.

"The Greek is the Established Church of Russia. The priests are as a class illiterate, and but little removed above the mujicks in their habits of life. A priest is expected to marry, but can only marry one wife. When she dies, he enters the monastic order. His sons enter the clerical seminaries, and his daughters marry priests, while another takes his vicarage. When a priest dies, or becomes a widower, and leaves a grown-up daughter, the living is generally given to some candidate for holy orders who pleases the young lady, and who is willing to marry her. Thus the clergy have become almost a separate class, the office descending from father to son. The value of livings is very small, seldom surpassing 15 pounds per annum. The priests are in general held in very little respect by all classes, even by the peasants, who, however, kiss their hands when they meet them, and often have a feeling of regard for them. There are numerous dissenters, who are frequently treated with the most bitter persecution by the orthodox Church.

"The *Pameshtchiks* or landed proprietors may be divided into two classes,—those who have vast estates, and, honoured by titles, live chiefly at courts, while they commit their affairs to the charge of stewards; and those who reside on their property and look after it themselves. The former are generally polished in their manners, well-informed, and luxurious in their habits, and are courtiers, diplomatists, or naval or military commanders. Though they occasionally visit their estates, when they keep up considerable pomp and ceremony, they reside chiefly in the capital.

"The landlord who lives entirely on his property is of a very different character, and thoroughly unlike an old English gentleman of the same social rank. Supremely indolent and unintellectual, he thinks of nothing but how he can most easily kill time. When he awakes in the morning, his attendant slave brings him his pipe, and he smokes till his first meal of tea and rusks is prepared; his bailiff then comes and makes his daily report, and serves as a vent for his ill-humour. Then he eats a substantial and somewhat greasy meal, which enables him to exist while he takes a drive round his estate till dinner-time. That meal is even more coarse and greasy than the former one. He then sleeps for a couple of hours, smokes, plays at cards, sups, and goes to bed,—not a satisfactory way for a person with a soul to spend his time. His wife spends her day much in the same way, smoking paper cigarettes instead of a pipe, and managing the female domestic serfs instead of the men. All matrimonial affairs come under the cognisance of the *Pameshtchik*, as no serf can marry without his permission. This, however, is rarely withheld, as it is his interest to have as large a number of people as possible beneath his rule.

"Owners often treat their serfs kindly, and make their lives happy, but a capricious or tyrannical master has the power of rendering every person on his estate miserable.

"The above description refers to the Russian landowners as a class. There are undoubtedly exceptions, and many very excellent, intelligent men may be found, who, living entirely on their property, devote themselves to its improvement, and to the amelioration of the condition of those who have been placed in dependence on them.

"The worst class in Russia are the *Tchinovniks*, or those employed in the civil service of the Government, of all grades, from the highest to the lowest. They are badly paid, and thus indemnify themselves by every description of peculation, and by endeavouring to wring bribes out of all with whom they come in contact. The Emperors have at times endeavoured to alter the system, but, although they have punished delinquents, when discovered, with the greatest severity, they have failed to put a stop to the evil.

"The mercantile class are considered generally respectable. No person can trade unless he is a member of one of three guilds. The privileges belonging to the first guild are purchased by an annual tax, calculated on the declared capital, but which cannot be less than 150; and those of the other guilds by sums in proportion to the smaller facilities for trading which they afford.

"The Russians are certainly not a warlike race, though their governors have endeavoured to make them so. The conscription presses most cruelly on the peasants, and it is with the most painful reluctance that its summons is obeyed. When they join, the officers may ill-treat them, pull their hair, and strike them with impunity. The officers have generally a fair supply of professional knowledge, and some are highly educated. The men have a larger amount of passive courage than of dashing bravery; yet they will usually follow where their officers lead them. The private has a possibility of rising to the rank of an officer after twelve years' probation, and even sooner by some dashing act of bravery; and several even thus have become generals. There are numerous military colleges in which cadets are educated, but a commission may also be obtained by a youth of family by his serving two years in the ranks. No officer may appear on any occasion without his uniform, nor carry an umbrella. The cadets are exercised during the summer in camps, as, indeed, is the greater part of the army, to prepare them for actual warfare."

Mr Allwick had got thus far in his description of the people of Russia, when, as the horses were galloping along at a great rate, a crash was heard, and over went the carriage on its side;—one of the long poles of the tarantasse had broken. The travellers got out in dismay, not knowing how long this accident might delay them. As they looked out they saw some cottages ahead. A peasant standing at the door of one of them had observed the occurrence, and now came running up with his axe in his hand to ascertain the amount of the damage. Two or three other men followed. "Oh, it is nothing," said they; "we will soon put this all right." They were as good as their word. While the travellers stood at the roadside watching what they would do, they disappeared into the forest, out of which they speedily issued with a young fir-tree, which in an incredibly short space of time they stripped of its bark and fitted to

the carriage. A rouble amply satisfied them for their trouble. They were merry fellows, evidently, for they laughed and joked or sung all the time they were at work, so that Fred and Harry were quite sorry that they could not understand what they were saying. The tarantasse was soon moving on as before. In the evening they stopped at a place with a name too difficult to pronounce, to take tea. The inn was an unclean, straggling-looking mansion, with a long whitewashed corridor, and whitewashed rooms, very scantily furnished, opening out of it. The whole place was redolent of an odour which appears to be a mixture of vodka, onions, or rather garlic, and stale tobacco smoke. No house in Russia seems to be without it, of high or low degree, its intensity only being greater in those of the lower orders. Evergreen complained bitterly of it. His consumption of *eau-de-Cologne* was doubled, he said, and he declared that it alone would prevent him from ever willingly taking up his abode in Russia, irrespective of his dislike to the despotic system of government under which it was placed. The travellers were ushered by a waiter into a room with a straight-backed, leather-covered sofa, chairs with wooden seats, and an old card-table; while the walls were ornamented with some coloured prints of battles between the Circassians and Russians, in which a host of the mountaineers were flying before a handful of their enemies. The waiter would have astonished one of his brethren in England; for he wore jack-boots, into which were tucked his full Oriental breeches, a pink shirt, showing the tail outside, and a dirty, collarless, long coat, like a dressing-gown, fastened round his waist by a sash. "*Tchai, tchai!*" (tea, tea!), exclaimed Cousin Giles with as much dignity as if he was thorough master of the Russian language. "*Si chasse, si chasse,*" replied the jack-booted waiter, meaning thereby that he would bring it as suited his convenience. Mr Allwick, however, added a few persuasive words, and in a short time the hissing *samovar* made its appearance, with a teapot and cups. The tea, which would anywhere be considered excellent, the travellers had brought with them. The principle of the *samovar* is very simple. In the centre of a common-shaped urn there is a cylinder with a grating at the bottom of it. The urn is filled with water, and the cylinder with charcoal. A brass chimney fits on to the top of the cylinder. A light is then applied to the lower end, which soon ignites the charcoal from the bottom to the top, and boils the water in three or four minutes. A frame fixes on to the top of the cylinder, on which the teapot is placed to keep it warm. There is a damper or cap, which can be placed on the top of the cylinder when it is required to put out the fire. There is no more convenient machine for travellers, as breakfast can thus be prepared in a very few minutes. A sum amounting to little more than a shilling was paid for the accommodation thus afforded. For a less sum they might have slept all night, but then they would have had to wrap themselves up in their cloaks and pick out a soft plank on the floor. In an hour fresh horses were procured, and once more the tarantasse was rattling along the road. About twenty-four hours after leaving Moscow, the travellers reached the ancient city of Vladimir, with the Golden Gate. It was once upon a time the capital of the Empire, and is still a city of considerable size. It is picturesquely situated on a hill, on which stand about twenty churches, overlooking a wide extent of wooded country, with a magnificent river flowing through it. The Golden Gate, which still rises in dignified solitude, a proud monument of the past, is not an ungraceful building. It is no longer used as a gate.

The temptations held out by the hotel here did not induce our travellers to stop, but, ordering fresh horses, they pushed on towards Nishni. They were now entering a fertile tract of country; but, fertile as it is, the population is not more dense than that of the most barren districts of Scotland. Mile after mile of thick forest was passed through, varied occasionally, as they approached the river Okka, by large villages. These villages have a strong similarity to each other, the houses being built of logs, and the gable-ends being turned to the road, and being inhabited by people with a very great likeness to each other. At length the town of Nishni-Novogorood appeared before them. At most times of the year it contains but few inhabitants. It was now crowded by persons from all parts of Russia and the provinces to the south and east, who had assembled to dispose of the produce of their respective districts, or to make purchases for exportation. Here assemble merchants from all parts of Siberia, Tartars, Georgians, Persians, and Armenians, to meet Russians and Germans, and even English and French, from Saint Petersburg and Moscow, who come to buy their produce or exchange them for manufactures from the West. Nishni stands on a high promontory, whose base is washed on one side by the Volga, on the other by its tributary the Okka. The Kremlin, or Citadel, with its low, embattled walls, stands on the highest point, and overlooks a vast plain, through which, at the base of the hill, the Volga flows proudly past. On this plain, close to the banks of the river, was a whole city of booths of various styles of architecture—those for the tea merchants being in the shape of pagodas. Some of the booths are of considerable size, being, in fact, storehouses for a large amount of valuable merchandise. One of the most conspicuous buildings in this quarter is a mosque, whose tall, pointed spire, surmounted by a glittering crescent, towers above all others. This mosque is said to be the most northern Mohammedan temple, with the exception of the humble little structure at Moscow.

Our friends found the hotel in the upper part of the town far more comfortable than they expected. The rooms and beds were tolerably clean, and the eatables contained no larger amount of grease and garlic than might reasonably be expected. Having refreshed themselves with a quantity of fresh-water, which somewhat astonished the Russian attendants, and partaken of a substantial meal, they sallied forth to visit the fair. Mr Allwick, who had been there before, acted as their guide. The upper part of the town presented no unusual bustle, but as they descended to the plain they found themselves among dense crowds of human beings in every variety of costume. Long-coated, long-bearded, and high-booted Russians predominated. By listening attentively, our friends thought they could distinguish very many different languages and dialects; and all were speaking in an earnest, energetic way, showing that they had met for business, and not for pleasure. There was, in truth, no gaiety either in their manner or their costume; for their dresses also were of somewhat grave, sombre colours, though here and there gay sashes, or caps, or vests, or turbans were to be seen. They walked up and down the long lanes of booths, in which the traders sat in state ready to dispose of their merchandise. But the more interesting part of their employment was the visit they paid to the various storehouses. In some were packages upon packages of tea, done up in skins, in which mode it is brought all the way from China by caravans; in another were piles of hides, in another heaps of dressed leather, in another bales of hemp and wool, brought by the Volga and its tributaries from far-off regions. There were also less bulky manufactured articles—leather work and embroidery, slippers and belts, from Kazan, shawls and cloths from Persia, and saddles from Tartary; indeed, it would be difficult to name one-half of the articles exposed for sale. There were no means of amusement, such as are to be seen at an English or German fair. No jugglers, or actors, or roundabouts, or swings, though there were eating and drinking booths in abundance, where the buyers and sellers and carriers might refresh themselves after the toils of the day. The mighty Volga, even here a fine river, presented an interesting scene. It was covered with a great variety of boats, some of considerable size, which had brought to market the

produce enumerated above, and were ready to carry off what was taken in exchange for it. There were steamers also, some going much above Nishni, and others navigating from thence its whole length to its mouth.

While the travellers had been moving about the fair, Cousin Giles, who had a great facility for remembering countenances, had observed a man in the costume of a mujick continually following them. His dress was dusty and travel-stained, but it was neither torn nor patched, nor had he the appearance of a poor man. His countenance was frank, open, and pleasant, though grave and somewhat careworn, so that it did not appear to Cousin Giles that he had any sinister motive for his conduct. Our friends were so much interested with all they saw, that quick-gathering darkness alone reminded them that it was time to return to their hotel. They had even then seen but a very small portion of the fair. Cousin Giles had before this lost sight of the mujick. They were on their way to the upper town, and were passing through a street, if so it might be called, with high walls on either side, when, coming from under a dark archway, the mujick presented himself before them.

He walked up at once to Cousin Giles, and took his hand, which he pressed to his lips, and then spoke several sentences in a low, earnest tone; but as the language was Russian, Cousin Giles could not understand a word. Mr Allwick, however, came up to interpret.

“He tells you,” said he, “that he knows some of our countrymen; that he has always found them honourable, kind, and religious, and able to sympathise with the afflicted; and that, after watching you, he feels that he may put perfect confidence in you and your companions.”

“What does he want us to do?” asked Cousin Giles. “I shall be very happy to assist the poor man if a few roubles will be of consequence to him; but I do not see how otherwise I can help him.”

“He says that, if you will let him call on you at the hotel in a short time, he will tell you what he has got to say, but that now he dare not remain longer talking to you, lest he should be observed. He says that he will not appear as he now does, and he hopes you will allow whoever asks for you to be admitted,” replied Mr Allwick.

“Very mysterious,” said Cousin Giles. “It may perhaps be a device of the police to entrap us.”

“I do not think that, sir,” replied Mr Allwick. “The man is, I believe, honest; at the same time I cannot advise you to have anything to do with him. In this country one cannot be too wary. With the best of intentions, we may easily be brought into trouble.”

“Very shocking, indeed, to be taken up and sent off to Siberia,” observed Mr Evergreen. “Tell the good man that I will give him ten roubles if that will help him, but that I do not want to see his face again—in case of accident, you know. Tell him that.”

“It is not pecuniary assistance that he requires,” said Mr Allwick, who had again been speaking with the stranger. “He says that he will explain everything by and by if he is allowed to visit us. He throws himself on our charity. He thinks the risk to us will be slight, and the gain to him great. He entreats that you will give him a reply, for he dare not remain longer.”

Mr Evergreen’s curiosity was aroused, and he forgot his fears. After consulting a minute, Cousin Giles replied: “Tell him that I will see him if he thinks fit to call, but I cannot promise to help him.”

Mr Allwick translated what had been said into Russian, and the stranger, bowing low, retired into the retreat from which he had come forth, while the travellers returned to their inn.

Chapter Eleven.

The Stranger Merchant commences his Story—The Molokani—Origin of their Faith—Progress among the Villagers—How the Bible was prized by them—Its Distribution—Captain Martineff—His Endurance of Persecution—Sad History—His Christian Fortitude—General Persecution of the Sect—Flight—Transported to a New District—Attempt to convert Captain Martineff.

The hissing *samovar* was on the table, and the fragrant *tchai* had just been made, when the waiter with the high boots and pink shirt entered to say that a merchant had called with some goods for the travellers to inspect. Cousin Giles desired that the man might be admitted, and in a minute a person in a long dark coat, with a case slung before him, entered the room. He at once began to display some caps and belts of gold and silk embroidery, several articles of silver, spoons ornamented with black-lined engraving, little hand-bells, snuff-boxes, slippers of leather richly worked, and many similar articles, such as English travellers in Russia are accustomed to purchase. The prices he named were very moderate. While he was displaying his merchandise, Cousin Giles was observing him narrowly.

“Why, he is our friend the mujick,” he whispered to Mr Allwick. “The man can masquerade well.”

The waiter had now left the room. The merchant went to the door and looked out. He then came back to the table on which he had spread out his merchandise, and addressed Mr Allwick in a low, earnest voice. The latter now grew very much interested, apparently, with what he heard. The stranger perceived that his cause was making progress, and continued his story with increased earnestness. At length he stopped to allow Mr Allwick to translate to his friends what had been said. Cousin Giles looked inquiringly at him for an explanation.

“I will translate, as nearly as I can, what he has told me,” said Mr Allwick.

“I am, you must know, sirs,” said he, “one of that class of dissenters from the Established Greek Church whom our countrymen designate as *molokani* or milk-drinkers. You have not heard of them, perhaps. I will tell you about them.

Many years ago the unadulterated word of God—the Holy Bible, translated into our native language—was brought into Russia without note or comment. Some copies of it reached my native province, and were received most gladly by many of our peasants. Those who could afford it eagerly bought the book of glad tidings; those who could not clubbed their money together and became the joyful purchasers of a copy. How the book came, no one could tell. Some said that a stranger from another land brought many volumes of the book with him in a large chest, and that he travelled about from village to village, instructing certain men in each village, and making them desire to possess the book. Though such might have been the case, I never saw the stranger. All I know is, that a certain very pious man in our village had several copies of the book which he had bought at a great cost, though not too great for its value, oh no! And that he sold them without profit to all who would buy—rather, I would say, at a loss, for to some who could not pay the full cost he remitted part of the amount. When we got the book we lost no time in reading it. In the fields in summer, under the shade of trees, we sat and read it, where no one could watch us; in our huts, by torch-light in winter, we eagerly studied the book. We knew that we had got the word of God, that we possessed a jewel of rich price; we were afraid that thieves might come and steal it from us. We read and read on; most eagerly we met together to talk about it, to discuss the meaning of parts which we could not at first understand, to pray that our minds might be enlightened to comprehend it. We read it, as the book itself tells us to do, with earnest prayer; we read it with faith, and we read it not in vain. Soon passages which seemed at first obscure were made clear to our comprehension. Every day we understood it better and better. We had no one to whom to go for information. We had no one to instruct us, so we went to God; we asked Him to show us the truth, as He in the book told us to do, and His promises never fail. He instructed our minds; He gave us all we asked for. We now discovered, truly, how darkened had been our minds, how ignorant we had been, what follies, what fables, what falsehoods we had believed. We saw the gross, the terrible, the wicked errors of the Church of our country. We found that those who should have instructed us were generally as ignorant as we had been, and that if not ignorant, they had taught us falsehoods, knowing them to be falsehoods. We found in that book how the world was made; how man was first placed in the world; how he, by disobedience to God's simple command, fell from his happy state, and how sin thus entered into the world, and all men became by nature sinful; how God in His mercy promised a Redeemer who should bear upon His own shoulders the sin of all the children of Adam who believe in Him; how God selected a people to keep His great name, and to make it known among men; how He promised to the patriarchs of old, from age to age, that the Redeemer of the world should be one of their chosen tribe, and that the glad tidings of salvation should first be offered to them; how, in process of time, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, from His unbounded love to the human race, appeared in the form of a man, and in humble rank, to teach us that He regards not the persons of men; how He was despised and rejected of men; how He suffered toil, and sorrow, and persecution, though He spent His days on earth in doing good to all around Him, to show the humble, and poor, and afflicted that He can feel for them; how He was rejected by God's chosen people; how they crucified Him, and invoked a curse on their own heads by taking on themselves all the terrible guilt of the deed; how He died and was buried; how thus He offered Himself a sacrifice for our sins; how He remained for three days in the vale of departed spirits; how in His own body He rose again to teach men the doctrine of the resurrection; how, having fulfilled all the work of the sacrifice, He ascended into heaven, and how He there acts as a mediator between God and man; how, too, in His abundant mercy, He sent down the Holy Ghost to lead men aright, to teach them the truth. That book tells us nothing of the Virgin Mary, except that she was the earthly mother of our Lord. It tells us nothing of the mediation of saints, but it tells us that God accepts but one great sacrifice, that offered by our Lord Jesus Christ; that He is our only Priest, our only Mediator in heaven; that those who heartily repent of their sins, who put their faith in Him, and Him alone, will be saved.

“We find nothing said in the Bible of a Patriarch, or any other head of the Church on earth. The only Patriarch, therefore, we can acknowledge, the only Head of our Church, is Christ in heaven. Yet the Bible has taught us to bow to the authority of earthly powers in all temporal matters, but in spiritual matters to yield to the authority of no one unless it is plainly and undoubtedly in accordance with the word of God revealed in that book. Putting aside all the customs of the country, which seemed to us so overloaded with error and abuse that we could not distinguish the right from the wrong, we have endeavoured to form a system of worship and mutual instruction as nearly similar as possible to that instituted by our Lord Himself and His disciples. We knew that we could not preach our doctrines in public without bringing down on our heads a severe punishment from the authorities of the Empire; but they, nevertheless, made certain though slow progress. No sooner did one receive the truth than he became anxious to impart it to others. All this time, who, think you, had joined our faith?—none but serfs, peasants, humble mujicks. But this did not cast us down, for we asked ourselves. Who were the first disciples of our Lord?—fishermen, humble men like ourselves. Because our faith was different to that of the great and mighty in the land, it did not make us less certain that it was the true one, or less anxious to impart it to others, to offer our brethren the same assurance of pardon and salvation which we had ourselves received. Hitherto the progress of our creed had received no interruption from the Government authorities. We had worked silently and quietly; even the priests knew nothing of the movement going on. We were well assured that, should they discover it, they would oppose us with all their power. We were, therefore, allowed to continue on without persecution. By degrees, however, our doctrines began to make progress among persons of a higher grade. An earnest, piously-minded land-steward had a Bible lent him by a peasant; he expressed his satisfaction at reading it, and was at last invited to attend one of our meetings. He came, and his heart was turned to the right way. For many months he worshipped with us, and at length the owner of the estate he managed came to live on his property. He was an officer in the army, who had seen much service in the Caucasus fighting against the Circassians. He had the character of being a brave and a stern man in the army. His serfs always found him a kind though a strict master—not indulgent, but just. To his master the steward was induced, after some time, to open the secret of his heart, and he at length persuaded him to study the Bible. The master read and read on. He became convinced of the errors of the Greek Church, and joined our fraternity. Truly as a brother, humble and lowly in his own sight, he moved among us.

“The truth had now spread widely; many thousands believed and worshipped with us, and we began to hope that the pure doctrines of Christianity might extend over the face of our beloved country. Alas! We deceived ourselves. We forgot that times of persecution, trial, and suffering must ever be looked for by God's saints on earth.

