

VOLTAIRE

THE HISTORY OF PETER
THE GREAT, EMPEROR
OF RUSSIA

Вольтер

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Voltaire

The History of Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia

CHAP. I

DESCRIPTION OF RUSSIA.

The empire of Russia is the largest in the whole globe, extending from west to east upwards of two thousand common leagues of France,¹ and about eight hundred in its greatest breadth from north to south. It borders upon Poland and the Frozen Sea, and joins to Sweden and China. Its length from the island of Dago, in the westernmost part of Livonia, to its most eastern limits, takes in near one hundred and seventy degrees, so that when it is noon in the western parts of the empire, it is nearly midnight in the eastern. Its breadth from north to south is three thousand six hundred wersts, which make eight hundred and fifty of our common French leagues.

The limits of this country were so little known in the last century, that, in 1689, when it was reported, that the Chinese and the Russians were at war, and that in order to terminate their differences, the emperor *Camhi* on the one hand, and the czars Ivan or John, and Peter, on the other, had sent their ministers to meet an embassy within three hundred leagues of Pekin, on the frontiers of the two empires, the account was at first treated as a fiction.

The country now comprehended under the name of Russia, or the Russias, is of a greater extent than all the rest of Europe, or than ever the Roman empire was, or that of Darius subdued by Alexander; for it contains upwards of one million one hundred thousand square leagues. Neither the Roman empire, nor that of Alexander, contained more than five hundred and fifty thousand each; and there is not a kingdom in Europe the twelfth part so extensive as the Roman empire; but to make Russia as populous, as plentiful, and as well stored with towns as our southern countries, would require whole ages, and a race of monarchs such as Peter the Great.

The English ambassador, who resided at Petersburg in 1733, and who had been at Madrid, says, in his manuscript relation, that in Spain, which is the least populous state in Europe, there may be reckoned forty persons to every square mile, and in Russia not above five. We shall see in the second chapter, whether this minister was mistaken. Marshal Vauban, the greatest of engineers, and the best of citizens, computes, that, in France, every square mile contains two hundred inhabitants. These calculations are never very exact, but they serve to shew the amazing disproportion in the population of two different countries.

I shall observe here, that from Petersburg to Pekin, there is hardly one mountain to be met with in the route which the caravans might take through independent Tartary, and that from Petersburg to the north of France, by the road of Dantzic, Hamburg, and Amsterdam, there is not even a hill of any eminence to be seen. This observation leaves room to doubt of the truth of that theory, which makes the mountains to have been formed by the rolling of the waves of the sea, and supposes all that is at present dry land, to have been for a long time covered with water: but how comes it to pass, that the waves, which, according to the supposition, formed the Alps, the Pyrenees, and Mount Taurus, did not likewise form some eminence or hill from Normandy to China, which is a winding space of above three thousand leagues? Geography, thus considered, may furnish lights to natural philosophy, or at least give room for rational doubts.

¹ A French league contains three English miles.

Formerly we called Russia by the name of Muscovy, from the city of Moscow, the capital of that empire, and the residence of the grand dukes: but at present the ancient name of Russia prevails.

It is not my business in this place to inquire, why the countries from Smolensko, to the other side of Moscow, were called White Russia, or why Hubner gives it the name of Black, nor for what reason the government of Kiow should be named Red Russia.

It is very likely that Madies the Scythian, who made an irruption into Asia, near seven hundred years before our vulgar æra, might have carried his arms into these regions, as Gengis-Khan and Tamerlane did afterwards, and as probably others had done long before Madies. Every part of antiquity is not deserving of our inquiries; that of the Chinese, the Indians, the Persians, and the Egyptians, is ascertained from illustrious and interesting monuments; but these monuments suppose others of a far more ancient date, since it required many ages to teach men the art of transmitting their thoughts by permanent signs, and no less time was required to form a regular language; and yet we have no such monuments even in this polite part of Europe. The art of writing was a long time unknown to all the North: the patriarch Constantine, who wrote the history of Kiow in the Russian language, acknowledges, that the use of writing was not known in these countries in the fifth century.

