

BROWNE JOHN ROSS

THE LAND OF THOR

John Browne
The Land of Thor

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Browne J.

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The Land of Thor

CHAPTER I. IMPRESSIONS OF ST. PETERSBURG

I landed at St. Petersburg with a knapsack on my back and a hundred dollars in my pocket. An extensive tour along the borders of the Arctic Circle was before me, and it was necessary I should husband my resources.

In my search for a cheap German gasthaus I walked nearly all over the city. My impressions were probably tinged by the circumstances of my position, but it seemed to me I had never seen so strange a place.

The best streets of St. Petersburg resemble on an inferior scale the best parts of Paris, Berlin, and Vienna. Nothing in the architecture conveys any idea of national taste except the glittering cupolas of the churches, the showy colors of the houses, and the vast extent and ornamentation of the palaces. The general aspect of the city is that of immense level space. Built upon islands, cut up into various sections by the branches of the Neva, intersected by canals, destitute of eminent points of observation, the whole city has a scattered and incongruous effect – an incomprehensible remoteness about it, as if one might continually wander about without finding the centre. Some parts, of course, are better than others; some streets are indicative of wealth and luxury; but without a guide it is extremely difficult to determine whether there are not still finer buildings and quarters in the main part of the city – if you could only get at it. The eye wanders continually in search of heights and prominent objects. Even the Winter Palace, the Admiralty, and the Izaak Church lose much of their grandeur in the surrounding deserts of space from the absence of contrast with familiar and tangible objects. It is only by a careful examination in detail that one can become fully sensible of their extraordinary magnificence. Vast streets of almost interminable length, lined by insignificant two-story houses with green roofs and yellow walls; vast open squares or ploschads; palaces, public buildings, and churches, dwindled down to mere toy-work in the deserts of space intervening; countless throngs of citizens and carriages scarcely bigger than ants to the eye; broad sheets of water, dotted with steamers, brigs, barks, wood-barges and row-boats, still infinitesimal in the distance; long rows of trees, forming a foliage to some of the principal promenades, with glimpses of gardens and shrubbery at remote intervals; canals and dismal green swamps – not all at one sweep of the eye, but visible from time to time in the course of an afternoon's ramble, are the most prominent characteristics of this wonderful city. A vague sense of loneliness impresses the traveler from a distant land – as if in his pilgrimage through foreign climes he had at length wandered into the midst of a strange and peculiar civilization – a boundless desert of wild-looking streets, a waste of colossal palaces, of gilded churches and glistening waters, all perpetually dwindling away before him in the infinity of space. He sees a people strange and unfamiliar in costume and expression; fierce, stern-looking officers, rigid in features, closely shaved, and dressed in glittering uniforms; grave, long-bearded priests, with square-topped black turbans, their flowing black drapery trailing in the dust; pale women richly and elegantly dressed, gliding unattended through mazes of the crowd; rough, half-savage serfs, in dirty pink shirts, loose trousers, and big boots, bowing down before the shrines on the bridges and public places; the drosky drivers, with their long beards, small bell-shaped hats, long blue coats and fire-bucket boots, lying half asleep upon their rusty little vehicles awaiting a customer, or dashing away at a headlong pace over the rough cobble-paved streets, and so on of every class and kind. The traveler wanders about from place to place, gazing into the strange faces he meets, till the sense of loneliness becomes oppressive. An

invisible but impassable barrier seems to stand between him and the moving multitude. He hears languages that fall without a meaning upon his ear; wonders at the soft inflections of the voices; vainly seeks some familiar look or word; thinks it strange that he alone should be cut off from all communion with the souls of men around him; and then wonders if they have souls like other people, and why there is no kindred expression in their faces – no visible consciousness of a common humanity. It is natural that every stranger in a strange city should experience this feeling to some extent, but I know of no place where it seems so strikingly the case as in St. Petersburg. Accustomed as I was to strange cities and strange languages, I never felt utterly lonely until I reached this great mart of commerce and civilization. The costly luxury of the palaces; the wild Tartaric glitter of the churches; the tropical luxuriance of the gardens; the brilliant equipages of the nobility; the display of military power; the strange and restless throngs forever moving through the haunts of business and pleasure; the uncouth costumes of the lower classes, and the wonderful commingling of sumptuous elegance and barbarous filth, visible in almost every thing, produced a singular feeling of mingled wonder and isolation – as if the solitary traveler were the only person in the world who was not permitted to comprehend the spirit and import of the scene, or take a part in the great drama of life in which all others seemed to be engaged. I do not know if plain, practical men are generally so easily impressed by external objects, but I must confess that when I trudged along the streets with my knapsack on my back, looking around in every direction for a gasthaus; when I spoke to people in my peculiar style of French and German, and received unintelligible answers in Russian; when I got lost among palaces and grand military establishments, instead of finding the gasthaus, and finally attracted the attention of the surly-looking guards, who were stationed about every where, by the anxious pertinacity with which I examined every building, a vague notion began to get possession of me that I was a sort of outlaw, and would sooner or later be seized and dragged before the Czar for daring to enter such a magnificent city in such an uncouth and unbecoming manner. When I cast my eyes up at the sign-boards, and read about grand fabrications and steam-companies, and walked along the quays of the Neva, and saw wood enough piled up in big broad-bottomed boats to satisfy the wants of myself and family for ten thousand years; when I strolled into the Nevskoi, and jostled my way through crowds of nobles, officers, soldiers, dandies, and commoners, stopping suddenly at every picture-shop, gazing dreamily into the gorgeous millinery establishments, pondering thoughtfully over the glittering wares of the jewelers, lagging moodily by the grand cafés, and snuffing reflectively the odors that came from the grand restaurations – when all this occurred, and I went down into a beer-cellar and made acquaintance with a worthy German, and he asked me if I had any meerschaums to sell, the notion that I had no particular business in so costly and luxurious a place began to grow stronger than ever. A kind of dread came over me that the mighty spirit of Peter the Great would come riding through the scorching hot air on a gale of snowflakes, at the head of a bloody phalanx of Muscovites, and, rising in his stirrups as he approached, would demand of me in a voice of thunder, “Stranger, how much money have you got?” to which I could only answer, “Sublime and potent Czar, taking the average value of my Roaring Grizzly, Dead Broke, Gone Case, and Sorrowful Countenance, and placing it against the present value of Russian securities, I consider it within the bounds of reason to say that I hold about a million of rubles!” But if he should insist upon an exhibit of ready cash – there was the rub! It absolutely made me feel weak in the knees to think of it. Indeed, a horrid suspicion seized me, after I had crossed the bridge and begun to renew my search for a cheap gasthaus on the Vassoli Ostrou, that every fat, neatly-shaved man I met, with small gray eyes, a polished hat on his head drawn a little over his brow, his lips compressed, and his coat buttoned closely around his body, was a rich banker, and that he was saying to himself as I passed, “That fellow with the slouched hat and the knapsack is a suspicious character, to say the least of him. It becomes my duty to warn the police of his movements. I suspect him to be a Hungarian refugee.”

With some difficulty, I succeeded at length in finding just such a place as I desired – clean and comfortable enough, considering the circumstances, and not unusually fertile in vermin for a city

like St. Petersburg, which produces all kinds of troublesome insects spontaneously. There was this advantage in my quarters, in addition to their cheapness – that the proprietor and attendants spoke several of the Christian languages, including German, which, of all languages in the world, is the softest and most euphonious to my ear – when I am away from Frankfort. Besides, my room was very advantageously arranged for a solitary traveler. Being about eight feet square, with only one small window overlooking the back yard, and effectually secured by iron fastenings, so that nobody could open it, there was no possibility of thieves getting in and robbing me when the door was shut and locked on the inside. Its closeness presented an effectual barrier against the night air, which in these high northern latitudes is considered extremely unwholesome to sleep in. With the thermometer at 100 degrees Fahrenheit, the atmosphere, to be sure, was a little sweltering during the day, and somewhat thick by night, but that was an additional advantage, inasmuch as it forced the occupant to stay out most of the time and see a great deal more of the town than he could possibly see in his room.

Having deposited my knapsack and put my extra shirt in the wash, you will now be kind enough to consider me the shade of Virgil, ready to lead you, after the fashion of Dante, through the infernal regions or any where else within the bounds of justice, even through St. Petersburg, where the climate in summer is hot enough to satisfy almost any body. The sun shines here, in June and July, for twenty hours a day, and even then scarcely disappears beneath the horizon. I never experienced such sweltering weather in any part of the world except Aspinwall. One is fairly boiled with the heat, and might be wrung out like a wet rag. Properly speaking, the day commences for respectable people, and men of enterprising spirit – tourists, pleasure-seekers, gamblers, vagabonds, and the like – about nine or ten o'clock at night, and continues till about four or five o'clock the next morning. It is then St. Petersburg fairly turns out; then the beauty and fashion of the city unfold their wings and flit through the streets, or float in Russian gondolas upon the glistening waters of the Neva; then it is the little steamers skim about from island to island, freighted with a population just waked up to a realizing sense of the pleasures of existence; then is the atmosphere balmy, and the light wonderfully soft and richly tinted; then come the sweet witching hours, when

“Shady nooks
Patiently give up their quiet being.”

None but the weary, labor-worn serf, who has toiled through the long day in the fierce rays of the sun, can sleep such nights as these. I call them nights, yet what a strange mistake. The sunshine still lingers in the heavens with a golden glow; the evening vanishes dreamily in the arms of the morning; there is nothing to mark the changes – all is soft, gradual, and illusory. A peculiar and almost supernatural light glistens upon the gilded domes of the churches; the glaring waters of the Neva are alive with gondolas; miniature steamers are flying through the winding channels of the islands; strains of music float upon the air; gay and festive throngs move along the promenades of the Nevskoi; gilded and glittering equipages pass over the bridges and disappear in the shadowy recesses of the islands. Whatever may be unseemly in life is covered by a rich and mystic drapery of twilight. The floating bath-houses of the Neva, with their variegated tressel-work and brilliant colors, resemble fairy palaces; and the plashing of the bathers falls upon the ear like the gambols of water-spirits. Not far from the Izaak Bridge, the equestrian statue of Peter the Great stands out in bold relief on a pedestal of granite; the mighty Czar, casting an eagle look over the waters of the Neva, while his noble steed rears over the yawning precipice in front, crushing a serpent beneath his hoof. The spirit of Peter the Great still lives throughout Russia; but it is better understood in the merciless blasts of winter than in the soft glow of the summer nights.

Wander with me now, and let us take a look at the Winter Palace – the grandest pile, perhaps, ever built by human hands. Six thousand people occupy it during the long winter months, and well they may, for it is a city of palaces in itself. Fronting the Neva, it occupies a space of several acres, its massive walls richly decorated with ornamental designs, a forest of chimneys on top – the whole

pile forming an immense oblong square so grand, so massive, so wonderfully rich and varied in its details, that the imagination is lost in a colossal wilderness of architectural beauties. Standing in the open plozchad, we may gaze at this magnificent pile for hours, and dream over it, and picture to our minds the scenes of splendor its inner walls have witnessed; the royal *fêtes* of the Czars; the courtly throngs that have filled its halls; the vast treasures expended in erecting it; the enslaved multitudes, now low in the dust, who have left this monument to speak of human pride, and the sweat and toil that pride must feed upon; and while we gaze and dream thus, a mellow light comes down from the firmament, and the mighty Czars, and their palaces, and armies, and navies, and worldly strifes, what are they in the presence of the everlasting Power? For “it is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.”

But these dreamings and these wanderings through this city of palaces would be endless. We may feast our eyes upon the Admiralty, the Winter Palace, the Marble Palace, the Senate-house, the palace of the Grand-duke Michael, the Column of Alexander, the colleges, universities, imperial gardens and summer-houses, and, after all, we can only feel that they are built upon the necks of an enslaved people; that the mightiest Czars of Russia, in common with the poorest serfs, are but “as grasshoppers upon the earth.”

The *istrovoschik* (sneeze and you have the word) – in plain English, the drosky drivers – are a notable feature in St. Petersburg. When I saw them for the first time on the quay of the Wassaly Ostrow, where the steamer from Stettin lands her passengers, the idea naturally impressed my mind that I had fallen among a brotherhood of Pilgrims or Druids. Nothing could be more unique than the incongruity of their costume and occupation. Every man looked like a priest; his long beard, his grave expression of countenance, his little black hat and flowing blue coat, gathered around the waist by means of a sash, his glazed boots reaching above the knees, his slow and measured motions, and the sublime indifference with which he regarded his customers, were singularly impressive. Even the filth and rustiness which formed the most prominent characteristics of the class contributed to the delusion that they might have sprung from a Druidical source, and gathered their dust of travel on the pilgrimage from remote ages down to the present period. It is really something novel, in the line of hackery, to see those sedate fellows sitting on their little droskys awaiting a customer. The force of competition, however, has of late years committed sad inroads upon their dignity, and now they are getting to be about as enterprising and pertinacious as any of their kindred in other parts of the world. The drosky is in itself a curiosity as a means of locomotion. Like the driver, it is generally dirty and dilapidated; but here the similitude ends; for, while the former is often high, his drosky is always low. The wheels are not bigger than those of an ordinary dog-cart, and the seat is only designed for one person, though on a pinch it can accommodate two. Generally it consists of a plank covered with a cushion, extending lengthwise in the same direction as the horse, so that the rider sits astride of it as if riding on horseback; some, however, have been modernized so as to afford a more convenient seat in the usual way. Night and day these droskys are every where to be seen, sometimes drawn up by the sidewalk, the driver asleep, awaiting a customer, but more frequently rattling full tilt over the pavements (the roughest in the world) with a load, consisting, in nine cases out of ten, of a fat old gentleman in military uniform, a very ugly old lady with a lapdog, or a very dashy young lady glittering with jewels, on her way, perhaps, to the Confiseur’s or somewhere else. But in a city like St. Petersburg, where it is at least two or three miles from one place to another, every body with twenty kopecks in his pocket uses the drosky. It is the most convenient and economical mode of locomotion for all ordinary purposes, hence the number of them is very large. On some of the principal streets it is marvelous how they wind their way at such a rattling pace through the crowd. To a stranger unacquainted with localities, they are a great convenience. And here, you see, commences the gist of the story.

On a certain occasion I called a drosky-man and directed him to drive me to the United States Consulate. Having never been there myself, I depended solely upon the intelligence and enterprise of

the istrovoschik. My knowledge of the Russian consisted of three words – the name of the street and *dratzall kopeck*, the latter being the stipulated fare of twenty kopecks. By an affirmative signal the driver gave me to understand that he fully comprehended my wishes, and, with a flourish of his whip, away we started. After driving me nearly all over the city of St. Petersburg – a pretty extensive city, as any body will find who undertakes to walk through it – this adroit and skillful whipster, who had never uttered a word from the time of starting, now deliberately drew up his drosky on the corner of a principal street and began a conversation. I repeated the name of the street in which the consulate was located, and *dratzall kopeck*. The driver gazed in my face with a grave and placid countenance, stroked his long beard, tucked the skirts of his long blue coat under him, and drove on again. After rattling over a series of the most frightful cobble-stone pavements ever designed as an improvement in a great city, through several new quarters, he again stopped and treated me to some more remarks in his native language. I answered as before, the name of the street. He shook his head with discouraging gravity. I then remarked *dratzall kopeck*. From the confused answer he made, which occupied at least ten minutes of his time, and of which I was unable to comprehend a single word, it was apparent that he was as ignorant of his own language as he was of the city. In this extremity he called another driver to his aid, who spoke just the words of English, “Gooda-morkig!” “Good-morning,” said I. From this the conversation lapsed at once into remote depths of Russian. In despair I got out of the drosky and walked along the street, looking up at all the signs – the driver after me with his drosky, apparently watching to see that I did not make my escape. At length I espied a German name on a bakery sign. How familiar it looked in that desert of unintelligible Russian – like a favorite quotation in a page of metaphysics. I went in and spoke German —*vie gaetz?* You are aware, perhaps, that I excel in that language. I asked the way to the United States Consulate. The baker had probably forgotten his native tongue, if ever he knew it at all, for I could get nothing out of him but a shake of the head and *nicht furstay*. However, he had the goodness, seeing my perplexity, to put on his hat and undertake to find the consul’s, which, by dint of inquiry, he at length ascertained to be about half a mile distant. We walked all the way, this good old baker and I, he refusing to ride because there was only room for one, and I not liking to do so and let him walk. The drosky-man followed in the rear, driving along very leisurely, and with great apparent comfort to himself. He leaned back in his seat with much gusto, and seemed rather amused than otherwise at our movements. At length we reached the consulate. It was about three hundred yards from my original point of departure. Any other man in existence than my istrovoschik would have sunk into the earth upon seeing me make this astounding discovery. I knew it by certain landmarks – a church and a garden. But he did not sink into the earth. He merely sat on his drosky as cool as a cucumber. I felt so grateful to the worthy baker, who was a fat old gentleman, and perspired freely after his walk, that I gave him thirty kopecks. The drosky-man claimed forty kopecks, just double his fare. I called in the services of an interpreter, and protested against this imposition. The interpreter and the drosky-man got into an animated dispute on the question, and must have gone clear back to the fundamental principles of droskyism, for they seemed likely never to come to an end. The weather was warm, and both kept constantly wiping their faces, and turning the whole subject over and over again, without the slightest probability of an equitable conclusion. At length my interpreter said, “Perhaps, sir, you had better pay it. The man says you kept him running about for over two hours; and since you have no proof to the contrary, it would only give you trouble to have him punished.” This view accorded entirely with my own, and I cheerfully paid the forty kopecks; also ten kopecks drink-geld, and a small *douceur* of half a ruble (fifty kopecks) to the gentleman who had so kindly settled the difficulty for me. After many years’ experience of travel, I am satisfied, as before stated, that a man may be born naturally honest, but can not long retain his integrity in the hack business. He must sooner or later take to swindling, otherwise he can never keep his horses fat, or make the profession respectable and remunerative. Such, at least, has been my experience of men in this line of business, not excepting the istrovoschik of St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER II.

A PLEASANT EXCURSION

I had the good fortune, during my ramble, to meet with a couple of fellow-passengers from Stettin. One of them was a rough, weather-beaten man of middle age, with rather marked features, but not an unkindly expression. His mysterious conduct during the voyage had frequently attracted my attention. There was something curious about his motions, as if an invisible companion, to whom he was bound in some strange way, continually accompanied him. He drank enormous quantities of beer, and smoked from morning till night a tremendous meerschaum, which must have held at least a pint of tobacco. When not engaged in drinking beer and smoking, he usually walked rapidly up and down the decks, with his hands behind him and his head bent down, talking in a guttural voice to himself about “hemp.” He slept – or rather lay down, for I don’t think he ever slept – with his head close to mine on a bench in the cabin, and it was a continued source of trouble to me the way he puffed, and groaned, and talked about “hemp.” Sometimes he was half the night arguing with himself about the various prices and qualities of this useful article, but I did not understand enough of his *blat deutsch* to gather the drift of the argument. All I could make out was “*Zweimal zwei macht vier*– (a puff) —*sechs und vierzig*– (a groan) —*acht und sechzig macht ein hundert*– (a snort) —*sieben tausend—acht tausend fünf und dreissig thaler*– (a sigh) —*schilling—kopeck—ruble—hemphf! Mein Gott! Zwei und dreissig tausend—hemphf—ruble*– (a terrible gritting of the teeth) —*sechs und fünfzig—Gott im Himmel!—Ich kann nicht schlafen!*” Here he would jump up and shout “*Kellner! Kellner! ein flask bier!—sechs und zechzig—zweimal acht und vierzig! Kellner, flask bier!—Liebe Gott—was ist das?—Nine und sechzig—flask bier! Gleich! Gleich!*” When the beer came he would drink off three bottles without stopping, then light his pipe, fill the cabin with smoke, and after he had done that go on deck to get the fresh air. I could hear him for hours walking up and down over my head, and thought I could occasionally detect the words. “*Hemphf—ruble—thaler—fünfmal sechs und zwanzig—mein Gott!*” It was evident the man was laboring under some dreadful internal excitement about the price of hemp. What could it be? Was he going to hang himself? Did he contemplate buying some Russian hemp for that purpose especially? The mystery was heightened by the fact that he was frequently in close conversation with the young man whom I have already mentioned as my other fellow-passenger, and they both talked about nothing else but hemp. What in the name of sense were they going to do with hemp in Mechlenberg, their native country, where people were beheaded – unless they meant to hang themselves? The mystery troubled me so much that I finally made bold to ask the young man if his friend had committed any serious crime, and whether that was the reason he talked so much about hemp? These North Germans are a queer people. I don’t think they ever suspect any body to be joking. They take the most outrageous proposition literally, and never seem to understand that there can be two meanings to any thing. As Sydney Smith says of the Scotch, it would take a surgical operation to get a joke well into their understanding. When I propounded this question to my young fellow-passenger – a very amiable and intelligent young man – he looked distressed and horror-stricken, and replied with great earnestness, “Oh no, he is a very respectable man. I am certain he never committed a crime in his life.” “But,” said I, “if he doesn’t intend to hang somebody, why should he rave about hemp all night?” “Oh, he is a rope-maker. He is going to Russia to buy a cargo of hemp, and he’s afraid prices will go up unless he gets there soon. The head wind and chopping sea keep us back a good deal.” “Yes, yes, I understand it all now. Suppose, my young friend, you and I go to work and help the steamer along a little? It would be doing a great service to the cause of hemp, and enable me to sleep besides.” The Mechlenberger looked incredulous. “How are we to do it?” he asked at length. “Oh, nothing easier!” I answered. “Just put a couple of these handspikes in the lee scuppers – so! and hold her steady!” At this the Mechlenberger, who was a very genial and

good-natured fellow, could scarcely help laughing, the absurdity of the idea struck him so forcibly. Seeing, however, that I looked perfectly in earnest, he was kind enough to explain the erroneous basis of my calculation, and accordingly entered into an elaborate mathematical demonstration to prove that what we gained by lifting we would lose by the additional pressure of our feet upon the decks! After this I was prepared to believe the story of the old Nuremberger, who, when about to set out on his travels, got on top of his trunk and took hold of each end for the purpose of carrying it to the post station. The question about the hemp was too good to be lost, and my young friend had too strong a business head not to perceive the delightful verdancy of my character. He accordingly took the earliest opportunity to mention it to his comrade, Herr Batz, the rope-maker, who never stopped laughing about the mistake I had made till we got to St. Petersburg. They were both very genial, pleasant fellows, and took a great fancy to the Herr American who thought Herr Batz was going to hang himself, and who had proposed to steady the steamer by means of a handspike. Such primitive simplicity was absolutely refreshing to them; and, since they enjoyed it, of course I did, and we were the best of friends.