“At length, as was to be expected, some of the Government officials got notice of our meetings. One night a congregation of us were assembled for prayer and instruction in the word in a rude hut constructed by us far away in

the depths of a forest,—the only temple we dared raise to our God,—when we were startled by hearing the trampling of steeds and the crashing of boughs. Before we could rise from our knees, a party of police, headed by a priest and two of the neighbouring landowners, rushed in upon us. Some attempted to fly, others stood boldly up to confront our persecutors; but neither would it have been right or wise, or of any avail, to have used carnal weapons for our defence. Those who thus stood firm felt bolder than they had ever done before. We demanded why we were thus assailed and interrupted in our private devotions. We asserted our right to meet for prayer to God and to our Lord, and demanded that we might be left to finish our devotions undisturbed. In return we were jeered and ridiculed, and roughly ordered to marshal ourselves and hurry on before our captors. They told us that we should be tried before a proper tribunal; that there could be no doubt we had met together for political and treasonable purposes; that also we were schismatics and heretics, and that we had merited the severest punishment. We had no help for it, so, praying to God for help and support in this our first hour of peril, we did as we were ordered. How we had been discovered we could not learn. We feared that some one among our own body had proved false, but we trusted that such was not the case. Our meetings had probably attracted the attention of some priest more acute than his brethren, and he had subtly made inquiries till he had discovered the truth. It was a sad procession as we marched forth from our woodland temple, but yet we were not cast down; we trusted in God that He would deliver us. He did not even then forget us. We had marched a verst or more when thick clouds began to gather in the sky, and loud rumblings were heard. Soon the tempest burst over the forest, louder and louder grew the thunder, flash upon flash of lightning darted from the heavens; first heavy drops, and then torrents of rain came down upon our heads; the trees bent, trunks were riven by the lightning, boughs were torn from the stems and dashed across our path. The steeds of our captors began to snort and rear and show every sign of terror. Crash succeeded crash—more vivid grew the lightning; it played round the tall stems of the trees, it ran hissing like serpents of fire along the ground, it almost blinded us by its brightness. At last the horses could no longer stand it; their riders, too, were alarmed. Some of the horses wheeled one way, some another, and all set off galloping furiously through the wood in different directions. In vain the priest and the lords called to us to keep together, and to meet them at the town; in vain their servants and their other attendants endeavoured to keep us together. Feeling that the tempest was sent for our deliverance, with a prayer for each other's safety we likewise dispersed in all directions, to seek places of shelter and concealment from our enemies. The large forests, the thin population, the rocks and caves of that region afforded us abundance of facilities for this object. Many of us reached such places of safety as I have described and the freemen were able to remain concealed, but the serfs were hunted up like wild beasts and brought back to their owners. Many were put to the torture, to make them betray those who had assumed what was called the new faith. Day after day some of our members were seized. The freemen were cast into prison and put to the torture, to compel them to deny their faith or to accuse others of following it. Our beloved brother, Captain Martineff, had hitherto escaped, but now he was accused of professing the new doctrines. He was seized and brought up before the officers of a commission appointed to try all such delinquents. He, who had ever proved a faithful soldier to his generals and the Emperor, was not now to be found false to his faith and his heavenly Lord and Master. He at once boldly confessed that he had taken the Bible as his rule and guide, that by that he would stand or fall; and he demanded that he might have the right of explaining and defending his doctrines in public court. This liberty was scornfully denied him. He was condemned for being guilty of desiring to subvert the Government and religion of the country, and thrown into prison. He would at once have been transported to Siberia, but the Government hoped by keeping him to discover others who held the same tenets. They little knew how far the true faith had spread, that thousands already held it, and that no power of theirs could extinguish the light thus kindled. They dreamed not also of the fortitude and courage of which a true Christian is capable. Captain Martineff would neither betray others nor deny his own faith. It was determined to break his proud spirit, as it was called, and now commenced a system of the most cruel persecution against him. His property was confiscated, his wife and children were seized and cast into dungeons separate from each other. They were fed on black bread and water. One by one they were brought to him and cruelly flogged before his eyes. He saw them growing thinner and thinner every day, the colour fading from their cheeks, the hue of sickness taking its place. He knew they were sinking into the grave—murdered by his persecutors. Still he would not deny his faith or perform ceremonies which he knew to be superstitious and idolatrous. With a refinement of cruelty worthy of demons, they told him that one child was dead. 'It is well,' he replied; 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' A second died, a bright little cherub; it had been the joy of his life. 'God be praised! He is in Abraham's bosom,' he answered. Soon a third sank under his treatment. 'You have released him from prison to praise God with the angels in heaven!' he remarked.

"His wife, a believer with him, mild, pious, and good, became a victim to their barbarity. They told him abruptly, to shock his feelings the more. A serene smile illuminated his countenance, 'She has entered into her rest, where neither grief, nor pain, nor sickness can come. She is with the spirits of the just made perfect.'

"Still he had more children. It was known how he had loved them. One after the other died, till one alone remained. They brought it to him. They told him that if he would conform to the rules of the Established Church he should be released from prison, his property should be restored, and that this child—this darling child—should be sent to a place where fresh, pure air and the care of a good physician would quickly restore it to health. 'Life and death are in the hands of the Almighty; to Him I commit the life of my child. I have but in faith humbly to obey His laws, and to follow the course He has marked out for me.'

"One, two, three, four years passed away, and he and his child remained in prison. The little boy grew thin and pale, and pined and pined away. They took him occasionally to be seen by his father—not to bring any joy to that father's heart, but to tempt his constancy. The attempt availed them not. The child died; the father shed not a tear, uttered not a complaint, but remained firm as ever to the faith. Another year he was kept in prison, and then stripped of his property. He was dismissed from prison, and a certain locality fixed for his abode. Why he was not sent to Siberia was not known. It was the will of the Emperor, it was supposed, who had heard his story.

"While I have been narrating Captain Martineff's history, I have neglected to speak of the condition of the poorer brethren. Numbers were seized, knouted, and sent off to labour in the mines of Siberia. They little thought that by that means they were taking the surest way of propagating the truth. Others were thrown into prison, and subjected daily to cruel tortures to force them to recant.

"A few unhappy men were overcome by the pains and terror, and returned to the Greek faith, but the greater number held firm. I remained in concealment, and it was supposed that I had died; but I had relatives and friends who were wealthy for our rank of life, and gave me support. All my family were free, yet in position we were not much above the poor mujick. I used after a time to venture out of my hiding-place and meet our brethren for prayer and praise; but it was at great hazard, and oftentimes I had a narrow escape of being captured. At length, after we had suffered years of persecution, a time of rest was awarded us, and we fancied that we were to be allowed to worship our God as we judged best. Still I dared not be seen in public, for I had refused to appear when summoned, and I was looked upon as a political as well as a religious offender.

"The mercy we were promised was but little mercy to us. We were to be removed from the land of our birth, from our once happy homes, and to be settled down, many hundred versts away, in a district between some German colonies and Tartary. It was believed that our tenets would not spread among the people by whom we were surrounded. Many hundreds of families were thus turned out of their homes and compelled to settle in this new region. The choice was given them of renouncing their faith or going. Few hesitated. I at length came forth from my hiding-place and joined my companions. We set to work assiduously to bring under cultivation the wild country in which we were placed, and God prospered our labours.

"Among the few of higher rank who belonged to us, Captain Martineff was sent here. Sickness and long confinement had turned his hair prematurely grey, and he looked an old man. He built himself a small hut with a single chamber in it, and here he took up his abode, while he used to labour with his own hands for his sustenance. His fellow-villagers were all poor enough, but we all sought to assist him and to take him food—without it, I believe at times that he would have starved. He received our gifts thankfully, but never would take them unless when he was absolutely in want of food. He had been much respected when he was in the army, and the Emperor himself desired much to bring him back to the world. More than one priest had come to effect this object. At length the Emperor sent a general who was celebrated for his great powers of argument. He arrived at our village in great state, but set out alone on foot to pay his visit. The humble captain had been apprised of his coming; he sat at his little round table, made by his own hands, with his only spare seat placed ready for his guest. His Bible lay open before him. The General struck his head against the doorway as he entered. 'We have need of humility when we approach the word of God,' observed his host with a gentle smile.

"The General spoke kindly and affectionately to the old man. They had been comrades, brothers-in-arms together. For months they had slept in the same tent, and eaten out of the same dish. For a short time they conversed of old times.

"'But you came to talk to me of matters of more importance, my General,' said the Captain, laying his hand on the Bible. 'Out of this book I will reply to you. Of my own words I need speak none.'

"The General then commenced a series of arguments, which he had thought incontrovertible. As each was brought forward, the Captain turned to his Bible, and produced a text, which with its context clearly refuted it. Text after text was brought forward. At first the General had been very confident of success; by degrees his confidence decreased, but the Captain retained the same composure as at the first.

"'You have a great knowledge of the book, my friend,' said the General.

"'I should have,' answered the Captain humbly; 'I study no other; for where can another of equal value be found? This shows us the way of eternal life.'

"'Ah, you speak the truth, my old comrade,' exclaimed the General, rising. 'I came certain of succeeding to convert you to my way of belief, but I own that you have conquered. You have converted me to yours.'

"These were the General's last words. He rose to take his departure. He grasped his old comrade's hand, and went out. Alas! Alas! His reason was convinced, but his heart was unchanged. His own words had condemned him. He went back to the world to taste of its allurements and false pleasure, its titles, its wealth, its evanescent honours. He undoubtedly reported favourably of his friend, and obtained for him immunity from further persecution; but for himself he sought not the Lord where alone He can be found. He continued his old habits of life, seeking the praise of men rather than the praise of God."

Chapter Twelve.

Steffanoff Saveleff's Early History—Resolves to visit his Parents and his Betrothed—Commences his Journey—Meets Woodcutters—Takes Shelter in the Hut of old Sidor—Attacked by Fever—Compelled to fly—Pursued by Enemies—Concealed in a Cave.

"All this time I have been telling you about my people, but I have said nothing about myself," continued the stranger. "When my people were ordered to take up their abode in the new districts appointed for them, I left my hiding-place, resolved to share their fortunes. I remained unmolested at the new settlement for some months, labouring hard to prepare a home for my aged parents, who I trusted might be allowed to join me. With them dwelt a young orphan; she had grown up under their roof from infancy to womanhood, and was betrothed to me. During the days of persecution, I could not venture to wed her; but now that they were over, and I had the prospect of being able to prepare a home fit for her reception, I hoped to make her my wife. A peasant can love as well as a noble.—I could not leave the settlement, that is, openly, without permission from the mayor, the chief man of the village. In vain I asked for it. I told him my object; still he would not listen to me. I determined, therefore, to leave the place without his permission. As soon as darkness set in, one night, amid a storm of wind and rain, I started on my journey. The police, or anybody who would stop me, were not likely to be out at such a time. I hurried on all night, and in the daytime climbed up into a tree far away in the depths of a forest, where it was not probable any one would discover me. I

carried a wallet well stored with food; I wished to make it last me as many days as possible, as my great fear was of being captured should I enter any village to buy bread. I had scraped together all the money I could collect, so that I was well provided with the means of purchasing provisions when I could venture to do so. Night after night I toiled on, sustained with the hope that success would crown my efforts. I feared neither bears nor wolves; they seldom in the summer season attack people, and I had often contended with them. In winter the wolves are most to be dreaded; and often travellers, even in sledges, have fallen victims to them. On foot a person overtaken by a flock of them would not have a chance of escaping with his life, unless he could climb a tree or a rock out of their way. I dreaded famine more than anything else. Had I been able to buy food wherever I could find it, I might have carried enough to enable me to get on from one farm or one village to another without difficulty, but, as this I was afraid to do, I was obliged to husband my provisions. I found in the woods an abundance of wild fruit, such as strawberries and raspberries, which grow plentifully in the woods; also of many roots, with the nature of which I was well acquainted. Besides roots, there were many varieties of mushrooms, and I had a small pan with me in which I could cook them.

“It was a wild sort of life I was leading. Sometimes for days together I did not speak a word to a fellow-creature. Now and then I fell in with woodcutters, but they were poor men who knew how to commiserate those in distress, and seldom asked me questions. The greatest assistance I received was from men of my own faith. Our tenets have spread far and wide throughout the whole of the south of Russia, and I had no difficulty in discovering those who held them. I at first had little hopes of meeting with any friends, but He who governs by His will the mighty universe, and without whose knowledge not a sparrow falls to the ground, directed me to one. I one day had just climbed a tree after my night-march, and was commending myself to my Maker before going to sleep, when, as I looked once more around me, I saw coming through the wood an old man and a young lad. By their dress, and the hatchets in their belts, I knew that they were woodcutters. I thought, perhaps, that they might cut down the very tree I had climbed into; however, they went on a little way, and then, throwing aside their axes at the foot of a tree, they knelt down together and offered up their morning prayers. Then they sang a hymn, which our brethren often use when met together for worship. The sounds cheered my heart; I knew at once that they were friends. I quickly descended the tree, and went up to them. At first they were afraid, thinking that I was a spy upon their actions, but a few words reassured them. I told them at once my story, for I knew that I was in safe hands. They promised to assist me as far as they had the power. I by this time much wanted help. My provisions were well-nigh exhausted, my feet sore, and my boots worn out. I required a day’s rest, and here was an opportunity of enjoying it. The lad, who was the old man’s grandson, undertook to get my boots mended by a brother, who would ask no questions concerning me, and would gladly do it for charity’s sake. The old man promised to bring me next morning an ample supply of provisions, and, in the mean time, insisted on my taking rest while he and his boy watched near me. For this purpose they lopped off a number of branches from the surrounding trees, and formed an arbour. They then strewed the inside of it thickly with dry leaves, so as to form a more comfortable couch than I had enjoyed for many a day. I crept in, and was soon asleep. I had no fears, for I knew that the woodcutters were Christian men, and that nothing would induce them to betray me.

“They aroused me at noon to partake of their meal, which consisted but of black bread and fish taken from the neighbouring river. The fish, however, reminded me that, if I could but provide myself with a rod and tackle, I might frequently provide myself with food. I mentioned my idea to my new friends, and they promised to procure me what I wanted. I was always a good fisherman, and knew how to catch every sort of fish. I was surprised that I had not thought of this before starting from home.

“After dinner I again went to sleep, and rested soundly till the evening. I awoke up, and the old man came and sat down by me, giving me some more food. While we sat and ate we conversed earnestly of religious matters. The lad had gone away with my boots to the village, which was three versts off. He did more even than he promised, for soon after dark he returned with them thoroughly repaired.

“‘Our brother knew the importance of having them ready, in case you might be compelled to move away suddenly, so he lost no time in mending them,’ said the young lad as he gave them to me.

“Blessings on his head! He gave me also some provisions; but he did more than this, he brought out with him a Bible. It was not his own—he had borrowed it. By the light of a fir-torch, as we sat in the entrance of my bower, he read many chapters from its sacred pages. It was late before the old man and his grandson left me, promising to return early the next morning. They told me that I might securely rest there till then, sheltered by the bower. They brought some water and washed my feet, and anointed them with some salve, which the lad, most thoughtful for his years, had procured for the purpose. I had been too much accustomed to sleep out at night during my long years of hiding from persecution to have any fears after the assurance the woodcutters had given me, so, commending myself to my Maker, I quickly fell asleep.

“I was awoke by feeling a hand placed on my shoulder. I started up, believing that a police-officer was about to seize me. I had lived for some time in hourly expectation of being captured, and I could not throw off the feeling. I felt, notwithstanding, that to allow it to weigh on my mind was a sin, as it arose from want of faith and trust in God’s providence. I looked up, and beheld the honest countenance of the young woodcutter.

“‘You sleep soundly, father,’ said he with a smile. ‘Few but those who have good consciences can thus repose, I have heard. Well, father, I have brought you as much food as you can carry, and enough to last you for many days. Eat, and then we will set off. I am to go with you some of the way; my grandfather will meet us on the road. He wishes to say farewell to you. It is all settled, so say not a word on the matter.’

“I willingly agreed to the young lad’s proposal. I was too thankful to have a guide and companion for part of my dreary journey to desire to refuse his offer. Young Khor (that was the lad’s name) insisted on carrying my wallet, so I walked lightly along, with a cheerful heart. Thus I found, when most in distress, Providence had sent me aid. After walking about two versts through the wood, we saw the old man coming towards us.

“He embraced me warmly. ‘Heaven protect you, my son,’ he said; ‘all the brethren here will earnestly pray for you:

may you escape our persecutors wherever you go, and may friends be raised up for you whenever you require them.' I thanked him warmly. 'Khor will go with you—Khor will guide you till you arrive at the abode of brother Sidor. It is but three days' journey from hence. Khor will then easily find his way back, and Sidor will then guide you on your way farther;—farewell.' With these words we parted. Young Khor was a pleasant, cheerful companion, and as he knew the country well, he led me by far more direct roads than I could have found myself. It was truly an agreeable change for me to have Khor with me. Instead of being left to my own thoughts, I had pleasant conversation. He, too, had brought a Testament with him, although he had not the whole Bible, and whenever we sat down to rest he pulled it out and read to me, or I read to him. We were now also able to travel by day instead of by night, as he was able to conduct me by byways where we were not likely to meet any one to interrupt us. At length we reached the abode of brother Sidor. He was a grey-headed old man, and from sad experience had learned caution. We knocked three times at his door before he opened it. When he had done so he did not speak, but stood in the porch, examining us from head to foot. This scrutiny was apparently satisfactory. 'Come in and sit down,' said he, at the same time placing fish, and bread, and cheese, and milk before us. 'There, eat; when you have satisfied your hunger, I will hear what you wish to tell me.' We gladly did as he desired, and when we had satisfied our hunger, I frankly told him all my history, and the object of my journey. 'Ah, my son! I knew your father, Loutich Saveleff, very well, in my youth. We were fellow-servants together at Petersburg, in the establishment of Count Paul Illarionovitch. He kept up a great state, and gave great parties, and made us wear magnificent liveries, and we thought ourselves very fine fellows. When he died we could not procure other situations, and as we had saved nothing and could not pay our masters the tax, we were compelled to return to our native villages and to resume our labours in the field. This at first we thought very hard work, and grumbled at it exceedingly, but we could not help ourselves, and what at first we fancied a curse proved a blessing in the end. By that means the blessed light of gospel truth was made to shine on us. Your father was the first to receive it, and having procured two Bibles he sent me one of them, as the richest gift he could bestow. At first I valued it only as a gift from him, for I loved him much; and that he knew, or he would not have ventured to send it to me. I, however, began to read, and as I read on I learned to value it for itself, and would not now change it for all the wealth of the Czar. What, I often ask myself, would the world be without it? What can for a moment be compared to it? How dark, how gloomy would our life appear! How unjust, how unmerciful the Creator of the universe! No guide for the present; no certainty, no hope for the future. It teaches us all we should wish for, all we should desire to know; how to walk in this present life, how to bear affliction, what to expect in the future.' Much more to the same effect the old man said. I loved the word of God, I had suffered much for its sake, but he opened my mind to many things; he showed more clearly to me its exceeding brilliancy. Thus Christian men always gain advantage by holding converse with each other about the volume on which their creed is founded. Oh! miserable, miserable men who have not that foundation! I spent a whole day under Sidor's roof. Young Khor rested there too. He then set off with a light step to return home; he had no fears. In the solitude of the forest, on the vast steppe at midnight or noonday, he was sustained by a belief that One who could humble Himself to become man, and who so loved mankind that He could suffer death for their sakes, was ever watching over him. This knowledge had taught him to discredit all the foolish superstitions of our country. The *Domvoi* (the familiar spirit of the house, similar to the Brownie of Scotland) had no terrors for him; neither had the *Roussalka* (the wood fairy), nor the *Leechie* (the demon of the forest). He knew that there was no such being as the *Trichka*, who, it is supposed, will one day visit the country and commit incalculable mischief, nor any such thing as a *Vodainoi*, or water spirit; in truth, he felt sure that God would allow only one evil being to infest the earth, and that merely to try mankind, and the better to fit them for the time when he and his angels shall be chained for ever and ever. I was truly sorry to part from Khor, though my new friend Sidor was a man I was heartily glad to meet. He had seen much of the world: he had been in France and in England, and he told me that he much liked the English. At the time he was there he said he did not know the reason of this liking, but since then he had discovered that it arose from the national religion, so free from bigotry, superstition, and priestcraft, faults which have completely destroyed all purity in the national religion of Russia.

"But I must not stop to describe the conversations I held with old Sidor. He pressed me to spend some days with him to recruit my strength thoroughly before I should recommence my journey. I was glad of a little delay; at the same time I warned him that, should it be discovered that a stranger was at his cottage without a pass, he might be subject to severe penalties.

"'We never calculate the risk when a brother requires our help,' he replied, taking my arm. 'He who went about doing good, and died for our sakes, taught us that lesson, with many others, which we are too apt to forget. Say, therefore, no more about it, my son, but lay thee down and rest till thy strength has returned, and thou canst prosecute thy journey with renewed hope and confidence.'

"I could not resist old Sidor's pressing, and, with a satisfaction I can scarcely describe, I threw myself on his bed, and in an instant was asleep. My sleep, however, was feverish and troubled. I had felt ill before I reached his cottage, and now, when I awoke, I found a raging fever on me. How long I had slept I know not. Old Sidor was by my side. There he sat, day after day, and night after night, tending me with as much care as a father would an only son. Several weeks I thus lay, hovering between life and death. Oftentimes my old friend told me that he was inclined to summon a leech to see me, but, if he did so, he was afraid that I might be betrayed, and delivered into the hands of our enemies. He besought, therefore, with much earnestness and prayer, the great Physician of our souls, that He would, in His abundant mercy, heal me. Surely such prayers are not in vain. In a short time the fever left me, and my strength rapidly returned. I had been out of the hut more than once to ramble through the woods, but was yet, I fancied, unfit to prosecute my journey. I lay on the bed while Sidor sat by my side reading that book which was seldom out of our hands—the Book of Life, when we saw through the open doorway his little grandson running in haste towards the hut. He entered too much out of breath to speak; in his hand he bore a feather, which he held out towards me. I took it in my hand; it was from the wing of a bird. I guessed in a moment what it betokened—so did Sidor.

"'Our foes have discovered your retreat, and this is sent by a brother to bid you flee.'

"The boy nodded, and waved his hand hurriedly towards the door. I threw my arms for a moment on the neck of my old friend.

"'Keep straight on the way I showed you yesterday, till you come to a tree scathed and blasted by lightning. To the

right of it is a thicket; on the farther side, midway down it, you will find some dried brambles; remove them, and you will perceive a narrow passage. Half-way down it the ground beneath your feet will sound hollow. On your right hand, by bending aside the boughs, you will discover a further pile of brambles, which appear to have been thrown there by chance. Draw them aside, and there will be found a cavity; enter without hesitation, drawing the brambles over your head. You will find there provisions for several days, and a couch on which to rest your yet unpractised limbs. Many a fugitive brother has there found shelter for weeks together. Farewell, my son; Heaven guard you; you have not a moment to lose.'

"These words he uttered as rapidly as possible, yet it was necessary to be precise, to enable me to find the spot capable of concealing me. Again embracing him, I darted from the hut in the direction he indicated as fast as my legs, long unaccustomed to rapid movement, would carry me. Once I looked back on hearing a shout; I could just distinguish between the trees several men, some on horseback, approaching the hut. For an instant I gave myself up for lost, yet I continued my flight. I found soon that I was not followed, then I trembled for the fate of my old friend. If he is accused of having harboured a fugitive like me, and cannot give an account of me, the knout and Siberia will be his fate. I felt inclined to turn back, but then I remembered that I should only the more certainly bring ruin on him, by proving him guilty of the crime.

"'Alas! Alas!' I cried, 'is it my fate to injure those who benefit me?' I had little time for thought, though. I must hurry on; my pursuers might soon be on my track. I began to fear that my destination was suspected at the settlement, and that notice of my flight had been sent along the road before me. Perhaps even at the very end of my journey I might be seized, and sent a prisoner to Siberia.

"Still, as long as I could, I resolved to struggle on, and trust to God's mercy. This thought gave strength to my feet. On I went in a direct line towards the scathed pine of which Sidor had told me. I was too long accustomed to the marks on the trees, imperceptible to ordinary eyes, to be led to diverge from my course. There was an open glade, and the tree stood before me on the other side. I hurried across the glade, and had nearly reached the farther side, when I heard a shout, and saw several horsemen emerging from the shade of the trees. The thicket was before me. I darted round it, and at once saw the bramble which marked the entrance to the narrow passage. To creep under the brambles and to run along the passage was the work of a moment. The shouts of the horsemen grew louder and louder. Had I not known of the passage I should not have had a chance of escape. I searched with beating heart for the hollow ground. My foot discovered it by the sound. I removed the branches and the bundle of brambles, and crept into a hole, drawing them again over me. I found there was space before me, so I crept on. As I began to move, I judged by the sound of their voices that the horsemen had reached the thicket.

"'I saw him near about here, to a certainty,' said one; 'he cannot be far from this.'

"'We will unearth him, the impious rebel, if he is hid near here,' exclaimed another.

"'He ran fast; he may have got away again on the other side of the thicket,' said a third.