On the present occasion, after we had passed the usual compliments it was proposed that we should hire a boat, as the night was fine, and take a trip down to the Kamennoi Island. I was delighted to have two such agreeable companions, and readily acceded to the proposition. A young Russian in the hemp business accompanied us, and altogether we made a very lively and humorous party. I was sorry, however, to be prejudiced in the estimation of the Russian by having the hemp and handspike story repeated in my presence, but finally got over that, and changed the current of the conversation by asking if the Emperor Alexander would send me to Siberia in case I smoked a cigar in the boat? To which the Russian responded somewhat gravely that I could smoke as many cigars on the water as I pleased, although it was forbidden in the streets on account of the danger of fire; but that, in any event, I would merely have to pay a fine, as people were only sent to Siberia for capital crimes and political offenses.

We got a boat down near the Custom-house, at a point of the Vassoli Ostrou, called the Strelka, and were soon skimming along through a small branch of the Neva, toward the island of Krestofskoi. The water was literally alive with boats, all filled with gay parties of pleasure-seekers, some on their way to the different islands, some to the bath-houses which abound in every direction, and all apparently enjoying a delightful time of it. Passing to the right of the Petrofskoi Island, whose grass-covered shores slope down to the water like a green carpet outspread under the trees, we soon reached the Little Nevka, about three miles from our starting-point. We disembarked on the Krestofskoi Island, near the bridge which crosses from Petrofskoi. On the right is a beautiful palace belonging to some of the royal family, the gardens of which sweep down to the waters of the Nevka, and present a charming scene of floral luxuriance. Gondolas, richly carved and curiously shaped, lay moored near the stone steps; the trestled bowers were filled with gay parties; pleasant sounds of voices and music floated upon the air, and over all a soft twilight gave a mystic fascination to the scene. I thought of the terrible arctic winters that for six months in the year cast their cold death-pall over the scene of glowing and tropical luxuriance, and wondered how it could ever come to life again; how the shrubs could bloom, and the birds sing, and the soft air of the summer nights come back and linger where such dreary horrors were wont to desolate the earth.

The constant dread of infringing upon the police regulations; the extraordinary deference with which men in uniform are regarded; the circumspect behavior at public places; the nice and well-regulated mirthfulness, never overstepping the strict bounds of prudence, which I had so often noticed in the northern states of Germany, and which may in part be attributed to the naturally conservative and orderly character of the people, are not the prominent features of the population of St. Petersburg. It appeared to me that in this respect at least they are more like Americans than any people I had seen in Europe; they do pretty much as they please; follow such trades and occupations as they like best; become noisy and uproarious when it suits them; get drunk occasionally; fight now and then; lie about

on the grass and under the trees when they feel tired; enjoy themselves to their heart's content at all the public places; and care nothing about the police as long as the police let them alone. I rather fancied there must be a natural democratic streak in these people, for they are certainly more free and easy in their manners, rougher in their dress, more independent in their general air, and a good deal dirtier than most of the people I had met with in the course of my travels. I do not mean to say that rowdyism and democracy are synonymous, but I consider it a good sign of innate manliness and a natural spirit of independence when men are not afraid to dress like vagabonds and behave a little extravagantly, if it suits their taste. It must be said, however, that the police regulations of St. Petersburg, without being onerous or vexatious, are quite as good as those of any large city in Europe. When men are deprived of their political liberties, the least that can be done for them is to let them enjoy as much municipal freedom as may be consistent with public peace. I should never have suspected, from any thing I saw in the city or neighborhood of St. Petersburg, that I was within the limits of an absolute despotism. If one desires to satisfy himself on this point he must visit the interior.

I was led into this train of reflection partly by the scenes I had witnessed during my rambles through the city and on the way down the river, and partly by what we now saw on the island of Krestofskoi. A bridge unites this island with the Petrofskoi, and two other bridges with the islands of Kamennoi and Elaghinskoi. It was eleven o'clock at night, yet the twilight was so rich and glowing that one might readily read a newspaper in any of the open spaces. The main avenues were crowded with carriages of every conceivable description – the grandly decorated coach of the noble, glittering with armorial bearings and drawn by four richly-caparisoned horses; the barouche, easy and elegant, filled with a gay company of foreigners; the drosky, whirling along at a rapid pace, with its solitary occupant; the kareta, plain, neat, and substantial, carrying on its ample seats some worthy merchant and his family; the nondescript little vehicle, without top, bottom, or sides – nothing but four small wheels and a cushioned seat perched on springs, with an exquisite perched astride upon the street, driving a magnificent blood horse at the rate of 2.40; and English boxes with stiff Englishmen in them; and French chaises with loose Frenchmen in them; and a New York buggy with a New York fancy man in it; and hundreds of fine horses with dashing Russian officers in uniform mounted on them, and hundreds of other horses with secretaries and various young sprigs of nobility struggling painfully to stay mounted on them; and, in short, every thing grand, fanciful, and entertaining in the way of locomotion that the most fertile imagination can conceive. Don't do me the injustice, I pray you, to consider me envious of the good fortune of others in being able to ride when I had to walk, for it does me an amazing deal of good to see people enjoy themselves. Nothing pleases me better than to see a fat old lady, glittering all over with fine silks and jewels, leaning back in her cushioned carriage, with her beloved little lapdog in her arms – two elegant drivers, four prancing horses, and a splendid little postillion in front; two stalwart footmen, in plush breeches, behind, with variegated yellow backs like a pair of wasps. Can any thing be more picturesque? It always makes me think of a large June-bug dragged about by an accommodating crowd of fancy-colored flies! And what can be more imposing than a Russian grandee? See that terrific old gentleman, sitting all alone in a gorgeous carriage, large enough to carry himself and half a dozen of his friends. Orders and disorders cover him from head to foot. He is the exact picture of a ferocious bullfrog, with a tremendous mustache and a horribly malignant expression of eye, and naturally enough expects every body to get out of his way. That man must have had greatness thrust upon him, for he never could have achieved it by the brilliancy of his intellect. Doubtless he spends much of his time at the springs, but they don't seem to have purified his body, or subdued the natural ferocity of his temper. His wife must have a pleasant time. I wonder if he sleeps well, or enjoys Herzain's essays on Russian aristocracy? But make way, ye pedestrian rabble, for here comes a secretary of legation on horseback – make way, or he will tumble off and inflict some bodily injury upon you with the points of his waxed mustache! I know he must be a secretary of legation by the enormous polished boots he wears over his tight breeches, the dandy parting of his hair, the supercilious stupidity of his countenance, and the horrible tortures

he suffers in trying to stick on the back of his horse. Nobody else in the world could make such an ass of himself by such frantic attempts to show off and keep on at the same time. I'll bet my life he thinks he is the most beautiful and accomplished gentleman ever produced by a beneficent Creator. Well, it is a happy thing for some of us that we don't see ourselves as others see us; if we did, my friends in the hemp business and myself would fare badly. Beregrissa! Padi! Padi! – have a care! make way, for here comes a cloud of dust, and in that cloud of dust is a kubitka, drawn by three wild horses, and in that kubitka, half sitting, half clinging to the side, is an official courier. Crack goes the whip of the *yamtschick*; the three fiery horses fly through the dust; the courier waves his hand to an officer on horseback, and with a whirl and a whisk they disappear. *Pashol!* I hope they won't break their necks before they get through.

Soon the main road branches out in various directions, and we strike off with the diverging streams of pedestrians, families of the middle and lower classes, young men of the town, gay young damsels with their beaux, burly tradesmen, tinkers, tailors, and hatters, waiters and apprentices, sailors and soldiers, until we find ourselves in the midst of a grand old forest. Open glades, pavilions, and tables are visible at intervals; but for the most part we are in a labyrinthian wilderness of trees, rich in foliage, and almost oppressive in their umbrageous density, while

“Deep velvet verdure clothes the turf beneath,
And trodden flowers their richest odors breathe.”

Insects flit through the still atmosphere; the hum of human voices, softened by distance, falls soothingly upon the ear; and as we look, and listen, and loiter on our way, we wonder if this can be the dreamland of the arctic regions? Can there ever be snow-storms and scathing frosts in such a land of tropical luxuriance? Thus, as we lounge along in the mellow twilight amid the groves of Katrofskoi, what charming pictures of sylvan enjoyment are revealed to us at every turn! Rustic tables under the great wide-spreading trees are surrounded by family groups – old patriarchs, and their children, and great-grandchildren; the steaming urn of tea in the middle; the old people chatting and gossiping; the young people laughing merrily; the children tumbling about over the green sward. Passing on we come to a group of Mujiks lying camp-fashion on the grass, eating their black bread, drinking their vodka, and sleeping whenever they please – for this is their summer home, and this grass is their bed. Next we come to a group of officers, their rich uniforms glittering in the soft twilight, their horses tied to the trees, or held at a little distance by some attendant soldiers. Dominoes, cards, Champagne, and cakes are scattered in tempting profusion upon the table, and if they are not enjoying their military career, it is not for want of congenial accompaniments and plenty of leisure. A little farther on we meet a jovial party of Germans seated under a tree, with a goodly supply of bread and sausages before them, singing in fine accord a song of their faderland. Next we hear the familiar strains of an organ, and soon come in sight of an Italian who is exhibiting an accomplished monkey to an enraptured crowd of children. The monkey has been thoroughly trained in the school of adversity, and makes horrible grimaces at his cruel and cadaverous master, who in ferocious tones, and without the least appearance of enjoying the sport, commands this miniature man to dance, fire a small gun, go through the sword exercise, play on a small fiddle, smoke a cigar, turn a somersault, bow to the company, and hold out his hat for an unlimited number of kopecks. Herr Batz suggests that such a monkey as that might be taught to spin ropes, and our younger Mechlenberger laughs, and says he once read a story of a monkey that shaved a cat, and then cut off his own or the cat's tail, he could not remember which. This reminds the Russian of a countess in Moscow who owned a beautiful little dog, to which she was greatly attached. She required her serfs to call it “My noble Prince,” and had them well flogged with the knout whenever they approached it without bowing. One day a cat got hold of the noble Prince, and gave him a good scratching. The countess, being unable to soothe her afflicted poodle, caused the cat's paws to be cut off, and served up on a plate for his unhappy highness to play with – after which

the noble pug was perfectly satisfied! Of course, we all laughed at the Russian's story, but he assured us it was a well authenticated fact, and was generally regarded as a most delicate *jeu d'esprit*. Not to be behindhand in the line of cats and monkeys, I was obliged to tell an anecdote of a Frenchman, who, on his arrival in Algiers, ordered a ragout at one of the most fashionable restaurants. It was duly served up, and pronounced excellent, though rather strongly flavored. "Pray," said the Frenchman to the *maître d'hotel*, "of what species of cat do you make ragouts in Algiers?" "Pardon, monsieur," replied the polite host, "we use nothing but monkeys in Africa!" Disgusted at this colonial barbarism, the Frenchman immediately returned to Paris, where he remained forever after, that he might enjoy his customary and more civilized dish of cat. Herr Batz had not before heard of such a thing, neither had the young Mechlenberger, and they both agreed that cats must be a very disgusting article of food. The Russian, however, seemed to regard it as nothing uncommon, and gave us some very entertaining accounts of various curious dishes in the interior of Russia, to which cats were not a circumstance.

With such flimsy conversation as this we entertain ourselves till we reach a village of summer residences on the Kamennoi Island. Here we pause a while to enjoy the varied scenes of amusement that tempt the loiterer at every step; the tea-drinking parties out on the porticoes, the gambling saloons, the dancing pavilions, the cafés, the confectioneries, with their gay throngs of customers, their gaudy colors, their music, and sounds of joy and revelry. A little farther on we come to a stand of carriages, and near by a gate and a large garden. For thirty kopecks apiece we procure tickets of admission. This is the Vauxhall of Kamennoi. We jostle in with the crowd, and soon find ourselves in front of an open theatre.

So passes away the time till the whistle of a little steamer warns us of an opportunity to get back to the city. Hurrying down to the wharf, we secure places on the stern-sheets of a screw-wheeled craft not much bigger than a good-sized yawl. It is crowded to overflowing – in front, on top of the machinery, in the rear, over the sides – not a square inch of space left for man or beast. The whistle blows again; the fiery little monster of an engine shivers and screams with excess of steam; the grim, black-looking engineer gives the irons a pull, and away we go at a rate of speed that threatens momentary destruction against some bridge or bath-house. It is now two o'clock A.M. The rays of the rising sun are already reflected upon the glowing waters of the Neva. Barges and row-boats are hurrying toward the city. Carriages are rolling along the shady avenues of the islands. Crowds are gathered at every pier and landing-place awaiting some conveyance homeward. Ladies are waving their handkerchiefs to the little steamer to stop, and gentlemen are flourishing their hats. The captain blows the whistle, and the engineer stops the boat with such a sudden reversion of our screw that we are pitched forward out of the seats. Some of the passengers clamber up at the landing-places, and others clamber down and take their places. The little engine sets up its terrific scream again; the hot steam hisses and fizzes all over the boat; involuntary thoughts of maimed limbs and scalded skins are palpably impressed upon every face; but the little steamer keeps on – she is used to it, like the eels, and never bursts up. Winding through the varied channels of the Neva, under bridges, through narrow passes, among wood-boats, row-boats, and shipping, we at length reach the landing on the Russian Quay, above the Admiralty. Here we disembark, well satisfied to be safely over all the enjoyments and hazards of the evening.

Evening, did I say? The morning sun is blazing out in all his glory! We have had no evening – no night. It has been all a wild, strange, glowing freak of fancy. The light of day has been upon us all the time. And now, should we go to bed, when the sun is shining over the city, glistening upon the domes of the churches, illuminating the windows of the palaces, awaking the drowsy sailors of the Neva? Shall we hide ourselves away in suffocating rooms when the morning breeze is floating in from the Gulf of Finland, bearing upon its wings the invigorating brine of ocean, or shall we,

“Pleased to feel the air,
Still wander in the luxury of light?”

CHAPTER III. VIEWS ON THE MOSCOW RAILWAY

The St. Petersburg and Moscow Railroad has been in operation some eight or ten years, and has contributed much to the internal prosperity of the country. In the summer of 1862 it was extended as far as Vladimir, and now connects St. Petersburg with Nijni Novgorod, one of the most important points in the empire, where the great annual fair is held, where tea-merchants and others from all parts of Tartary and China meet to exchange the products of those countries with those of the merchants of Russia. During the present year (1862) it is expected that the line of railway connection will be completed from St. Petersburg to the Prussian frontier, and connect with the railroads of Prussia, so that within twelve months it will be practicable to travel by rail all the way from Marseilles or Bordeaux to Nijni Novgorod.

The Moscow and St. Petersburg Railway is something over four hundred miles in length, and consists of a double track, broad, well graded, and substantially constructed. The whole business of running the line, keeping the cars and track in repair, working the machine-shops, etc., embracing all the practical details of the operative department, is let out by contract to an American company, while the government supervises the financial department, and reserves to itself the municipal control.¹ It is a remarkable fact, characteristic of the Russians, that while they possess uncommon capacity to acquire all the details of engineering, and are by no means lacking in mechanical skill, they are utterly deficient in management and administrative capacity. Wasteful, improvident, and short-sighted, they can never do any thing without the aid of more sagacious and economical heads to keep them within the bounds of reason. Thus, at one time, when they undertook to run this line on their own account, although they started with an extraordinary surplus of material, they soon ran the cars off their wheels, forgetting to keep up a supply of new ones as they went along; ran the engines out of working order; kept nothing in repair; provided against no contingency; and were finally likely to break down entirely, when they determined that it would be better to give this branch of the business out by contract. One great fault with them is, they labor under an idea that nothing can be done without an extraordinary number of officers, soldiers, policemen, and employés of every description – upon the principle, I suppose, that if two heads are better than one, the ignorance or inefficiency of a small number of employés can be remedied by having a very great number of the same kind. In other words, they seem to think that if five hundred men can not be industrious, skillful, and economical, five thousand trained in exactly the same schools, and with precisely the same propensities, must be ten times better. Even now there is not a station, and scarcely a foot of the railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow, that is not infested with an extraordinary surplus of useless men in uniform. At the great dépôts in each of these cities the traveler is fairly confused with the crowds of officers and employés through which he is obliged to make his way. Before he enters the doorways, liveried porters outside offer to take his baggage; then he passes by guards, who look at him carefully and let him go in; then he finds guards who show him where to find the ticket-office; when he arrives at the ticket-office, he finds a guard or two outside, and half a dozen clerks inside; then he buys his ticket, and an officer examines it as he goes into the wirthsaal; there he finds other officers stationed to preserve order; when the bell rings the doors are opened; numerous officers outside show him where to find the cars, and which car he must get into; and when he gets into a car he sits for a quarter of an hour, and sees officers going up and down outside all the time, and thinks to himself that people certainly can not be supposed to have very good eyes, ears, or understanding of their own in this country, since nobody is deemed capable of using them on his individual responsibility. I only wonder that

¹ This contract terminated last year (1865).

they don't eat, drink, sleep, and travel for a man at once by proxy, and thereby save him the trouble of living or moving at all. In fact, I had some thought of asking one of these licensed gentlemen if the regulations could not be stretched a point so as to embrace the payment of my expenses; but it occurred to me that if I were relieved of that responsibility, they might undertake at the same time to write these letters for me, which would be likely to alter the tone and thereby destroy my individuality. But it must be admitted that good order, convenience, politeness, and comfort are the predominant characteristics of railway travel in Russia. The conductors usually speak French, German, and English, and are exceedingly attentive to the comfort of the passengers. The hours of starting and stopping are punctually observed – so punctually that you can calculate to the exact minute when you will arrive at any given point. Having no watch, I always knew the time by looking at my ticket. Between St. Petersburg and Moscow there are thirty-three stations, seven of which are the grand stations of Lubanskaia, Malovischerskaia, Okoulourskaia, Bologovskaia, Spirovskaia, Tver, and Klinskaia. The rest are small intermediate stations. At every seventy-five versts – about fifty miles – the cars stop twenty minutes, and refreshments may be had by paying a pretty heavy price for them. At the points above-named there are large and substantial edifices built by the company, containing various offices, spacious eating-saloons, ante-chambers, etc., and attached to which are extensive machine-shops, and various outbuildings required by the service. Occasionally towns may be seen in the vicinity of these stations, but for the most part they stand out desolate and alone in the dreary waste of country lying between the two great cities. At every twenty-five versts are sub-stations, where the cars stop for a few minutes. These are also large and very substantial edifices, but not distinguished for architectural beauty, like many of the stations in France and Germany. Usually the Russian station consists of an immense plain circular building, constructed of brick, with very thick walls, and a plain zinc roof, the outside painted red, the roof green; wings or flanges built of the same material extending along the track; a broad wooden esplanade in front, upon which the passengers can amuse themselves promenading, and a neat garden, with other accommodations, at one end. Some of the large stations are not only massive and of enormous extent, but present rather a striking and picturesque appearance as they are approached from the distance, standing as they do in the great deserts of space like solitary sentinels of civilization. The passengers rush out at every stopping-place just as they do in other parts of the world, some to stretch their limbs, others to replenish the waste that seems to be constantly going on in the stomachs of the traveling public. I don't know how it is, but it appears to me that people who travel by railway are always either tired, thirsty, or hungry. The voracity with which plates of soup, cutlets, sandwiches, salad, scalding hot tea, wine, beer, and brandy are swallowed down by these hungry and thirsty Russians, is quite as striking as any thing I ever saw done in the same line at Washoe. But it is not a feature confined to Russia. I notice the same thing every where all over the world; and what vexes me about it is that I never get tired myself, and rarely hungry or thirsty. Here, in midsummer, with a sweltering hot sun, and an atmosphere that would almost smother a salamander, were whole legions of officers, elegantly-dressed ladies, and a rabble of miscellaneous second and third class passengers like myself, puffing, blowing, eating, drinking, sweating, and toiling, as if their very existence depended upon keeping up the internal fires and blowing them off again. It is dreadful to see people so hard pushed to live. I really can't conjecture what sort of a commotion they will make when they come to die. A sandwich or two and a glass of tea lasted me all the way to Moscow – a journey of eighteen hours, and I never suffered from hunger, thirst, or fatigue the whole way. If I had "gone in" like other people, I would certainly have been a dead man before I got half way; and yet, I think, two sandwiches more would have lasted me to the Ural Mountains. It continually bothers me to know how the human stomach can bear to be tormented in this frightful way. Per Baccho! I would as soon be shot in the hand with an escopette ball as drink the quantity of wine and eat the quantity of food that I have seen even women and children dispose of, as if it were mere pastime, on these railway journeys. I think it must be either this or the frost that accounts for the extraordinary prevalence of red noses in Russia, and it even occurred to me that the stations are painted a fiery red,

so that when travelers come within range of the refracted color their noses may look pale by contrast, and thereby remind them that it is time to renew the caloric.