"'Let us try this place first,' cried the man who had previously spoken, and immediately several shots were fired into the thicket.

"'Come out, you rebel!—come out!' exclaimed several together.

"These words gave me courage, for it convinced me that my pursuers knew nothing of my place of concealment, and also that they possessed no superabundance of bravery or zeal. Had they been very zealous, they would not have cried 'come out!' but they would have forced their way in, and dragged me out. So I lay snug, while they expended their powder and shot on the harmless bushes. My only fear was, that they would shoot each other. It would have been wrong, you know, to wish them ill—they were only doing what, in their ignorance, they thought their duty.

"I lay all the time perfectly quiet, but without alarm, only wishing that they would go away, and allow me to continue my journey. I was anxious, also, to discover by anything they said what had become of my kind friend Sidor, but they did not mention him. Still, I knew that his chance of escape was very small; all I could do was to pray that he might be supported in his affliction.

"My pursuers continued beating about the bush for some minutes; at last one exclaimed, 'There is no use in looking here, men; he has gone on, depend on it.'

"'One hunt more before we go!' shouted another. 'Unearth the miscreant! Unearth the heretic! Drive him out from this—drive him out!—he's here, depend on it!'

"Scarcely had these words been uttered, when a number of shots were again fired into the thicket—the people apparently loading and firing as fast as they could.

"'If he is in there, he must be killed or wounded by this time, so now, men, let us try if we can find him!' cried one of the party, apparently more eager than his companions.

"On this I heard the crackling of branches, as if the bushes were being broken and pushed aside as the people forced their way into the thicket. I could not now help feeling some apprehension that my place of retreat should be discovered, for I fancied they had got into the very pathway which led to it, and I feared that I might have been careless in my hurry in drawing the brambles over the entrance to my burrow; or I might have broken some of the twigs, which would clearly indicate my whereabouts, should any woodman or hunter be among my pursuers. Fortunately there was no dog with them, or he would speedily have ferreted me out. I thought the time very long that they were hunting about for me. At last one of them exclaimed—

"'Are you satisfied that he is not here?'

"I suppose he is not,' was the answer.

"Well, then, he must thank you for not finding that out sooner,' replied the man who disbelieved in my taking shelter in the thicket. 'We have given him a good start, if he knows how to take advantage of it; but let us have no more delay—so after him again, my men!'

"These words were a great relief to me. My pursuers apparently worked their way out of the thicket as best they could, with torn clothes and scratched hands, and, mounting their horses, galloped away through the wood.

"I would not, however, venture to move out of my place of concealment for some time, for I thought it very likely that somebody might be left to watch the thicket by those who seemed convinced that I had taken shelter within it. I, however, crawled farther in, and then found myself in a chamber, hollowed out in the earth, sufficiently large to hold several persons. It was lighted, though somewhat dimly, by two apertures in the roof, grated over, and then covered with bushes, so ingeniously placed that no one could suspect what was beneath.

"There was a table and some benches, and several raised places for couches. Besides this, there was a sort of cupboard to hold provisions. The place had evidently been formed with great care for the purpose of concealment. Some parts had been hollowed out by art, though I concluded from the appearance of the roof and sides that there had been originally a cavern there formed by nature. Whether it had been constructed by our brethren the Molokani, or at a period antecedent to the persecutions they had suffered, I could not tell to a certainty, but I thought it very likely that it was of a much more ancient date. As may be supposed, I was not in a condition to consider the subject. The unusual exertion and excitement I had just gone through made rest very requisite, so, commending myself to my Maker, I lay down on the couch, and endeavoured to sleep. Sleep, however, for long refused to visit my eyelids. I listened, but not a sound could I hear. Thankful was I when I felt sleep stealing on me at last."

Chapter Thirteen.

Fears for old Sidor's Safety—Continues Journey—Encounter with young Horse-drovers—Superstitions of Russia—Young Vacia—Sleeps in a Tree.

"I awoke much refreshed. A glimmer of light still came into the cave, so I knew that night had not yet set in. My chief anxiety was now to learn what had become of Sidor. I arose, and took some of the food I found in the cupboard. It consisted of bread and cheese and dried fish, with a pitcher of water. The food, though very dry, was free from mould. It was sufficient to sustain nature; more could not be required. Much strengthened, I resolved before proceeding on my way to go back to Sidor's hut as soon as darkness would allow me to approach it without risk of being seized by my enemies. I therefore crawled out of the hole, and, placing the brambles over the entrance as before, stood upright in the pathway leading to it through the thicket. I walked along cautiously, listening as I went; I heard no sound, so, removing the bushes at the entrance, I looked out. The sun had just set, and darkness was rapidly coming on. I looked around in every direction; I could see no one. It was, however, safer to wait till it was so dark that I could not be distinguished at a distance, should any of my enemies be prowling about. I went back, and sat down on the ground. When night came on I sallied forth from my hiding-place, and walked towards Sidor's hut. No light gleamed through the window or open doorway as I approached. This foreboded ill, I thought. I reached the hut; all was silent. I looked in at the window; I could see no one, nor could I hear a sound. I entered the hut; it was empty. By the glimmer of light which yet remained I discovered that even the scanty furniture, the old man's only property, had been removed. There was nothing to tell me what had become of my kind friend, but my fears suggested that by the cruel hand of the law he had been carried off, and would probably ere long be dragging his weary feet over the burning steppes, or the wide expanses of snow in Siberia, probably to sink down and die ere half the journey was performed. As I thought of the suffering I had brought on the kind old man, I threw myself on the ground, and for the first time for many a long year gave way to a bitter flood of tears. It was wrong, I know. It was mistrusting Providence; but human nature is weak. I remembered this, and prayed for strength. It came. I arose, and sinking on my knees, earnestly prayed that the old man's sufferings might be lightened as much as was for his good. I knew on whom he would trust, and had no more fears for him.

"Calling my thoughts to the necessity of taking steps for my own safety, I hurried on my way. It was important that before the morning dawned I should have placed many versts between my pursuers and me. They were not men, I guessed, to venture through the forest at night, and I calculated that, after having chased me as they supposed for an hour or two, and not finding me, they would give up the pursuit and return home. All night I walked on; the fresh cool air revived my strength and spirits; when morning came I felt much less fatigue than I expected, for the chief portion of the night I had been in the open country. At dawn I again made for a wood for the purpose of concealment, and as day advanced, and people were likely to be about, I climbed up as usual into a tree to sleep. I used to fasten myself on to a bough with my sash, so that I had no fear of falling off. In the evening, having surveyed the country carefully, to see that there was no one apparently pursuing me, I came down and continued my journey. For several days I met with no adventure. I was daily gaining strength; and as I approached my father's village, and expected so soon to meet him and my mother, and her I loved, my hopes grew stronger, and my spirits rose. Yet I had still a wide extent of country to traverse. I went on for days together without even seeing a human being. On the high road I should have met them, but the country itself is so thinly inhabited, that often for thirty or forty versts together not a hut is to be found. My provisions were now again running short; how to replenish my stock I scarcely knew. I had reached the brow of a hill one morning, when I saw below me an encampment. On looking closer I saw that it was composed of young lads who were tending a drove of horses feeding in the plain below. They had kindled a large fire, and were busily cooking their morning meal.

"I had no fears of their intentionally betraying me, and the fact of their cooking arrangements made me suspect that they were some way from home, so that they would not speak of me thoughtlessly, and thus get me into trouble. I was very soon among them.

“‘My dear boys,’ said I, ‘I am a wayfarer, hungry and weary; can you spare me some of your food?’

“They all looked at me earnestly for a minute before one of them spoke, as if they would learn if I was telling the truth. Then, satisfied apparently, they all found their tongues together.

“‘Gladly, gladly, stranger, whoever you are. Come and sit down and rest—you are welcome.’

“Ah! The candour and heartiness of youth before bitter experience has taught it to mistrust the world is very delightful. They were boiling potatoes. They had a large can of milk with them. The potatoes were just cooked. One of the lads plunged his long knife into the cauldron, and drew out a potato at the point. He presented it to me, with some salt, in a dish. There were eight lads in all, fine intelligent fellows, not serfs, but sons of freemen, small farmers and others: The occupation in which they were engaged is looked upon as honourable. It is highly exciting and interesting. Their herds were feeding together near them. The moment one was seen to stray, one or two lads threw themselves on their own steeds, which they kept tethered near, and galloped off in pursuit of the straggler. They had, too, to defend their cattle from the wolves—often hazardous work. They offered me some milk, and then each lad helped himself to some potatoes; they had an abundance cooked, so that I was not depriving them of their food. They were all light-hearted and communicative. They told me how they had been startled in the night by unearthly sounds, and whence they proceeded they could not tell.

“‘Not tell!’ said one, looking up from his dish of potatoes. ‘We did not see what it was, but we can tell well enough. It was the *Vodainoi* calling to us from the neighbouring river, trying to tempt us to come near, that she might draw us into the water. She has drowned many people in that way. Why she does it I do not know. Perhaps she wants their souls to destroy them; perhaps their bodies, to eat them. She is very beautiful, all clothed in green garments, glittering with jewels. She is never seen in the daytime—very seldom at night. No one would wish to see her, for she is certain to deceive all she meets. The only chance of escaping is to clasp the cross, and pray to our patron saint; even then she will try to tempt the unwary to let go the cross, and cease praying. Oh! She is very vile, with all her loveliness.’

“‘What you say is very true, I doubt not,’ said another lad, ‘but the sounds we heard last night were as likely to have come from the wood as from the water. Now, to my mind, it was the *Leechie* calling to us from the forest. He is as bad as the *Vodainoi*, and ugly instead of handsome. Anybody seeing him is frightened, and runs away; so far he can do much less harm. He is a great brown monster, the colour of the bark of a tree; he never appears in the day, and at night always keeps out of the moonlight, as if he was afraid of anything bright. He does not shriek out like some other spirits, but goes moaning and groaning about the forest as if he was in pain. So it will be to the end of the world; he never sleeps and never dies. Some time ago little Koulik, the cobbler of our village, was returning home at night from his brother’s cottage, three versts off, where he had been to the wedding of a niece, when just as he came to the wood by the side of the hill he saw a *Leechie* looking out at him from among the trees. He did not cry out, for he is a brave fellow, but tried to pass this evil spirit as fast as he could. He did not think of his cross, though, and he did not say his prayers, so the *Leechie* caught hold of him, and kept knocking him about, against the trunks of the trees and over the fallen branches and roots, till he had scarcely a whole bone left in his body. The *Leechie* did not say a word, but only went *clack, clack, clack*, and chuckled with pleasure. Poor Koulik was almost dead with terror and pain, but still he never thought of his cross. Had the *Leechie* once got him well inside the forest, I do not know what would have become of him. He would probably never have been seen again by mortal man. He had just sense enough to keep outside, and when he was driven in to run out again, till at length the dawn appeared, and the *Leechie* left him. More dead than alive, he had just strength to crawl home and take to his bed. Next day he went to the priest, and the priest asked him if he had thought of his cross, and said his prayers. He confessed that he had not. “Then you only got your deserts,” said the priest; “how can you expect to be protected from evil spirits if you do not pray to the saints, you infidel? Do you think they would take the trouble of looking after you if you do not pray to them and bring them offerings to their shrines?” Frightened out of his wits and deeply penitent, poor little Koulik promised to buy two dozen wax-tapers at least, as soon as he could scrape together the money, and to bring them to the shrine of his patron saint. The priest told him if he did this the *Leechie* would not dare to attack him for a whole year or more.’ The other young lads seemed deeply interested with this story of their companion, and to believe it implicitly, so I took the opportunity of explaining to them the folly, not to say the wickedness, of such a superstition. I told them that in this instance the appearance of the *Leechie* was easily explained. The cobbler Koulik had, without doubt, taken more vodka than his brain could stand, and that in his tipsy state he had fallen against the trunks and roots of the trees and hurt himself. The priest ought to have known this. If not, he was a blind leader of the blind. If he did guess it, and knew better than to believe in such folly, he was worse, and designedly imposed on the people. I told them that a belief in ghosts and goblins and omens, and such like things, was a sin, and showed a total want of faith in God’s guidance and providence. They were all lies and inventions of the Evil One, and were introduced into the world by him to deceive and mislead human beings. The lads listened to me attentively. Much more I said to the same effect. I urged them to think of what I had said, but not to talk about the matter to strangers till they were convinced I was right. How I longed to have a Bible to give them, but I could not spare mine. Some of them could read, but they had never even heard of the book, and knew not that the religion they professed was drawn from it. I grieved to part from these fine lads. I wished them farewell. They did not inquire who I was or whence I came, but I won their hearts by speaking to them the truth. They were ready to do anything for me, and one of them insisted on lending me his horse and accompanying me part of my way. This was a great help to me, because I got over the ground three times as fast as I could otherwise have done, and could besides venture to travel during the daytime, as a person on horseback with an attendant would be less suspected than a poor wayworn traveller on foot. Thankful for the assistance so unexpectedly afforded me, I set off with my young companion. He was one of the most intelligent of the lads, and full of life and spirits. Vacia was his name. He told me he was an orphan: he lived in the house of a neighbouring proprietor, more as a servant than as an equal, though his parents were both noble, he believed. He never knew them. ‘Ah! I wish that I had some one like you to live with,’ he exclaimed; ‘I would go with you round the world.’ I was pleased with the lad’s warmth. ‘I am but a poor man myself,’ I answered, ‘very poor, Vacia; believe me, I could not afford you protection.’—‘I care not for that; I like you much, very much; not for what you appear, but for what you say. You speak wisdom;—you speak to my heart.’ I told him where I got that wisdom; that I spoke not of

myself, but that I spoke from the Bible, and that all who would go there would get the same. We rode on talking thus for many versts. I at last reined up my horse and reminded him that he must return home, that the horses were not his, and that I had no right to tire them.

“‘Oh, the Count would not object to my thus using them,’ he answered. ‘He is not unkind, understand. I am grateful to him for many things, but I cannot love him. He has no soul—he cannot talk to me—he never reads—he has no thought except as to what he will eat and what he will drink. He esteems his cook more than his wife—more than any one. Who can love such a man?’

“I fully entered into young Vacia’s feelings. ‘I should much like to have your company,’ I replied; ‘you would make my days far more pleasant than they now are, and I might instruct you in many things you do not now know; but, alas! My young friend, this cannot be. My course is full of difficulties and dangers, and I must not let any one share it with me.’ What I now said only increased the lad’s ardour. Difficulties and dangers he longed to encounter. He scarcely knew, however, what they signified. The danger was not death, but a protracted march to Siberia, or the knout, and imprisonment—inflictions far more trying than wounds or death. ‘Come, come, my young friend, we must part,’ I exclaimed, throwing myself from my horse. ‘I am most grateful to you for your regard and for your kindness, but farther I will not let you go with me.’ I was obliged to be firm. I gave him the reins of my horse. His was without saddle or bridle. He had guided it with a rough halter. When he saw that I was firm, he burst into tears.

“‘Who shall I have to speak to me? Where shall I again hear such words as you have uttered?’ he exclaimed.

“Again I told him I was but a poor peasant, and that I could not help him. All I could do was to advise him not to rest till he had found a copy of that book which had given me such wisdom as I possessed. I knew not how further to afford him advice.

“‘I will, I will!’ he exclaimed. ‘I will find that book before I rest from the search. When I have found it, I will not cease from studying it, and I will often think of you who told me of it.’

“This thought seemed to console him. He told me that if I would let him ride one verst more with me he would then turn back. This I could not refuse; but he rode very slowly, and made the verst a very long one. At the end of it I dismounted once more, on the skirts of a wood, when, embracing my young friend, I charged him to return, while I plunged hastily among the trees. I hurried on that I might get into the depths of the forest before I should chance to meet any one who might have authority to stop me. For several more days I travelled on, across plains and through forests, till my provisions ran short. I wanted rest also. A few versts on was a village, but I dared not enter it till the evening, and I must then depart privately and speedily, before any inquiries might be made concerning me. I had plenty of money, so that I could always purchase provisions. I, one morning, had just entered a forest; I walked on through it till I suddenly found myself on the farther edge. It was on a slight elevation, and, as I looked down on the plain surrounding it, I recognised the village I was in search of. It was scarcely more than fifty versts from my native hamlet. In two nights more I might be there. I longed to push on, and for the moment I felt that I could reach the place by the following morning; but I remembered that by precipitation or carelessness I should make unavailing all my long-continued toils and exertions. Of course every day, as I drew nearer home, I ran a greater chance of being recognised. I retreated, therefore, a little way into the forest, and climbing up into a tree, secured myself as usual, and fell asleep. Those who have not toiled on, day after day, can scarcely understand the suddenness with which I could lose all consciousness in sleep, or the ease with which I could again awake at the slightest unusual sound. Those placed in the position I so long have been in, can most fully appreciate the blessing of sleep.”

Chapter Fourteen.

A Russian Village—Danger of being discovered—Providential Warning—Flight—Approach to his Native Village—Horror on discovering his Home deserted—Encounter with old Soukhoroukof—Taken to his House—Account of his Parents—Aneouta carried away—His Agony—Encouraged to rouse himself—Plans for rescuing his Parents and Aneouta—Sets off again—Encounter with Zingari—Old Friends—A bold Exploit—They offer to assist him—Plan arranged.

“I have given a far longer account of myself and my travels than I intended, gentlemen, but I wished to interest you,” continued the stranger. “I trust that I have done so already. What I have further to tell you will, I hope, excite your sympathy and commiseration, and induce you to accede to the request I have to make. I awoke just before sunset, and descending from my tree hastened towards the village, now bathed in the calm glow of the evening. I knew the spot well. I had often been there. I recognised the little church with its gilt dome and blue and pink walls, the pride of all the inhabitants—the whitewashed houses of the richer villagers, and the rough log-huts, thatched with straw, of the poorer serfs. A sparkling stream ran by it, and green fields and orchards surrounded the place. It was altogether a flourishing little village. The stream ran from out of the side of the very hill from which I was descending. I stopped by its brink, and having enjoyed a draught of the clear, pure, cold water, I took off my upper garments, and washed away all signs of travel from my countenance. Much refreshed, I proceeded. I had hopes of finding some one who could give me information about my parents. I walked on with as unconcerned an air as possible. First I went to a baker’s shop, where I bought bread, but he scarcely knew the name of my village. I procured also some cheese, and salt, and dried fish. With a beating heart I made inquiries of those of whom I bought these articles, but not a particle of information could I obtain. At last I thought that people began to look at me suspiciously, and that it would be more prudent to take my departure. Having come to this resolution, I went straight on, neither looking to the right hand nor to the left, and endeavouring to appear as unconcerned as possible. I had gone a little way when a person passed me as if running to reach some object before me. He did not look at me, but I heard him say, ‘Hasten on, brother. Tarry not to-night—you are suspected, and may ere long be pursued.’

“‘Thanks, thanks; may our brother be rewarded by Heaven,’ I replied, without looking at him or altering my pace. To this day I know not the countenance of the man who gave me this timely warning. As soon as he had gone on some

way, I began to walk quicker than before; and darkness having now concealed me from any loungers near the village, I hastened on as fast as my feet could carry me. Young Vacia's horse would have been truly welcome, still I dared not rest. Never had I travelled on so rapidly. I had, indeed, two powerful motives to hurry my steps—fear of capture, and a longing desire to see my parents and my betrothed. I escaped the threatened danger. Suffice it to say that, after another night passed on foot, I stood within half a verst of my father's door, yet I dared not venture into the village by daylight. I had hoped to reach it before dawn, but my weary feet refused to carry me along faster. I could gain no information of those I loved. All my friends whom I could trust had been removed. Many new inhabitants had been sent to the place, and I was as a stranger on the spot where my childhood and youth had been passed. I lay concealed all day in a sheltered nook on the hill-side, which commanded a wide view in every direction, and would enable me to retreat should any one approach. How can I paint the anxiety of those hours, as I looked down on my native village, and recognised my father's cottage, and every spot I knew so well? I tried to discover any inhabitants moving about the door, but none came out whom I could see all day. Evening drew on; the cows came lowing home to be milked, the horses were driven forth to their pastures, and the field labourers loitered in weary from their work. Many a hearth in the village sent up its tiny wreath of smoke into the pure blue sky, but I could see none ascending from my father's cottage. Forebodings of evil tidings grew upon me. It was impossible longer to curb my anxiety. I hastened down the hill, regardless of danger. No one observed me as I hurried on. The cottage stood in a small garden, railed off from a field. I ran across the field, leaped over the railing, and looked in at a window at the back of the dwelling. All was silent; no one was there. Perhaps they may be sitting in the porch in front of the house, I thought. My sudden appearance will alarm them, though; but it cannot be helped. I got over the paling again, and with beating, anxious heart went round to the front. The porch was empty; the door was off its hinges. My heart sank within me. A villager was passing—an old man—I remembered his face well. He used to be kind to me as a boy, but he liked not our new tenets.

“‘What has become of Loutich Saveleff and his wife and their adopted daughter, my father?’ I asked, with a trembling voice.

“‘Do you belong to this place, as your voice informs me, and ask what has become of them?’ exclaimed old Soukhoroukof. ‘I always told my friend Saveleff that the same thing would happen to him which has happened to his son, if he would persist in adopting the newfangled doctrines which have been so rife of late years. What has become of his son I know not. It is supposed generally that he is dead. He was a good youth, but fanciful and unsteady. Not content with the old-established, well-approved religion of this country, but he must needs run after these new inventions, and get himself into trouble. Well, I was telling you about friend Saveleff. He had long been suspected of harbouring those doctrines, when lately it was discovered that he had given shelter to three or four convicted heretics escaping from justice. None of our old villagers would have informed against him, but some of the newcomers brought the matter before the *Starosta*, who was obliged to look into it. He carried the matter, as in duty bound, to the steward, who, unfortunately for old Saveleff, owed him a spite, and was but too glad to indulge his ill-feeling. The steward, Morgatch (I will not say what I think of him), brought the affair up to our Barin, the Count. Now the Count is a staunch religionist, and wonderful orthodox; though between you and me, if his heart was looked into, he cares as little for priests and the good of the Church as he does for the Grand Sultan of the Turks. However, whatever that—hum!—Morgatch advises him to do he does. Morgatch brought forward plenty of witnesses to prove that the heretics had been seen in Saveleff's house, and that he and his wife and daughter had served them with food; and what is more, read out of the Bible, and prayed with them. Such atrocious crimes, of course, could not go unpunished; Morgatch, to make sure of the condemnation of his victims, brought forward evidence to prove that, not content with holding those pernicious doctrines themselves, they had endeavoured to instil them into others. This, too, was clearly proved. Saveleff had not a word to say in his defence, nor had his wife, but rather they boldly confessed and gloried in their crime. Had they been serfs, their owners might have claimed them; but they were free, and the old couple, without the power of appeal, were condemned to be transported to Siberia. No mercy was shown them on account of their grey hairs and their excellent character. They were sent off with felons, murderers, thieves, and traitors, to Moscow. One consolation is, that ere this they have probably sunk down, overcome with fatigue and ill usage, and been released from their sufferings by death.’