With the exception of the seventy-five versts between Moscow and Tver, I can not remember that I ever traveled over so desolate and uninteresting a stretch of country as that lying between St. Petersburg and Moscow. For a short distance out of St. Petersburg there are some few villas and farms to relieve the monotony of the gloomy pine forests; then the country opens out into immense undulating plains, marshy meadows, scrubby groves of young pine, without any apparent limit; here and there a bleak and solitary village of log huts; a herd of cattle in the meadows; a wretched, sterile-looking farm, with plowed fields, at remote intervals, and so on hour after hour, the scene offering but little variety the whole way to Tver. The villages are wholly destitute of picturesque effect. Such rude and miserable hovels as they are composed of could scarcely be found in the wildest frontier region of the United States. These cabins or hovels are built of logs, and are very low and small, generally consisting of only one or two rooms. I saw none that were whitewashed or painted, and nothing like order or regularity was perceptible about them, all seeming to be huddled together as if they happened there by accident, and were obliged to keep at close quarters in order to avoid freezing during the terrible winters. Some of them are not unlike the city of Eden in Martin Chuzzlewit. The entire absence of every thing approaching taste, comfort, or rural beauty in the appearance of these villages; the weird and desolate aspect of the boggy and grass-grown streets; the utter want of interest in progress or improvement on the part of the peasantry who inhabit them, are well calculated to produce a melancholy impression of the condition of these poor people. How can it be otherwise, held in bondage as they have been for centuries, subject to be taxed at the discretion of their owners; the results of their labors wrested from them; no advance made by the most enterprising and intelligent of them without in some way subjecting them to new burdens? Whatever may be the result of the movement now made for their emancipation, it certainly can not be more depressing than the existing system of serfage. Looking back over the scenes of village life I had witnessed in France and Germany – the neat vine-covered cottages, the little flower-gardens, the orchards and green lanes, the festive days, when the air resounded to the merry voices of laughing damsels and village beaux —

“The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made” —

the joyous dancers out on the village green, the flaunting banners and wreaths of flowers hung in rich profusion over the cross-roads – with such scenes as these flitting through my memory, I could well understand that there is an absolute physical servitude to which men can be reduced, that, in the progress of generations, must crush down the human soul, and make life indeed a dreary struggle. In the splendor of large cities, amid the glitter and magnificence of palaces and churches, the varied paraphernalia of aristocracy and wealth, and all the excitements, allurements, and novelties apparent to the superficial eye, the real condition of the masses is not perceptible. They must be seen in the country – in their far-off villages and homes throughout the broad land; there you find no disguise to cover the horrible deformities of their bruised and crushed life; there you see the full measure of their civilization. In the huts of these poor people there is little or no comfort. Many of them have neither beds nor chairs, and the occupants spend a sort of camp life within doors, cooking their food like Indians, and huddling round the earthen stove or fireplace in winter, where they lie down on the bare ground and sleep in a mass, like a nest of animals, to keep each other warm. Their clothing is of the coarsest material, but reasonably good, and well suited to the climate. The men are a much finer-looking race, physically, than their masters. I saw some serfs in Moscow who, in stature, strong athletic forms, and bold and manly features, would compare favorably with the best specimens of men in any country. It was almost incredible that such noble-looking fellows, with their blue, piercing eyes and manly air, should be reduced to such a state of abject servitude as to kiss the tails of their

master's coats! Many of them had features as bold and forms as brawny as our own California miners; and more than once, when I saw them lounging about in their big boots, with their easy, reckless air, and looked at their weather-beaten faces and vigorous, sunburnt beards, I could almost imagine that they were genuine Californians. But here the resemblance ceased. No sooner did an officer of high standing pass, than they manifested some abject sign of their degraded condition.

Some of the agricultural implements that one sees in this country would astonish a Californian. The plows are patterned very much after those that were used by Boaz and other large farmers in the days of the Patriarchs; the scythes are the exact originals of the old pictures in which Death is represented as mowing down mankind; the hoes, rakes, and shovels would be an ornament to any museum, but are entirely indescribable; and as for the wagons and harnesses – herein lies the superior genius of the Russians over all the races of earth, ancient or modern, for never were such wagons and such harnesses seen on any other part of the globe. To be accurate and methodical, each wagon has four wheels, and each wheel is roughly put together of rough wood, and then roughly bound up in an iron band about four inches wide, and thick in proportion. Logs of wood, skillfully hewed with broad-axes, answer for the axle-tree; and as they don't weigh over half a ton each, they are sometimes braced in the middle to keep them from breaking. Upon the top of this is a big basket, about the shape of a bath-tub, in which the load is carried. Sometimes the body is made of planks tied together with bullock's hide, or no body at all is used, as convenience may require. The wagon being thus completed, braced and thorough-braced with old ropes, iron bands, and leather straps, we come to the horses, which stand generally in front. The middle horse is favored with a pair of shafts of enormous durability and strength. He stands between these shafts, and is fastened in them by means of ropes; but, to prevent him from jumping out overhead, a wooden arch is out over him, which is the *chef-d'œuvre* of ornamentation. This is called the *duga*, and is the most prominent object to be seen about every wagon, drosky, and kbitka in Russia. I am not sure but a species of veneration is attached to it. Often it is highly decorated with gilding, painted figures, and every vagary of artistic genius, and must cost nearly as much as the entire wagon. Some of the *dugas* even carry saintly images upon them, so that the devout driver may perform his devotions as he drives through life. To suppose that a horse could pull a wagon in Russia without this wooden arch, the utility of which no human eye but that of a Russian can see, is to suppose an impossibility. Now, the shafts being spread out so as to give the horse plenty of room at each side, it becomes necessary, since they are rather loosely hung on at the but-ends, to keep them from swaying. How do you think this is done? Nothing easier. By running a rope from the end of each shaft to the projecting end of the fore axle, outside of the wheels. For this purpose the axle is made to project a foot beyond the wheels, and the only trouble about it is that two wagons on a narrow road often find it difficult to pass. It is very curious to see these primitive-looking objects lumbering about through the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The horses are most commonly placed three abreast. In the ordinary kbitka or traveling wagon the outside horses are merely fastened by ropes, and strike out in any direction they please, the whip and a small rein serving to keep them within bounds. It is perfectly astonishing with what reckless and headlong speed these animals dash over the rough pavements. Just imagine the luxury of a warm day's journey in such a vehicle, which has neither springs nor backed seats – three fiery horses fastened to it, and each pulling, plunging, and pirouetting on his own account; a ferocious *yamtschick* cracking his whip and shrieking “Shivar! shivar!” – faster! faster! – the wagon, rattling all over, plunging into ruts, jumping over stones, ripping its way through bogs and mud-banks; your bones shaken nearly out of their sockets; your vertebræ partially dislocated; your mouth filled with dust; your tongue swollen and parched; your eyes blinded with grit; your *yamtschick* reeling drunk with *vodka*, and bound to draw to the destined station – or some worse place; your confidence in men and horses shaken with your bones; your views of the future circumscribed by every turn of the road – oh! it is charming; it is the very climax of human enjoyment. Wouldn't you like to travel in Russia?

In addition to the villages which are scattered at frequent intervals along the route, the gilded dome of a church is occasionally seen in the distance, indicating the existence of a town; but one seldom catches more than a glimpse of the green-covered roofs of the houses, over the interminable patches of scrubby pine. It is not a country that presents such attractive features as to induce the mere tourist to get out and spend a few days rambling through it. In these dreary solitudes of marshes and pines, the inhabitants speak no other language than their own, and that not very well; but well or ill, it is all Greek – or rather Russian – to the majority of people from other countries.

But, as I said before, this habit of digression will be the death of me. Like a rocket, I start off splendidly, but explode and fall to pieces in every direction before I get half way on my journey. If the scintillations are varied and gayly colored, to be sure, the powder is not utterly lost; but the trouble of it is, if one keeps going off like rockets all the time, he will never get any where, and in the end will leave nothing but smoke and darkness to the gaping multitude.

If my memory serves me, I was talking of the Emperor Alexander's convoy of private railway carriages – the most magnificent affair of the kind, perhaps, in existence. It was made purposely for his use, at a cost of more than a hundred thousand dollars, and presented to him by the American company, Winans and Company. Nothing so magnificent in decoration, and so admirably adapted to the convenience, comfort, and enjoyment of a royal party has ever been seen in Europe. The main carriage – for there are several in the suite – called, *par excellence*, the emperor's own, is eighty-five feet long, and something over the usual width. It rests upon two undivided sleepers of such elastic and well-grained wood that they would bear the entire weight of the carriage, without the necessity of a support in the middle, forming a single stretch or arch, from axle to axle, of about seventy feet. The springs, wheels, brakes, and various kinds of iron-work, are of the finest and most select material, and highly finished in every detail, combining strength and durability with artistic beauty. The interior of the main or imperial carriage is a masterpiece of sumptuous ornamentation. Here are the richest of carvings; the most gorgeous hangings of embroidered velvet; mirrors and pictures in profusion; carpets and rugs that seem coaxing the feet to linger upon them; tables, cushioned sofas, and luxurious arm-chairs; divans and lounges of rare designs, covered with the richest damask; exquisite Pompeian vases and brilliant chandeliers – all, in short, that ingenuity could devise and wealth procure to charm the senses, and render this a traveling palace worthy the imperial presence. Connected with the main saloon is the royal bedchamber, with adjoining bathing and dressing rooms, equally sumptuous in all their appointments. Besides which, there are smoking-rooms, private offices, magnificent chambers for the camarilla, the secretaries, and body-guard of the emperor. The whole is admirably arranged for convenience and comfort; and it is said that the motion, when the convoy is under way, is so soft and dreamy that it is scarcely possible to feel a vibration, the effect being as if the cars were floating through the air, or drawn over tracks of down. Fully equal to this, yet more subdued and delicate in the drapery and coloring, are the apartments of the empress. Here it may truly be said is “the poetry of motion” realized – saloons fit for the angels that flit through them, of whom the chiefest ornament is the empress herself – the beautiful and beloved Maria Alexandrina, the charm of whose presence is felt like a pleasant glow of sunshine wherever she goes. Here are drawing-rooms, boudoirs, apartments for the beautiful maids of honor, reading-rooms, and even a dancing-saloon, from which it may well be inferred that the royal party enjoy themselves. If the emperor fails to make himself agreeable in this branch of his establishment, he deserves to be put out at the very first station. But he has the ladies at a disadvantage, which probably compels them to be very tolerant of his behavior; that is to say, he can detach their branch of the establishment from his own, and leave them on the road at any time he pleases by pulling a string; but I believe there is no instance yet on record of his having availed himself of this autocratic privilege. It is usually understood at the start whether the excursion is to be in partnership or alone. When the emperor goes out on a hunting expedition, he is accompanied by a select company of gentlemen, and of course is compelled to deprive himself of the pleasure of the more attractive and intoxicating society of ladies, which would be calculated to

unsteady his nerves, and render him unfit for those terrific encounters with the bears of the forest upon which his fame as a hunter is chiefly founded.

CHAPTER IV. MOSCOW

What the great Napoleon thought when he gazed for the first time across the broad valley that lay at his feet, and caught the first dazzling light that flashed from the walls and golden cupolas of the Kremlin – whether some shadowy sense of the wondrous beauties of the scene did not enter his soul – is more than I can say with certainty; but this much I know, that neither he nor his legions could have enjoyed the view from Sparrow Hill more than I did the first glimpse of the grand old city of the Czars as I stepped from the railroad *dépôt*, with my knapsack on my back, and stood, a solitary and bewildered waif, uncertain if it could all be real; for never yet had I, in the experience of many years' travel, seen such a magnificent sight, so wildly Tartaric, so strange, glowing, and incomprehensible. This was Moscow at last – the Moscow I had read of when a child – the Moscow I had so often seen burnt up in panoramas by an excited and patriotic populace – the Moscow ever flashing through memory in fitful gleams, half buried in smoke, and flames, and toppling ruins, now absolutely before me, a gorgeous reality in the bright noonday sun, with its countless churches, its domes and cupolas, and mighty Kremlin.

Stand with me, reader, on the first eminence, and let us take a bird's-eye view of the city, always keeping in mind that the Kremlin is the great nucleus from which it all radiates. What a vast, wavy ocean of golden cupolas and fancy-colored domes, green-roofed houses and tortuous streets circle around this magic pile! what a combination of wild, barbaric splendors! nothing within the sweep of vision that is not glowing and Oriental. Never was a city so fashioned for scenic effects. From the banks of the Moskwa the Kremlin rears its glittering crest, surrounded by green-capped towers and frowning embattlements, its umbrageous gardens and massive white walls conspicuous over the vast sea of green-roofed houses, while high above all, grand and stern, like some grim old Czar of the North, rises the magnificent tower of Ivan Veliki. Within these walls stand the chief glories of Moscow – the palaces of the Emperor, the Cathedral of the Assumption, the House of the Holy Synod, the Treasury, the Arsenal, and the Czar Kolokol, the great king of bells. All these gorgeous edifices, and many more, crown the eminence which forms the sacred grounds, clustering in a magic maze of beauty around the tower of Ivan the Terrible. Beyond the walls are numerous open spaces occupied by booths and markets; then come the principal streets and buildings of the city, encircled by the inner boulevards; then the suburbs, around which wind the outer boulevards; then a vast tract of beautiful and undulating country, dotted with villas, lakes, convents, and public buildings, inclosed in the far distance by the great outer wall, which forms a circuit of twenty miles around the city. The Moskwa River enters near the Presnenski Lake, and, taking a circuitous route, washes the base of the Kremlin, and passes out near the convent of St. Daniel. If you undertake, however, to trace out any plan of the city from the confused maze of streets that lie outspread before you, it will be infinitely worse than an attempt to solve the mysteries of a woman's heart; for there is no apparent plan about it; the whole thing is an unintelligible web of accidents. There is no accounting for its irregularity, unless upon the principle that it became distorted in a perpetual struggle to keep within reach of the Kremlin.

It is sometimes rather amusing to compare one's preconceived ideas of a place with the reality. A city like Moscow is very difficult to recognize from any written description. From some cause wholly inexplicable, I had pictured to my mind a vast gathering of tall, massive houses, elaborately ornamented; long lines of narrow and gloomy streets; many great palaces, dingy with age; and a population composed chiefly of Russian nabobs and their retinues of serfs. The reality is almost exactly the reverse of all these preconceived ideas. The houses for the most part are low – not over one or two stories high – painted with gay and fanciful colors, chiefly yellow, red, or blue; the roofs

of tin or zinc, and nearly all of a bright green, giving them a very lively effect in the sun; nothing grand or imposing about them in detail, and but little pretension to architectural beauty. Very nearly such houses may be seen every day on any of the four continents.

Still, every indication of life presents a very different aspect from any thing in our own country. The people have a slow, slouching, shabby appearance; and the traveler is forcibly reminded, by the strange costumes he meets at every turn – the thriftless and degenerate aspect of the laboring classes – the great lumbering wagons that roll over the stone-paved streets – the droskies rattling hither and thither with their grave, priest-like drivers and wild horses – the squads of filthy soldiers lounging idly at every corner – the markets and market-places, and all that gives interest to the scene, that he is in a foreign land – a wild land of fierce battles between the elements, and fiercer still between men – where civilization is ever struggling between Oriental barbarism and European profligacy.

The most interesting feature in the population of Moscow is their constant and extraordinary displays of religious enthusiasm. This seems to be confined to no class or sect, but is the prevailing characteristic. No less than three hundred churches are embraced within the limits of the city. Some writers estimate the number as high as five hundred; nor does the discrepancy show so much a want of accuracy as the difficulty of determining precisely what constitutes a distinct church. Many of these remarkable edifices are built in clusters, with a variety of domes and cupolas, with different names, and contain distinct places of worship – as in the Cathedral of St. Basil, for instance, which is distinguished by a vast number of variegated domes, and embraces within its limits at least five or six separate churches, each church being still farther subdivided into various chapels. Of the extraordinary architectural style of these edifices, their many-shaped and highly-colored domes, representing all the lines of the rainbow, the gilding so lavishly bestowed upon them, their wonderfully picturesque effect from every point of view, it would be impossible to convey any adequate idea without entering into a more elaborate description than I can at present attempt.

But it is not only in the numberless churches scattered throughout the city that the devotional spirit of the inhabitants is manifested. Moscow is the Mecca of Russia, where all are devotees. The external forms of religion are every where apparent – in the palaces, the barracks, the institutions of learning, the traktirs, the bath-houses – even in the drinking cellars and gambling-hells. Scarcely a bridge or corner of a street is without its shrine, its pictured saint and burning taper, before which every by-passer of high or low degree bows down and worships. It may be said with truth that one is never out of sight of devotees baring their heads and prostrating themselves before these sacred images. All distinctions of rank seem lost in this universal passion for prayer. The nobleman, in his gilded carriage with liveried servants, stops and pays the tribute of an uncovered head to some saintly image by the bridge or the roadside; the peasant, in his shaggy sheepskin capote, doffs his greasy cap, and, while devoutly crossing himself, utters a prayer; the soldier, grim and warlike, marches up in his rattling armor, grounds his musket, and forgets for the time his mission of blood; the tradesman, with his leather apron and labor-worn hands, lays down his tools and does homage to the shrine; the drosky-driver, noted for his petty villainies, checks his horse, and, standing up in his drosky, bows low and crosses himself before he crosses the street or the bridge; even my guide, the saturnine Dominico – and every body knows what guides are all over the world – halted at every corner, regardless of time, and uttered an elaborate form of adjurations for our mutual salvation.

Pictures of a devotional character are offered for sale in almost every booth, alley, and passage-way, where the most extraordinary daubs may be seen pinned up to the walls. Saints and dragons, fiery-nosed monsters, and snakes, and horrid creeping things, gilded and decorated in the most gaudy style, attract idle crowds from morning till night.

It is marvelous with what profound reverence the Russians will gaze at these extraordinary specimens of art. Often you see a hardened-looking ruffian – his face covered with beard and filth; his great, brawny form resembling that of a prize-fighter; his costume a ragged blouse, with loose trowsers thrust in his boots; such a wretch, in short, as you would select for an unmitigated ruffian

if you were in want of a model for that character – take off his cap, and, with superstitious awe and an expression of profound humility, bow down before some picture of a dragon with seven heads or a chubby little baby of saintly parentage.

That these poor people are sincere in their devotion there can be no doubt. Their sincerity, indeed, is attested by the strongest proofs of self-sacrifice. A Russian will not hesitate to lie, rob, murder, or suffer starvation for the preservation of his religion. Bigoted though he may be, he is true to his faith and devoted to his forms of worship, whatever may be his short-comings in other respects. It is a part of his nature; it permeates his entire being. Hence no city in the world, perhaps – Jerusalem not excepted – presents so strange a spectacle of religious enthusiasm, genuine and universal, mingled with moral turpitude; monkish asceticism and utter abandonment to vice; self-sacrifice and loose indulgence. It may be said that this is not true religion – not even what these people profess. Perhaps not; but it is what they are accustomed to from infancy, and it certainly develops some of their best traits of character – charity to each other, earnestness, constancy, and self-sacrifice.