“I groaned as I heard these words; I had no questions to ask concerning my parents—the worst was revealed to me. ‘And Aneouta, their daughter, what became of her?’ I gasped out. ‘Ah, poor girl, her fate was a hard one. She would have been transported also, but that—hum!—Morgatch proved that she was a serf, the property of a brother of our Barin's, the Count; that her father and mother were serfs, and that she had never been manumitted, as old Saveleff, who had adopted her, supposed. Instead, therefore, of being sent to Siberia, she was packed off without ceremony to her native village, to work in the fields, I suppose, or—But what is the matter, young man? You are ill, surely,’ continued the good-natured Soukhoroukof, extending a hand to me, as he saw me at these words about to sink on the ground.

“‘Oh, nothing, nothing,’ I answered, trying to conceal my agitation, but in vain.

“‘Young men do not look like that for nothing,’ he replied. ‘Come along—come into my house. You require food; perhaps a glass of kvass will do you good. Come along,’ and seizing my arm he led me, scarcely conscious of where I was going, to his own cottage.

“‘Had I had time for consideration I would not have allowed the good man to have run the risk of harbouring me. He made me sit down at his table, and gave me food, and the kvass he promised. I ate and drank mechanically.

“‘When did all this happen?’ I asked, with a trembling voice.

“‘About a fortnight ago only,’ he answered, looking very hard at me. ‘You seem very interested in the people; did you know them?’

“‘I did,’ I answered, doubly agitated; ‘but oh, father, do not ask me questions; it can do no good.’

“I must ask you one. Are you young Steffanos Saveleff, my old friend’s son?”

“I am,” I answered, bowing my head. ‘And oh, father, I would not have entered your house had you given me time to think of the danger I might place you in; and you, I am sure, will not betray me.’

“Speak not of it, my son. You have eaten of my loaf and my salt, and drunk of my cup, and you are safe. No one saw you enter, and no one need see you depart. Rest a little while, and then go on your way. I must not venture to harbour you longer than a few hours. Before daylight you should be far from this.’

“Thanks, thanks, father!” I exclaimed. ‘And now you know who I am, will you advise me how to proceed? Have I a chance of rescuing my parents, should they be still alive? You know that I am betrothed to Aneouta. Can I save her from the fate to which she is doomed?’

“Soukhoroukof leaned back in his chair and thought for some time. ‘I have an idea,’ he exclaimed at length. ‘The Emperor, our great Czar, is about to be crowned shortly. On such an occasion he will surely grant the requests of his loving subjects. Get a petition drawn up: go to Moscow: present it. Tell the Czar your whole story. He will be interested. If he grants your petition, as he may, ask him boldly to increase the favour by enabling you to marry Aneouta. Say no more than that you are betrothed to a beautiful girl who loves you, and that difficulties which the Czar alone can overcome lie in the way of your nuptials.’

“‘Oh, my kind father, the advice you give is excellent,’ I answered; ‘but thousands will be offering similar petitions, and what chance shall I have?’

“‘You will have as good a chance as others,’ he replied. ‘Try and be one of the first. But I doubt if many will venture to present petitions. The difficulty of reaching the city is great, and few, even if they wish it, will be allowed to go, while those who dwell there are not likely to have any petitions to present. Try your chance, at all events.’

“‘I will, I will,’ I exclaimed, grasping eagerly at the proposal, as a sinking man does at a straw, though I had little hope of its success. ‘But how shall I reach Moscow?’ I asked. ‘It is a long, long way, I fear, from this.’

“‘Go to the banks of the Volga; you will there find steamers going up to Nishni; get on board one of them, and your way will then be easy.’

“I warmly thanked the kind Soukhoroukof for his advice, and rose to take my departure. I was unwilling to jeopardise him by remaining a moment longer under his roof than was necessary. ‘One thing more I would wish to speak about before I go,’ said I, taking his hand. ‘Oh, my father, if you would but study that book on which we place our faith, how happy, how wise it would make you!’

“‘Well, well, my son, speak not of it. Perhaps I do: I think not as I used to do. The times are evil. It is necessary to be cautious. I will say no more on that point. But I have another matter to speak to you about before you go. You will want money to prosecute your plans. I am a widower; I have no children left to me alive. The bones of my sons whiten many a battle-field. My daughters died giving birth to those who will be dragged off to the same fate;—slaves, slaves all. I have no one to provide for; I am rich—rich in gold, that is to say, poor in everything else. I can well spare what I give. Take this purse; it contains two hundred roubles. It will help you on your way. Heaven prosper you!’

“My heart came into my mouth as the old man uttered these words. I could not reply to him; no words could have expressed my feelings; I took his hand, I bathed it with tears. I fell on his neck and wept. He saw how grateful I was; I would not have had him for a moment think me otherwise. ‘And a less sum than this would have purchased my Aneouta’s freedom,’ I exclaimed; for I could not help thinking of my betrothed, though I did not in any possible way desire to withdraw it from the still more important object of saving my parents from worse than slavery—a banishment to Siberia, or rather, a cruel death on the road.

“‘I think not,’ answered my host to my last observation. ‘The brother of our Barin, the Count, who owns Aneouta, is not likely to give her her freedom for any sum a poor man can offer; through the Emperor, alone can you hope to succeed with him. He will not refuse to comply with any request made to him by the Czar; depend on that. If you fail with the Emperor then come back to me, and we will try what money will do with the Barin. I will offer to pay the money for the poor girl’s freedom, to adopt her. We must let her know, in the meantime, that she has still friends in the world, and that she must keep up her spirits. She must also endeavour to make herself of little value in the sight of the Barin, her owner. She must feign sickness or foolishness, and disfigure her countenance, or refuse to work; a woman’s wit will advise her best, though, what to do.’

“‘Oh, my father, my father, you overwhelm me!’ I exclaimed. ‘I will go and see her; I will carry your advice to her. It cannot be far out of the way; I will travel day and night not to cause any delay.’

“‘You may pass by the estate on your way,’ answered my old friend, ‘but the danger is very great. Any one seeking to speak to her is certain to be watched, and if you are captured, your punishment will be of the severest kind. They will knout you till you are nearly dead, and you will then be sent off to work for the rest of your miserable life in the mines of Siberia.’ ‘I know all that, but I will run every risk for Aneouta’s sake,’ I answered; and so it was settled. In spite of the almost desperate state of my prospects, I felt my spirits rise with the hope of overcoming the difficulties which lay before me. Soukhoroukof amply stocked my wallet with provisions, and before the end of another hour I had left my native village three versts behind my back. Five days’ hard walking would, I calculated, bring me to where I expected to find Aneouta. My strength, I felt, would sustain me till I had seen her, and to see her I was determined at every risk. I would entrust to no one our friend Soukhoroukof’s message and advice. The idea occurred to me that if I could but get a horse I might push on more rapidly than I possibly could on foot, but how to secure one was the difficulty. To purchase one would require more money than I could spare, and it would be impossible to get one at the postmaster’s without a pass. I should instantly have been questioned, and imprisoned till I could give an account of myself. Indeed, the greater portion of my route lay along byroads, or no roads at all, across the country. Morning was

approaching, and I was getting very weary, for it must be remembered that I had taken but little rest the previous day, when I saw in the distance, reflected in the sky, a red gleam of light. It was a wild district, and I knew of no village in that direction, but it appeared to me to proceed from the burning of some cottage. 'Some woodman's hut, perhaps, has caught fire,' I said to myself, as I pushed onward. As I drew still nearer there seemed to be several fires, and I began to fear that an entire village, perhaps, was on fire. I determined, at all events, to ascertain the cause of the conflagration before I stopped to rest. I walked on, therefore, as fast as I could, and at length, having reached a slightly rising ground, I saw before me a number of tents grouped together, at a short distance from each other, and enclosed by a circle of waggons. Outside the waggons were tethered horses, and donkeys, and mules, and several head of cattle. The whole encampment, even at that early hour, was astir: some persons were bending round the fires which had at first attracted my attention, busily employed in cooking; others were lashing up packages, filling panniers with the contents of the tents; while young lads were carrying round fodder and water to the horses and cattle. They might have been mistaken for a party of merchants going with goods brought from far-off provinces to the fair of Nishni, but I recognised them at once as a band of Zingari or gipsies, probably bound in the same direction. I had often met these people during the long period of my wanderings, and I was well acquainted with their habits. Under certain restrictions from Government they rove about the country, and lead a free and independent life of a purely nomadic character. They are not so wealthy as those who live in the towns, and sing on the stage and in public gardens; but they are more trustworthy, and have more rude virtues than their brethren of the city. Oftentimes had I spent nights together in their tents when they knew that they were running some risk by sheltering me, and might, perhaps, have obtained some reward by handing me over to Government. I was in hopes that I might find among them some of my former friends, so I resolved at once to go boldly among them. As I drew near the encampment, a number of dogs rushed out from beneath the waggons, and began barking at me furiously. The noise brought out several of the men, who came from among the tents, peering at me cautiously through the darkness.

"'What do you want here?' asked one of them gruffly, calling back the dogs.

"'Shelter and assistance,' said I.

"'You are not likely to find either one or the other here. We are moving from hence, and require no strangers.'

"'Lead me to your chief, then, and I will hear what he has to say,' I replied, in a confident voice.

"'He is here,' said a man, stepping out from among the tents. 'Tell me what you require.'

"There was nothing in the appearance of the man to distinguish him as the chief, except that his voice was particularly clear and firm, and there was an air of authority in his manner, as if he was accustomed to command.

"'You are known to be kind to the persecuted and to the friendless, and I am one of those coming to seek your assistance.'

"'You shall have what you require, my friend, if it is in my power to give it you,' he replied; 'but come in here, and let me know more particularly what it is you require.'

"He took me by the hand, and led me in front of a tent, where he made me sit down on a bale, which had just been prepared for loading a horse.

"'We have met before, father,' said I, as soon as I saw his features more distinctly by the bright light of the fire. 'It was some time ago, though, yet you will remember the circumstance, I know. The first snows of winter had just fallen, and a hard frost had set in, when one of your children strayed into the woods. On, on she went, thinking she was approaching your encampment, but was all the time getting farther from it. The evening was setting in, when she saw three huge animals moving towards her; they were wolves, ravenous with hunger. An armed man might well have dreaded to encounter them alone. I was, happily, in the wood, a houseless wanderer. I beheld the scene from the entrance of a rude hut I had just constructed to shelter myself from the inclemency of the weather. The sweet child stood petrified with terror—the savage beasts approached her—my fowling-piece lay by my side—I levelled it, fired, and brought the largest wolf to the ground. Then loading as I went, I rushed forward with a loud shout, which made the animals stop to see whence it came. This gave me time to load and to shoot another through the head; the third took to flight, but I killed him also just as he was disappearing among the trees. The little girl stood staring at me with amazement, then burst into tears. I took her up in my arms, and wrapped a sheepskin round her. She was a sweet little creature. Her features and her dress told me the race to which she belonged. I had seen the encampment in the morning; it was more than two versts away, but I was strong and active, and I knew I could carry her as far. She rested quietly in my arms, with all the beautiful confidence of childhood. I took my gun with me, and went gaily on over the crisp ground. In less than an hour I reached the encampment. There was joy and gratitude in the hearts of those to whom I delivered her. They had been searching for her in vain, and had already believed her a prey to wolves, which much infested that region.'

"'Ah, she was my own, my beautiful little Azeota,' exclaimed, the gipsy chief, looking at me earnestly. 'Every circumstance you relate was told me then, I remember. But was it you did that brave act? Was it you who saved my child? Pardon me that I did not know you; you are much changed since then.'

"'So I believe,' said I. 'Toil and anxiety have done their work on my features, I doubt not. I am glad of it in one respect, for though at times it may prevent my friends recognising me, it will more effectually guard me from being discovered by my enemies.'

"'Ah, my dear friend, my son, my well-beloved, I know you now, though,' exclaimed the gipsy, springing up, and throwing his arms round my neck, while his countenance exhibited the deepest emotion. 'Ah, my Azeota, my sweet flower! I have lost her; death has taken her from me, but I am not the less grateful to you for what you did for her, and I thank the fates who have sent you once more to me that we may converse together of her. But tell me, how is it that you come here to seek me?'

"On this I told him such part of my history as I thought would afford him interest, and informed him of my purpose of endeavouring to find Aneouta, and of going on afterwards to Nishni and Moscow.

"I will think over the matter as we go along," he replied; "we shall soon be on the move; you will ride along with me. But stay, you have had no food this morning, probably. Here, Kazan," he cried, calling to a lad who was passing; "bring some provisions here immediately for this, my friend; your mother will give them to you—the best she has, tell her. Then saddle my black mare, and bring her along with my horse; he will ride her."

"I thanked the gipsy chief for his arrangements. Nothing could be more opportune than the encounter. The tribe were proceeding in the very direction I wished to go, and though I could have performed the distance almost as quickly on foot, I should now be enabled to do it without fatigue. I ate a hearty breakfast, and by the time it was finished, the gipsy's mare was brought to me to mount. Accompanying the chief, I rode on to the head of the caravan. As he passed along the line he issued his orders in a tone which showed that he was accustomed to be obeyed, and this increased my confidence that he would be enabled to assist me effectually. There were nearly three hundred people, I calculated, altogether; quite a little army. Some of the younger men and boys were on foot, lightly clad, with sticks in their hands to drive the horses and cattle; others were on horseback, while some of the very old men and women and children were carried in the waggons, which were driven by some of the men on foot. The story of my having preserved little Azeota from the wolves had already got about, and as I rode by, I was saluted with expressions of gratitude, which were very satisfactory. I felt indeed thankful that I had again fallen among friends so well able to help me. At the time to which I allude, I had remained many days in the camp. I had conversed much with the gipsies on religious subjects, and, alas! Had found their minds totally ignorant of the truth. Though living in a land at least called Christian, they knew nothing of that pure faith; they were almost destitute of any hope, any fear; this life was all they thought of. The future, eternity, was totally beyond their comprehension. They put their hands before their eyes as if to shut it out when I spoke of it. Gradually I unfolded to them holy things; I spoke to them of the Bible and its wonderful history, and by degrees they listened and were interested. Finally, I believe that I made much impression on the minds of many of them. Then I was once more obliged to fly for my liberty. Still I often visited the Zingari whenever I had an opportunity, and never was otherwise than kindly received by them. But to return to my late adventure with them.

"We had ridden some versts, and the gipsy chief had long been silent, when he turned to me, and said:—

"I have thought of a plan by which you may not only see your Aneouta, but you may, if she will consent, carry her away from those who keep her from you. You shall disguise yourself as a gipsy, and, accompanied by one of the young women of the tribe, you will easily gain access to her, under the pretence of telling fortunes. If you can persuade her to fly from her persecutors, we will protect her. No one will suspect that you have gone to the house for any other purpose than collecting a few kopecks, or stealing chickens, perhaps; and who will think of searching for her with us?"

"I saw at once the advantages of the plan proposed by the Zingari chief, and yet I trembled at the thought of leaving Aneouta so long among his people; not that I doubted they would protect her to the utmost of their power, but I feared she might suffer from the hardships to which she would be inevitably exposed. Still I felt that I must wait to decide till I had seen my betrothed. For five days we travelled on with far greater ease than I had been accustomed to, so that at the end of the time I was fresher and stronger than when I fell in with the encampment.

"But I am wearying you, sirs, with my long history, and I am sure that this kind gentleman, who has been interpreting for me, is completely out of breath."

Mr Allwick smiled as he said this.

"Oh, no, no," exclaimed Cousin Giles, and the boys, and Mr Evergreen, in a breath. "We are very much interested. Tell him to go on. We would rather hear his adventures than see all the sights in the place."

The stranger bowed, and continued his narrative.

Chapter Fifteen.

Disguised as a Zingari—Start on the Expedition—Minetta's Fortune-telling—Communicative Serfs—A tyrant Land-steward—Outbreak of Peasants—Dreadful Result—Old Scratchichna—Discovery of Aneouta—Their Flight—Stratagem of the Zingari Chief—Aneouta left in the Gipsy Encampment—Reaches the Volga—Voyage to Nishni—Conclusion of History—Cousin Giles promises to assist him.

"The gipsy tents were pitched on a wild moor, surrounded by low, barren hills, about three versts distant from the estate of young Barin Peoter Petrovitch, the owner of my poor Aneouta. Although my features are not at all of the gipsy cast, and any one examining them narrowly would at once have seen that I was no Zingari, yet by dressing carefully in their style, and by having my countenance doubly dyed, and my beard shaved off, I certainly might hope to be taken for one by the casual passer-by.

"The chief himself attended to the arrangement of my costume. He was a widower, and childless, but he had a niece, the child of a brother, whom he adopted. She was a clever, spirited girl, and gladly undertook to be my companion; indeed Minetta—that was her name—fully entered into the spirit of the undertaking. It was arranged, also, that a little lad, her brother, should accompany us. I described Aneouta to them both, so that they might know her at once should they meet her. My countenance had been so altered by the dye and paint that I looked quite an old man, and no one could possibly recognise me. Whatever may be the faults of the Zingari, they may be safely trusted with the secrets committed to their tribe; therefore, though every one in the encampment knew my object, I had no fears of being betrayed.

"Many a good wish was uttered as we three set off together on horseback. The chief had furnished me with a strong, active steed, which would carry Aneouta as well as me, should I be so fortunate as to be able to bear her off unperceived. We rode on till we came to a copse, a quarter of a verst or so from the house of the young Barin.

"Minetta and I then dismounting, left the horses under charge of her brother, and sauntering along in an unconcerned way, we approached the house. I had agreed to feign to be dumb, lest the tone of my voice should betray me. Thus I knew I should be perfectly safe from detection, and even Aneouta would not know me. Our difficulty was to learn where she could be found. Eagerly I cast my eyes about in every direction, expecting to see her among the work-people in the fields, but nowhere did she appear. Minetta had a good excuse to go among them, to offer to tell the girls their fortunes. They were not unaccustomed to such visits, apparently, for they smiled and laughed as she talked to them, and willingly held out their hands that she might read their fate by the marks on their palms. She cleverly adapted her promises according to the age and appearance of each, and seemed to give universal satisfaction. After she had gained their confidence, she began to put questions to them, to which they seemed fully willing to reply. First she spoke to one; then to another a little way off; and what the first told her she made use of with surprising facility, as if she had been long informed of it, to draw information from the second. I listened with painful eagerness to all that was said to her, but for a long time she could elicit nothing which could give me information about Aneouta. At length she got nearer to the subject.

"'Surely all the girls of the estate are not in the fields to-day?' she said. 'Not long ago I heard weeping and moaning, as from one in pain or grief. The sounds came a long, long way through the air, even to where I then was standing, many versts away from this.'

"The girls looked at each other.

"'Yes, you are right,' said one. 'It was a maiden who had gone away from this when a child, and thought herself free, but she was mistaken; and the Barin, our lord, is fond of keeping all his people about him, so when he found it out, he had her brought back. Poor thing, she was very unhappy, for she was taken from all her friends; but she will be better by and by. She will marry one of our young men, and then she will make new friends, and be reconciled to her fate.'

"'Ah, let any one beware who marries her,' exclaimed Minetta, promptly. 'I have read his destiny in the stars. He will speedily die. Let him beware, I say.'

"The girls looked at each other with horror, resolved to warn all the young men in the village of the fate they might expect if they wished to marry the new-comer.

"'Then she has not yet been sent out into the fields to labour?' she continued. 'I thought not.'

"'Oh, no, she is still in the overseer's house,' answered one of the girls; 'she has plenty of work there, for he is a hard man, and not likely to excuse her because she is weak or ill. For my part, I would rather be in the fields, where at least we have freedom to talk, and laugh, and sing as much and as loud as we please, at least as long as the land-steward keeps away from us. When he comes all are dumb and grave. If we talk, he thinks we are plotting mischief; if we laugh, he fancies we are laughing at him. He is miserable himself, and he wants to make everybody miserable also.'

"'Why is that?' asked Minetta. 'He is well-to-do in the world—a good house, and plenty to eat and drink.'

"'Ah, but he is always in terror of his life,' answered the girl. 'Before he came here he was steward of an estate owned by a Barin and his wife, who were the most grinding couple in all the country round. They starved their house serfs, and ground every moment of work out of the peasants that the law would allow. No other man but Gavrillo, our land-steward, would have lived with such people, I verily believe. The mujicks bore it for many years, not without complaining and grumbling, but without trying to right themselves. At last they could bear it no longer. A bad season came, and they were starving, and when they complained, they were only ground more and more; so they rose up with arms in their hands, and attacked the Barin's house one morning, just before daylight, and the Barin put his head out of the window, and they shot him, and he fell down into the road; and when his wife looked out to see what had become of her lord, they shot her too. When they were certain that they were both dead they went off to the house of Gavrillo, intending to shoot him also. He, however, hearing the shots, guessed that something wrong was happening, and, mounting his horse, galloped away as hard as he could go. The mujicks saw him, and followed. They thirsted for his blood; and as they well knew that no mercy would be shown them, they were determined to have it. They followed him across fields, and there they kept up with him. Then he reached a plain, a wild heath, and he distanced them, but at the other side of the heath was a wood—he must either skirt it or go through it. Fear drove him through it, and they rapidly gained on him again. They now were almost sure that they should catch him, but as they got to the farther edge of the wood they saw him tearing along, his horse all foam, and his clothes in shreds, and his hat knocked off, a quarter of a verst or less before them. Shots were fired at him, but the bullets missed. A broad and rapid river was before him. They thought that they should now certainly overtake him, and already they fancied their revenge secure, when he reached the bank. He hesitated not a moment. He heard the infuriated mujicks behind him—their cries of rage and fierce threats—and saw the broad rapid stream before him. Death from behind was certain. The water might float him—he urged in his horse—the animal was strong and fearless. Bravely it swam on, encouraged by its master's voice. Shot after shot was fired at him—still he held on. He was mounting the one bank when his pursuers reached the other, uttering cries of disappointed hate. He shook his clenched fist at them, and galloped on. He did not stop nor think himself safe till he had reached the nearest town. He there gave notice of what had occurred, and the governor sent off for troops to punish the rebels. The mujicks, meantime, with shouts of vengeance, went back to his house. His wife and children were within, and a hoard of his ill-gotten gold. They could not fly. He had had no time to secure his gold. The mujicks surrounded the dwelling, and closed the doors that no one might escape. There was a shout for faggots, dried branches, logs of wood. They were brought, they were piled up round the house, and a fire was kindled on every side. It blazed up fiercely. It crackled, and hissed, and roared. There was a strong wind: the cries of the inmates were overcome. Soon the smoke stifled them; and Gavrillo,

when he returned with the troops many days afterwards, found nothing but a heap of ashes where his house had been. The mujicks then burnt down the house of their lord and emptied his granaries, and then dispersed in every direction. Not an inhabitant was left in the place. Even the old men and the women and children were carried off. Some of the latter, alas! Were soon captured and cruelly treated, but many of the men escaped to the distant steppe, and there, banding themselves together, robbed and plundered all they could venture to attack. That is the reason that Gavrillo is so melancholy and morose,' said the girl.

“‘Enough to make him so,’ answered Minetta. ‘But has he not married again? Who takes care of his house?’

“‘Oh, no, he has taken no second wife. I should pity the woman to whom should fall such a fate. He has a blind and deaf old woman who takes care of his house, and I suppose he thinks if his house was again burnt there would be no great loss if she was burnt too. She is as sweet tempered as he is. A pretty life poor Aneouta will have with her.’

“‘And Gavrillo himself, where is he?’ asked Minetta.

“‘Oh, he is away from home just now—gone to see after the sale of some timber; and the Barin is away on his road to Moscow, and won’t be back till after the grand doings at the coronation of the Czar, and that makes us all so merry, you know.’

“Minetta had now heard all she required—so had I. The Barin’s absence would enable me the better to carry off Aneouta; at the same time I fancied that he might make out a good story to the Emperor, and persuade him to disallow my petition when he found that I was interfering with one whom he claimed as his serf. The Zingari chief, however, who knows the world well, afterwards told me that I need have no fears on that score, and that if the Czar grants my petition no one is likely to interfere with me. Well, Minetta and I left the field highly satisfied with the information we had obtained, and betook ourselves to Gavrillo’s house. The old woman, his housekeeper, sat in the porch knitting. The girl we had spoken with had in no way done her injustice; a more unattractive female was never seen. I groaned as I thought that my poor Aneouta should have been committed to the charge of such a being. A brown handkerchief was tied over her head: from beneath it escaped a few straggling white hairs. The eyes in her parchment-like countenance were scarcely perceptible, while her mouth was garnished with two yellow bones, which did the duty of teeth; her feet were encased in straw shoes, and her entire dress was of a dark hue, obtained by age and dirt. There was not a spot of white about her.

“‘What do you want here?’ she growled out, as she saw us approach.

“‘To tell your fortune, dear mother,’ answered Minetta, in the blandest voice.

“‘My fortune has been settled long ago, and a bad one it has been,’ answered the old woman.

“‘The moon changes, and fine weather comes at last,’ replied the gipsy, smiling. ‘Those who are wise never mourn the past, but look to the future. See what wonderful things this age has produced! Steamers, and railroads, and balloons—all you have heard of, I doubt not. Even now the world is ringing with the latest and grandest discovery, made by our people, too. Those only who come to us can benefit by it.’

“‘What is it, girl?’ asked the old woman, with more animation than could be expected.

“‘What is it? What you, perchance, would like to have, if you could afford to pay for it,’ answered Minetta archly.

“‘How do you know that I cannot afford to pay? Tell me what your discovery is, and I will tell you whether I will pay for it,’ croaked out the old woman.

“‘Oh, no, no; you will not trust to it,’ answered Minetta. ‘There are others who will value the great secret more than you; I must keep it for them. Farewell, mother;’ and taking my hand, she began to move away.

“‘Stop, stop, girl; let me know what it is,’ cried the old woman, her curiosity fully excited.

“Still Minetta went on.

“‘Stop, stop!’ again croaked out the old woman.

“The Zingari maiden pretended to relent, and stopped.

“‘Well, mother dear, perhaps you would like to try the effects of this great discovery. Often has the attempt been made, but in vain, to give back youth to age, to renovate the beauty which years and sickness have destroyed. The secret has been obtained. A liquid, distilled from the dew found on certain plants at early dawn, has that wondrous power. Every day the effect is perceptible; the limbs become strong, the muscles vigorous, the cheeks fill out, the roses return, the eyes grow bright, the step elastic, the—’

“‘Oh, give me some of it!’ shrieked the wretched hag, stretching out her withered arms. ‘I’ll try it!—I’ll try it! What do you demand, girl?—say quickly!’

“‘Try it first, and as you prove its effects, then you shall reward me accordingly,’ said Minetta, producing a bottle with a colourless liquid from under her cloak. She poured out some of the liquid on a sponge, and held it to the mouth of the hag. In a few moments its effects were indeed perceptible; her eyes closed, her arms hung down, and she was in a state of stupor.

“‘What have you been about?’ I exclaimed, afraid that some injury might have been done the old woman.

“‘No harm whatever,’ she answered, laughing. ‘Do you go in, and bring out your Aneouta. I will watch here, and then

the sooner we are away the better.'

"With a beating heart, I sprang into the house. There were but five or six rooms. In the last I found a female, sitting with her hands crossed on her knees, looking on vacancy. She started on hearing a person enter, and gazed up at my countenance. I knew her by her figure; but, alas! Grief and anxiety had sadly changed her features. Still she was my Aneouta. Of that I was certain. Eagerly, inquiringly, she looked at me. Her eyes ran over my gipsy costume, then she once more gazed into my eyes, and springing up, threw herself into my arms.

"'It is you—you, my Steffanoff!' she exclaimed, in a voice that went to my heart. 'Tell me not that it is any one else. It is you—it is you. I know you through your disguise. The dark skin—the Zingari dress—the white hair cannot deceive me. You have come to save me from this—to take me away—to carry me to your home. Tell me that I do not dream. Tell me that it is a reality I enjoy. Tell me that it is you yourself I hold in my arms!'

"'Oh, my Aneouta, it is indeed your Steffanoff who has found you out—who has come to carry you from this place,' I exclaimed, pressing her to my heart. 'But there is no time to delay—I will tell you all by and by. We must be away at once, or we may be pursued.'

"'Yes, yes, I come. Take me with you at once, my beloved,' she cried, pressing closer to me. 'But ah!—old Scratchichna, where is she? She will give the alarm, and clutch us with her claws, till some one comes to stop us!'

"'Fear not about her,' I answered, as I led her out of the room and into the porch. 'See, she will not stop us.'

"The old woman was sitting as I had left her, perfectly unconscious. Certainly she did not appear as if her youth was returning; she looked far more as if death had overtaken her. Minetta stood over her, and as we were going, applied the sponge once more to her nostrils.

"'She is not dying, I trust?' said I.

"'Oh, no, no!' answered Minetta, laughing. 'She will come very soon to herself, and then sit quiet, indulging in the fancy that she is growing young again, forgetting all about her charge and us. When she finds that this bird has flown, she will give such a confused account of the matter, that no one will know what has occurred. Good-bye, old mother—you do look very young, certainly!' Minetta laughed in a peculiar self-satisfied way as she said this.

"Minetta having thrown her own cloak over Aneouta, which much assisted in disguising her, we hurried towards the copse where we had left the horses. Anxiously we looked around on every side to notice if any one was watching us, but the peasants were in the fields, and we carefully avoided the high road and the main street of the village. We found the lad with the horses all safe—no one had come near him. Things may be done in a thinly-peopled country which could not occur in the denser population of a town. Taking up Aneouta on the horse before me, away we galloped—my heart lighter than it had been for many a year. Still I knew that the time might be far distant when I might hope to live with her in peace and security.

"We were cordially welcomed by the Zingari chief and his people, who seemed to take an especial interest in the achievement we had accomplished. Its success was, I confess, entirely owing to the tact and adroitness of Minetta. The means she took were, however, not such as in my calmer moments I could in my conscience approve of.

"The Zingari chief received Aneouta as a daughter. 'You shall eat of my bread and dwell in my tent, and occupy the place of one who is lost to me, till your betrothed comes to claim you,' said he, taking her hand. 'Minetta will be your companion, and she will tell you many things to make the hours pass lightly away.'

"Soon after we reached the encampment the orders were given to strike the tents, that we might remove to some distance before nightfall. Of course we knew that directly Gavrillo, the steward, returned, he would make every effort to discover what had become of Aneouta. The chief had placed her carefully in a covered waggon, when he asked her for her mantle and the handkerchief she had worn over her head. He took them, and rolling them up, gave them to the young lad who had been with us. I asked him as we rode along why he had done this.

"'The river which passes near the village is deep and rapid; I have told him to go there as soon as it is dark, and throw them on the bank. Their being found there will effectually mislead the steward, who will believe that Aneouta has drowned herself, and will make no further search for her.'

"In the hopes that this stratagem would succeed, my mind was relieved of a very great anxiety; for I was certain that if it was known that Aneouta had taken refuge among the gipsies, and she was demanded from them, they would not venture to retain her. I expressed my fears to the chief.

"'We will see to that,' he answered, laughing confidently. 'They cannot prove that she is among us, and they may come and search through every tent, and not discover her if she desires to remain concealed.'

"'How can that be?' I asked.

"'By disguising her, so that she will become like one of ourselves,' he answered.

"'You could not disguise me,' I answered; 'she knew me at once.'

"'Ah, the eyes of love pierce deeper than any other eyes,' he answered; 'besides, Aneouta's features are much of the Zingari cast, and her eyes are dark like ours. Depend on it, we will disguise her so that no one will know her. If any come to look for her, we will tell them to come and search, and take her if they can find her. Depend on it they will fix on the wrong person rather than on her.'

"The perfect confidence of the Zingari chief very much assured me, if it did not do so completely. When we

encamped at night, I gave Aneouta a rapid account of all that I had gone through, and all I proposed doing. The watch-fire, by which we sat, had almost burnt out before we had ceased talking, and I had not then told her half I had to say. When I informed her that my great object, the sacred duty I had imposed on myself, was to try and rescue my parents from the cruel fate to which they were condemned, she at first eagerly besought me to let her accompany me, and endeavour to aid in the object. However, this I soon showed her would be impossible, and she then willingly consented to remain with the Zingari till I had accomplished it or found the effort hopeless.

“‘If you fail entirely, my beloved, then we will fly together to the far east,’ exclaimed Aneouta warmly; ‘for rather would I live among the wild tribes of the Tartars in their rude tents than exposed to the fate from which you have rescued me in this country.’

“I applauded her resolution—the same thought had been running in my own mind. To escape, however, from the confines of Russia is a work not easy of accomplishment. I will not detain you longer with an account of our progress towards the Volga. We were not pursued, and we had reason to fancy even that the Zingari were not suspected of carrying off Aneouta. Probably the chief’s trick succeeded, and she was supposed, in a fit of despair, to have thrown herself into the river. At last the time came that I must part from Aneouta. Sad as it may seem, I with more confidence left her under charge of those wild, untutored children of the desert, than I would with many who profess the tenets of Christianity. I neither exacted nor received any oaths from the chief and his people.

“‘Your betrothed will be safe, as far as we have power to protect her, while she remains under our tents; and I hope, my brother and my friend, when you return, to deliver her to you with renewed strength and spirits,’ he said, taking my hand.

“All the tribe assembled to wish me farewell. I will not describe my parting with Aneouta. Our mutual grief can better be imagined. While journeying with the Zingari, I had retained their dress. I had now again taken the stains from my face, and habited myself as a mujick. I stood at length on the banks of the mighty Volga among a crowd of travellers, waiting for the appearance of a steamer which was to touch at that village. I had been travelling lately with so much ease and freedom from care, that I forgot my present position. I was again in danger. I might be asked for my pass. Not having one to show, I might be stopped, and sent to prison. I had fastened my money about my body, but I kept a few roubles ready at hand in case of necessity. There is nothing like a bribe in Russia to alter a person’s vision—black is made white, and white black. I had never before seen a steamer. I was struck with amazement when I beheld the astonishing sight. On it came, gliding over the surface of the river, like a huge swan, without apparent effort. When it drew nearer I saw that it had huge wheels driving it along. I could scarcely contain my admiration; yet it would not do to exhibit it, lest I should appear a novice in the world. When the vessel stopped, people rushed on board; I followed them. They were all too busy about their own affairs to think of me. I passed on with a number of mujicks into the fore part of the vessel, where we stood huddled together like a flock of sheep in a pen. Everybody was talking, or laughing, or making a noise of some sort. Several had swallowed more vodka than their heads could stand, and were still more vociferous; but the confusion added to my security. I talked away as fast as anybody else, and tried to learn who people were, and struck up acquaintances with them, and I was so busy in asking them questions, that no one thought of asking me any. For several days we steamed on, living, and eating, and sleeping on deck; but the weather was fine, and it mattered not. I always have been happy in making friends wherever I have been, and on this occasion I fell in with a merchant, whom, from his remarks, I recognised as one of the Molokani. Although he took me by my dress only for a humble mujick, he had at first addressed me kindly, and I soon got into intimate conversation with him. He invited me to attend on him at Nishni, where I might assist him in selling his goods. He told me, also, that he thought he could succeed in procuring me a pass, which would enable me to proceed on to Moscow. He had been often to Nishni, also more than once to Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and through many other parts of Russia. As he knew somewhat of the world, therefore, his advice was of much value. By degrees I learned to place confidence in him, and told him part of my history. He much applauded my plan of petitioning the Emperor, but he advised me, if possible, to gain the friendship of some Englishmen who were going to Moscow, and would allow me to accompany them. In that way the pass he could procure me would be unquestioned, and they would afterwards probably assist me in gaining access to the Emperor. He, too, would undoubtedly be willing to appear magnanimous in the sight of foreigners, and be more ready to grant my request.

“There, gentlemen, I have told you my history; far more of it, I own, than I at first purposed. My object in so doing, you have, I doubt not, divined. I earnestly beseech you to allow me to accompany you to Moscow, to remain with you while you are there, and to assist me in getting access to the Emperor. Every word I have told you is true. You will run none of the risks of offending against the laws of the country which Russians in your position might do, while you will be conferring a great blessing, not only on me, but on my aged parents, and on my betrothed, and you may be the means of bringing, happiness to a whole family.”

“Tell him that we are all deeply interested in his history, and that we believe it to be perfectly true,” said Cousin Giles, as soon as Mr Allwick had ceased translating; “but that I do not see how we can assist him, as he proposes, while I certainly cannot suppose that we can in any way enable him to get access to the Emperor.”

“I hope that you will allow me to plead for him myself,” returned Mr Allwick. “I knew his parents. I have been to their village, and he himself is not a stranger to me. He recognised me this morning in the crowd, and that induced him to pay us this visit. The truth is, I have seen much of the Molokani. A more inoffensive, earnest, religious people do not exist. When travelling in the south of Russia with a gentleman, to whom I was attached as secretary, we have had thirty of them dining with us at once, and, though peasants of the humblest class, they have invariably behaved like gentlemen. Their Christianity has taught them not only to be kind and courteous to each other, but to put aside all dirty habits and customs, and I am certain that no persons in the most polished society would have acted in a more refined manner than they did.”

“If that is the case, and you are willing to be responsible for your friend, I, for my part, shall be happy to run any risk which may arise from our connection with him, and will most gladly give him every assistance in my power. He is a fine fellow, of whom any nation might be proud. Tell him that we wish him every success, and will help him as far as

we can. What say you, Mr Evergreen; do you agree with me?" asked Cousin Giles.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," answered Mr Evergreen, with his usual bland smile, "whatever you think right I think right also; so, Mr Allwick, tell him from me, that I will give him a helping hand whenever I can; and if we can get back his old father and mother from Siberia, or rather from their way there, we will see what can be done for them."

The stranger, as soon as Mr Allwick had told him what had been said, warmly pressed the hands of the Englishmen, and placed them on his heart, to show the depth of his gratitude. Mr Allwick assured them that he was sure they were acting generously and rightly in thus affording the stranger their protection. So it was arranged that he was to return in the morning in his mujick costume, and be regularly engaged publicly to act as their servant.

They proposed remaining another day in Nishni, and then making a tour through the country, before returning to Moscow for the coronation.

Chapter Sixteen.

Cousin Giles meets an old Friend—Excursion into the Interior—Fine View on the Volga—Scenes on the Road—The Count's Estate—Welcomed with Bread and Salt—The Count's old-fashioned Mansion—A Fishing Excursion—Winter in Russia—Russian Stoves—Modes of keeping out Cold—Mode of Dressing in Winter—Result of a Snowless Winter.

"I know that man, I am certain," exclaimed Cousin Giles, as the travellers were on their way from their hotel to the busy part of the fair. Just before them was a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, dressed in a shooting-jacket, with a stout stick in his hand, and walking along with that free and independent air which generally distinguishes a seaman. "Hallo, old ship! Where are you bound to? Heave-to till I can come up with you, will you?" sung out Cousin Giles, in a loud, jovial voice, which instantly made the person who has been described turn his head. His countenance brightened as he did so, and with extended hands he came back, and heartily shook those of our friend.

"Well, Fairman, I am delighted to see you," he exclaimed heartily, "I am indeed; but what has brought you to this part of the world?"

"The love of travel, and the pleasure of showing a small portion of the globe we inhabit to these young lads," answered Cousin Giles. "But I assure you, Ivanovitch, I am equally delighted to meet you, though I should little have expected to find you acting the part of a country gentleman when last we parted on the deck of the *Asia*."

"I have been through a good deal since then, but we will talk of that another time," answered the Russian in English, without the slightest foreign accent. "Well, we have met most opportunely. I stopped a day at this place to see the humours of the fair, on my way to take possession of an estate which has lately been left me, and if I can induce you to accompany me, it will indeed be a satisfaction."

"The very thing I should like; and as I know you are sincere, I will accept your invitation; but I have several companions, and I fear we shall crowd you," said Cousin Giles.

The Russian laughed heartily.

"A dozen people, more or less, makes no difference in on? Of our houses," he answered; "I shall be delighted to see them, and any more you may like to ask."

"My present party, with a servant we engaged yesterday, are all I will bring," said Cousin Giles. "When are we to set off?"

"To-morrow morning, at daybreak, to enjoy as much cool air as can be obtained. We shall get there in two days without fatigue."

So it was all arranged. Nothing could be more pleasant or convenient. The travellers would thus see country life in Russia to great advantage, and be able to get back to Moscow in time for the coronation.

Alexis Ivanovitch, Cousin Giles' old friend, had been educated in England, and afterwards served for several years on board a British man-of-war, for the purpose of learning seamanship and navigation. Several Russians have been allowed by the British Government to study on board their ships; and they have, with perfect impartiality, allowed Turks, in the same way, to learn the art of naval warfare. It was while serving together afloat that Cousin Giles and Alexis Ivanovitch, now a Count, had formed their friendship.

Towards evening of the second day the carriages of the travellers reached a village standing on a height overlooking that father of European rivers, the Volga. The scene was a lovely one. The cloudless sky had a faint pinkish tint, while a rich mellow glow was cast over the landscape. Far in the east, across the river, were boundless steppes, their verdant hue depending entirely on the dews of heaven, there not being a well or water-spring throughout their whole extent. To make amends for the want, Nature has planted on them the juicy water-melon, which those only who have luxuriated on it, in a hot country, can appreciate. Here and there might be seen the camp-fires of troops of Cossacks, bivouacking for the night, or of herdsmen preparing to watch their cattle, or of haymakers, who go out there to prepare fodder for the winter food of their beasts; while in the west the eye wandered over ranges of hills, cultivated fields, and populous villages, with their grey wooden houses peeping out from among the trees.

The village before them contained several neat houses; the gable-ends of all, formed of wood, and often tastefully decorated with carved work, being turned towards the road.

On the river below them, gangs of bargemen, or *boorlaks*, were towing against the sluggish stream vast barges deeply laden with corn; the voices of the men, modulated by distance, rising in a pleasing chorus. Others, again, were dragging along immense rafts of timber, cut from far distant forests, destined to construct navies in widely scattered lands; while craft of all sorts were steering their course up the stream, laden with produce for the extensive market then taking place. No sooner had the carriages stopped than a troop of villagers were seen approaching along the street, some with garlands, others with banners, those leading bearing in their hands large dishes. In one dish was a large black loaf, in another a pile of salt, on a third a jug of water. The men had flowing beards of patriarchal length and thickness, and were habited in long sheepskin garments, which gave them a comfortable, substantial look. They all bowed low as they approached the Count, but he entreated them in a kind voice to rise and stand upright before him.

"We come, most noble *Goshod*, to offer you the congratulations of our village on your coming among us for the first time, and we beg to present you such poor food as we can supply, according to the ancient custom of our country," said the chief man of the party.

The Count having thanked them in a few kind words, cut some of the brown bread, which he dipped in the salt, and then drank a draught of the water, which was of delicious coolness. It was drawn, they told him, from a well celebrated for its purity, and which, even in the height of summer, had always ice on the shaft. This ceremony over, the Count and his friends drove on to his mansion, about a verst farther within the estate. A long avenue of lime-trees conducted them up to the house, which was of considerable size, and surrounded by all descriptions of out-houses, in anything but a flourishing condition. The mansion was built partly of brick and partly of wood, with verandahs and galleries, and steps running round outside it, and odd little projections, and bits of roofs apparently covering nothing, and for no other object than to serve as ornaments. The land-steward came down the steps, making many low bows, and followed by a troop of servants in faded blue liveries, all of them endeavouring to imitate his movements with very ridiculous ill success. The Count could scarcely restrain his laughter.

"I shall have plenty of work here to get things shipshape," said he, turning to Cousin Giles. "My uncle, from whom I inherited this property, was a noble of the old school. State with him was of the greatest importance. He loved to make a show—not that he really cared about it himself, or had any large amount of vanity, but that he considered it necessary to maintain the dignity of his order. Thus he kept up this useless troop of lazy varlets in faded liveries, when a good house-steward and two active footmen would have served him much better. I shall turn some of those fellows to the right-about very soon, and try to employ them in productive labour."

While the Count was talking they entered the house. Everything within betokened the old-fashioned taste of the former owner. Large sofas, numberless card-tables, high-backed chairs, huge, badly gilt picture-frames, enclosing daubs of most incomprehensible subjects, mirrors of all shapes and sizes, not one condescending to give a correct reflection of the human face. There was a large hall with a table down the centre, on which an ample meal was spread. At the upper end was a profusion of silver and glass, and two huge salt-cellars. Below the salt-cellars were plates and knives and forks of a far more humble description. The house-steward came forward with many a bow, and inquired when his lord would condescend to dine. "As soon as dinner can be ready," was the answer; "but come, gentlemen, we will go up to our rooms and shake off the dust of our journey."

The guests were shown by the house-steward to their bedrooms. They were very humbly furnished. All the grandeur had evidently been reserved for the public apartments. They came down to the dining-hall, when the Count took his seat at the head of the board, and his guests arranged themselves on either side. A number of other persons then came in, retainers of some sort,—persons of an inferior order, at all events: among them was a man in a long green gown, yellow boots, a dark vest, and light hair straggling over his shoulders. He bowed low, as did the others, to the Barin, the lord, and took his seat humbly below the salt.

They all ate with the gravity of judges about to condemn a fellow-mortal to death.

"I am glad that you have had an opportunity of seeing how Russians of the old school lived," observed the Count, turning to Cousin Giles. "I could not endure this sort of thing long, but it would not be wise to make too sudden changes. I shall in future only dine in state on great occasions, when it is politic to exhibit myself in public. We cannot all of a sudden introduce the freedom of the English. Ah! You should indeed value your institutions, both public and domestic."

The Count was busy all the next morning in seeing his overseers, and receiving deputations from the inhabitants of the various villages on his estate, who came to welcome him, and bring the accustomed offering of bread and salt. He arranged, however, ample amusement for his guests during the day, by supplying them with horses to ride, and boats on a lake a couple of versts away from the house, where they caught a large supply of fish in a very short time. In the afternoon several visitors, who had been invited to meet them, arrived. They were proprietors, large and small, of estates ten, twenty, and thirty versts away. The Count's own estate extended thirty versts in one direction, so that he had not many near neighbours. Some of these gentlemen spoke English fluently, and had seen the world. Fred and Harry were delighted with them, and so especially was Mr Evergreen, they were so polite and polished, and so full of information. Mr Evergreen declared that he should be proud to be a Russian, to be like them.