On the morning after my arrival in Moscow I witnessed from the window of my hotel a very impressive and melancholy spectacle – the departure of a gang of prisoners for Siberia. The number amounted to some two or three hundred. Every year similar trains are dispatched, yet the parting scene always attracts a sympathizing crowd. These poor creatures were chained in pairs, and guarded by a strong detachment of soldiers. Their appearance, as they stood in the street awaiting the order to march, was very sad. Most of them were miserably clad, and some scarcely clad at all. A degraded, forlorn set they were – filthy and ragged – their downcast features expressive of an utter absence of hope. Few of them seemed to have any friends or relatives in the crowd of by-standers; but in two or three instances I noticed some very touching scenes of separation – where wives came to bid good-by to their husbands, and children to their fathers. Nearly every body gave them something to help them on their way – a few kopecks, a loaf of bread, or some cast-off article of clothing. I saw a little child timidly approach the gang, and, dropping a small coin into the hand of one poor wretch, run back again into the crowd, weeping bitterly. These prisoners are condemned to exile for three, four, or five years – often for life. It requires from twelve to eighteen months of weary travel, all the way on foot, through barren wastes and inhospitable deserts, to enable them to reach their desolate place of exile. Many of them fall sick on the way from fatigue and privation – many die. Few ever live to return. In some instances the whole term of exile is served out on the journey to and from Siberia. On their arrival they are compelled to labor in the government mines or on the public works. Occasionally the most skillful and industrious are rewarded by appointments to positions of honor and trust, and become in the course of time leading men.

In contemplating the dreary journey of these poor creatures – a journey of some fifteen hundred or two thousand miles – I was insensibly reminded of that touching little story of filial affection, “Elizabeth of Siberia,” a story drawn from nature, and known in all civilized languages.

Not long after the departure of the Siberian prisoners, I witnessed, in passing along one of the principal streets, a grand funeral procession. The burial of the dead is a picturesque and interesting ceremony in Moscow. A body of priests, dressed in black robes and wearing long beards, take the lead in the funeral cortége, bearing in their hands shrines and burning tapers. The hearse follows, drawn by four horses. Black plumes wave from the heads of the horses, and flowing black drapery covers their bodies and legs. Even their heads are draped in black, nothing being perceptible but their eyes. The coffin lies exposed on the top of the hearse, and is also similarly draped. This combination of sombre plumage and drapery has a singularly mournful appearance. Priests stand on steps attached to the hearse holding images of the Savior over the coffin; others follow in the rear, comforting the friends and relatives of the deceased. A wild, monotonous chant is sung from time to time by the chief mourners as the procession moves toward the burial-ground. The people cease their occupations in the streets through which the funeral passes, uncover their heads, and, bowing down before the images borne by the priests, utter prayers for the repose of the dead. The rich and the poor of both

sexes stand upon the sidewalks and offer up their humble petitions. The deep-tongued bells of the Kremlin ring out solemn peals, and the wild and mournful chant of the priests mingles with the grand knell of death that sweeps through the air. All is profoundly impressive: the procession of priests, with their burning tapers; the drapery of black on the horses; the coffin with its dead; the weeping mourners; the sepulchral chant; the sudden cessation of all the business of life, and the rapt attention of the multitude; the deep, grand, death-knell of the bells; the glitter of domes and cupolas on every side; the green-roofed sea of houses; the winding streets, and the costumes of the people – form a spectacle wonderfully wild, strange, and mournful. In every thing that comes within the sweep of the eye there is a mixed aspect of Tartaric barbarism and European civilization. Yet even the stranger from a far-distant clime, speaking another language, accustomed to other forms, must feel, in gazing upon such a scene, that death levels all distinctions of race – that our common mortality brings us nearer together. Every where we are pilgrims on the same journey. Wherever we sojourn among men,

“The dead around us lie,
And the death-bell tolls.”

CHAPTER V. TEA-DRINKING

The *traktirs*, or tea-houses, are prominent among the remarkable institutions of Russia. In Moscow they abound in every street, lane, and by-alley. That situated near the Katai Gorod is said to be the best. Though inferior to the ordinary cafés of Paris or Marseilles in extent and decoration, it is nevertheless pretty stylish in its way, and is interesting to strangers from the fact that it represents a prominent feature in Russian life – the drinking of *tchai*.

Who has not heard of Russian tea? – the tea that comes all the way across the steppes of Tartary and over the Ural Mountains? – the tea that never loses its flavor by admixture with the salt of the ocean, but is delivered over at the great fair of Nijni Novgorod as pure and fragrant as when it started? He who has never heard of Russian tea has heard nothing, and he who has never enjoyed a glass of it may have been highly favored in other respects, but I contend that he has nevertheless led a very benighted existence. All epicures in the delicate leaf unite in pronouncing it far superior to the nectar with which the gods of old were wont to quench their thirst. It is truly one of the luxuries of life – so soft; so richly yet delicately flavored; so bright, glowing, and transparent as it flashes through the crystal glasses; nothing acrid, gross, or earthly about it – a heavenly compound that “cheers but not inebriates.”

“A balm for the sickness of care,
A bliss for a bosom unblest’d.”

Come with me, friend, and let us take a seat in the *traktir*. Every body here is a tea-drinker. Coffee is never good in Russia. Besides, it is gross and villainous stuff compared with the *tchai* of Moscow. At all hours of the day we find the saloons crowded with Russians, French, Germans, and the representatives of various other nations – all worshipers before the burnished shrine of *Tchai*. A little saint in the corner presides especially over this department. The devout Russians take off their hats and make a profound salam to this accommodating little patron, whose corpulent stomach and smiling countenance betoken an appreciation of all the good things of life. Now observe how these wonderful Russians – the strangest and most incomprehensible of beings – cool themselves this sweltering hot day. Each stalwart son of the North calls for a portion of *tchai*, not a tea-cupful or a glassful, but a genuine Russian portion – a tea-potful. The tea-pot is small, but the tea is strong enough to bear an unlimited amount of dilution; and it is one of the glorious privileges of the tea-drinker in this country that he may have as much hot water as he pleases. Sugar is more sparingly supplied. The adept remedies this difficulty by placing a lump of sugar in his mouth and sipping his tea through it – a great improvement upon the custom said to exist in some parts of Holland, where a lump of sugar is hung by a string over the table and swung around from mouth to mouth, so that each guest may take a pull at it after swallowing his tea. A portion would be quite enough for a good-sized family in America. The Russian makes nothing of it. Filling and swilling hour after hour, he seldom rises before he gets through ten or fifteen tumblersful, and, if he happens to be thirsty, will double it – enough, one would think, to founder a horse. But the Russian stomach is constructed upon some physiological principles unknown to the rest of mankind – perhaps lined with gutta-percha and riveted to a diaphragm of sheet-iron. Grease and scalding-hot tea; *quass* and cabbage soup; raw cucumbers; cold fish; lumps of ice; decayed cheese and black bread, seem to have no other effect upon it than to provoke an appetite. In warm weather it is absolutely marvelous to see the quantities of fiery-hot liquids these people pour down their throats. Just cast your eye upon that bearded giant in the corner, with his hissing urn of tea before him, his *batvina* and his *shtshie*! What a spectacle of physical enjoyment! His throat is bare; his face a glowing carbuncle; his body a monstrous cauldron, seething and dripping with overflowing juices. Shade of Hebe! how he swills the tea – how glass

after glass of the steaming-hot liquid flows into his capacious maw, and diffuses itself over his entire person! It oozes from every pore of his skin; drops in globules from his forehead; smokes through his shirt; makes a piebald chart of seas and islands over his back; streams down and simmers in his boots! He is saturated with tea, inside and out – a living sponge overflowing at every pore. You might wring him out, and there would still be a heavy balance left in him.

These traktirs are the general places of meeting, where matters of business or pleasure are discussed; accounts settled and bargains made. Here the merchant, the broker, the banker, and the votary of pleasure meet in common. Here all the pursuits of human life are represented, and the best qualities of men drawn out with the drawing of the tea. Enmities are forgotten and friendships cemented in tea. In short, the traktir is an institution, and its influence extends through all the ramifications of society.

But it is in the gardens and various places of suburban resort that the universal passion for tea is displayed in its most pleasing and romantic phases. Surrounded by the beauties of nature, lovers make their avowals over the irrepressible tea-pot; the hearts of fair damsels are won in the intoxication of love and tea; quarrels between man and wife are made up, and children weaned – I had almost said baptized – in tea. The traveler must see the families seated under the trees, with the burnished urn before them – the children romping about over the grass; joy beaming upon every face; the whole neighborhood a repetition of family groups and steaming urns, bound together by the mystic tie of sympathy, before he can fully appreciate the important part that tea performs in the great drama of Russian life.

CHAPTER VI. THE PETERSKOI GARDENS

This draws me insensibly toward the beautiful gardens of the Peterskoi – a favorite place of resort for the Moskovites, and famous for its chateau built by the Empress Elizabeth, in which Napoleon sought refuge during the burning of Moscow. It is here the rank and fashion of the city may be seen to the greatest advantage of a fine summer afternoon. In these gardens all that is brilliant, beautiful, and poetical in Russian life finds a congenial atmosphere.

I spent an evening at the Peterskoi which I shall long remember as one of the most interesting I ever spent at any place of popular amusement. The weather was charming – neither too warm nor too cold, but of that peculiarly soft and dreamy temperature which predisposes one for the enjoyment of music, flowers, the prattle of children, the fascinations of female loveliness, the luxuries of idleness. In such an atmosphere no man of sentiment can rack his brain with troublesome problems. These witching hours, when the sun lingers dreamily on the horizon; when the long twilight weaves a web of purple and gold that covers the transition from night to morning; when nature, wearied of the dazzling glare of day, puts on her silver-spangled robes, and receives her worshipers with celestial smiles, are surely enough to soften the most stubborn heart. We must make love, sweet ladies, or die. There is no help for it. Resistance is an abstract impossibility. The best man in the world could not justly be censured for practicing a little with his eyes, when away from home, merely as I do, you know, to keep up the expression.

The gardens of the Peterskoi are still a dream to me. For a distance of three versts from the gate of St. Petersburg the road was thronged with carriages and droskies, and crowds of gayly-dressed citizens, all wending their way toward the scene of entertainment. The pressure for tickets at the porter's lodge was so great that it required considerable patience and good-humor to get through at all. Officers in dashing uniforms rode on spirited chargers up and down the long rows of vehicles, and with drawn swords made way for the foot-passengers. Guards in imperial livery, glittering from head to foot with embroidery, stood at the grand portals of the gate, and with many profound and elegant bows ushered in the company. Policemen with cocked hats and shining epaulets were stationed at intervals along the leading thoroughfares to preserve order.

The scene inside the gates was wonderfully imposing. Nothing could be more fanciful. In every aspect it presented some striking combination of natural and artificial beauties, admirably calculated to fascinate the imagination. I have a vague recollection of shady and undulating walks, winding over sweeping lawns dotted with masses of flowers and copses of shrubbery, and overhung by wide-spreading trees, sometimes gradually rising over gentle acclivities or points of rock overhung with moss and fern. Rustic cottages, half hidden by the luxuriant foliage, crowned each prominent eminence, and little by-ways branched off into cool, umbrageous recesses, where caves, glittering with sea-shells and illuminated stalactites, invited the wayfarer to linger a while and rest. Far down in deep glens and grottoes were retired nooks, where lovers, hidden from the busy throng, might mingle their vows to the harmony of falling waters; where the very flowers seemed whispering love to each other, and the lights and shadows fell, by some intuitive sense of fitness, into the form of bridal wreaths. Marble statues representing the Graces, winged Mercuries and Cupids, are so cunningly displayed in relief against the green banks of foliage that they seem the natural inhabitants of the place. Snow-spirits, too, with outspread wings, hover in the air, as if to waft cooling zephyrs through the soft summer night. In the open spaces fountains dash their sparkling waters high into the moonlight, spreading a mystic spray over the sward. Through vistas of shrubbery gleam the bright waters of a lake, on the far side of which the embattled towers of a castle rise in bold relief over the intervening groups of trees.

On an elevated plateau, near the centre of the garden, stands a series of Asiatic temples and pagodas, in which the chief entertainments are held. The approaching avenues are illuminated with many-colored lights suspended from the branches of the trees, and wind under triumphal archways, festooned with flowers. The theatres present open fronts, and abound in all the tinsel of the stage, both inside and out. The grounds are crowded to their utmost capacity with the rank and fashion of the city, in all the glory of jeweled head-dresses and decorations of order. Festoons of variegated lights swing from the trees over the audience, and painted figures of dragons and genii are dimly seen in the background.

Attracted by sounds of applause at one of these theatres, I edged my way through the crowd, and succeeded, after many apologies, in securing a favorable position. Amid a motley gathering of Russians, Poles, Germans, and French – for here all nations and classes are represented – my ears were stunned by the clapping of hands and vociferous cries *Bis! Bis!* The curtain was down, but in answer to the call for a repetition of the last scene it soon rose again, and afforded me an opportunity of witnessing a characteristic performance. A wild Mujik has the impudence to make love to the maid-servant of his master, who appears to be rather a crusty old gentleman, not disposed to favor matrimonial alliances of that kind. Love gets the better of the lover's discretion, and he is surprised in the kitchen. The bull-dog is let loose upon him; master and mistress and subordinate members of the family rush after him, armed with saucepans, tongs, shovels, and broomsticks. The affrighted Mujik runs all round the stage bellowing fearfully; the bull-dog seizes him by the nether extremities and hangs on with the tenacity of a vice. Round and round they run, Mujik roaring for help, bull-dog swinging out horizontally. The audience applauds; the master flings down his broomstick and seizes the dog by the tail; the old woman seizes master by the skirts of his coat; and all three are dragged around the stage at a terrific rate, while the younger members of the family shower down miscellaneous blows with their sticks and cudgels, which always happen to fall on the old people, to the great satisfaction of the audience. Shouts, and shrieks, and clapping of hands but faintly express the popular appreciation of the joke. Finally the faithful maid, taking advantage of the confusion, flings a bunch of fire-crackers at her oppressors and blows them up, and the Mujik, relieved of their weight, makes a brilliant dash through the door, carrying with him the tenacious bull-dog, which it is reasonable to suppose he subsequently takes to market and sells for a good price. The curtain falls, the music strikes up, and the whole performance is greeted with the most enthusiastic applause. Such are the entertainments that delight these humorous people – a little broad to be sure, but not deficient in grotesque spirit.

From the theatre I wandered to the pavilion of Zingalee gipsies, where a band of these wild sons of Hagar were creating a perfect furor by the shrillness and discord of their voices. Never was such terrific music inflicted upon mortal ears. It went through and through you, quivering and vibrating like a rapier; but the common classes of Russians delight in it above all earthly sounds. They deem it the very finest kind of music. It is only the dilettante who have visited Paris who profess to hold it in contempt.

Very soon surfeited with these piercing strains, I rambled away till I came upon a party of rope-dancers, and after seeing a dozen or so of stout fellows hang themselves by the chins, turn back somersaults in the air, and swing by one foot at a dizzy height from the ground, left them standing upon each other's heads to the depth of six or eight, and turned aside into a grotto to enjoy a few glasses of tea. Here were German girls singing and buffoons reciting humorous stories between the pauses, and thirsty Russians pouring down whole oceans of their favorite beverage.

Again I wandered forth through the leafy mazes of the garden. The gorgeous profusion of lights and glittering ornaments, the endless variety of colors, the novel and Asiatic appearance of the temples, the tropical luxuriance of the foliage, the gleaming white statuary, the gay company, the wild strains of music, all combined to form a scene of peculiar interest. High overhead, dimly visible through the tops of the trees, the sky wears an almost supernatural aspect during these long summer

nights. A soft golden glow flushes upward from the horizon, and, lying outspread over the firmament, gives a spectral effect to the gentler and more delicate sheen of the moon; the stars seem to shrink back into the dim infinity, as if unable to contend with the grosser effulgence of the great orbs that rule the day and the night. Unconscious whether the day is waning into the night, or the night into the morning, the rapt spectator gazes and dreams till lost in the strange enchantment of the scene.

At a late hour a signal was given, and the company wandered down to the lake, along the shores of which rustic seats and divans, overshadowed by shrubbery, afforded the weary an opportunity of resting. Here we were to witness the crowning entertainment of the evening – a grand display of fireworks. A miniature steam-boat, gayly decorated with flags, swept to and fro, carrying passengers to the different landing-places. Gondolas, with peaked prows and variegated canopies, lay floating upon the still water, that lovers might quench their flames in the contemplation of its crystal depths, or draw fresh inspiration from the blaze of artificial fires. Soon a wild outburst of music was heard; then from the opposite shore the whole heavens were lighted up with a flood of rockets, and the ears were stunned by their explosions. Down through the depths of ether came showers of colored balls, illuminating the waters of the lake with inverted streams of light scarcely less bright and glowing. Anon all was dark; then from out the darkness flashed whirling and seething fires, gradually assuming the grotesque forms of monsters and genii, till with a deafening explosion they were scattered to the winds. From the blackened mass of ruins stood forth illuminated statues of the imperial family, in all the paraphernalia of royalty, their crowns glittering with jewels, their robes of light resplendent with precious gems and tracery of gold. A murmur of admiration ran through the crowd. The imperial figures vanished as if by magic, and suddenly a stream of fire flashed from a mass of dark undefined objects on the opposite shore, and lo! the waters were covered with fiery swans, sailing majestically among the gondolas, their necks moving slowly as if inspired by life. Hither and thither they swept, propelled by streams of fire, till, wearied with their sport, they gradually lay motionless, yet glowing with an augmented brilliancy. While the eyes of all were fixed in amazement and admiration upon these beautiful swans, they exploded with a series of deafening reports, and were scattered in confused volumes of smoke. Out of the chaos swept innumerable hosts of whirling little monsters, whizzing and boring through the water like infernal spirits of the deep. These again burst with a rattle of explosions like an irregular fire of musketry, and shot high into the air in a perfect maze of scintillating stars of every imaginable color. When the shower of stars was over, and silence and darkness once more reigned, a magnificent barge, that might well have represented that of the Egyptian queen – its gay canopies resplendent with the glow of many-colored lamps – swept out into the middle of the lake, and

“Like a burnished throne
Burn’d on the water.”

And when the rowers had ceased, and the barge lay motionless, soft strains of music arose from its curtained recesses, swelling up gradually till the air was filled with the floods of rich, wild harmony, and the senses were ravished with their sweetness.

Was it a wild Oriental dream? Could it all be real – the glittering fires, the gayly-costumed crowds, the illuminated barge, the voluptuous strains of music? Might it not be some gorgeous freak of the emperor, such as the sultan in the Arabian Nights enjoyed at the expense of the poor traveler? Surely there could be nothing real like it since the days of the califs of Bagdad!

A single night’s entertainment such as this must cost many thousand rubles. When it is considered that there are but few months in the year when such things can be enjoyed, some idea may be formed of the characteristic passion of the Russians for luxurious amusements. It is worthy of mention, too, that the decorations, the lamps, the actors and operators, the material of nearly every description, are imported from various parts of the world, and very little is contributed in any way by the native Russians, save the means by which these costly luxuries are obtained.

CHAPTER VII. THE “LITTLE WATER.”

On the fundamental principles of association the intelligent reader will at once comprehend how it came to pass that, of all the traits I discovered in the Russian people, none impressed me so favorably as their love of vodka, or native brandy, signifying the “little water.” I admired their long and filthy beards and matted heads of hair, because there was much in them to remind me of my beloved Washoe; but in nothing did I experience a greater fellowship with them than in their constitutional thirst for intoxicating liquors. It was absolutely refreshing, after a year’s travel over the Continent of Europe, to come across a genuine lover of the “tarantula” – to meet at every corner of the street a great bearded fellow staggering along blind drunk, or attempting to steady the town by hugging a post. Rarely had I enjoyed such a sight since my arrival in the Old World. In Germany I had seen a few cases of stupefaction arising from overdoses of beer; in France the red nose of the *bon vivant* is not uncommon; in England some muddled heads are to be found; and in Scotland there are temperance societies enough to give rise to the suspicion that there is a cause for them; but, generally speaking, the sight of an intoxicated man is somewhat rare in the principal cities of the Continent. It will, therefore, be conceded that there was something very congenial in the spectacle that greeted me on the very first day of my arrival in Moscow. A great giant of a Mujik, with a ferocious beard and the general aspect of a wild beast, came toward me with a heel and a lurch to port that was very expressive of his condition. As he staggered up and tried to balance himself, he blurted out some unmeaning twaddle in his native language which I took to be a species of greeting. His expression was absolutely inspiring – the great bleary eyes rolling foolishly in his head; his tongue lolling helplessly from his mouth; his under jaw hanging down; his greasy cap hung on one side on a tuft of dirty hair – all so familiar, so characteristic of something I had seen before! Where could it have been? What potent spell was there about this fellow to attract me? In what was it that I, an ambassador from Washoe, a citizen of California, a resident of Oakland, could thus be drawn toward this hideous wretch? A word in your ear, reader. It was all the effect of association! The unbidden tears flowed to my eyes as I caught a whiff of the fellow’s breath. It was so like the free-lunch breaths of San Francisco, and even suggested thoughts of the Legislative Assembly in Sacramento. Only think what a genuine Californian must suffer in being a whole year without a glass of whisky – nay, without as much as a smell of it! How delightful it is to see a brother human downright soggy drunk; drunk all over; drunk in the eyes, in the mouth, in the small of his back, in his knees, in his boots, clear down to his toes! How one’s heart is drawn toward him by this common bond of human infirmity! How it recalls the camp, the one-horse mining town, the social gathering of the “boys” at Dan’s, or Jim’s, or Jack’s; and the clink of dimes and glasses at the bar; how distances are annihilated and time set back! Of a verity, when I saw that man, with reason dethroned and the garb of self-respect thrown aside, I was once again in my own beloved state!