"Ah, my dear sirs, you should see Russia during the winter," exclaimed Baron Shakertoskey. "It is then we are most full of life and vivacity. Then nature kindly forms us roads, over which we are borne, gliding smoothly, at a rapid pace by quick-footed steeds; bridges are thrown across streams, by means which far surpass the art of man; and fresh fish, and flesh, and fowl are brought to market in the forms which they held when alive. Fish stand up on their tails, as if about to leap out of the baskets where they are placed. Sheep, oxen, and calves, rabbits and hares, look as if they could still run about, and fowls rear up their heads as if still denizens of the poultry-yard. A true Russian winter is only to be found at Moscow or in the interior. At Saint Petersburg, owing to the neighbourhood of the Baltic, the wind which blows over it frequently produces a thaw or a partial thaw, even in the middle of winter. Thus, as the wind shifts, so does the temperature rise and fall. With a west wind comes rain, and with a north-east a bitter cold; other

winds bring fogs, and some, cheerful, bright frosty days, so that the inhabitants of that great city are liable to wind and rain in January, and frost and snow in April. Still the thermometer of Fahrenheit often falls to 55 degrees below zero, which it seldom reaches in Moscow. As in summer it often rises to 99 degrees, we may calculate a range of temperature of 150 degrees. This is a difference of temperature which would dreadfully try the constitution, did not people take very great precautions against it by the mode in which they warm their houses and clothe themselves. In Moscow, when the winter begins, it commences to freeze in right earnest, and does not leave off at the beck of any wind which may blow. We consider it to begin in October, and to end in May—a period of six months—long enough to please the greatest admirer of ice and snow. We then, once for all, don our fur cloaks, caps, and boots, without which we never show our noses out of doors till the beginning of spring. We then also light our stoves and paste up our windows. You have seen a Russian stove? It is worth examination. It is a vast mass of stone, which, though it takes a long time to warm, will keep warm for a much longer period without any additional fuel. The interior is like an oven, with a chimney, a long snake-like passage leading to it. As long as the wood continues to blaze the chimney is kept open, but as soon as it is reduced to ashes, the passage to it is closed, and the hot air is allowed to pass by numerous channels into the room. Sometimes the outer air is allowed to pass through pipes over hot plates in the stove, and in this way fresh air, properly charged with oxygen, is supplied to the inhabitants. In large houses the mouth of the stove is in an outer passage or in an ante-room, while the front is a mere mass of china, or concealed altogether by looking-glasses or other furniture. One or more servants in large houses have the entire charge of the stoves. They fill them with wood the last thing at night, and light them some hours before the family rise in the morning. In the sleeping-rooms they are kept in all night. In the houses of the poor, one stove of huge proportions serves for every purpose. It serves not only to heat the hut, but to bake their bread, and for all sorts of cookery, and to dry their clothes, articles of which are generally seen hung up round it. Benches are placed before it, where the inmates sit to warm themselves, while on a platform above it are placed beds, where, wrapped up in sheepskins, they indulge in idleness and heat—the greatest luxuries they are able to enjoy. To all our houses we have double windows: we paste paper over every crevice by which air may enter, and we fill up the lower part of the interval between the two windows with sand, into which we stick artificial flowers, to remind us that summer, with its varied-tinted beauties, will once again return. Two or three doors also must generally be passed before the inside of the house is reached. Thus, you see, in spite of the bitter cold in the outer world, we contrive to construct an inner one where we can make ourselves tolerably comfortable. We never venture out without being well wrapped up in furs, and then we move from house to house as fast as we can, so as to avoid being exposed any length of time to the cold. We have also large fires lighted in front of the places of amusement and the palaces of the Emperor and nobility, where the drivers and servants may warm themselves while waiting for their masters. Generally with great cold there is little wind; and people, as long as they are warmly clad and in motion, have no reason to fear its effects, but unhappy is the wretch who is overtaken by sleep while exposed to it. His death is certain. Death thus produced is said to be accompanied by no disagreeable sensations, at least so say those who have been partially frozen and recovered, but I would rather not try the experiment. When the thermometer falls to 50 or 55 degrees below zero, it is time to be cautious. No one shows his nose out of doors unless compelled by urgent necessity, and when he does, he moves along as fast as he can—keeping a watchful look-out after that prominent and important feature of the human countenance. As no unusual sensation accompanies the first attack of frost on the nose, it is difficult to guard against it. A warning is, however, given by the peculiar white hue which it assumes, and immediately this sign is observed by a passer-by, he gives notice to the person attacked. ‘Oh, father! Father! Thy nose, thy nose!’ he will cry, rushing up to him with a handful of snow, with which he will rub the feature attacked, if, on a nearer inspection, he sees that it is in danger. Of course people generally take the best possible care of their noses, so that the dreaded catastrophe does not often occur. We wrap up warmly, and leave only the eyes and mouth and nose exposed, so that nearly all the heat which escapes from the body has to pass through that channel, and thus effectually keeps it warm.

“We Russians are not so fond of violent exercise as are you English, and therefore we depend on the heat of our stoves and the thickness of our clothing to keep ourselves warm. We sometimes forget that our servants are not so substantially clad as ourselves, and while we are entertaining ourselves in-doors, they, foolish fellows, fall asleep, and get frozen to death outside the palace or theatre, or wherever we may happen to be. Every year, also, people lose their lives by getting drunk and falling asleep out of doors. They may try the experiment several times, but some night the thermometer sinks to zero, and they never wake again. In summer, travelling is all very well, but in winter it is enjoyable; no dust, no dirt, no scorching heat. Well covered up with warm skins, and with fur boots on our feet, away we glide, dragged rapidly on by our prancing steeds over the hard snow, fleet almost as the bird on the wing, and like the bird directly across the country, where in summer no road can be found. Mighty streams also are bridged over, and we journey along the bed of water-courses; which in spring are swept by foaming torrents. The thick mantle of ice and snow which clothes our country forms a superb highway, which the inhabitants of other lands may in vain desire. The snow, which seems so cold and inhospitable to the stranger, is our greatest and most valued friend. It is like a fur cloak; it keeps in the warmth generated in the bosom of the earth, and shelters the bulbs and roots and seeds from the biting cold, which would otherwise destroy them. More than anything else we have to dread a snowless winter; then truly the earth is shut up by an iron grasp, and tall trees, and shrubs, and plants wither and die under its malign influence. The earth, deprived of its usual covering, the ruthless cold deeply penetrates it, and man and beast and creeping things suffer from its effects. Oh, yes, we have reason to pray earnestly to be delivered from a snowless winter?”

Chapter Seventeen.

Sports in Winter—Bear and Wolf Hunting—Story of the Miller and the Wolves—Other Tales about Wolves—Shooting Wolves from Sledges—Narrow Escape from a Wolf—Breaking up of the Ice on the Volga—Dreadful Sight of a Boat’s Crew carried away with the Ice—Loss of an old Man on the Ice—The Russian Bath—Trial of Vocal Powers of Two Musicians.

“But have you no sports in the winter season?” asked Fred. “I thought that the country abounded in bears and wolves, and deer and game of all sorts. They are the sort of animals I should like to look after.”

"We have an abundance of bears and wolves, and of smaller animals too, but we are not very fond of leaving our comfortable homes to shoot them. Sometimes, when a bear becomes troublesome in a neighbourhood by his depredations, the villagers turn out in a body to destroy him; and wolves are the enemies of all. In winter, when hard pressed by hunger, a flock of these are very dangerous, and numberless persons have fallen victims to their voracity. A dreadful circumstance relating to wolves occurred near this a few winters ago.

"A miller, Nicholas Eréméitch by name, was, with his wife and children, returning from the neighbouring town to his own village, a distance of some twenty versts or so. He and his wife sat in the front part of the sledge; their children, well covered with skins, were behind, except one, which was in its mother's arms, another at their feet. Their road lay partly through a forest, and partly across an open plain, now exhibiting one unbroken sheet of snow. The children were laughing cheerily, for though the frost was excessive, there was no wind, and the cold was scarcely felt. They had accomplished more than half their distance at a good rate.

"Nicholas Eréméitch was well-to-do in the world, and he had a pair of good horses, which knew how to go over the ground. A common peasant would have driven but one, but he required them for his trade. He and his wife were conversing together on what they had seen in the town, when they were startled by a sharp yelp at no great distance off.

"'Is that a dog who has lost his master?' asked the miller's wife.

"'No, wife, no,' answered the miller. 'Heaven protect us!'

"As he spoke there was a rushing sound heard from far off in the forest. At first it was very faint; then it grew louder and louder. Their sagacious steeds knew too well what caused the sound, and, snorting with fear, they started off at full gallop. There was no necessity for Nicholas to urge them on. He, also, too well knew the cause of the sound. Anxiously he looked over his shoulder. Another yelp was heard, louder and sharper than before. They were just entering on the plain. Another and another yelp rang in their ears, and at the same moment a pack of wolves, in a dense mass, were seen emerging from the forest. The affrighted steeds tore on. It was with difficulty the miller could keep them together. His wife clasped her infant closer to her bosom. The children looked from under their fur covering, and then shrunk down again shivering with fear, for they had an instinctive dread of the danger which threatened them. The stout miller, who scarcely before had ever known what fear was, turned pale, as the sharp, eager yelps of the infernal pack sounded nearer and nearer behind him. He had no weapons but his long whip and a thick stick. He clenched his teeth, and his breath came fast and thick, as the danger grew more imminent. With voice, and rein, and whip, he urged on his steeds, yet they wanted, as I said, no inducement to proceed. They felt the danger as well as their master. The miller's wife sat still, an icy coldness gathering round her heart. All they had to trust to was speed. The nearest *isba* where they could hope for aid was yet a long way off; yet rapidly as they dashed onward, the hungry pack were fleeter still. A miracle alone could save them—from man they could expect no help.

"'On!—on! My trusty steeds,' shouted the miller. 'Courage, wife!—courage! We may distance them yet. Trust in the good saints; they may preserve us. Oh that I had my gun in my hand, I would give an account of some of these brutes!'

"In vain, in vain the horses stretched their sinews to the utmost. Fast though they flew through the air, the savage brutes were faster still. The miller's shouts and cries seemed for a short time to keep the animals at bay, but still they were gathering thickly around the sledge, singling out its inmates for their prey.

"The poor children shrieked with terror as they beheld the fiery eyes, the open mouths, and hanging tongues of the fierce brutes close to the sledge. They fancied that they could feel their hot breath on their cheeks—the terrible fangs of the animals seemed every instant about to seize them. Again and again they piteously shrieked out—

"'Oh, father!—oh, mother, mother! Save us!'

"The miller frantically lashed and lashed, and shouted to his steeds, till his voice almost failed him. They could go no faster. Already, indeed, their strength began to flag. 'If they fail me at this juncture all will be lost,' thought the miller; 'still I'll not give up hope.'

"Again he lashed his horses, and then he lashed and lashed around him, in the hopes of keeping off the infuriated animals, which now came thronging up on either side. As yet they had not dared to seize the horses; should they do so, all, he knew, would be lost. His wife, pale as death, sat by his side. She could do nothing but cry for mercy. She dared not look round, lest altogether she should lose her senses at the sight she dreaded to see. She longs to draw her elder children to the front of the sledge, but there is no room for them there; so, as before, she sits still, clasping her infant to her bosom. On fly the horses. The wolves pursue, growing bolder and bolder. There is a fearful shriek.

"'Oh, mother! Mother! Save—'

"The cry is drowned by the sharp yelping of the wolves. On a sudden the pack give up the chase. The miller looks round to learn the cause. His eldest child—his favourite, Titiana, is no longer in her place. The other children point with fearful gaze to the spot where the wolves are circling round, snorting, and gnashing, and tearing, and leaping over each other's shoulders. To rescue her is hopeless; to attempt it would be the certain destruction of the rest. Flight, rapid and continuous, offers the only prospect of safety. Faint, alas! Is that. On—on he drives; but, oh horror!—once more the wolves are in hot pursuit. The sledge is again soon overtaken. Fiercely the miller defends his remaining children with loud shouts and lashings of his whip; but what can a weapon such as that effect against a whole host of wild beasts? Some of the fiercest leapt on the sledge.

"'Oh, mercy, mercy!'—Another child—their darling boy, poor little Peoter, is torn away. Can they rescue him? No, no; it is impossible. They must drive on—on—on—for their own lives. Even if they drive fast as the wind, will they preserve the rest? For a few short moments the wolves stop to revel in their dreadful banquet. The miller lashes on

his steeds furiously as before. He is maddened with horror. On, on he drives. The poor mother sits like a statue. All faculties are benumbed. She has no power to shriek. Scarcely does she know what has occurred. Again the wolves are in full chase. Two children remain alive, but they are exposed to the cold; their sheepskin mantle has been torn away. They are weeping piteously. With a frantic grasp the miller drags one up between him and his wife; but, alas! The other he cannot save. He tries, but ere he can grasp it by the shoulder, the savage brutes have dragged it down among them. A faint shriek escapes it, and its miseries are at an end. With whetted appetites the wolves again follow the sledge. The miller looks at the savage pack now almost surrounding him, and his courage begins to give way. But his wife is still by his side, and three children are unhurt. He may yet keep the wolves off; but if they once venture on the sledge, if once his arm is seized, he knows that all, all he holds dearest in life, must be lost also. Still, therefore, he drives on, but he almost despairs of escaping. He has too much reason for his worst fears. Impatient for their expected banquet, the wolves begin to leap up round the sledge, just as the waves of a breaking sea rise tumultuously round the labouring bark. In a few minutes all will be over. The miller knows full well that his horses will soon be seized, and then that hope must indeed depart. Ah! The fatal moment has come. Already a wolf, more famished than his companions, has flown at the neck of one of his horses. The animal plunges and rears in a frantic attempt to free himself from his foe. Ah! At that instant the miller shouts louder than before—his courage returns—he lashes furiously at the wolf—The noble horse frees himself and dashes onward.

“‘We are saved—we are saved!’ shouts the miller. ‘Wife, wife, arouse yourself!’

“Far off he sees advancing over the snow a large sledge; it glides nearer and nearer. Those in it see what is occurring. Shot after shot is fired, and the wolves fall thickly around. Dashing up at full speed, a sledge approaches. The miller almost shrieks with joy. For an instant he forgets those he has lost; yet only for an instant. He has the fond heart of a father. The sportsmen load and fire again. They have come in search of this very pack. The miller and the rest of his family were saved; but it was many a long week before he or his poor bereaved wife recovered from the effects of that day’s adventure.”

“A very dreadful story indeed; very dreadful,” observed Mr Evergreen. “Do people generally get attacked by wolves when they travel by sledges in winter.”

“I think we may safely say not generally,” answered one of the Russian guests, laughing. “If such were the case, people would be inclined to stay at home. A story is current still more dreadful than the one you have heard.

“A peasant woman was driving a sledge with several of her children in it from one village to another, when she was pursued by a pack of wolves. As the brutes overtook her, she threw them one of her children, to induce them to stop and eat it up, while she drove on. Child after child was treated in the same way, till she reached a village, when the villagers came out and drove the wolves back. When the mother told her story, one of the villagers, in his rage at her inhumanity, struck her dead on the spot with his axe.”

“A very dreadful story, but I do not believe a word about it,” said their host. “I do not believe that any woman would act so barbarous a part.”

“Nor do I,” observed Cousin Giles. “The slavers on the coast of Africa are wont to play a similar trick when pursued by our cruisers. They will throw a live slave overboard at a time, in the hopes that the cruiser will heave-to or lower a boat to pick the poor black up, and thus allow them more time to escape.”

“We often go out on sledges expressly to shoot the wolves,” observed an old country gentleman of the party. “We use large sledges, capable of containing several persons, and we provide ourselves with plenty of guns and ammunition. In one of the sledges a pig is carried, in charge of a servant, and there is also a rope with a bag of hay, which is dragged after the sledge. When we arrive on the ground where we expect to find the wolves, the bag of hay is thrown out, and the servant gives the pig a twitch of the tail, which makes it squeak lustily. Now, wolves are especially fond of pork, and, hearing the well-known sounds, they hurry out of their fastnesses from all quarters, in expectation of a feast. As the brutes happily hunt by sight and sound, and not by scent, and being, moreover, foolish brutes, as the more savage animals often are, when they see the bag of hay they fancy that the pig must be inside it, and eagerly give chase. Now the sport begins, and as the wolves draw near, one after the other they get knocked over by the guns of the sportsmen. We often kill numbers in that way, and thus get rid of most noxious animals. Although their flesh is of no use, their skins are of considerable value, mantles and cloaks being lined with them. A wolf is a dangerous animal to meddle with when wounded. On one occasion I was out hunting, when we had killed some fifty or more wolves. On our return, we passed a remarkably large wolf, which lay apparently dead on the snow. One of our party took it into his head that he would like to possess himself of the skin, and, leaving the sledge, he approached the brute with the intention of flaying it. He was about to take hold of its muzzle, when the animal, resenting the indignity of having his nose pulled, reared itself up on its forepaws, snarling furiously. Ere my friend could spring back, the brute had seized him by the arm, and was dragging him to the earth. In another instant his fangs would have been at his throat, when the sportsman plunged his knife into its breast. Still the wolf struggled with his antagonist. We were afraid to fire, lest we should kill the man as well as the brute. It was a moment of fearful suspense. The life-blood of the wolf was flowing freely, but before he died he might have destroyed our friend. We drove to the spot as fast as we could, in the hopes of being in time to rescue our companion. As we were leaping from the sledge, the combatants rolled over. Happily the man was uppermost. He drew a deep breath as we released him.

“‘I never wish to have such a fight as that again,’ he exclaimed, shaking himself. ‘It must have lasted a quarter of an hour at least. How was it you did not sooner come to my assistance?’

“In reality, not two minutes had elapsed from the time he reached the wolf till he finally killed it. His arm was somewhat lacerated, but his thick coat had saved him. It was a lesson to me ever after, not to go near a wild beast till I am certain he is put *hors de combat*.”

"The breaking up of the ice on the various rivers of Russia is a time of great excitement," observed the Count. "In an instant the natural bridges which the winter has formed are destroyed, often with little or no warning, and people are hurried down the stream on the floating masses of ice, frequently unable to reach the shore, till, one mass driven under the other by the fierce rush of waters, they are engulfed beneath them. I was one year at Jaroslaf, on the Volga, at that period. You, my friends, who were there at the time, will not have forgotten the circumstance. I was on horseback, riding along the banks of the river, to watch the huge masses of ice which came floating down the stream. Sometimes they would glide calmly by, in almost unbroken sheets; then they would meet with some obstruction—either a narrow part of the stream, or a promontory, or a rock—and then they would leap and rush over each other, as if imbued with life, and eager to escape from the pursuit of an enemy. The rushing and crushing and grinding of the ice, and roar of the waters was almost deafening. The masses would assume, too, all sorts of fantastic shapes, which one, with a slight exertion of fancy, might imagine bears, and lions, and castles, and ships under sail—indeed all sorts of things, animate and inanimate. As I looked up the stream, my attention was drawn to a large black object, which I soon made out to be a vessel of the largest size which navigates those waters. She came gliding rapidly down—now stem, now stern foremost; now whirling round and round, and evidently beyond all control. To my horror, I perceived as she drew near there were several men on board. The current brought her close to the bank where I was. By the gaunt looks and gestures of the crew, I perceived that they were suffering from hunger. This notion was confirmed when the vessel drew still nearer.

"'Oh, give us bread!—oh, give us bread!' they shouted, in piteous tones. 'We have had no food for these three days. We have been seven days thus driving on, and unable to reach the shore.'

"On hearing this, I galloped along the bank, so as to get before the vessel, and succeeded in finding some bread at some cottages a little way on. The peasants willingly brought it out, and by my directions endeavoured to heave it on board the vessel. Oh, it was sad to see the eager way in which the starving wretches held out their hands for the food, but in vain. Loaf after loaf was thrown by the strongest men present; but the bread, which would have preserved their lives, fell into the water, or on to the masses of ice which surrounded the vessel, some few yards only short of her. I and others galloped on, in the hopes that she might be driven still nearer; but, as we thought she was approaching, the current swept her away again into the middle of the stream. It was a melancholy exemplification of the story of Tantalus. There were those poor famished men floating down a river in the midst truly of plenty—for where can be found more fertile regions!—and yet they were unable to procure a mouthful of food to appease the pangs of hunger.

"I endeavoured to devise some plan to send them help; but all the plans I could think of seemed hopeless. No boat could approach them, could one have been procured, or people to man her. A stone might have carried a thin line on board, but no thin line could be found. I asked for one at every cottage I passed, but in vain. At length, with a sad heart, I saw the vessel with her hapless crew drive by me. On she was whirled by the rapid current till I lost sight of her. I had but faint hopes of the people being saved. If, before starvation deprived them of all strength to move, the vessel struck on one of the banks, they might be saved. If not, they would be carried onward, down the stream, till she reached the Caspian Sea, where, perhaps, leaky from the crushing she had received from the masses of ice, she might go to the bottom; or, after knocking about for a long time, she might be picked up, the bones of her crew telling plainly their melancholy fate.

"That very day, as I rode back, I witnessed another scene, which I shall never forget. High up the stream I descried an object on a large slab of ice which came floating down towards me. As it came nearer, I perceived a telega, a country cart, with a horse harnessed to it. Near it I saw a human figure kneeling. By his side was a dog, which, from its attitude, even at that distance, I guessed was looking up into his master's face. So still were all the figures, that I might have fancied them a group chiselled out of marble. Nearer drew the sheet of ice. I then saw that the figure was that of an old man; his cap had fallen off, and his long white locks were streaming in the wind. His hands were lifted up in prayer, and his lips moved, as if imploring aid from above. His faithful dog looked up wistfully and inquiringly, as if to say, 'Master dear, what is the matter?—how can I help you?' The old man seemed resigned fully to his fate, and not inclined to make an effort to save himself. He turned his head, and then saw farther down the stream a number of people, who were beckoning to him, and showing their anxiety to save him. At first when he saw them, he shook his head, and once more addressed himself to prayer. He had evidently given up all hope of being saved. But when the cheering voices of his fellow-creatures reached his ears, and he saw their friendly gestures, the desire to live returned, and he rose from his knees. In his cart were a number of long poles. He seized one of them, and stood balancing it in his hand, while he looked eagerly towards the shore. He called to his dog, 'Now, my faithful one, you and I have a dangerous work to perform. Life or death depends on the course we take.' He approached the edge of the floe, which was now driven close to another large mass, and then whirled round again, a wide gulf being left between them. The poor dog whined, and drew back with dismay as he watched the eddying waters close before him.

"'Courage, courage, friend!' shouted the people on the shore, as the floe on which the old man stood approached another sheet of ice at that moment attached to the shore. 'Leap, leap, friend!' His tall sinewy figure showed me that he might justly in his youth have trusted to his athletic powers to save him from a similar predicament, but age, alas! Had unstrung his nerves and weakened his muscles. He hesitated. Again the people shouted, 'Courage, courage!—leap, leap!' He looked up to Heaven for a moment, and then sprang forward. His dog followed. There was a shriek of horror; the treacherous ice, worn at the edges by the constant abrasion of the other pieces, was rotten and unable to bear the weight suddenly placed on it. It gave way ere he could take a second leap, and sank beneath him. One cry escaped him, and the wild foaming waters closed over his head. His dog, lighter of foot, reached the shore in safety, and was till his death in my possession."

The guests gave a shudder at the recital.

"We have had enough of tales of horror for one day," said the Count. "Have you ever tried our Russian bath, Fairman?"

"No; I must confess to having neglected that duty of a traveller, who ought to taste every dish, go through every operation, and see every ceremony characteristic of the country," answered Cousin Giles, laughing. "I cannot fancy a roll in the snow after a hot bath."

"Whether it is injurious or not depends on the effect which the hot bath produces on the frame," answered the Count. "Every country mansion has a bath, placed near a stream, if possible. It is a very simple affair. The bath-house is divided into two portions. In the inner half is a large oven, and high up round the walls are rows of seats. In the oven are placed large stones which are completely heated through. In the room stand ready some buckets of water. The people who are to bathe then come in and take their seats on the benches, having left their clothes in the outer room; the door is closed, and the water is thrown over the hot stones. This fills the whole room with hot vapour, which thoroughly penetrates the pores of the skin. The bathers are then rubbed over with towels and brushes, and a profuse perspiration ensues, which continues till all superfluous moisture has exuded from the body. There is then, it must be understood, no lassitude, no weakness, such as is produced by physical exertion, while also perspiration has in reality ceased. The frame, therefore, is not liable to receive a chill, but is, on the contrary, strengthened to resist it. Consequently, a person may either rush out into the freezing air and roll in the snow, or may plunge into a bath of pure cold water with impunity. For this purpose the bath-houses are, as I said, built near a stream or pond; and most refreshing and invigorating it is, after taking the steam-bath, to leap into the bright, sparkling stream. One comes out again like a new being, feeling capable of any exertion."

Cousin Giles and his companions declared, after the description they had heard, that they should be anxious to take a true Russian bath before they left the country.

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of some musicians and singers, who came expressly to amuse the company. The instrumental music was very good, and received, as it merited, an abundance of applause; but the great amusement of the evening was a contest between two rival singers. On their introduction they bowed to the company, which was composed evidently of persons much superior to them in rank.

"Come, friend Nedopeouski, do you begin," said the Count, addressing a tall man with a very quiet, almost sheepish expression of countenance. Thus summoned, the singer, who had been standing for some time alone without uttering a word, began an air, which it was evident could only be accomplished by a person capable of reaching the highest notes. He soon showed that he was equal to what he had undertaken. It was wonderful the mode in which he played with his voice: it rose and fell, and swelled again, now seeming to come through the roof from the clouds, now scarcely audible; sweet and strong notes succeeded each other with rapid transition. Then others present joined in chorus, and this seeming to encourage him to still further exertions, he quickly surpassed all his first efforts, till, utterly overcome, he could sing no longer, and would have sunk on the ground had not some of the guests, enraptured by the music, sprung up and caught him in their arms. Loud acclamations of delight broke from every one present, and it appeared as if there was no use in his rival attempting to compete with him. On the speedy recovery of the first singer, the Count, however, beckoned to him to begin. He rose and stood forward. At first his voice was weak, but his notes seemed to rivet the attention of his audience. As he proceeded, it became more and more animated, firmer, and fuller, exhibiting a wonderful combination of freshness, sweetness, and power; so exquisitely plaintive, so overflowing with poignant grief—for it was of a melancholy character—that tears, sobs, and groans broke from the breasts of most of his audience. It was truly the triumph of song over human feelings, and the palm of victory was unanimously awarded to the last singer.

"I am glad you heard these singers," observed the Count, as his guests were retiring for the night. "We Russians are celebrated, I believe, for our musical talents, and I think you have heard a fair specimen of them this evening."

Chapter Eighteen.

Preparations for a Hunt—Ride to Cover—Account of an Insurrection of Peasants—Game breaks Cover—Fred and Harry lose their Way—Chase a Stag—Desperate Encounter with a She-wolf—Harry's Bravery—Saved by Saveleff the Molokani—The Count promises to assist Saveleff—Return to Moscow.

A fine bright morning, which ushered in the day appointed for the hunt, gave promise of much amusement. Breakfast being over at an early hour, the Count and his guests mounted the horses, which were led forth in front of the house by high-booted, long pink-shirted, wide-trousered peasants, looking as unlike English grooms as a polar bear does to an opera-dancer. Cousin Giles was not a bad horseman for a sailor, and the lads were delighted with the steeds provided for them; but Mr Evergreen had great doubts whether he should risk his neck on the back of an animal with which he was unacquainted. The Count, however, assured him that the horse selected for him bore a very good character for quietness, so at last he persuaded himself to mount. People of all ranks came from far and near to join the hunt. They were dressed in all sorts of costumes, partaking much of a military character, and the steeds which they rode were as varied in character as their masters. Some were more like chargers and cart-horses than hunters of the English stamp; the greater number were little Cossack horses not bigger than ponies, with long tails and shaggy coats.

"Don't laugh, my friend," said the Count to Cousin Giles, as five or six tall picqueurs, in splendid green-and-gold liveries, rode forth on the above-described style of little steeds, driving before them a number of dogs of a most mongrel appearance, at whom a pack of aristocratic English hounds would most certainly have turned up their noses. "You see, my predecessor was of the old school, and I do not wish to make any sudden changes in matters of small importance, lest I should be considered to hold his memory in slight esteem. By degrees I hope to make improvements, but sudden changes do not suit this country."

A large number of persons, very picturesque in appearance, had now collected in front of the mansion. The huntsmen blew their horns and cracked their whips, the dogs barked and yelped and gave tongue in a variety of ways, the horses pranced and kicked, the peasants shouted, and the whole party set off towards the spot appointed for the

meet. A ride of three or four versts brought them in front of a dilapidated building on the borders of a wood.

"That house was erected as a hunting-box by one of my predecessors many years ago," observed the Count. Many hundreds of people used to assemble here in the olden days, to hunt in a style of magnificence which has now become obsolete. Open house was kept, and all comers were welcome. Intimates of the family, or those of rank, were accommodated inside, some in beds and some on the floor, while others bivouacked outside as best they could under arbours of boughs or beneath the vault of heaven. They used to hunt all day and feast all night for a whole week or longer, without intermission. From the secluded position of the place, it was for many months of the year totally unvisited. There existed at that time three or four landlords, owners of large numbers of serfs, whom they treated with great harshness, if I may not, indeed, say with much barbarity. For long the unhappy people groaned helplessly under their tyranny, which was made yet more severe by the cruel and grasping dispositions of their overseers. The laws existing for the protection of the serfs were in every way evaded, and every kopeck which could be wrung from them was exacted without mercy. A worm will turn on the foot which treads on it. The man who had charge of this house was educated above his fellows. He had read in history of peasants, poor and simple men, revolting against their rulers when tyrannised over to excess, and thought and meditated on what he had read. At length he persuaded himself that he could emancipate his fellow-serfs from thralldom, and enable them to avenge themselves on their tyrants. He opened his plans at first to a few, and by degrees to others. They used to assemble at this house, where there was no fear of their being disturbed. Often they met, and much they planned, till they believed, their plans were ripe for execution. At first they drew up a remonstrance, which in the humblest manner they presented to their masters. It was treated with the bitterest scorn. They resolved on wreaking a dreadful vengeance on their oppressors; they supplied themselves with fire-arms—how procured the authorities could not discover—others armed themselves with scythes, reaping-hooks, hatchets, pikes, and weapons of every description. With these in their hands they rushed through the district, calling their fellow-serfs to arms. The call was answered by many; others hung back, dreading the consequences should the outbreak prove unsuccessful, as the more sagacious knew it must be. Still many hundreds, I might say thousands, rose to wreak a fearful vengeance on the heads of their lords; but they had no one capable of commanding them. They murdered all the inmates of the first house they attacked, and burned it to the ground. They rushed from house to house, burning, murdering, and destroying all that came in their way. For many days they set all authority at defiance, and there appeared no power capable of stemming the torrent of their fury.

"In the meantime, Government, having notice of what was taking place, was sending down troops at once to crush the insurrection. The largest body of the insurgents were met by the troops, and quickly breaking, were driven before them like a flock of sheep, the greater number being slaughtered without mercy; the remainder threw themselves into this house, resolving to defend themselves to the last. It is said they made a brave resistance, but the building was stormed, and not one of its defenders was left alive to tell the tale. The house has ever since remained in ruins, and shunned by all the peasants in the neighbourhood. Several similar outbreaks have occurred at different times among the serfs, with similar consequences. The people of Russia are not fit to govern themselves. They may at some time become so, but at present, were they to attempt it, they would bring certain destruction on themselves and the country at large. I speak to you as a friend, and perhaps in an unpatriotic way tell you of occurrences which ought to be kept secret; but I trust that you have seen many things in Russia to admire, and will not judge us over harshly when you hear of some of our weak points. But, tally ho! The huntsmen's horns give notice that the pack have found some game. It will soon break cover, and then away after it!"

Besides the gaily-coated picqueurs on horseback, a number of peasants habited in the usual pink shirt, wide green breeches, and willow-woven sandals, were engaged with long sticks in beating the bushes and underwood which grew in thick clumps in the forest. The green-and-gold coated huntsmen galloped about outside, sounding their horns, shouting to the peasants, and watching eagerly the movements of the dogs. On a sudden the huntsmen sounded their horns more gaily than before, the people shouted, and a large fox broke from the cover, and darted away along the skirts of the wood. Away went the hounds, and away went the horsemen after him, the Count and his English friends shouting "Tally ho! Tally ho!" in right honest British fashion, while the peasants gave utterance to the wildest cries, which sounded wonderfully strange in the travellers' ears.

It was not very hard riding, although Mr Evergreen seemed to think it so; but as he was mounted on a fast horse, he, in spite of himself, kept well ahead of most of the field. Cousin Giles and the Count rode alongside each other, and the two Markhams kept together.

They had not gone far when another fox showed his nose out of the wood, apparently to learn what was going forward, and a few of the dogs instantly made chase after him, while the huntsmen followed the main body.

"Tally ho!" shouted Fred Markham. "Harry, let us have a hunt of our own. It will be fine fun to bring home a brush which we have got all by ourselves."

"Capital fun," answered Harry; and boy-like, thought less of the consequences, away they galloped after the four or five dogs which had separated themselves from the chase. No one followed. The fox led them directly into the wood. He was a knowing old fellow, and was aware that they would thus have the greatest difficulty in overtaking him. Deeper and deeper they got into the forest, but the dogs had still the scent of the old fox.

"I wish that we could kill a deer now," exclaimed Harry. "That would be something to boast of."

"Or a wolf, rather," cried Fred. "That is nobler game, for he shows more fight."

"Yes, I should like to fall in with a wolf," responded his brother. "But I say, Fred, how are we to kill him if we find him?"

"Knock him on the head with the butt end of our whip! That is what he deserves, at all events."

"Easier said than done," observed Harry. "However, I'll stick by you, don't fear, if we should find one of the rascals. I shall ever hate a wolf after the story we heard the other night."

Thus talking, the lads galloped on. Suddenly a deer started up from an open glade which lay before them. They looked round for the old fox—he was nowhere to be seen, and the dogs appeared to have lost the scent. However, as soon as the deer began to run they followed, evidently not at all particular as to what they had to pursue.

"Rare fun this is," shouted Fred and Harry, as they galloped after the deer. But the dogs, already tired, had not the slightest chance of overtaking the nimble-footed animal, though, had the young hunters been provided with rifles, they could quickly have brought her to the ground.

"Hallo! Where is she?" exclaimed Fred, as the deer darted among a thick clump of trees.

"I am sure I saw her but a moment ago," answered Harry. "Let us get round to the other side of the clump, she will have gone through it."

If she had gone through the clump, she had gone a long way beyond it, for she was nowhere to be seen on the other side. The dogs also were equally at fault, and began to stray about, as if each one was resolved to have a hunt by himself. Where our friends had got to by this time, they could not tell. They proposed returning to the ruined house where the hunt had met, but in what direction to find it was the puzzle.

"This is worse than losing ourselves in the streets of Saint Petersburg," cried Harry, who was in no ways daunted. "The fox and the deer have brought us all this way—I wish we could find a wolf or a bear to show us the road home again."

"Not much chance of that," answered Fred, as they rode on in the direction they fancied would lead them whence they had come. "But, I say, hallo, what is that shaggy-looking brute showing his head out of the hollow stump of that old tree there?" As he spoke, a loud snarling growl saluted their ears.

"A big she-wolf and her cubs," shouted Harry. "Let's knock her over, the brute."

"For mercy's sake, don't attempt anything so rash," cried Fred. "She will prove an ugly customer to deal with, depend on it."

The white, grinning teeth and ferocious aspect of the wolf fully corroborated Fred's assertion. Still the lads did not like to decline the combat, but without fire-arms or spears they were hard pressed to know what to do. They rode round and round the tree at a respectful distance, the wolf following them with her eyes, though she would not leave her cubs either to escape or to attack them. Still the lads, thoughtless of the risk they ran, could not bring themselves to leave the beast alone.

"Hang it, I must give her a lick over the chops, just to remind her that she must not eat up little children in future," cried Harry, riding up towards the beast. The wolf looked at Harry, as much as to say, "You had better not, master, for if you do, I'll give you a taste of my fangs." Harry rode on. The wolf stood up, and advanced a step or two beyond her lair, grinning horribly.

"Stay, stay, Harry!" shouted Fred, dashing on before him. "The wolf will fly at you."

The wolf took the movement as the signal of attack, and with a terrible snarl, which sounded far more ferocious than the bark or growl of a dog, flew at Fred's horse, evidently intending to pull the rider to the ground. Never had Fred been in peril so terrific. A cry of horror escaped him; he could not restrain it, but, speedily recovering his presence of mind, he began to belabour the head of the wolf. Harry, true to his promise, nothing daunted, came to his assistance, but their blows, though given with a hearty good-will, had not the slightest effect on the head of the wolf. On the contrary, they only seemed to increase her fury. She let go, but it was only to spring again with surer aim. The poor horse, torn by her fangs, reared with pain and fright, as the savage brute again sprang towards him. In another moment its fangs would have been fixed in Fred's thigh. Alas! Poor fellow! His life was in dreadful jeopardy.

"Oh! What can I do? What can I do?" cried poor Harry.

The wolf and her cubs seemed to say, "Gallop away while you can, or we will eat you up as well as your brother."

At that critical moment a rifle-shot was heard, and the wolf, with a yelp of pain and rage, let go her hold. Directly afterwards a man was seen, with a rifle in his hand, running through the forest towards them.

"Oh, you are saved!—you are saved, my brother," cried Harry, giving way to his feelings of affection.

"In mercy I am," answered Fred, looking down at the wounded wolf, whom he seemed inclined to strike with his whip.

The stranger shouted to them as he advanced. They could not understand what he said, but they thought it was probably telling them not to meddle with the wolf. As soon as he came up to the spot he drew a long knife from a sheath at his side, and in the most deliberate way, evidently the result of long practice, approaching the brute from behind, plunged it into her neck.

"Bravo! Bravo!" shouted Fred and Harry. "Thanks—thanks! Oh, how we wish we could thank you in your own language."

The stranger looked up with a smile on his countenance, and the lads then recognised him as their new attendant, the Molokani, Steffanoff Saveleff. They put out their hands to shake his. He smiled again, and pointed westward through the forest.

"Oh, but we want the skin of the beast," said Fred; "I'll keep it as a memorial of what you have done for me."

"And we may as well kill the cubs, or they will be growing up, and will soon become as unamiable as their mother," added Harry, pointing to the tree.

Steffanoff understood the action which accompanied the remark, and very soon put an end to the young wolves. Thus, in hunter guise, they took their way through the forest. The lads chatted freely to their guide, and though he could not understand a word they said, he looked up every now and then with one of those pleasant smiles which showed that he would gladly have talked to them if he could. His step was so elastic and rapid, that he kept their horses at a short trot the whole way.

The Count and his friends got home soon after they arrived, and Cousin Giles expressed no small satisfaction at seeing them. This was very much increased when he heard the risk they had run; and Steffanoff came in most deservedly for his share of praise for the way in which he had rescued the lads.

"Tell him," said Cousin Giles to Mr Allwick, "that I was inclined to serve him before, but that now I am doubly anxious to be of use to him. Had any accident happened to the two lads, I should never have forgiven myself."

Cousin Giles being certain that he could depend on the Count, gave him a sketch of Saveleff's life, for the purpose of gaining his advice and assistance.

The Count shook his head. "I am afraid that he has very little chance of success," said he; "still I will gladly assist and protect him to the utmost of my power."

When Saveleff heard, through Mr Allwick, the promise which had been made him, he also shook his head. "I am deeply grateful to the Count," said he; "but I have no faith in what my countrymen can do for me."

A few days after this occurrence the whole party set off for Moscow, to be present at the coronation of the Emperor.

Chapter Nineteen.

Letter from Fred Markham to his Mother—Entrance of the Czar into Moscow—Saveleff presents his Petition—Grand Review of Troops—Coronation of the Emperor—Fête at the Opera—State Balls—The Illumination—The People's Feast—The People's Ball—Fireworks—Character of Russians—Thieving Propensities—Russian's Aptitude for Commerce—Cucumber-water—Aqueduct of Moscow—Cursing Heretics—Blessing the Waters—Blessing Fruits—Christening Ceremony—Story of a Post-office for the Saints—High Mass in a Greek Church—Preparations for Leaving Moscow—Last News of Saveleff.

"Moscow, 30th September, 1856.

"Dearest Mother,—We are delighted that we came back to Moscow, for we have seen some magnificent sights, such as we are not likely to see again; and, thanks to the Count's kindness, we saw everything to the best advantage, which I will now try and describe to you as briefly as I can. The very day we came here the Emperor arrived at his boiled-crab-like palace of Petrofsky, in front of which his camp of sixty thousand men is pitched. The 29th of August was fixed for his entrance into the city. A long, somewhat winding street, with houses of all heights and sizes, leads from the city gate to the Kremlin. Rows above rows of benches were placed at every interval between the houses, as also on their roofs, and in front of them, every bench being covered with people in their best attire, while the sides of the street were densely crowded with mujicks, both men and women, in their holiday suits, the centre part being kept clear by lines of cavalry; gay carpets, cloths, flags, and banners of every description hung out of all the windows, adding to the brilliancy of the scene. We got first-rate seats near the entrance to the Kremlin. The morning was rainy, but in the forenoon the weather cleared, and ringing of bells and firing of big guns, and talking and laughing, and hurrying of people to and fro to their posts, and marching of infantry and cavalry, occupied the time till four o'clock, when the Emperor entered the city gate; troops of many Asiatic tribes, in various gorgeous costumes, and imperial guards, and nobles of the realm, in magnificent uniforms, preceding him, while he was followed by the members of his family and their wives in five carriages—fine enough to make the Lord Mayor of London and all the Sheriffs jealous.

"All the great people were accompanied by running footmen, lacqueys, and others, and the whole procession was wound up with some fine squadrons of cuirassiers. Priests in their robes, with their crosses and pictures of saints, stood at all the churches, and at the doors of some the Emperor dismounted and kissed them—not the priests, but the crosses and pictures—as he and his Empress did also the relics and pictures of saints of peculiar sanctity in the various cathedrals. And lastly, in the cathedral of Saint Michael, they prostrated themselves before the tombs of those of their ancestors who are there buried. Cousin Giles said it struck him as setting somewhat of an example of idolatry to his subjects; but I do not suppose that he troubled himself about any such consideration. The universal custom of presenting bread and salt was performed by the Archbishop of Moscow to the Emperor as he entered the palace of the Kremlin, and here the ceremony of the day concluded. We eagerly watched to see if our friend Saveleff could find an opportunity of presenting his petition to the Emperor. Whenever the Czar stopped, the crowd pressed forward, and, amid shouts and cries, took his hand, and pressed it to their lips.

"'I see him! I see him!' cried Harry, as nodding plumes, and glittering helmets, and rich turbans, and tall spears, and shining swords, and gay banners were defiling through the gate of the Kremlin.

"We looked eagerly among the crowd, and then we saw a mujick working his way to the front rank, with a paper held out in one hand above his head. We could not hear, of course, what he said, but whatever was his appeal, his brethren made way for him. We were certain he could be no other than Saveleff. He had just reached the position he sought, when the Emperor himself approached. The Emperor bowed and smiled, and held out his hand to a number

of mujicks, who were pressing forward to kiss it. At that moment, Saveleff, with a few hurried words, thrust his paper between the Emperor's fingers. We understand that he exclaimed, 'Oh, your Majesty, look at my document—life and death depends on it. Grant my petition!' The Czar cast a look of surprise at the audacious mujick, and, without saying a word, handed the paper to an officer near him. But the result of all his toils, his sufferings, his anxieties—ah, you will ask, what is that?—we cannot tell. The Count has done his utmost to forward his object. His parents are still on their way to Siberia, if they have survived the hardships they have endured. His betrothed is still among the gipsies, and may any day be dragged back to slavery. The poor fellow remains with us, and is unmolested, but he is in low spirits, and hopeless of success. Still, he says that he would gladly go through far greater hardships and troubles than he has endured for the sake of the faith to which he holds. Cousin Giles would have taken him with us to England, but he will not quit the country which holds his betrothed, nor give up all prospects of rescuing his parents.

"I must, however, try to give you an idea of what took place during the coronation festival. The next thing which took place was a grand parade of all the troops in the camp, now increased to one hundred and twenty thousand men. Some of the cavalry had a fine appearance, dressed in Oriental costume. There were Circassians, or rather Lesghians, and other tribes bordering on the Caucasus—some in chain armour, others in white robes. There were Greeks and Albanians in their national costume, ferocious Koords, and terrier-looking Cossacks, with long lances, on shaggy little ponies, looking as if they would bite any one who came in their way. All the great people were there. The finest thing was a charge of twelve thousand dragoons, who literally made the ground tremble under them. They afterwards galloped up to the Emperor, and, drawing their swords simultaneously, with loud shouts, exclaimed—'We wish your health, Czar!' and then, wheeling round, dashed off at full speed.

"I must next tell you about the coronation itself. It took place in the Church of the Assumption, before which a large court had been formed by railing in several other churches, and covering them with galleries. These were filled with all the great people of the nation and their visitors. The arched roof of the church is supported by four massive pillars, covered with gold; under them sat the Emperor and Empress, surrounded by their Court. The Emperor took the crown, an immense one, blazing with jewels, from the Metropolitan who held it, and with his own hands placed it on his head. This he did to intimate that from no earthly power, clerical or lay, did he receive his sovereignty. The Empress then advanced, and kneeling before him, he touched her forehead with the crown, and then replaced it on his own head. The Empress-mother, who was the first to advance to congratulate her son, burst into tears, it is said, while her children, forgetful of all rules of etiquette, clung affectionately round him. The whole congregation wept, overcome at the sight.

"That same night all Moscow was illuminated, and a truly fairy-like spectacle it was. Every tower, minaret, cupola, dome, the front of its vast palace, and all the walls of the Kremlin were a blaze of light; so was the vast square with the arches which temporarily surround it, and the superb opera-house at one end, all the palaces of the great people, and the public buildings. You remember our description of the Cathedral of Saint Basil, with its wondrous towers and domes, and its various ins-and-outs? Every part of that bizarre building was clearly traced with bright lamps, and the effect was curiously beautiful. We walked about, and gazed and gazed with wonder and delight, till our eyes were so dazzled that we could scarcely see our way home.

"After this there were grand galas at the opera, and balls at the palace, and one at the English Ambassador's, where McAllister, Lord Stafford's piper, figured as a very important personage. The people also had their feast, the preparations for which we had seen; but they rushed up to the tables, and made away with the food, either down their throats or into their pockets, before the arrival of the Emperor and the greater part of the intended spectators. They, however, behaved much better at a ball which the Emperor gave them at the palace in the Kremlin. Dance they could not, but the mujicks and their wives and daughters walked about the vast halls, admiring the wonders they beheld, and eating and drinking as much of the delicate viands prepared for them as they could procure.