“What a beauty dwelt in each familiar face,
What music hung on every voice!”

Since reading is not a very general accomplishment among the lower classes, a system of signs answers in some degree as a substitute. The irregularity of the streets would of itself present no very remarkable feature but for the wonderful variety of small shops and the oddity of the signs upon which their contents are pictured. What these symbols of trade lack in artistic style they make up in grotesque effects. Thus, the tobacco shops are ornamented outside with various highly-colored pictures, drawn by artists of the most florid genius, representing cigar-boxes, pipes, meerschaums,

narghillas, bunches of cigars, snuffboxes, plugs and twists of tobacco, and all that the most fastidious smoker, chewer, or snuffer can expect to find in any tobacco shop, besides a good many things that he never will find in any of these shops. Prominent among these symbolical displays is the counterfeit presentment of a jet-black Indian of African descent – his woolly head adorned with a crown of pearls and feathers; in his right hand an uplifted tomahawk, with which he is about to kill some invisible enemy; in his left a meerschaum, supposed to be the pipe of peace; a tobacco plantation in the background, and a group of warriors smoking profusely around a camp-fire, located under one of the tobacco plants; the whole having a very fine allegorical effect, fully understood, no doubt, by the artist, but very difficult to explain upon any known principle of art. The butchers' shops are equally prolific in external adornments. On the sign-boards you see every animal fit to be eaten, and many of questionable aspect, denuded of their skins and reduced to every conceivable degree of butchery; so that if you want a veal cutlet of any particular pattern, all you have to do is to select your pattern, and the cutlet will be chopped accordingly. The bakeries excel in their artistic displays. Here you have painted bread from black-moon down to double-knotted twist; cakes, biscuit, rolls, and crackers, and as many other varieties as the genius of the artist may be capable of suggesting. The bakers of Moscow are mostly French or German; and it is a notable fact that the bread is quite equal to any made in France or Germany. The wine-stores, of which there are many, are decorated with pictures of bottles, and bas-reliefs of gilded grapes – a great improvement upon the ordinary grape produced by nature.

CHAPTER VIII. THE MARKETS OF MOSCOW

If there is nothing new under the sun, there are certainly a good many old things to interest a stranger in Moscow. A favorite resort of mine during my sojourn in that strange old city of the Czars was in the markets of the Katai Gorod. Those of the Riadi and Gostovini Dvor present the greatest attractions, perhaps, in the way of shops and merchandise; for there, by the aid of time, patience, and money, you can get any thing you want, from saints' armlets and devils down to candlesticks and cucumbers. Singing-birds, Kazan-work, and Siberian diamonds are its most attractive features. But if you have a passion for human oddities rather than curiosities of merchandise, you must visit the second-hand markets extending along the walls of the Katai Gorod, where you will find not only every conceivable variety of old clothes, clocks, cooking utensils, and rubbish of all sorts, but the queerest imaginable conglomeration of human beings from the far East to the far West. It would be a fruitless task to attempt a description of the motley assemblage. Pick out all the strangest, most ragged, most uncouth figures you ever saw in old pictures, from childhood up to the present day; select from every theatrical representation within the range of your experience the most monstrous and absurd caricatures upon humanity; bring to your aid all the masquerades and burlesque fancy-balls you ever visited, tumble them together in the great bag of your imagination, and pour them out over a vague wilderness of open spaces, dirty streets, high walls, and rickety little booths, and you have no idea at all of the queer old markets of the Katai Gorod. You will be just as much puzzled to make any thing of the scene as when you started, if not more so.

No mortal man can picture to another all these shaggy-faced Russians, booted up to the knees, their long, loose robes flaunting idly around their legs, their red sashes twisted around their waists; brawny fellows with a reckless, independent swagger about them, stalking like grim savages of the North through the crowd. Then there are the sallow and cadaverous Jew peddlers, covered all over with piles of ragged old clothes, and mountains of old hats and caps; and leathery-faced old women – witches of Endor – dealing out horrible mixtures of *quass* (the national drink); and dirty, dingy-looking soldiers, belonging to the imperial service, peddling off old boots and cast-off shirts; and Zingalee gipsies, dark, lean, and wiry, offering strings of beads and armlets for sale with shrill cries; and so on without limit.

Here you see the rich and the poor in all the extremes of affluence and poverty; the robust and the decrepit; the strong, the lame, and the blind; the noble, with his star and orders of office; the Mujik in his shaggy sheepskin capote or tattered blouse; the Mongolian, the Persian, and the Caucasian; the Greek and the Turk; the Armenian and the Californian, all intent upon something, buying, selling, or looking on.

Being the only representative from the Golden State, I was anxious to offer some Washoe stock for sale – twenty or thirty feet in the Gone Case; but Dominico, my interpreter, informed me that these traders had never heard of Washoe, and were mostly involved in Russian securities – old breeches, boots, stockings, and the like. He did not think my “Gone Case” would bring an old hat; and as for my “Sorrowful Countenance” and “Ragged End,” he was persuaded I could not dispose of my entire interest in them for a pint of grease.

I was very much taken with the soldiers who infested these old markets. It was something new in military economy to see the representatives of an imperial army supporting themselves in this way; dark, lazy fellows in uniform, lounging about with old boots, and suspenders hanging all over them, crying out the merits of their wares in stentorian voices, thus, as it were, patriotically relieving the national treasury of a small fraction of its burden. They have much the appearance, in the crowd, of raisins in a plum-pudding.

The peasant women, who flock in from the country with immense burdens of vegetables and other products of the farms, are a very striking, if not a very pleasing feature in the markets. Owing to the hard labor imposed upon them, they are exceedingly rough and brawny, and have a hard, dreary, and unfeminine expression of countenance, rather inconsistent with one's notions of the delicacy and tenderness of woman. Few of them are even passably well-looking. All the natural playfulness of the gentler sex seems to be crushed out of them; and while their manners are uncouth, their voices are the wildest and most unmusical that ever fell upon the ear from a feminine source. When dressed in their best attire they usually wear a profusion of red handkerchiefs about their heads and shoulders; and from an unpicturesque habit they have of making an upper waist immediately under their arms by a ligature of some sort, and tying their apron-strings about a foot below, they have the singular appearance of being double-waisted or three-story women. They carry their children on their backs, much after the fashion of Digger Indians, and suckle them through an opening in the second or middle story. Doubtless this is a convenient arrangement, but it presents the curious anomaly of a poor peasant living in a one-story house with a three-story wife. According to the prevailing style of architecture in well-wooded countries, these women ought to wear their hair shingled; but they generally tie it up in a knot behind, or cover it with a fancy-colored handkerchief, on the presumption, I suppose, that they look less barbarous in that way than they would with shingled heads. You may suspect me of story-telling, but upon my word I think three-story women are extravagant enough without adding another to them. I only hope their garrets contain a better quality of furniture than that which afflicts the male members of the Mujik community. No wonder those poor women have families of children like steps of stairs! It is said that their husbands are often very cruel to them, and think nothing of knocking them down and beating them; but even that does not surprise me. How can a man be expected to get along with a three-story wife unless he floors her occasionally?

Ragged little boys, prematurely arrested in their growth, you see too, in myriads – shovel-nosed and bare-legged urchins of hideously eccentric manners, carrying around big bottles of *sbiteen* (a kind of mead), which they are continually pouring out into glasses, to appease the chronic thirst with which the public seem to be afflicted; and groups of the natives gathered around a cucumber stand, devouring great piles of unwholesome-looking cucumbers, which skinny old women are dipping up out of wooden buckets. The voracity with which all classes stow away these vicious edibles in their stomachs is amazing, and suggests a melancholy train of reflections on the subject of cholera morbus. It was a continual matter of wonder to me how the lower classes of Russians survived the horrid messes with which they tortured their digestive apparatus. Only think of thousands of men dining every day on black bread, heavy enough for bullets, a pound or two of grease, and half a peck of raw cucumbers per man, and then expecting to live until next morning! And yet they do live, and grow fat, and generally die at a good old age, in case they are not killed in battle, or frozen up in the wilds of Siberia.

Outside the walls of the Katai Gorod, in an open square, or plaza, are rows of wooden booths, in which innumerable varieties of living stock are offered for sale – geese, ducks, chickens, rabbits, pigeons, and birds of various sorts. I sometimes went down here and bargained for an hour or so over a fat goose or a Muscovy duck, not with any ultimate idea of purchasing it, but merely because it was offered to me at a reduced price. It was amusing, also, to study the manners and customs of the dealer, and enjoy their amazement when, after causing them so much loss of time, I would hand over five kopeks and walk off. Some of them, I verily believe, will long entertain serious doubts as to the sanity of the Californian public; for Dominico, my guide, always took particular pride in announcing that I was from that great country, and was the richest man in it, being, to the best of his knowledge, the only one who had money enough to spare to travel all the way to Moscow, merely for the fun of the thing.

I may as well mention, parenthetically, that Dominico was rather an original in his way. His father was an Italian and his mother a Russian. I believe he was born in Moscow. How he came to adopt the profession of guide I don't know, unless it was on account of some natural proclivity for an

easy life. A grave, lean, saturnine man was Dominico – something of a cross between Machiavelli and Paganini. If he knew any thing about the wonders and curiosities of Moscow he kept it a profound secret. It was only by the most rigid inquiry and an adroit system of cross-examination that I could get any thing out of him, and then his information was vague and laconic, sometimes a little sarcastic, but never beyond what I knew myself. Yet he was polite, dignified, and gentlemanly – never refused to drink a glass of beer with me, and always knew the way to a traktir. To the public functionaries with whom we came in contact during the course of our rambles his air was grand and imposing; and on the subject of money he was sublimely nonchalant, caring no more for rubles than I did for kopeks. Once or twice he hinted to me that he was of noble blood, but laid no particular stress upon that, since it was his misfortune at present to be in rather reduced circumstances. Some time or other he would go to Italy and resume his proper position there. In justice to Dominico, I must add that he never neglected an opportunity of praying for me before any of the public shrines; and at the close of our acquaintance he let me off pretty easily, all things considered. Upon my explaining to him that a draft for five hundred thousand rubles, which ought to be on the way, had failed to reach me, owing, doubtless, to some irregularity in the mail service, or some sudden depression in my Washoe stocks, he merely shrugged his shoulders, took a pinch of snuff, and accepted with profound indifference a fee amounting to three times the value of his services.

I was particularly interested in the dog-market. The display of living dog-flesh here must be very tempting to one who has a taste for poodle soup or fricasseed pup. Dominico repudiated the idea that the Russians are addicted to this article of diet; but the very expression of his eye as he took up a fat little innocent, smoothed down its skin, squeezed its ribs, pinched its loins, and smelled it, satisfied me that a litter of pups would stand but a poor chance of ever arriving at maturity if they depended upon forbearance upon his part as a national virtue. The Chinese quarter of San Francisco affords some curious examples of the art of compounding sustenance for man out of odd materials – rats, snails, dried frogs, star-fish, polypi, and the like; but any person who wishes to indulge a morbid appetite for the most disgusting dishes ever devised by human ingenuity must visit Moscow. I adhere to it that the dog-market supplies a large portion of the population with fancy meats. No other use could possibly be made of the numberless squads of fat, hairless dogs tied together and hawked about by the traders in this article of traffic. I saw one man – he had the teeth of an ogre and a fearfully carnivorous expression of eye – carry around a bunch of pups on each arm, and cry aloud something in his native tongue, which I am confident had reference to the tenderness and juiciness of their flesh. Dominico declared the man was only talking about the breed – that they were fine rat-dogs; but I know that was a miserable subterfuge. Such dogs never caught a rat in this world; and if they did, it must have been with a view to the manufacture of sausages.

A Russian peasant is not particular about the quality of his food, as may well be supposed from this general summary. Quantity is the main object. Grease of all kinds is his special luxury. The upper classes, who have plenty of money to spare, may buy fish from the Volga at its weight in gold, and mutton from Astrakan at fabulous prices; but give the Mujik his *batvina* (salt grease and honey boiled together), a loaf of black bread, and a peck of raw cucumbers, and he is happy. Judging by external appearances, very little grease seems to be wasted in the manufacture of soap. Indeed, I would not trust one of these Mujiks to carry a pound of soap any where for me, any more than I would a gallon of oil or a pound of candles. Once I saw a fellow grease his boots with a lump of dirty fat which he had picked up out of the gutter, but he took good care first to extract from it the richest part of its essence by sucking it, and then greasing his beard. The boots came last. In all probability he had just dined, or he would have pocketed his treasure for another occasion, instead of throwing the remnant, as he did, to the nearest cat.

In respect to the language, one might as well be dropped down in Timbuctoo as in a village or country town of Russia, for all the good the gift of speech would do him. It is not harsh, as might be supposed, yet wonderfully like an East India jungle when you attempt to penetrate it. I could make

better headway through a boulder of solid quartz, or the title to my own house and lot in Oakland. Now I profess to be able to see as far into a millstone as most people, but I can't see in what respect the Russians behaved any worse than other people of the Tower of Babel, that they should be afflicted with a language which nobody can hope to understand before his beard becomes grizzled, and the top of his head entirely bald. Many of the better classes, to be sure, speak French and German; but even in the streets of Moscow I could seldom find any body who could discover a ray of meaning in my French or German, which is almost as plain as English.

Some people know what you want by instinct, whether they understand your language or not. Not so the Russians. Ask for a horse, and they will probably offer you a fat goose; inquire the way to your lodgings, and they are just as likely as not to show you the Foundling Hospital or a livery-stable; go into an old variety shop, and express a desire to purchase an Astrakan breast-pin for your sweetheart, and the worthy trader hands you a pair of bellows or an old blunderbuss; cast your eye upon any old market-woman, and she divines at once that you are in search of a bunch of chickens or a bucket of raw cucumbers, and offers them to you at the lowest market-price; hint to a picture-dealer that you would like to have an authentic portrait of his imperial majesty, and he hands you a picture of the Iberian Mother, or St. George slaying the dragon, or the devil and all his imps; in short, you can get any thing that you don't want, and nothing that you do. If these people are utterly deficient in any one quality, it is a sense of fitness in things. They take the most inappropriate times for offering you the most inappropriate articles of human use that the imagination can possibly conceive. I was more than once solicited by the dealers in the markets of Moscow to carry with me a bunch of live dogs, or a couple of freshly-scalded pigs, and on one occasion was pressed very hard to take a brass skillet and a pair of tongs. What could these good people have supposed I wanted with articles of this kind on my travels? Is there any thing in my dress or the expression of my countenance – I leave it to all who know me – any thing in the mildness of my speech or the gravity of my manner, to indicate that I am suffering particularly for bunches of dogs or scalded pigs, brass skillets or pairs of tongs? Do I look like a man who labors under a chronic destitution of dogs, pigs, skillets, and tongs?

It is quite natural that the traveler who finds himself for the first time within the limits of a purely despotic government should look around him with some vague idea that he must see the effects strongly marked upon the external life of the people; that the restraints imposed upon popular liberty must be every where apparent. So far as any thing of this kind may exist in Moscow or St. Petersburg, it is a notable fact that there are few cities in the world where it is less visible, or where the people seem more unrestrained in the exercise of their popular freedom. Indeed, it struck me rather forcibly, after my experience in Vienna and Berlin, that the Russians enjoy quite as large a share of practical independence as most of their neighbors. I was particularly impressed by the bold and independent air of the middle classes, the politeness with which even the lower orders address each other, and the absence of those petty and vexatious restraints which prevail in some of the German states. The constant dread of infringing upon the police regulations; the extraordinary deference with which men in uniform are regarded; the circumspect behavior at public places; the nice and well-regulated mirthfulness, never overstepping the strict bounds of prudence, which I had so often noticed in the northern parts of Germany, and which may in part be attributed to the naturally orderly and conservative character of the people, are by no means prominent features in the principal cities of Russia.

Soldiers, indeed, there are in abundance every where throughout the dominions of the Czar, and the constant rattle of musketry and clang of arms show that the liberty of the people is not altogether without limit.

CHAPTER IX. THE NOSE REGIMENT

I saw nothing in the line of military service that interested me more than the Imperial Guard. Without vouching for the truth of the whole story connected with the history of this famous regiment, I give it as related to me by Dominico, merely stating as a fact within my own observation that there is no question whatever about the peculiarity of their features. It seems that the Emperor Nicholas, shortly before the Crimean War, discovered by some means that the best fighting men in his dominions belonged to a certain wild tribe from the north, distinguished for the extreme ugliness of their faces. The most remarkable feature was the nose, which stood straight out from the base of the forehead in the form of a triangle, presenting in front the appearance of a double-barreled pistol. A stiff grizzly mustache underneath gave them a peculiarly ferocious expression, so that brave men quailed, and women and children fled from them in terror. The emperor gave orders that all men in the ranks possessed of these frightful noses should be brought before him. Finding, when they were mustered together, that there was not over one company, he caused a general average of the noses to be taken, from which he had a diagram carefully prepared and disseminated throughout the empire, calling upon the military commanders of the provinces to send him recruits corresponding with the prescribed formula.

In due time he was enabled to muster a thousand of these ferocious barbarians, whom he caused to be carefully drilled and disciplined. He kept them in St. Petersburg under his own immediate supervision till some time after the attack upon Sebastopol, when, finding the fortunes of war likely to go against him, he sent them down to the Crimea, with special instructions to the commander-in-chief to rely upon them in any emergency. In compliance with the imperial order, they were at once placed in the front ranks, and in a very few days had occasion to display their fighting qualities. At the very first onslaught of the enemy they stood their ground manfully till the French troops had approached within ten feet, when, with one accord, they took to their heels, and never stopped running till they were entirely out of sight. It was a disastrous day for the Russians. The commander-in-chief was overwhelmed with shame and mortification. A detachment of cavalry was dispatched in pursuit of the fugitives, who were finally arrested in their flight and brought back. "Cowards!" thundered the enraged commander, as they stood drawn up before him; "miserable poltroons! dastards! is this the way you do honor to your imperial master? Am I to report to his most potent majesty that, without striking one blow in his defense, you ran like sheep? Wretches, what have you to say for yourselves?"

"May it please your excellency," responded the men, firmly and with unblenched faces, "we ran away, it is true; but we are not cowards. On the contrary, sire, we are brave men, and fear neither man nor beast. But your excellency is aware that nature has gifted us with noses peculiarly open to unusual impressions. We have smelled all the smells known from the far North to the far South, from the stewed rats of Moscow to the carrion that lies mouldering upon the plains of the Crimea; but, if it please your highness, we never smelled Frenchmen before. There was an unearthly odor about them that filled our nostrils, and struck a mysterious terror into our souls."

"Fools!" roared the commander-in-chief, bursting with rage, "what you smelled was nothing more than garlic, to which these Frenchmen are addicted."

"Call it as you will," firmly responded the men with the noses, "it was too horrible to be endured. We are willing to die by the natural casualties of war, but not by unseen blasts of garlic, against which no human power can contend."

"Then," cried the commander, in tones of thunder, "I'll see that you die to-morrow by the natural casualties of war. You shall be put in the very front rank, and care shall be taken to have every man of you shot down the moment you undertake to run."

On the following day this rigorous order was carried into effect. The nose regiment was placed in front, and the battle opened with great spirit. The French troops swept down upon them like an avalanche. For an instant they looked behind, but, finding no hope of escape in that direction, each man of them suddenly grasped up a handful of mud, and, dashing it over his nostrils, shouted “Death, to the garlic-eaters!” and rushed against the enemy with indescribable ferocity. Never before were such prodigies of valor performed on the field of battle. The French went down like stricken reeds before the ferocious onslaught of the Imperial Guard. Their dead bodies lay piled in heaps on the bloody field. The fortunes of the day were saved, and, panting and bleeding, the men of Noses stood triumphantly in the presence of their chief. In an ecstasy of pride and delight he complimented them upon their valor, and pronounced them the brightest nosegay in his imperial majesty’s service, which name they have borne ever since.

CHAPTER X. THE EMPEROR'S BEAR-HUNT

The present emperor, Alexander III., is more distinguished for his liberal views respecting the rights of his subjects than for his military proclivities. In private life he is much beloved, and is said to be a man of very genial social qualities. His predominating passion in this relation is a love of hunting. I have been told that he is especially great on bears. With all your experience of this manly pastime in America, I doubt if you can form any conception of the bear-hunts in which the Autocrat of all the Russias has distinguished himself. Any body with nerve enough can kill a grizzly, but it requires both nerve and money to kill bears of any kind in the genuine autocratic style. By an imperial ukase it has been ordered that when any of the peasants or serfs discover a bear within twenty versts of the Moscow and St. Petersburg Railway, they must make known the fact to the proprietor of the estate, whose duty it is to communicate official information of the discovery to the corresponding secretary of the Czar. With becoming humility the secretary announces the tidings to his royal master, who directs him to advise the distant party that his majesty is much pleased, and will avail himself of his earliest leisure to proceed to the scene of action. In the mean time the entire available force of the estate is set to work to watch the bear, and from three to five hundred men, armed with cudgels, tin pans, old kettles, drums, etc., are stationed in a circle around him. Dogs also are employed upon this important service. The advance trains, under the direction of the master hunter, having deposited their stores of wines, cordials, and provisions, and telegraphic communications being transmitted to head-quarters from time to time, it is at length privately announced that his imperial majesty has condescended to honor the place with his presence, and, should the saints not prove averse, will be there with his royal party at the hour and on the day specified in the imperial dispatch. The grand convoy is then put upon the track; dispatches are transmitted to all the stations; officers, soldiers, and guards are required to be in attendance to do honor to their sovereign master – privately, of course, as this is simply an unofficial affair which nobody is supposed to know any thing about. The emperor, having selected his chosen few – that is to say, half a dozen princes, a dozen dukes, a score or two of counts and barons – all fine fellows and genuine bloods – proceeds unostentatiously to the *dépôt* in his hunting-carriage (a simple little affair, manufactured at a cost of only forty thousand rubles or so), where he is astonished to see a large concourse of admiring subjects, gayly interspersed with soldiers, all accidentally gathered there to see him off. Now hats are removed, bows are made, suppressed murmurs of delight run through the crowd; the locomotive whizzes and fizzes with impatience; bells are rung, arms are grounded; the princes, dukes, and barons – jolly fellows as they are – laugh and joke just like common people; bells ring again and whistles blow; a signal is made, and the Autocrat of all the Russias is off on his bear-hunt!

In an hour, or two or three hours, as the case may be, the royal hunters arrive at the destined station. Should the public business be pressing, it is not improbable the emperor, availing himself of the conveniences provided for him by Winans and Co., in whose magnificent present of a railway carriage he travels, has in the mean time dispatched a fleet of vessels to Finland, ten or a dozen extra regiments of Cossacks to Warsaw, closed upon terms for a loan of fifty millions, banished various objectionable parties to the deserts of Siberia, and partaken of a game or two of whist with his camarilla.

But now the important affair of the day is at hand – the bear – the terrible black bear, which every body is fully armed and equipped to kill, but which every body knows by instinct is going to be killed by the emperor, because of his majesty's superior skill and courage on trying occasions of this sort. What a blessing it is to possess such steadiness of nerve! I would not hesitate one moment to attack the most ferocious grizzly in existence if I felt half as much confidence in my ability to

kill it. But the carriages are waiting; the horses are prancing; the hunters are blowing their bugles; the royal party are mounting on horseback or in their carriages, as best may suit their taste, and the signal is given! A salute is fired by the Guard, huzzas ring through the air, and the Czar of all the Russias is fairly off on his hunt. Trees fly by; desert patches of ground whirl from under; versts are as nothing to these spirited steeds and their spirited masters, and in an hour or so the grand scene of action is reached. Here couriers stand ready to conduct the imperial hunters into the very jaws of death. The noble proprietor himself, bareheaded, greets the royal pageant; the serfs bow down in Oriental fashion; the dashing young Czar touches his hunting-cap in military style and waves his hand gallantly to the ladies of the household, who are peeping at him from their carriages in the distance. Once more the bugle is sounded, and away they dash – knights, nobles, and all – the handsome and gallant Czar leading the way by several lengths. Soon the terrific cry is heard – “Halt! the bear! the bear! Halt!” Shut your eyes, reader, for you never can stand such a sight as that – a full-grown black bear, not two hundred yards off, in the middle of an open space, surrounded by five hundred men hidden behind trees and driving him back from every point where he attempts to escape. You don’t see the men, but you hear them shouting and banging upon their pots, pans, and kettles. Now just open one eye and see the emperor dismount from his famous charger, and deliver the rein to a dozen domestics, deliberately cock his rifle, and fearlessly get behind the nearest tree within the range of the bear. By this time you perceive that Bruin is dancing a *pas seul* on his hind legs, utterly confounded with the noises around him. Shut your eyes again, for the emperor is taking his royal aim, and will presently crack away with his royal rifle. Hist! triggers are clicking around you in every direction, but you needn’t be the least afraid, for, although the bear is covered by a reserve of forty rifles, not one of the hunters has nerve enough to shoot unless officially authorized or personally desirous of visiting the silver-mines of Siberia. Crack! thug! The smoke clears away. By Jove! his imperial majesty has done it cleverly; hit the brute plumb on the os frontis, or through the heart, it makes no difference which. Down drops Bruin, kicking and tearing up the earth at a dreadful rate; cheers rend the welkin; pots, pans, and kettles are banged. High above all rises the stern voice of the autocrat, calling for another rifle, which is immediately handed to him. Humanity requires that he should at once put an end to the poor animal’s sufferings, and he does it with his accustomed skill.

Now the bear having kicked his last, an intrepid hunter charges up to the spot on horseback, whirls around it two or three times, carefully examines the body with an opera-glass, returns, and, approaching the royal presence with uncovered head, delivers himself according to this formula: “May it please your most gallant and imperial majesty, THE BEAR IS DEAD!” The emperor sometimes responds, “Is he?” but usually contents himself by waving his hand in an indifferent manner, puffing his cigar, and calling for his horse. Sixteen grooms immediately rush forward with his majesty’s horse; and, being still young and vigorous, he mounts without difficulty, unaided except by Master of Stirrups. Next he draws an ivory-handled revolver – a present from Colt, of New York – and, dashing fearlessly upon the bear, fires six shots into the dead body; upon which he coolly dismounts, and pulling forth from the breast of his hunting-coat an Arkansas bowie-knife – a present from the poet Albert Pike, of Little Rock – plunges that dangerous weapon into the bowels of the dead bear; then rising to his full height, with a dark and stern countenance, he holds the blood-dripping blade high in the air, so that all may see it, and utters one wild stentorian and terrific shout, “Harasho! harasho!” signifying in English, “Good! very well!” The cry is caught up by the princes and nobles, who, with uncovered heads, now crowd around their gallant emperor, and waving their hats, likewise shout “Harasho! harasho!” – “Good! very well!” Then the five hundred peasants rush in with their tin pans, kettles, and drums, and amid the most amazing din catch up the inspiring strain, and deafen every ear with their wild shouts of “Harasho! harasho!” – “Good! very well!” Upon which the emperor, rapidly mounting, places a finger in each ear, and, still puffing his cigar, rides triumphantly away.

The bear is hastily gutted and dressed with flowers. When all is ready the royal party return to the railroad dépôt in a long procession, headed by his majesty, and brought up in the rear by

the dead body of Bruin borne on poles by six-and-twenty powerful serfs. Refreshments in the mean time have been administered to every body of high and low degree, and by the time they reach the dépôt there are but two sober individuals in the entire procession – his royal majesty and the bear. Farther refreshments are administered all round during the journey back to St. Petersburg, and, notwithstanding he is rigidly prohibited by his physician from the use of stimulating beverages, it is supposed that a reaction has now taken place, which renders necessary a modification of the medical ukase. At all events, I am told the bear is sometimes the only really steady member of the party by the time the imperial pageant reaches the palace. When the usual ceremonies of congratulation are over, a merry dance winds up the evening. After this the company disperses to prayer and slumber, and thus ends the great bear-hunt of his majesty the Autocrat of all the Russias.

CHAPTER XI. RUSSIAN HUMOR

The Russians have little or no humor, though they are not deficient in a certain grotesque savagery bordering on the humorous. There is something fearfully vicious in the royal freaks of fancy of which Russian history furnishes us so many examples. We read with a shudder of the facetious compliment paid to the Italian architect by Ivan the Terrible, who caused the poor man's eyes to be put out that he might never see to build another church so beautiful as that of St. Basil. We can not but smile at the grim humor of Peter the Great, who, upon seeing a crowd of men with wigs and gowns at Westminster Hall, and being informed that they were lawyers, observed that he had but two in his whole empire, and he believed he would hang one of them as soon as he got home. A still more striking though less ghastly freak of fancy was that perpetrated by the Empress Anne of Courland, who, on the occasion of the marriage of her favorite buffoon, Galitzin, caused a palace of ice to be built, with a bed of the same material, in which she compelled the happy pair to pass their wedding night. The Empress Catharine II., a Pomeranian by birth, but thoroughly Russian in her morals, possessed a more ardent temperament. What time she did not spend in gratifying her ambition by slaughtering men, she spent in loving them:

“For, though she would widow all
Nations, she liked man as an individual.”

She never dismissed an old admirer until she had secured several new ones, and generally consoled those who had served her by a present of twenty or thirty thousand serfs. On the death of Lanskoï, it is recorded of her that “she gave herself up to the most poignant grief, and remained three months without going out of her palace of Czarsko Selo,” thus perpetrating a very curious practical satire upon the holiest of human affections. Her grenadier lover Potemkin, according to the character given of him by the Count Ségur, was little better than a gigantic and savage buffoon – licentious and superstitious, bold and timid by turns – sometimes desiring to be King of Poland, at others a bishop or a monk. Of him we read that “he put out an eye to free it from a blemish which diminished his beauty. Banished by his rival, he ran to meet death in battle, and returned with glory.” Another pleasant little jest was that perpetrated by Suwarow, who, after the bloody battle of Tourtourskaya, announced the result to his mistress in an epigram of two doggerel lines. This was the terrible warrior who used to sleep almost naked in a room of suffocating heat, and rush out to review his troops in a linen jacket, with the thermometer of Reaumur ten degrees below freezing point. Of the Emperor Paul, the son of Catharine, we read that he issued a ukase against the use of shoe-strings and round hats; caused all the watch-boxes, gates, and bridges throughout the empire to be painted in the most glaring and fantastic colors, and passed a considerable portion of his time riding on a wooden rocking-horse – a degenerate practice for a scion of the bold Catharine, who used to dress herself in men's clothes, and ride a-straddle on the back of a live horse to review her troops. Alexander I., in his ukase of September, 1827, perpetrated a very fine piece of Russian humor. The period of military service for serfs is fixed at twenty years in the Imperial Guard, and twenty-two in other branches of the service. It is stated in express terms that the moment a serf becomes enrolled in the ranks of the army he is free! But he must not desert, for if he does he becomes a slave again. This idea of freedom is really refreshing. Only twenty or twenty-two years of the gentle restraints of Russian military discipline to be enjoyed after becoming a free agent! Then he may go off (at the age of fifty or sixty, say), unless disease or gunpowder has carried him off long before, to enjoy the sweets of hard labor in some agreeable desert, or the position of a watchman on the frontiers of Siberia, where the climate is probably considered salubrious.

These may be considered royal or princely vagaries, in which great people are privileged to indulge; but I think it will be found that the same capricious savagery of humor – if I may so call it – prevails to some extent among all classes of Russians. In some instances it can scarcely be associated with any idea of mirthfulness, yet in the love of strange, startling, and incongruous ideas there is something bordering on the humorous. On Recollection Monday, for example, the mass of the people go out into the grave-yards, and, spreading table-cloths on the mounds that cover the dead bodies of their relatives, drink quass and vodka to the health of the deceased, saying, “Since the dead are unable to drink, the living must drink for them!” Rather a grave excuse, one must think, for intoxication.

In the museum of Peter the Great at St. Petersburg stands the stuffed skin of his favorite servant – a gigantic Holsteiner – one of the most ghastly of all the grotesque and ghastly relics in that remarkable institution. It is not a very agreeable subject for the pencil of an artist, yet there is something so original in the idea of stuffing a human being and putting him up for exhibition before the public that I am constrained to introduce the following sketch of this strange spectacle.

In one of the arsenals is an eagle made of gun-flints, with swords for wings, daggers for feathers, and the mouths of cannons for eyes. A painting of the Strelitzes, in another, represents heaven as containing the Russian priests and all the faithful; while the other place – a region of fire and brimstone – contains Jews, Tartars, Germans, and negroes!

The winter markets of Moscow and St. Petersburg present some of the most cadaverous specimens of the startling humor in which the Russians delight. Here you find frozen oxen, calves, sheep, rabbits, geese, ducks, and all manner of animals and birds, once animate with life, now stiff and stark in death. The oxen stand staring at you with their fixed eyes and gory carcasses; the calves are jumping or frisking in skinless innocence; the sheep ba-a at you with open mouths, or cast sheep’s-eyes at the by-passers; the rabbits, having traveled hundreds of miles, are jumping, or running, or turning somersaults in frozen tableaux to keep themselves warm, and so on with every variety of flesh, fowl, and even fish. The butchers cut short these expressive practical witticisms by means of saws, as one might saw a block of wood; and the saw-dust, which is really frozen flesh and blood in a powdered state, is gathered up in baskets and carried away by the children and ragamuffins to be made into soup.

I can conceive of nothing humorous in these people which is not associated in some way with the cruel and the grotesque. They have many noble and generous traits, but lack delicacy of feeling. Where the range of the thermometer is from a hundred to a hundred and fifty degrees of Fahrenheit, their character must partake in some sort of the qualities of the climate – fierce, rigorous, and pitiless in its wintry aspect, and without the compensating and genial tenderness of spring; fitful and passionate as the scorching heats of summer, and dark, stormy, and dreary as the desolation of autumn.

I could not but marvel, as I sat in some of the common traktirs, at the extraordinary affection manifested by the Russians for cats. It appeared to me that the proprietors must keep a feline corps expressly for the amusement of their customers. At one of these places I saw at least forty cats, of various breeds, from the confines of Tartary to the city of Paris. They were up on the tables, on the benches, on the floor, under the benches, on the backs of the tea-drinkers, in their laps, in their arms – every where. I strongly suspected that they answered the purpose of waiters, and that the owner relied upon them to keep the plates clean. Possibly, too, they were made available as musicians. I have a notion the Russians entertain the same superstitious devotion to cats that the Banyans of India do to cows, and the French and Germans to nasty little poodles. To see a great shaggy boor, his face dripping with grease, his eyes swimming in vodka, sit all doubled up, fondling and caressing these feline pets; holding them in his hands; pressing their velvety fur to his eyes, cheeks, even his lips; listening with delight to their screams and squalls, is indeed a curious spectacle.

Now I have no unchristian feeling toward any of the brute creation, but I don’t affect cats. Nor can I say that I greatly enjoy their music. I heard the very best bands of tom-cats every night during my sojourn in Moscow, and consider them utterly deficient in style and execution. It belongs, I think,

to the Music of Futurity, so much discussed by the critics of Europe during the past few years – a peculiar school of anti-melody that requires people yet to be born to appreciate it thoroughly. The discords may be very fine, and the passion very striking and tempestuous, but it is worse than thrown away on an uncultivated ear like mine.

CHAPTER XII. A MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE

The police of Moscow are not an attractive class of men, considering them in the light of guardians of the law. With a good deal of pomposity and laziness, they mingle much filth and rascality. The emperor may have great confidence in them, based upon some knowledge of their talents and virtues not shared by casual tourists; but if he would trust one of them with ten kopeks, or agree to place the life of any intimate personal friend in their keeping, in any of the dark alleys of Moscow, his faith in their integrity and humanity must be greater than mine. Indeed, upon casting around me in search of a parallel, I am not quite sure that I ever saw such a scurvy set of vagabonds employed to preserve the public peace in any other country, except, perhaps, in Spain. The guardians of the law in Cadiz and Seville are dark and forbidding enough in all conscience, and unscrupulous enough to turn a penny in any way not requiring the exercise of personal energy; and the police of Barcelona are not inferior in all that constitutes moral turpitude, but they can not surpass the Moscovites in filthiness of person or any of the essential attributes of villainy.

I have it upon good authority that they are the very worst set of thieves in the place, and that they will not hesitate to unite with any midnight prowler for the purpose of robbing a stranger. True, they did not rob me, but the reason of that is obvious. I gave them to understand at the start that I was connected with the press. You seldom hear of a writer for newspapers being robbed; and if such a thing ever does happen, the amount taken is never large.

As a consequence of this proclivity for ill-gotten gains on the part of the guardians of the law, it is unsafe for a stranger to go through the less frequented streets of Moscow at night. Should he chance to be stopped by two or three footpads and call for help, he will doubtless wake up some drowsy guardian of the law, but the help will be all against him. Instances have been related to me of robberies in which the police were the most active assailants, the robbers merely standing by for their share of the plunder. Should the unfortunate victim knock down a footpad or two in self-defense, it is good ground for an arrest, and both robbers and policemen become witnesses against him. A man had better get involved in a question of title to his property before the courts of California than be arrested for assault and battery, and carried before any of the civil tribunals in Russia. There is no end of the law's delays in these institutions, and his only chance of justice is to get his case before the emperor, who is practically the Supreme Court of the empire. Otherwise the really aggrieved party must pay a fine for defending himself, and support the assaulted man, whose nose he may have battered, during an unlimited period at the hospital, together with physician's fees for all the real or imaginary injuries inflicted. I met with a young American who was followed by a stalwart ruffian one night in returning from one of the public gardens. The man dogged his footsteps for some time. At length, there being nobody near to render aid, the robber mustered courage enough to seize hold and attempt to intimidate his supposed victim by brandishing a knife. He came from a country where they were not uncommon, and, besides, was an adept on the shoulder. With a sudden jerk he freed himself, and, hauling off a little, gave his assailant a note of hand that knocked him down. I am not versed in the classics of the ring, or I would make something out of this fight. The pad dropped like a stricken ox, his knife flying picturesquely through the silvery rays of the moon. Next moment he was on his feet again, the claret shining beautifully on his cheeks and beard. Throwing out his claws like a huge grizzly, he rushed in, gnashing his teeth and swearing horribly. This time our friend was fairly aroused, and the wretch promptly measured his length on the ground. Thinking he had scattered it on rather heavy, the American stooped down to see how matters stood, when the fellow grasped him by the coat and commenced shouting with all his might for the police – "Help! help! murder! murder!" There was no remedy but to silence him, which our friend dexterously accomplished by a blow on

the os frontis. Hearing the approaching footsteps of the police, he then concluded it was best to make his escape, and accordingly took to his heels. Chase was given, but he was as good at running as he was at the noble art of self-defense, and soon distanced his pursuers. Fortunately, he reached his quarters without being recognised. This was all that saved him from arrest and imprisonment, or the payment of a fine for the assault.

A common practice, as I was informed, is to arrest a stranger for some alleged breach of the law, such as smoking a cigar in the streets, or using disrespectful language toward the constituted authorities. Not being accustomed to the intricacies of a Russian judiciary, it is difficult, when once the matter comes before a tribunal of justice, for a foreigner to rebut the testimony brought against him; and if he be in a hurry to get away, his only course is to bribe the parties interested in his detention. It would be unjust to say that this system prevails universally throughout Russia. There is a small circle around the imperial presence said to be exempt from corruption; and there may possibly be a few dignitaries of the government, in remote parts of the empire, who will not tell an untruth unless in their official correspondence, or steal except to make up what they consider due to them for public services; but the circle of immaculate ones is very small, and commences very near the Czar, and the other exceptions referred to are exceedingly rare. Thieving may be said to begin within gunshot of the capital, and to attain its culminating excellences on the confines of Tartary. The difference is only in degree between the higher and the lower grades of officers. Hence, although it is quite possible to obtain full reparation for an injury before the Czar, through the intervention of a consul or a minister, it is a vexatious and expensive mode of proceeding, and would only result at last in the transportation of some miserable wretch to the mines of Siberia. Of course no man with a spark of feeling would like to see a poor fellow-creature go there. For my part, I would rather suffer any amount of injustice than be the cause of sending a fellow-mortal on so long and dreary a journey.