"Last night there was a grand display of fireworks, but somehow or other they did not go off at the right time and place; however, I daresay that the crowd were equally astonished and delighted as if each squib and cracker had played its part properly. One thing I must say for the Russians, that they are a very orderly, well-behaved people; and in all the vast crowds we saw, the people appeared kind and good-natured to each other in the extreme. There was no unnecessary pushing and shoving, and none of that abusive language which is so disgusting in an English crowd; on the contrary, every one appeared good-tempered and happy.

"I really like the Russians in many respects. Their faults are rather the consequence of bad government and a faulty religion, than such as are inherent in their race. If a pure religion were introduced among them generally, and their government were to become more and more liberal, till they are capable of governing themselves, another century would see a very great change in them for the better. At present a large number of them are semi-barbarians, with the ignorance and vices of barbarism; and although they may be easily governed under the present despotic system, they are equally liable to be led into revolt by any designing man who is bold enough to risk his life on the chance of success. I give you Cousin Giles' opinion on the subject, which is of more value than mine.

"I am sorry to say that in the capitals a number of people are found not a little addicted to picking and stealing. Not that housebreakers or footpads are to be found, but it is not safe to leave things about in one's room. One day, while we were at dinner, I found that I had left my pocket-handkerchief up-stairs, so I ran to get it. What was my surprise to find the door open, which I felt certain I had locked, and on looking in to observe a gentleman very composedly stowing away in a towel some shirts and other clothes which had just come home from the laundress.

"'Hollo, old fellow, what are you about?'

"'*Si chasse—si chasse,*' (presently—presently), he answered, with the greatest coolness, as if he was employed in something he had been ordered to do. They were some of the very few words of Russian I knew.

"'I'll not trouble you, my man. Just put those things down, and get out of this as fast as you can,' I exclaimed, walking up to him. He tried to grasp the things, and to make a bolt with them, but I was too quick for him; and while I sung

out at the top of my voice, he let the things fall, and made a dart out of the room. I followed him as fast as I could run, and had I not unfortunately slipped, I should have caught him, and held him fast till my shouts brought the people from the dining-room to my assistance. As it was, the fellow escaped, to my great disappointment, though he took nothing with him. The Russian thieves are also very expert at picking pockets, and at the time of the coronation they had plenty of opportunities in exercising their vocation. Harry and I lost our pocket-handkerchiefs one day, but after that we followed Cousin Giles' advice, and fastened them into our pockets. The Russians are great traders; they begin their mercantile pursuits at a very early age. Little fellows, who would be playing at marbles or hoop in England, if they were not at school, here manage shops or stalls in the streets. They are as sharp, too, as any grown-up men, and if they do not cheat others, they take very good care that they are not cheated themselves. We have seen small urchins not more than seven or eight years old with a store of wax-tapers or picture-books, or quass, of which they pressed all passers-by with the greatest pertinacity to become purchasers. We stopped several times with Mr Allwick to talk to them, and we found that they knew not only all about their own trade, but had already a good knowledge about trade in general. Many of the richest shopkeepers in Moscow and Saint Petersburg have sprung from this humble class of dealers.

"Many of the shopkeepers have a very Jewish look, and employ the very mode which the Jews in London, in some of the back streets, do to induce passers-by to purchase their wares. They stand in front of their shops, and as soon as they see any one approaching, they step forward, uttering praises of their goods, and, with hands stretched out, look as if they would forcibly detain the stranger, and as if they would consider themselves very ill-used should he not become a purchaser.

"The Russians are great eaters of raw vegetables, especially of onions and cucumbers. They eat them pickled in salt, and most thoroughly unwholesome they appeared. They drink also the juice of the cucumber, mixed with water, which is called cucumber-water. It is said to form a very cooling beverage in summer! But I suspect the water forms the best part of the potato. They are very fond of all sorts of sour vegetables. They have a species of apple, which they allow to freeze in winter, in which state it is preserved, and though it has a very withered appearance, it is really full of juice.

"Moscow is supplied with water by an aqueduct which reaches to about three versts from the city. It is there forced by a steam-engine into a basin at the top of a lofty tower in Garden Street, where pipes carry it to the various reservoirs in different directions for the supply of the houses. Over every spring in Russia, preserved for the use of man, is placed the picture of a saint, who is supposed to have the special charge of the water. Over this reservoir there is one of particular sanctity, but I am not acquainted with his name. This tower, which is called the Sukhareva Bashnia, is the most lofty in the city, and a view is to be obtained from it still more interesting than that from Ivan Veleki, because one sees, not only the surrounding city, but the wonderful Kremlin itself. At the top of the tower the Russian eagle, made of silver, expands its wings over a silver basin, and from this silver basin radiate fifty pipes, each an inch in diameter, which carry fifty streams for the supply of the inhabitants.

"One of the most curious ceremonies of which we heard in the Greek Church is that of cursing the heretics. First, there is a grand mass, and much singing and lighting of tapers, and then the chief priest, who has always a powerful, deep voice, pronounces an awful curse on the false Demetrius, Mazeppa, and several other noted worthies, long departed from all terrestrial influence. Many people, and heretics of all descriptions, are also cursed, and then the choir chants forth in melodious tones the words *anàfema, anàfema*, repeated sometimes by all the congregation with most startling effect. The Russians are, however, more given to blessing than to cursing. The priests, at the same time, consider themselves entitled to payment for their blessings. No true believer is content unless all his possessions are especially blessed: his house, his cattle, his horses, flocks; the fruits growing in his garden; his corn-fields, his children; the well which supplies him with water; indeed, all he possesses. He believes that nothing he undertakes will prosper unless the priest has first blessed the implements he uses, and his religious instructor takes no pains to undeceive him. One of the most curious ceremonies is that of blessing the waters. It is performed three times in the year; once in spring, once in midsummer, and once on the ice in winter. The latter is the most curious. The nearest large piece of water is selected—either a river, a lake, or a pond. On the ice a large arbour, composed of birch trees, is formed to represent a church, with a gallery in the form of an amphitheatre. In the centre a square hole is broken, so that the water can be reached. From the neighbouring church a procession of priests approaches with pictures, and crosses, and flags, and tapers, and with loud chanting enters the arbour. Here a service is performed, and as soon as it is over they march forth again with very picturesque effect, and the cross is dipped several times in the water. By this ceremony it is believed the water is especially blessed, and made wholesome for man, beast, bird, and fish. No sooner has it been performed than the multitude who have been surrounding the spot rush eagerly forward with bottles, jugs, pots, and pans, and fill their vessels, and also drink as much as they can. Not only is the water itself blessed, but all the streams, and wells, and fountains in the neighbourhood are equally benefited. It is curious to see the way in which the people dabble in the water, throw it over their persons, though it freezes as it falls, and drink of it till they can drink no more; all this being done in the belief that the water is holy, and that they will be especially benefited thereby. The ceremony in summer is very similar, only the arbours are formed on the banks of the river or lake, and people manage to drink still more abundantly, with fewer ill effects. A still more interesting festival is that of blessing the fruit, which takes place on the 6th of August. It is held in the country, in front of one of the principal churches or convents. People of all classes, rich and poor, high and low, assemble from all quarters, far and near, in vehicles of every description. In front of the church are long rows of fruit-sellers' booths to supply those who have brought no fruit with them. High Mass is then performed in the church, and as soon as it is concluded the priests come forth with bowls of holy water, with which they march up and down among the lines of people, drawn up in all directions, with fruits in their hands, sprinkling the consecrated liquid on either side as they go. As soon as this has been done, the people set to work and eat greedily of the various fruits which have been sprinkled, which they have not before ventured to touch, under the belief that till then they are unwholesome. In the more northern districts the fruit is very often far from ripe, but yet they eat away, under the belief that it can do them no harm. They will even give small infants in arms large green apples to suck, fancying that they cannot hurt them, poor little things. As, however, I have seen nursemaids in England equally foolish, I will not blame the ignorant Russian peasant. Cousin Giles says that the same sort of ceremonies are performed in Roman Catholic countries,

where horses and cattle are blessed in due form by a plentiful sprinkling of holy water. It would all appear very ridiculous to us, were it not sadly blasphemous. To a stranger, one of the most curious ceremonies in the Greek Church is that of baptism. The infant, soon after it is born, is brought by its godfathers and godmothers to the church—neither of its parents being present. The priest first asks if it will renounce the devil and all his works; the sponsors answer for it, that it will. The priest thereon commands the devil, who is supposed to have hitherto had possession of it, to take his departure. The order is believed to be instantly obeyed, and the priest consequently spits over his shoulder at the devil, who is beating a hasty retreat. His example is followed by all present, who spit with unfeigned satisfaction at the discomfited Evil One. The whole party then walk in procession three times round the font. At its conclusion the priest consecrates the water by putting it into a metal cross, and then immerses in it the infant three times, pronouncing at the end its baptismal name. As a visible sign that the child is now a Christian, the priest suspends round its neck, by a black string, a small metal cross, which it ever afterwards wears as an amulet. I remember well hearing of such crosses being found on the slain at the Alma and other battle-fields in the Crimea, but did not at the time know their signification. Next the child is dressed, and carried once more round the font with a procession of burning tapers, which, symbolising the Holy Spirit, signify that the child has now received that Spirit within it, of which it was before destitute. Lastly, the infant's eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet are anointed with holy oil, and pieces of hair are cut from its head, and rolled up with wax into a ball, and thrown into the font. No Russian has more than one Christian name. This custom arises from the belief that every name has its representative among the angels in heaven, who have the especial charge of all persons bearing that name; in return, it is expected that the prayers of mortals should especially be addressed to their guardian angels. Only one name is given, because it is said that a person can have only one guardian angel; if he had two, it might be doubtful which was to watch over him, and to which he should address his prayers. Cousin Giles observes that, when once people depart from the simple truths of Christianity, it is impossible to say what absurdities they may believe, or of what follies they may be guilty. As the people become enlightened, the priests of a false faith are compelled to refine their system; at present, in Russia, nothing is too gross for the credulity of the people to swallow.

“We attended mass the other day at the Uspensky Sabor (the Cathedral of the Resurrection). It was a very gorgeous ceremony, although, as it lasted three hours, it was very fatiguing; but we determined to stand it out, and afterwards never to go to another. I can only attempt to give an outline of the ceremonies. The church being crowded with people, a priest came through one of the side doors of the screen, and in a stentorian voice, with hand uplifted, announced that service was beginning. Some ceremony then took place behind the screen. Soon afterwards another priest entered, with two attendants, bearing over his head a huge Bible with a richly ornamented cover. It was allowed just to touch his forehead. Being placed on a desk in front of the chief door in the screen, another priest in a very irreverent and hurried manner read some chapters from it, the choir constantly repeating the words, '*Gospodi poluomini,*' (the Lord have mercy on us). The effect of these words, in a rich chant, soft, full, and swelling, is very beautiful. They continually occur throughout the service. We could see the high priest all the time through the open work of the chief door moving about before the altar. At length a fine psalm was sung, the chief door was thrown open, the high altar and its splendid decorations were displayed, and from the side doors issued forth the whole troop of officiating priests bearing the bread and wine for the sacrament, preceded by one man with a lighted taper, and the high priest coming in the rear with a silver chalice; the procession is closed by a priest with a salver on his head. Again they all entered the sanctuary, the bread and wine were placed on the altar, and the priest kneeling, what is called transubstantiation is supposed to take place. While this act is performing, all Turks, heretics, and infidels are commanded to leave the church. Numerous prayers are then offered up for the Emperor, the Imperial family, and for a variety of objects. The most impressive part is when the high priest prays for a blessing on the bread and wine, and shakes the bread into the chalice. Afterwards those who intend to partake of the sacrament are invited to come forward, and the bread and wine together are administered in a small silver spoon, the communicants holding their hands on their breasts, and kneeling three times. We were very much struck with the little the congregation had to do with the service. They had no book, they did not join in the singing, and they could scarcely have understood what the priest said who read from the Bible. Their only business seemed to be to cross themselves and to bow, touching the ground with their foreheads, during the whole three hours the affair lasted. Still the churches fill, and the people fancy, I suppose, that they derive some benefit from what takes place. The music is certainly very fine; it is all vocal; there are no instruments, and no organ; and as women are not allowed to sing in churches, boys are trained to perform their parts.

“‘Altogether,’ Cousin Giles says, ‘there is very little difference in the main features between the ceremonies of the Greek and Romish Churches. Both are intended to attract the senses, to please the vulgar, and to deceive the credulous, and neither can have any effect in changing the heart.’

“But it is time that I should bring my long letter to a conclusion. Much of the above information was given me by a German gentleman speaking English whom we met at Chollet's table-d'hôte. I have before said that we like the Russians; I mean the peasantry. When I spoke of the existence of thieves in Saint Petersburg or Moscow, I do not suppose that there are more thieves in Saint Petersburg or Moscow than in any other of the capitals of Europe. Many of the peasants are fine-looking men, though generally, from bad feeding, they have not the stamina of Englishmen. Of one thing I am certain, that if one Spaniard can lick two Portuguese, and one Englishman can lick all three, one Englishman can lick three Russians with a big boy to help them. Still I hope that we shall not have to go to war with them again. Poor fellows! The Russian soldiers had not a grain of spite or ill-feeling against us. They were driven on to the attack, and worked up by all sorts of falsehoods, and a plentiful administration of vodka, to commit the atrocities of which some of them were guilty.

“We are preparing to leave Moscow. Cousin Giles and Harry have gone to get the tiresome passport business arranged with Mr Allwick, and as I have sprained my ankle, I remained to write to you. We shall be very sorry to part with our interpreter; he has contributed very much to the pleasure of our visit to this city. Through his means we have seen and understood much more than we could otherwise possibly have done about the place and the people. We have no satisfactory news about poor Saveleffs affairs. The Count has promised to allow him to remain among his people as long as he wishes, and to protect him to the utmost of his power; but he owns that that power is likely to extend a very little way. He says that he will spare no expense, if bribery is likely to effect the object. He thinks,

however, that if the true state of the case could be laid before the Emperor, the poor fellow's cause might be gained, but the difficulty is to let the Emperor know the truth. We cannot help fancying that we saw poor Saveleffs old father and mother among the exiles starting for Siberia. Poor fellow! It is very sad. He does not despair, and yet he has very little hope of happiness in this world. Even now, if the police find him out, he will not be allowed to remain very long in quiet.

"To-morrow we are off by the railway for Saint Petersburg.

"Your affectionate son—

"Fred Markham."

Chapter Twenty.

Last Letter from Fred Markham to his Mother—Return to Saint Petersburg—Ceremony at the Kazan Church—Picnic into Finland—Visit to Peteroff—The Palace of the Czar—Villas of Peter the Great and Catherine—Beautiful Fountain—Leave Saint Petersburg—Cronstadt—Voyage down the Baltic—Copenhagen—Journey from Copenhagen to Hamburg—Conclusion.

"Hamburg, 20th October, 1856.

"My own dear mother,—Here we are within two days' paddling of England, and we hope within a week to be with you. In the meantime I will give you an idea of what we have done since I last wrote from Moscow. We journeyed back from that wondrous city with hundreds of other mortals returning from the coronation fêtes, and took up our old quarters at the Gostiniza Benson. We looked in the next morning at the Kazan church, which we had not before seen. The columns which support the roof are of grey and red granite, and their bases and capitals are gilt; there are long rows of them in each cross. Banners, tattered, blackened, and pierced by many a bullet, taken from the enemies of Russia, hang from the walls. Some ceremony was going forward. A fat, cunning Shylock, in spectacles, sat at a counter just inside the entrance, and sold wax-tapers to men and women, old and young, bearded officers and thin striplings. The votaries then advanced and bowed and crossed themselves. Some were so devout as to kneel down and kiss the horribly dirty floor, on which beggars were spitting. Harry and I felt much inclined to kick over one young fellow so employed close to us, and who looked as if he ought to have known better. Having genuflected to their heart's content, they advanced to the altar, and stuck their tapers into a frame on a huge candlestick placed before some saint or other. One saintship, who appeared to be a great favourite, had got his candlestick inconveniently full, but an old soldier—evidently in charge of the altar, and to whom some votaries presented their tapers—while pretending to stick in one took the opportunity to slip out four or five others, so that there was always room for more. I suspect the old soldier and Shylock were in league with each other, and that the same tapers did duty many times. I am grateful that I was not brought up in the Greek Church. Cousin Giles says we ought to be thankful that we are Englishmen and Protestants.

"The Monday before we left, some friends invited us to a picnic in Finland, the borders of which are distant only a fair drive from Saint Petersburg. We started early and drove in a northerly direction past a number of wooden villas of every conceivable Swiss-cottage style, very picturesque and very damp, of trees and canals and ponds, to the village of Mourina, fifteen versts off, where our friends have a villa. The property belongs to Prince Woronzoff, who was brought up in England; but instead of following the example of our good landlords, he imitates the bad ones, and allows his cottages to get into a very tumble-down condition. They are built of wood, so the lower part becomes rotten, and the rest sinks. Were they placed on foundations of stone, they would last far longer. They now offer no unfit epitome of the state of Russia. Our friend's villa was very pretty, with all sorts of Chinese-looking ins-and-outs, verandahs, and passages. There was a gauze covering to the verandah, which effectually kept out the flies and moths, and other teasing things. A stream of water ran at the foot of the garden, and close to it was built a vapour-bath, and a dressing-house for a plunge-bath. After breakfast, a carriage and several little country carts—telegas they are called—came to the door to take us to our destination. The carts were drawn by one horse in the shafts and another in the left side, with traces secured partly to the wheels and partly to a rough bar of birchwood fastened across the cart. They are in shape like boats with stem and stern cut off, and the ribs outside instead of in. Each holds two persons seated on horse-cloths and sheepskins, with their feet in straw. Cousin Giles called the bar to which the traces were fastened, a sprit-sail yard. The drivers were boys, who sat in front of the carts. Off we rattled down a steep hill, and through a bog, and were quickly in Finland. The boys tried to keep ahead of each other, and galloped down hills and up hills, and along the road at a tremendous pace;—it was rare fun. The road was sometimes sandy, sometimes gravelly, and always undulating. After a little time we had some pretty views, with a chain of lakes on either side of us. Then we reached the village of Toxova, with its Lutheran church and parsonage, situated on a wooded hill above the lakes. We stopped at the village, and went to a cottage with a large room with a table and benches, and a verandah looking down on the lakes. Here we hired a samovar, and spread our eatables. The chief dish was a salmon-pie, and a capital dish it is. A whole salmon (or another fish may be used) is rolled up in a coat of chopped eggs, and rice or other grain, first well boiled, and then covered with a coating of bread-dough, which is next baked like a loaf of bread. It is eaten cold. After dinner we walked through woods of birch and elder to a hill with a cross on it, above a lake, whence we got a view of Saint Petersburg.

"We altogether had one of the pleasantest days we passed in Russia, for though cities and fine sights are very interesting, there is nothing like the country after all, in my opinion. Another day we received an invitation from some friends to visit them at Peteroff, a village formed by a collection of villas and palaces on the south side of the Gulf of Finland. It can be reached by land, but we preferred going there by water. Steamers run between it and Saint Petersburg several times in the day. Crossing the bridge, we embarked in a boat, built in the far-off Clyde, and now called by a Russian name. The passage between the shallows all the way is very narrow, and the bar at the mouth of the Neva has often not more than ten feet of water on it. I have already in our journal described Peteroff, with its golden domes and spires peeping out among the trees just overlooking Cronstadt, so I will say no more about it. At

the end of a good landing-pier we found our friend's carriage waiting, and in it, over a good road, among groves of birch and lime-trees, we were driven to his very picturesque summer residence. It was built of logs, and weather-boarded, with a verandah running all round it, and at each angle is a wide space roofed over, so that shade and air can at all times of the day be procured. After an early dinner, we drove to the chateau of the Emperor, built by Peter the Great. It is a curious, long, half Oriental, half Italian-looking edifice, with a gilt roof, and white and yellow walls. On one side are gardens, laid out with long gravel walks, grass-plats, and trees; on the other the high road. Between the road and the sea are the smaller and still more ancient royal villas of Marly and Montplaisir, in the midst of gardens full of the strangest collection of gilt statues and urns, and flowerpots and marble fountains, and water-spouts and tanks, and seats and rows of trees, and flower-beds all of one colour, the whole having a very glittering, dazzling effect. From one of the fountains the water comes down an inclined plane, and we were told that the Emperor Nicholas used to amuse himself by making a party of the cadets of the military schools defend the top of the waterfall, while others had to storm it, climbing up the inclined plane, over which the water was rushing down. It might be very good fun on a hot day, with the thermometer at 90 degrees, but very disagreeable when a sharp north-easter was blowing.

"The villa of Marly was built by Peter, and here he used to go to watch the manoeuvres of his newly-formed fleet in the gulf below him. Here, also, he died; his bed and his night-cap are shown. Indeed, nothing has been altered in the cottage since he passed away from the scene where his wonderfully active mind had done so much. The cottage of Montplaisir was built by the Empress Catherine, and in it was a kitchen-range, where she used to amuse herself by cooking dinners for herself and any of her more honoured guests. In the dining-room was a table, the centre of which could be lowered and raised, so as to remove and replace the dishes without the presence of waiters. In the gardens is also a large bathing-house, of truly imperial dimensions. These cottages are interesting for their historical recollections; but by far the most beautiful object in the gardens is a fountain, which throws up water exactly in the shape of a Gothic cathedral. As the sun shone on the sparkling jets, the effect was excellent.

"We spent a most pleasant evening at our friend's house, and returned the next day to Saint Petersburg. We saw many other things in Saint Petersburg which I will tell you about when we meet. We went down to Cronstadt, to get on board the steamer which was to take us to Copenhagen. The town consists of several very broad streets and places, but not many houses within the fortifications, and quays, and a harbour full of shipping.

"We were not sorry to get out of Russia. Cousin Giles says that he felt as if there was something in the air which prevented him breathing freely. We liked the Russians very well. They do not live exclusively on train-oil, ill-smelling fish, and black bread, as we fancied before we went there; but their greatest admirers cannot call them a thoroughly civilised people.

"I wish that I could tell you something about their language. It sounds very soft and musical, but is very difficult to speak, and the characters make all one's previous knowledge of an alphabet utterly useless. We left Cronstadt on the afternoon of Wednesday, where neither was our baggage nor were we examined; indeed, half-a-dozen people might have smuggled themselves on board, and got away without difficulty. We had fine weather all the way down the Baltic, and came off a neat little village five miles from Copenhagen, on the afternoon of Sunday. Here we landed in a pilot-boat, with some Danish gentlemen, who were very civil to us, and by their aid we engaged a char-à-banc, and drove to Copenhagen the same evening. We spent five very pleasant days there, seeing numerous objects of interest. I will not attempt to describe them now. Cousin Giles says I must write a book about Denmark another year. It is a very interesting country, to Englishmen especially. We left Copenhagen in the afternoon, and the same evening reached by railway the town of Kirsoor, about sixty miles to the south of it. Here we embarked on board a steamer, which carried us to Kiel, where the English fleet were stationed last winter. Here another railway conveyed us, in a little more than three hours, to Hamburg. And now our foreign travels are almost over for this year. We have enjoyed them very much, as we hope you have our letters, and that you will allow us to accept Cousin Giles' invitation to accompany him next summer to some other country.

"Your affectionate son—

"Frederick Markham."

The End.

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*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FRED MARKHAM IN RUSSIA; OR, THE BOY TRAVELLERS IN THE LAND OF THE CZAR ***

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