The whole bearing of which you will presently discover. I am going to tell you a very singular adventure that befell me in Moscow. Do not be impatient; it will all come in due time. A few dashes of preliminary description will be necessary, by way of introduction, otherwise it would be impossible to comprehend the full scope and purpose of my narrative. If you be of the rougher mould, cherished reader, just cast yourself back somewhere at your ease, take this most excellently printed book deftly between your fingers, with a good cigar between your teeth; throw your legs over your desk, a gunny-bag, a fence-rail, or the mantel-piece of the bar-room, as the case may be; give me the benefit of your friendship and confidence, and read away at your leisure. But if you be one of those gentle beings placed upon earth to diffuse joy and happiness over the desert of life, I pray you consider me a serf at your imperial foot-stool; bend on me those tender eyes; and with the mingled respect and admiration due by all men to female loveliness, I shall proceed at once to tell you (confidentially of course)

A MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE

It so happened in Moscow that I fell in with a very pleasant and sociable party of Americans, several of whom were in the railway service, and therefore might reasonably be regarded as fast young gentlemen, though far be it from me to imply any thing injurious to their reputation. Beyond an excessive passion for tea, acquired by long residence in Moscow, I do not know that a single one of them was at all dissipated. When I first called at the rooms of these lively countrymen, they immediately got out their tea-urns, and assured me that it would be impossible to comprehend any thing of Russian life till I had partaken freely of Russian tea, therefore I was obliged to drink five or six glasses by way of a beginning. Having freely discussed the affairs of the American nation at one room, we adjourned to another, where we had a fresh supply of tea; and then, after settling the rebellion to our common satisfaction, adjourned to another, and so on throughout the best part of the day. Sometimes we stopped in at a *traktir* and had a portion or two, dashed with a little Cognac, which my friends assured me would prevent it from having any injurious effect upon the nervous system. In this way, within a period of twelve hours, owing to the kindness and hospitality of these agreeable Americans, who insisted upon treating me to tea, in public and in private, at every turn of our rambles,

I must have swallowed a gallon or two of this delicious beverage. The weather was exceedingly warm, but these experienced gentlemen insisted upon it that Russian tea was a sovereign antidote for warm weather, especially when dashed with Cognac, as it drove all the caloric out of the body through the pores of the skin. “Don’t be afraid!” said they, encouragingly; “drink just as much as you please – it will cool you! See how the Russians drink it. Nothing else enables them to stand these fiery hot summers after their polar winters!” Well, I didn’t feel exactly cool, with thirty or forty tumblers of boiling hot tea, dashed with Cognac, in my veins, but what was the use of remonstrating? They *lived* in Moscow – they *knew* better than I did what was good for strangers – so I kept on swallowing a little more, just to oblige them, till I verily believe, had any body stuck a pin in me, or had I undertaken to make a speech, I would have spouted Russian tea.

Why is it that the moment any body wants to render you a service, or manifest some token of friendship, he commences by striking at the very root of your digestive functions? Is it not exacting a little too much of human nature to require a man to consider himself a large sponge, in order that hospitality may be poured into him by the gallon? When a person of pliant and amiable disposition visits a set of good fellows, and they take some trouble to entertain him; when they think they are delighting him internally and externally – not to say infernally – with such tea as he never drank before, it is hard to refuse. The moral courage necessary for the peremptory rejection of such advances would make a hero. Thus it has ever been with me – I am the victim of misplaced hospitality. It has been the besetting trouble of my life. I remember once eating a Nantucket pudding to oblige a lady. It was made of corn-meal and molasses, with some diabolical compound in the way of sauce – possibly whale-oil and tar. I had just eaten a hearty dinner; but the lady insisted upon it that the pudding was a great dish in Nantucket, and I must try it. Well, I stuffed and gagged at it, out of pure politeness, till every morsel on the plate was gone, declaring all the time that it was perfectly delicious. The lady was charmed, and, in the face of every denial, instantly filled the plate again. What could I do but eat it? And after eating till I verily believe one half of me was composed of Nantucket pudding, and the other half of whale-oil and tar, what could I do but praise it again? The third attempt upon my life was made by this most excellent and hospitable lady; but I gave way, and had to beg off. Human nature could stand it no longer. The consequence was, I wounded her feelings. She regretted very much that I disliked Nantucket pudding, and I don’t think ever quite forgave me for my prejudice against that article of diet, though her kindness laid me up sick for two weeks. Nor is this an isolated case. I might relate a thousand others in illustration of the melancholy fact that hospitality has been the bane of my life. When I think of all the sufferings I have endured out of mere politeness – though by no means accounted a polite person – tears of grief and indignation spring to my eyes. Old John Rogers at the stake never suffered such martyrdom. But there is an end of it! The *tchai* of Moscow finished all this sort of thing – so far, at least, as the male sex is concerned. I would still eat a coyote or a weasel to oblige a lady, but as to drinking two gallons of strong tea per day, dashed with Cognac to reduce its temperature, to oblige any man that ever wore a beard, I solemnly declare I’ll die first. The thing is an imposition – an outrage. Every man has a right to my time, my purse, my real estate in Oakland, my coat, my boots, or my razor – nay, in a case of emergency, my tooth-brush – but no man has a right to deluge my diaphragm with slops, or make a ditch of Mundus of my stomach.

At the Peterskoi Gardens we had a little more tea, dashed with *vodka*, to keep out the night air. As soon as the fire-works were over we adjourned to the pavilion, and refreshed ourselves with a little more tea slightly impregnated with some more *vodka*. Now I don’t know exactly what this vodka is made of, but I believe it is an extract of corn. In the Russian language *voda* is water, and *vodka* means “little water.” There certainly was very little in what we got, or the tea must have been stronger than usual, for, notwithstanding these agreeable young gentlemen protested a gallon of such stuff would not produce the slightest effect, it seemed to me – though there might have been some delusion in the idea, arising from ignorance of Russian customs – that my head went round like a whirligig; and by the time I took my leave of these experienced young friends and retired to my room at the *Hotel de*

Venise, it did likewise occur to me – though that too may have been a mere notion – that there was a hive of bees in each ear. Upon due consideration of all the facts, I thought it best to turn in, and resume any inquiries that might be necessary for the elucidation of these phenomena in the morning.

[Here, you perceive, I am gradually verging toward the adventure. The heroine of the romance has not yet made her appearance, but depend upon it she is getting ready. You should never hurry the female characters; besides, it is not proper, even if this were all fiction instead of sober truth, that the heroine should be brought upon the stage just as the hero is tumbling into bed.]

But to proceed. Sleep was effectually banished from my eyes, and no wonder. Who in the name of sense could sleep with forty tumblers of Russian tea – to say nothing of the dashes that were put in it – simmering through every nook and cranny of his body, and boiling over in his head? There I lay, twisting and tumbling, the pillow continually descending into the depths of infinity, but never getting any where – the bed rolling like a dismantled hulk upon a stormy sea – the room filled with steaming and hissing urns – a fearful thirst parching my throat, while myriads of horrid bearded Russians were torturing me with tumblers of boiling-hot tea dashed with *vodka*– thus I lay a perfect victim of tea. I could even see Chinamen with long queues picking tea-leaves off endless varieties of shrubs that grew upon the papered walls; and Kalmuck Tartars, with their long caravans, traversing the dreary steppes of Tartary laden with inexhaustible burdens of the precious leaf; and the great fair of Nijni Novgorod, with its booths, and tents, and countless boxes of tea, and busy throngs of traders and tea-merchants, all passing like a panorama before me, and all growing naturally out of an indefinite background of tea.

I can not distinctly remember how long I tossed about in this way, beset by all sorts of vagaries. Sometimes I fancied sleep had come, and that the whole matter was a ridiculous freak of fancy, including my visit to Moscow – that Russian tea was all a fiction, and *vodka* a mere nightmare; but with a nervous start I would find myself awake, the palpable reality of my extraordinary condition staring me in the face. Unable to endure such an anomalous frame of mind and body any longer, I at length resolved to go down and take an airing in the streets, believing, if any thing would have a beneficial effect, it would be the fresh air. Acting upon this idea, I hastily dressed myself and descended to the front door. The *Hotel de Venise* is situated in a central part of the city, at no great distance from the Kremlin. It stands back in a large open yard, with a very pretty garden to the right as you enter from the main street. The proprietor is a Russian, but the hotel is conducted in the French style, and, although not more conspicuous for cleanliness than other establishments of the same class in Moscow, it is nevertheless tolerably free from vermin. The fleas in it were certainly neither so lively nor so entertaining as I have found them at many of the Spanish ranches in California, and the bugs, I am sure, are nothing like so corpulent as some I have seen in Washington City. I throw this in gratis, as a sort of puff, in consideration of an understanding with the landlord, that if he would refrain from cheating me I would recommend his hotel to American travelers. It is very good of its kind, and no person fond of veal, as a standard dish, can suffer from hunger at this establishment so long as calves continue to be born any where in the neighborhood of Moscow.

The porter, a drowsy old fellow in livery, whose only business, so far as I could discover, was to bow to the guests as they passed in and out during the day, at the expense of a kopek to each one of them for every bow, napping on a lounge close by the front door. Hearing my footsteps, he awoke, rubbed his eyes, bowed habitually, and then stared at me with a vacant and somewhat startled expression. It was not a common thing evidently for lodgers to go out of the hotel at that time of night, or rather morning – it must have been nearly two o'clock – for, after gazing a while at what he doubtless took to be an apparition or an absconding boarder whose bill had not been settled, he grumbled out something like a dissent, and stood between me and the door. A small fee of ten kopeks, which I placed in his hand, aided him in grasping at the mysteries of the case, and he unlocked the door and let me out, merely shaking his head gravely, as if he divined my purpose, but did not

altogether approve of it in one of my age and sedate appearance. In that, however, he was mistaken: I had no disposition to form any tender alliances in Moscow.

The streets were almost deserted. An occasional drosky, carrying home some belated pleasure-seeker, was all that disturbed the silence. I walked some distance in the direction of the Kremlin. The air was deliciously cool and refreshing, and the sky wore a still richer glow than I had noticed a few hours before at the gardens of the Peterskoi. The moon had not yet gone down, but the first glowing blushes of the early morning were stealing over the heavens, mingled with its silvery light. I took off my hat to enjoy the fresh air, and wandered along quite enchanted with the richness and variety of the scene. Every turn of the silent streets brought me in view of some gilded pile of cupolas, standing in glowing relief against the sky. Churches of strange Asiatic form, the domes richly and fancifully colored; golden stars glittering upon a groundwork of blue, green, or yellow; shrines with burning tapers over the massive doors and gateways, were scattered in every direction in the most beautiful profusion. Sometimes I saw a solitary beggar kneeling devoutly before some gilded saint, and mourning over the weariness of life. Once I was startled by the apparition of a poor wretch lying asleep – I thought he was dead – a crippled wreck upon the stone steps – his eyes closed in brief oblivion of the world and its sorrows, his furrowed and pallid features a ghastly commentary upon the glittering temples and idols that surround him. For above all these things that are “decked with silver and with gold, and fastened with nails and with hammers that they move not,” there is One who hath “made the earth by His power and established the world by His wisdom;” man is but brutish in his knowledge; “every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.” Such extremes every where abound in Moscow – magnificence and filth; wealth and poverty; a superstitious belief in the power of images in the midst of abject proofs of their impotence. And yet, is it not better that men should believe in something rather than in nothing? The glittering idol can not touch the crippled beggar and put health and strength in his limbs, but if the poor sufferer can sleep better upon the cold stones in the presence of his patron saint than elsewhere, in charity’s name let him,

“O’erlabored with his being’s strife
Shrink to that sweet forgetfulness of life.”

I wandered on. Soon the cupolas of the mighty Kremlin were in sight, all aglow with the bright sheen of the morn. Passing along its embattled walls, which now seemed of snowy whiteness, I reached the grand plaza of the Krasnoi Ploschod. Standing out in the open space, I gazed at the wondrous pile of gold-covered domes till my eyes rested on the highest point – the majestic tower of Ivan Veliki. And then I could but think of the terrible Czar – the fourth of the fierce race of Ivans, who ruled the destinies of Russia; he who killed his own son in a fit of rage, yet never shook hands with a foreign ambassador without washing his own immediately after; the patron of monasteries, and the conqueror of Kazan, Astrakan, and Siberia. This was the most cruel yet most enlightened of his name. I am not sure whether the tower was built to commemorate his fame or that of his grandfather, Ivan the Third, also called “the Terrible,” of whom Karasmin says that, “when excited with anger, his glance would make a timid woman swoon; that petitioners dreaded to approach his throne, and that even at his table the boyars, his grandees, trembled before him.” A terrible fellow, no doubt, and thoroughly Russian by the testimony of this Russian historian, for where else will you find men so terrible as to make timid women swoon by a single glance of their eye? Not in California, surely! If I were a Czar this soft summer night (such was the idea that naturally occurred to me), I would gaze upon the fair flowers of creation with an entirely different expression of countenance. They should neither wilt nor swoon unless overcome by the delicacy and tenderness of my admiration.

From the green towers of the Holy Gate, where neither Czar nor serf can enter without uncovering his head, I turned toward the Vassoli Blagennoi – the wondrous maze of churches that

gathers around the Cathedral of St. Basil. Not in all Moscow is there a sight so strange and gorgeous as this. The globular domes, all striped with the varied colors of the rainbow; the glittering gold-gilt cupolas; the rare and fanciful minarets; the shrines, and crosses, and stars; the massive steps; the iron railing, with shining gold-capped points – surely, in the combination of striking and picturesque forms and colors, lights and shades, must ever remain unequalled. The comparison may seem frivolous, yet it resembled more, to my eye, some gigantic cactus of the tropics, with its needles and rich colors, its round, prickly domes and fantastic cupolas, than any thing I had ever seen before in the shape of a church or group of churches. While I gazed in wonder at the strange fabric, I could not but think again of Ivan the Terrible; by whose order it was built; and how, when the architect (an Italian) was brought before him, trembling with awe, the mighty Ivan expressed his approval of the performance, and demanded if he, the architect, could build another equally strange and beautiful; to which the poor Italian, elated with joy, answered that he could build another even stranger and more beautiful than this; and then how the ferocious and unprincipled Czar had the poor fellow's eyes put out to prevent him from building another.

But this is not the adventure. I have nothing to do at present with the Church of St. Basil or Ivan the Terrible except in so far as they affected my imagination. The business on hand is to tell you how the dire catastrophe happened.

Bewildered at length with gazing at all these wonderful sights, I turned to retrace my steps to the hotel. A few droskies were still plying on the principal thoroughfares, and now and then I met gay parties trudging homeward after their night's dissipation; but I soon struck into the less frequented streets, where a dreary silence reigned. There was something very sad and solitary in the reverberation of my footsteps. For the first time it occurred to me that there was not much security here for life, in case of a covert attack from some of those footpads said to infest the city. I began to reflect upon the experience of my young American friend, and regret that it had not occurred to me before I left the hotel. You may think this very weak and foolish, good friends, surrounded as you are by all the safeguards of law and order, and living in a country where men are never knocked on the head of nights – with occasional exceptions; but I can assure you it is a very natural feeling in a strange, half-barbarous city like Moscow, where one doesn't understand the language. Had I been well versed in Russian, the probability is I should not have felt the least alarmed; but a man experiences a terrible sensation of loneliness when he expects every moment to be knocked on the head without being able to say a word in his own defense. Had my guide, Dominico, been with me, I should not have felt quite so helpless – though I never had much confidence in his courage – for he could at least have demanded an explanation, or, if the worst came to the worst, helped me to run away. The fact is – and there is no use attempting to disguise it – I began to feel a nervous apprehension that something was going to happen. I was startled at my own shadow, and was even afraid to whistle with any view of keeping up my spirits, lest something unusually florid in my style of whistling might lead to the supposition that I was from California, and therefore a good subject for robbery.

Which, by the way, puts me in mind of a remarkable fact, well worth mentioning. The State of California owes me, at the least calculation, two hundred dollars, paid in sums varying from six kreutzers up to a pound sterling to hotel-keepers, porters, lackeys, and professional gentlemen throughout Europe, exclusively on the ground of my citizenship in that state. In Paris – in Spain – in Africa – in Germany (with the exceptions of the beer-houses and country inns), I had to pay a heavy percentage upon the capital invested in my gold mines solely on the presumption that no man could come from so rich a country without carrying off a good deal of treasure on his person, like the carcass that carried the diamonds out of the rich valley for Sinbad the Sailor. Yet I never could forego the pleasure of announcing myself as an ambassador to foreign parts from that noble state, commissioned by the sovereigns generally to furnish them with the latest improvements in morals, fashions, and manners for the public benefit – an extremely onerous and responsible duty, which I have executed, and shall continue to execute, with the most rigid fidelity.

After walking quite far enough to have reached the hotel, I became confused at the winding of the streets. The neighborhood was strange. I could not discover any familiar sign or object. The houses were low, mean, and dark looking; the street was narrow and roughly paved. I walked a little farther, then turned into another street still more obscure, and, following that for some distance, brought up amid a pile of ruined walls. There could no longer be a doubt that I had missed the way, and was not likely to find it in this direction. It was a very suspicious quarter into which I had strayed. Every thing about it betokened poverty and crime. I began to feel rather uneasy, but it would not do to stand here among the ruins as a mark for any midnight prowler who might be lurking around. Turning off in a new direction, I took a by-street, which appeared to lead to an open space. As I picked my way over the masses of rubbish, a dark figure crossed in front, and disappeared in the shadow of a wall. I was entirely unarmed. What was to be done? Perhaps the man might be able to tell me the way to my lodgings; but I could not speak a word of Russian, as before stated, and, besides, was rather averse to making acquaintance with strangers. After a moment's reflection, I walked on, cautiously and distrustfully enough, for the notion was uppermost in my mind that this fellow was not there for any good purpose. As I passed the spot where he had disappeared, I looked suspiciously around, but he did not make his appearance. With a few hasty strides I readied the open space – a vacant lot, it seemed, caused by a recent fire. The houses were burnt down, and nothing but a blackened mass of beams, rafters, and ashes covered the ground. The only exit was through a narrow alley. Before entering this, I looked back and saw the same figure stealthily following me. On I went as rapidly as I could walk. Closer and closer came the figure. He was a man of gigantic stature, and was probably armed. Soon I heard the heavy tramp of his feet within a few paces. It was evident I must either run or stand my ground. Perhaps, if I had known what direction to take, or could have placed more reliance upon my knees, which were greatly weakened by tea, I might have chosen the former alternative, inglorious as it may seem; but, under the circumstances, I resolved to stand. Facing around suddenly, with my back to the wall, I called to the ruffian to stand off, as he valued his life. He halted within a few feet, evidently a little disconcerted at my sudden determination to make battle. His face was the most brutal I had over seen; a filthy mass of beard nearly covered it; two piercing white eyes glistened beneath the leaf of his greasy cap; a coarse blouse, gathered around the waist by a leather belt, and boots that reached nearly to his hips, were the most striking articles of his costume. For a moment he gazed at me, as if uncertain what to do; then brushed slowly past, with the design, no doubt, of ascertaining if I was armed. I could not see whether he carried any deadly weapons himself; but a man of his gigantic stature needed none to be a very unequal opponent in a struggle with one whose most sanguinary conflicts had hitherto been on paper, and who had never wielded a heavier weapon than a pen.

Proceeding on his way, however, the ruffian, after going about a hundred yards, disappeared in some dark recess in among the houses on one side. I continued on, taking care to keep in the middle of the alley. As I approached the spot where the man had disappeared, I heard several voices, and then the terrible truth flashed upon me that there must be a gang of them. I now saw no alternative but to turn back and run for my life. It was an inglorious thing to do, no doubt, but which of you, my friends, would not have done the same thing?

Scarcely had I started under full headway when three or four men rushed out in pursuit. I will not attempt to disguise the fact that the ground passed under my feet pretty rapidly; and the probability is, the hostile party would have been distanced in less than ten minutes but for an unfortunate accident. It was necessary to cross the ruins already described. Here, in the recklessness of my flight, I stumbled over a beam, and fell prostrate in a pile of ashes. Before I could regain my feet the ruffians were upon me. While two of them held my arms, the third clapped his dirty hand over my mouth, and in this way they dragged me back into the alley. As soon as they had reached the dark archway from which they had originally started, they knocked at a door on one side. This was quickly opened, and I was thrust into a large room, dimly lighted with rude lamps of grease hung upon the walls. When they

first got hold of me, I confess the sensation was not pleasant. What would the Emperor Alexander say when he heard that a citizen of California had been murdered in this cold-blooded manner? My next thought was, in what terms would this sad affair be noticed in the columns of the *Sacramento Union*? Would it not be regarded by the editor as an unprovoked disaster inflicted upon society? My fears, however, were somewhat dispelled upon looking around the saloon into which I had been so strangely introduced. Several tables were ranged along the walls, at each of which sat a group of the most horrible-looking savages that probably ever were seen out of jail – the very dregs and offscourings of Moscow. Their faces were mostly covered with coarse, greasy beards, reaching half way down their bodies; some wore dirty blue or gray blouses, tied around the waist with ropes, or fastened with leather belts; others, long blue coats, reaching nearly to their feet; and all, or nearly all, had caps on their heads, and great heavy boots reaching up to their knees, in which their pantaloons were thrust, giving them a rakish and ruffianly appearance. A few sat in their shirt-sleeves; and, judging by the color of their shirts, as well as their skins, did not reckon soap among the luxuries of life. Several of these savage-looking Mujiks were smoking some abominable weed, intended, perhaps, for tobacco, but very much unlike that delightful narcotic in the foul and tainted odor which it diffused over the room. They were all filthy and brutish in the extreme, and talked in some wretched jargon, which, even to my inexperienced ear, had but little of the gentle flow of the Russian in it. The tables were dotted with dice, cards, fragments of black bread, plates of grease, and cabbage soup, and glasses of vodka and tea; and the business of gambling, eating, and drinking was carried on with such earnestness that my entrance attracted no farther attention than a rude stare from the nearest group. No wonder they were a little puzzled, for I was covered with ashes, and must have presented rather a singular appearance. The three ruffians who had brought me in closed the door, and motioned me to a seat at a vacant table. They then called for tea, vodka, and quass, together with a great dish of raw cucumbers, which they set to work devouring with amazing voracity. During a pause in the feast they held a low conversation with the man who served them, who went out and presently returned with a small tea-pot full of tea and a glass, which he set before me. They motioned to me, in rather a friendly way, to drink. I was parched with thirst, and was not sorry to get a draught of any thing – even the villainous compound the *traktir* had set before me; so I drank off a tumblerfull at once. Soon I began to experience a whirling sensation in the head. A cold tremor ran through my limbs. Dim and confused visions of the company rose before me, and a strange and spectral light seemed shed over the room. The murmur of voices sounded like rushing waters in my ears. I gradually lost all power of volition, while my consciousness remained unimpaired, or, if any thing, became more acute than ever. The guests, if such they were, broke up their carousal about this time, and began to drop off one by one, each bowing profoundly to the landlord, and crossing himself devoutly, and bowing three times again before the shrine of the patron saint as he passed out. It was really marvelous to see some of these ruffians, so besotted with strong drink that they were scarcely able to see the way to the door, stagger up before the burnished shrine, and, steadying themselves the best they could, gravely and solemnly go through their devotions.

But I see you are beginning to yawn, and, notwithstanding the most exciting part of the adventure is about to commence, it would be extremely injudicious in me to force it upon you under circumstances so disadvantageous to both parties. You will therefore oblige me by finishing your nap, and, with your permission, we will proceed with our narrative as soon as it may be mutually agreeable. In the mean time, I beg you will regard what I have already told you as strictly confidential. My reputation, both for veracity and general good character, is involved in this very extraordinary affair, and it would be unfair that either the one or the other should be prejudiced by a partial exposition of the facts.

CHAPTER XIII. THE DENOUEMENT

I noticed that the *traktir*, in settling accounts with his customers, made use of a peculiar instrument commonly seen in the shops and market-places throughout the city. Behind a sort of bar or counter at the head of the room he kept what is called a *schot*, upon which he made his calculations. This is a frame about a foot square, across which run numerous wires. On each wire is a string of colored pieces of wood somewhat resembling billiard-counters, only smaller. The merchant, trader, *traktir*, or craftsman engaged in pecuniary transactions uses this instrument with wonderful dexterity in making his calculations. He believes it to be the only thing in the world that will not lie or steal. If you have purchased to the amount of thirty kopeks, you would naturally conclude that out of a ruble (one hundred kopeks) your change would amount to seventy. Not so the sagacious and wary Russian. He takes nothing for granted in the way of trade. Your calculations may be erroneous – figures obtained through the medium of mental arithmetic may lie, but the *schot* never. The experience of a lifetime goes for nothing. He must have proof positive. Taking his *schot* between his knees, he counts off thirty balls out of a hundred. Of course there is no mistake about that. Neither you nor he can dispute it. Then he counts the remainder, and finds that it amounts to seventy – therefore your change is seventy kopeks! Do you dispute it? Then you can count for yourself. You might cover pages with written calculations, or demonstrate the problem by the four cardinal rules of arithmetic; you might express the numbers by sticks, stones, beans, or grains of coffee, but it would be all the same to this astute and cautious calculator – facts can only reach his understanding through the colored balls of his beloved *schot*. I don't think he would rely with certainty upon the loose verbal statement that two and two make four without resorting to the *schot* for a verification. But to proceed:

A few of the guests, too far gone with "little water" to get up and perform their devotions, rolled over on the floor and went to sleep. The lights grew dim. A gloomy silence began to settle over the room, interrupted only by the occasional grunting or snoring of the sleepers. The ruffians who sat at the table with me had been nodding for some time; but, roused by the cessation of noises, they called to the man of the house, and in a low voice gave him some orders. He got a light and opened a small door in a recess at one side of the room. I was then lifted up by the others and carried into an adjoining passage, and thence up a narrow stairway. In a large dingy room overhead I could see by the flickering rays of the lamp a bed in one corner. It was not very clean – none of the Russian beds are – but they laid me in it, nevertheless, for I could offer no remonstrance. What they had hitherto done was bad enough, but this capped the climax of outrages. Were the cowardly villains afraid to murder me, and was this their plan of getting it done, and at the same time getting rid of the body? Great heavens! was I to be devoured piecemeal by a rapacious horde of the wild beasts that are said to infest the Russian beds! And utterly helpless, too, without the power to grapple with as much as a single flea – the least formidable, perhaps, of the entire gang! It was absolutely fearful to contemplate such an act of premeditated barbarity; yet what could I do, unable to speak a word or move a limb.

I am reminded by this that the Russians derive the most striking features of their civilization from the French and Germans. Their fashions, their tailors, their confectioners, their perfumeries, their barbers, are nearly all French or Germans; but their baths are a national institution, derived originally, perhaps, from the Orientals. We hear a good deal of Russian baths, especially from enthusiastic travelers, and are apt to suppose that where such a thorough system of scrubbing and boiling prevails, the human cuticle must present a very extraordinary aspect of cleanliness. Perhaps this is so in certain cases, but it is not a national characteristic. A Russian bath, in the genuine style, is rather a costly luxury. There are, to be sure, in St. Petersburg and Moscow, public bath-houses for the rabble, where the filthiest beggar can be boiled out and scrubbed for a few kopeks; but people

who wear a coating of dirt habitually must become attached to it in the course of time, and hate very much to dispose of it at any price. At least there seemed to be a prejudice of this kind in Moscow, where the affection with which this sort of overlining is preserved is quite equal to that with which the Germans adhere to their old household furniture. It may be, perhaps, that the few summer months which they enjoy are insufficient for the removal of all the strange things that accumulate upon the body during the long winters. The poorer classes seldom remove their furs or change their clothing till warm weather and the natural wear and tear of all perishable things cause them to drop off of their own accord. I have seen on a scorching hot day men wrapped in long woolen coats, doubled over the breast and securely fastened around the waist, and great boots, capacious enough and thick enough for fire-buckets, in which they were half buried, strolling lazily along in the sun, as if they absolutely enjoyed its warmth; and yet these very articles of clothing, with but little addition, must have borne the piercing winds of midwinter. A suspicion crossed my mind that they were trying in this way to bag a little heat for winter use, as the old burghers of Schilda bagged the light to put in their town hall because they had no windows. These strange habits must have something to do with the number of ferocious little animals – I will not degrade their breed and variety by calling them, vermin – which infest the rooms and beds. But the Russian skin is like Russian leather – the best and toughest in the world. Something in the climate is good for the production of thick and lasting cuticles. It is doubtless a wise provision of nature, based upon the extremes of heat and cold to which these people are exposed. There is no good reason why animals with four feet should be more favored in this respect than bipeds. I doubt if an ordinary Russian would suffer the slightest inconvenience if a needle were run into the small of his back. All those physical torments which disturb thin-skinned people from other countries are no torments at all to him; and I incline to the opinion that it is the constant experience he enjoys in a small way that enables him to endure the wounds received in battle with such wonderful stoicism. A man can carry a bull if he only commences when the animal is young. Why not, on the same principle, accustom himself to being stabbed every night till he can quietly endure to be run through with a bayonet? The Russian soldiers possess wonderful powers of passive endurance. Being stabbed or cut to pieces is second nature to them – they have been accustomed to it, in a degree, from early infancy. Who does not remember how they were hewed and hacked down in the Crimean War, and yet came to life again by thousands after they were given up for dead? Perhaps no other soldiers in the world possess such stoicism under the inflictions of pain. They stand an enormous amount of killing; more so, I think, than any other people, unless it may be the Irish, who, at the battle of Vinegar Hill, in the rebellion of '98, were nearly all cut to pieces and left for dead on the field, but got up in a day or two after and went at it again as lively as ever. This, however, was not owing to the same early experience, but to the healthy blood made of potatoes, with a slight sprinkling of Irish whisky. In fine, I don't think a genuine Muscovite could sleep without a bountiful supply of vermin to titillate his skin any more than a miller bereft of the customary noise of his hoppers.

Which brings me back again to the adventure. On that filthy bed the ruffians laid me down to be devoured by the wild beasts by which it was infested. Then they turned about to a shrine that stood in a corner of the room, and each one bowed down before it three times and crossed himself, after which they all left the room and quietly closed the door behind them. I was penetrated with horror at the thought of the terrible death before me, but not so much as to avoid noticing that the chief furniture of the room consisted of a stove in one corner, of cylindrical form, made of terracotta or burnt clay, and glazed outside. It was colored in rather a fanciful way, like queensware, and made a conspicuous appearance, reaching from the floor to the ceiling. This was the genuine Russian stove, with which these people no doubt kept themselves warm during the winter. The windows are composed of double glasses, and between the sashes the space is filled with sand to keep out the air, so that to be hermetically sealed up is one of necessities of existence in this rigorous climate. While I was pondering over the marvelous fact that people can live by breathing so many thousand gallons of air over and over so many thousand times, a whole legion of fleas, chinchies, and other animals

of a still more forbidding aspect commenced their horrid work, and would probably soon have made an end of me but for a new turn in this most extraordinary affair. The door gently opened. A figure glided in on tiptoe. It was that of a female, I knew by the grace and elegance of her motions, even before I could see her face or trace the undulating outline of her form in the dim light that pervaded the room. My senses were acutely alive to every movement, yet I was utterly unable to move, owing to the infernal drug with which they had dosed me. The woman, or rather girl – for she could not have been over eighteen or nineteen – cautiously approached the bed, with her finger to her lips, as if warning me not to speak. She was very beautiful – I was not insensible to that fact. Her features were wonderfully aristocratic for one in her position, and there was something in the expression of her dark, gleaming eyes peculiarly earnest and pathetic. Her hair was tossed wildly and carelessly back over her shoulders – she had evidently just risen from bed, for her costume consisted of nothing more than a loose night-wrapper, which fell in graceful folds around her limbs, revealing to great advantage the exquisite symmetry of her form. I was certain she did not belong to the house. Approaching timidly, yet with a certain air of determination, she bent down and gazed a moment in my face, and then hurriedly whispered in French, “Now is the time – let us escape! They lie sleeping by the door. A servant whom I bribed has disclosed the fact of your capture to me; I also am a prisoner in this horrid den. Will you save me? Oh, will you fly with me?” Of course, being unable to move a muscle, except those of my eyes, I could not open my mouth to utter a word in reply. The unhappy young woman looked profoundly distressed that I should thus gaze at her in silence. “Oh, what am I to do? Who will save me?” she cried, wringing her hands in the deepest anguish: “I have not a friend upon earth!” Then, clasping me by the hand, she looked in my face appealingly, and said, “Monsieur, I know you are a Frenchman. I see it in the chivalrous lines of your countenance. Ah! have pity on a friendless young girl, and do not gaze at her with such chilling indifference. I also am French. These wretches have waylaid and imprisoned me, and they hope to obtain a ransom by my detention. My friends are ignorant of my miserable fate. What can I do, monsieur, unless you assist me?”

Utterly helpless – drugged – yet perfectly conscious of all the lovely creature was saying, I was truly in a most deplorable situation. Again and again she begged me, if there was a spark of French chivalry left in my nature, not to respond to her appeals by such a look of unutterable disdain. She was thrillingly beautiful; and beauty in tears is enough to melt the hardest heart that ever was put in the breast of man. I could feel her balmy breath upon my face, and the warmth of her delicate hand in mine, as she struggled to arouse me; and I declare it is my honest conviction that, had I been simply a corpse, life would have come back to my assistance; but this diabolical drug possessed some extraordinary power against which not even the fascinations of beauty could successfully contend. Under other circumstances, indeed, there is no telling – but why talk of other circumstances? There I lay like a log, completely paralyzed from head to foot. At length, unable to elicit an answer, a flush of mingled indignation and scorn illuminated her beautiful features, and, drawing herself back with a haughty air, she said, “If this be the boasted chivalry of my countrymen, then the sooner it meets with a merited reward the better. Allow me to say, monsieur, that while I admire your prudence, I scorn the spirit that prompts it!” and, with a glance of fierce disdain, she swept with queenly strides out of the room. A moment after I heard some voices in the passage, and scarcely five minutes had elapsed before the door was opened again. To my horror I saw the ruffian who had first followed me enter stealthily with a darkened lantern, and approach toward my bed. He carried in his right hand a heavy bar of iron. Stopping a moment opposite a shrine on one side of the room, he laid down his lamp and bar, and, bowing down three times, crossed himself devoutly, and then proceeded to accomplish his fiendish work. No conception can be formed of the agony with which I now regarded my fate. Crouching low as he approached, the wretch soon reached my bedside, peered a moment into my face with his hideous white eyes, laid down the lamp, then grasped the bar of iron firmly in both hands, and raised himself up to his full height. I made a desperate effort to cry out for help. My voice was utterly gone. I could not even move my lips. But why prolong the dreadful scene? One

more glance with the fierce white eyes, a deep grating malediction, and the ruffian braced himself for his deadly job. He tightened his grip upon the bar, swung it high over his head, and with one fell blow – DASHED MY BRAINS OUT!!

Don't believe it, eh?

Well, sir, you would insist upon my telling you the adventure, and now I stand by it! If it be your deliberate opinion that my statement is not to be relied upon, nothing remains between us but to arrange the preliminaries. I have no disposition to deprive my publishers of a valuable contributor, or society of an ornament; but, sir, the great principles of truth must be maintained. As it will not be convenient for me to attend to this matter in person, you will be pleased to select any friend of mine in California who may desire to stand up for my honor; place him before you at the usual distance of ten paces; then name any friend of yours at present in Europe as a similar substitute for yourself – the principals only to use pistols – notify me by the Icelandic telegraph when you are ready, and then, upon return of signal, pop away at my friend. But, since it is not my wish to proceed to such an extremity unnecessarily, if you will admit that I may possibly have been deceived – that there may have been some hallucination about the adventure – that strong tea and nervous excitement may have had something to do with it, then, sir, I am willing to leave the matter open to future negotiation.

It is true I found myself in my room at the *Hotel de Venise* when I recovered from the stunning effects of the blow; also, that the door was locked on the inside; but I am by no means prepared to give up the point on such flimsy evidence as that. Should the physiological fact be developed in the course of these sketches that there is still any portion of the brain left, and that it performs its legitimate functions, of course I shall be forced to admit that the case is at least doubtful; yet even then it can not be regarded in the light of a pure fabrication. Has not Dickens given us, in his “Dreams of Venice,” the most vivid and truthful description of the City of the Sea ever written; and what have I done, at the worst, but try in my humble way to give you a general idea of Moscow in the pleasing form of a midnight adventure, ending in an assassination? You have seen the Kremlin and the Church of St. Basil, and the by-streets and alleys, and the interior of a low traktir, and the cats, and the Russian beds, and many other interesting features of this wonderful city, in a striking and peculiar point of view, and I hold that you have no right to complain because, like Louis Philippe, I sacrificed my crown for the benefit of my subject. Besides, has not my friend Bayard Taylor given to the world his wonderful experiences of the Hasheesh of Damascus; his varied and extraordinary hallucinations of intellect during the progress of its operations? And why should not I my humble experiences of the tchai of Moscow?

Reader. Slightly sprinkled with *vodka*, or “the little water.”

Oh, that was just thrown in to give additional effect to the tea!

Reader. It won't do, sir – it won't do! The deception was too transparent throughout.

Well, then, since you saw through it from the beginning, there is no harm done, and you can readily afford to make an apology for impugning my voracity.

Lady Reader. But who was the heroine? What became of her?

Ah! my dear madam, there you have me! I suspect she was a French countess, or more likely an actress engaged in the line of tragedy. Her style, at all events, was tragical.

Lady Reader (elevating her lovely eyebrows superciliously). She was rather demonstrative, it must be admitted. You brought her in apparently to fulfill your promise, but sent her off the stage very suddenly. You should, at least, have restored her to her friends, and not left her in that den of robbers.

That, dear madam, was my natural inclination; but the fact is, d'ye see, I was drugged —

Lady Reader (sarcastically). It won't do, Mr. Butterfield – your heroine was a failure! In future you had better confine yourself to facts – or fresh water.

Madam, I'd confine myself to the Rock of Gibraltar or an iceberg to oblige you; therefore, with your permission, I shall proceed to give you, in my next, a reliable description of the Kremlin.

CHAPTER XIV. THE KREMLIN

Not the least of the evils resulting from this harum-scarum way of traveling and writing is the fact that one's impressions become sadly tumbled together and very soon lose their most salient failures. To be whirled about the world by land and sea, as I have been for the last year, is enough to turn one's brain into a curiosity shop. When I undertake to pick out of the pile of rubbish some picture that must have been originally worth a great deal of money, I find it so disfigured by the sheer force of friction that it looks no better than an old daub. The pity of it is, too, that the very best of my gatherings are apt to get lost or ruined; and sometimes it happens that when I varnish up what appears to be valuable it turns out not a groat. Want of method would ruin a Zingalee gipsy or a Bedouin Arab. No doubt you have already discovered to your sorrow that when we start on a visit to the Kremlin, it is no sure indication that we will not spend the day in the Riadi or the old-clothes market. If either you or I ever reach our destination, it will be by the sheerest accident. And yet one might as well undertake to see Rome without the Capitoline Hill, or Athena without the Acropolis, as Moscow without the Kremlin. We have had several glimpses of it, to be sure, in the course of our rambles, but you must admit that they were very vague and indefinite – especially the last, when, if you remember, we were laboring under some strange mental hallucination.

The Kremlin has been fully described by many learned and accomplished travelers. Coxe, Atkinson, Kohl, and various others, have given elaborate accounts of it; yet why despair of presenting, in a homely way, some general idea of it, such as one might gather in the course of an afternoon's ramble? After reading all we find about it in books of travel, our conceptions are still vague and unsatisfactory. Probably the reason is, that minute details of history and architecture afford one but a very faint and inadequate idea of the appearance of any place. Like the pictures of old Dennen, they may give you every wrinkle with the accuracy of a daguerreotype, but they fail in the general effect, or resemble the corpse of the subject rather than the living reality. I must confess that all I had read on Russia previous to my visit afforded me a much less vivid idea of the actual appearance of the country, the people, or the principal cities, than the rough crayon sketches of Timm and Mitreuter, which I had seen in the shop windows of Paris. This may not be the fault of the writers, who, of course, are not bound to furnish their own eyes or their own understanding to other people, but it seems to me that elaborate detail is inimical to strong general impressions. I would not give two hours' personal observation of any place or city in the world for a hundred volumes of the best books of travel ever written upon it; and next to that comes the conversation of a friend who possesses, even in an ordinary degree, the faculty of conveying to another his own impressions. A word, a hint, a gesture, or some grotesque comparison, may give you a more vivid picture of the reality than you can obtain by a year's study. Now, if you will just consider me that friend, and resign yourself in a genial and confiding spirit to the trouble of listening; if you will fancy that I mean a great deal more than I say, and could be very learned and eloquent if I chose; if you will take it for granted that what you don't see is there nevertheless, the Kremlin will sooner or later loom out of the fogs of romance and mystery that surround it, and stand before you, with its embattled walls and towers, as it stood before me in the blaze of the noonday sun, when Dominico, the melancholy guide, led the way to the Holy Gate. You will then discover that the reality is quite wonderful enough in its natural aspect, without the colored spectacles of fancy or the rigid asperities of photographic detail to give it effect.

Like many of the old cities of Europe, Moscow probably had its origin in the nucleus of a citadel built upon the highest point, and commanding an extensive sweep of the neighborhood. Around this houses gathered by degrees for protection against the invasions of the hostile tribes that roamed through Russia at an early period of its history. The first object of the Kremlin was doubtless to

form a military strong-hold. It was originally constructed of wood, with ramparts thrown up around it for purposes of defense, but, in common with the rest of Moscow, was destroyed by the Tartars in the fourteenth century. Under the reign of Dimitri it was rebuilt of stone, and strongly fortified with walls and ditches, since which period it has sustained, without any great injury, the assaults of war, the ravages of fire, and the wear and tear of time. Kief and Vladimir, prior to that reign, had each served in turn as the capital of the empire. After the removal of the capital to Moscow, that city was besieged and ravaged by Tamerlane, and suffered from time to time during every succeeding century all the horrors of war, fire, pestilence, and famine, till 1812, when it was laid in ashes by the Russians themselves, who by this great national sacrifice secured the destruction of the French army under Napoleon.

During the almost perpetual wars by which Moscow was assailed for a period of four centuries, the Kremlin seems to have borne almost a charmed existence. With the exception of the Grand Palace, the Bolshoi Drovetz, built by the Emperor Alexander I., and the Maloi Drovetz, or Little Palace, built by the Emperor Nicholas, and the Arsenal, it has undergone but little change since the time of the early Czars. In 1812, when the French, after despoiling it of whatever they could lay their hands upon, attempted, in the rage of disappointment, to blow up the walls, the powder, as the Russians confidently assert, was possessed by the devil of water, and refused to explode; and when they planted a heavily-loaded cannon before the Holy Gate, and built a fire on top of the touch-hole to make it go off, it went off at the breech, and blew a number of Frenchmen into the infernal regions, after which the remainder of them thought it best to let it alone.

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