Let others examine whether the Huns, the Slavi, and the Tartars, formerly led their wandering and famished tribes towards the source of the Boristhenes;² my design is to shew what czar Peter created, and not to engage in a useless attempt, to clear up the chaos of antiquity. We should always keep in mind, that no family upon earth knows its first founder, and consequently, that no nation knows its first origin.

I use the name of Russians to designate the inhabitants of this great empire. That of Roxolians, which was formerly given them, would indeed be more sonorous, but we shall conform to the custom of the language in which we write. News-papers and other memoirs have for some time used the word Russians; but as this name comes too near to that of Prussians, I shall abide by that of Russ, which almost all our writers have given them. Besides, it appeared to me, that the most extensive people on the earth ought to be known by some appellation that may distinguish them absolutely from all other nations.³

This empire is at present divided into sixteen large governments, that will one day be subdivided, when the northern and eastern countries come to be more inhabited.

These sixteen governments, which contain several immense provinces are the following: —

LIVONIA

The nearest province to our part of the world is that of Livonia, one of the most fruitful in the whole North. In the twelfth century the inhabitants were pagans; at this time certain merchants of Bremen and Lubeck traded to this country, and a body of religious crusaders, called *port-glaives*, or sword-bearers, who were afterwards incorporated in the Teutonic order, made themselves masters of this province in the thirteenth century, at the time when the fury of the crusades armed the Christians against every one who was not of their religion. Albert, margrave of Brandenburg, grand-master of these religious conquerors, made himself sovereign of Livonia and of Brandenburg-Prussia, about the year 1514. From that time, the Russians and Poles began to dispute for the possession of this province. Soon afterwards it was invaded by the Swedes, and for a long while continued to be ravaged by these several powers. Gustavus Adolphus having conquered it, it was then ceded to the Swedes

² The Boristhenes, or Dnieper, is one of the largest rivers in Europe; it rises in the Walchonske Forest, runs through Lithuania, the country of the Zoporag Cossacks, and that of the Nagisch Tartars, and falls into the Black Sea near Oczakow. It has thirteen cataracts within a small distance.

³ The reader will easily perceive, that the whole of this paragraph relates only to the French language, for in English we make no such distinctions in the name of these people, but always call them Russians.

in 1660, by the famous treaty of Oliva; and, at length, czar Peter wrested it from these latter, as will be seen in the course of this history.

Courland, which joins to Livonia, is still in vassalage to Poland, though it depends greatly upon Russia. These are the western limits of this empire in Christendom.

Of the Governments of REVEL, PETERSBURG, and WYBURG

More northward is the government of Revel and Esthonia. Revel was built by the Danes in the thirteenth century. The Swedes were in possession of this province, from the time that country put itself under the protection of that crown in 1561. This is another of the conquests of Peter the Great.

On the borders of Esthonia lies the gulf of Finland. To the eastward of this sea, and at the junction of the Neva with the lake Ladoga,⁴ is situated Petersburg, the most modern and best built city in the whole empire, founded by czar Peter, in spite of all the united obstacles which opposed its foundation.

This city is situated on the bay of Kronstat, in the midst of nine rivers, by which its different quarters are divided. In the centre of this city is almost an impregnable fortress, built on an island, formed by the main-stream of the river Neva: seven canals are cut from the rivers, and wash the walls of one of the royal palaces of the admiralty, of the dock-yard for the galleys, and of several buildings of manufactories. Thirty-five large churches contribute to adorn the city; among which five are allotted for foreigners of the Roman Catholic, Calvinist, and Lutheran religions: these are as so many temples raised to toleration, and examples to other nations. There are five palaces; the old one, called the summer palace, situated on the river Neva, has a very large and beautiful stone balustrade, which runs all along the river side. The new summer palace near the triumphal gate, is one of the finest pieces of architecture in Europe. The admiralty buildings, the school for cadets, the imperial college, the academy of sciences, the exchange, and the merchants' warehouses, are all magnificent structures, and monuments of taste and public utility. The town-house, the public dispensary, where all the vessels are of porcelain, the court magazines, the foundery, the arsenal, the bridges, the markets, the squares, the barracks for the horse and foot guards, contribute at once to the embellishment and safety of the city, which is said to contain at present four hundred thousand souls. In the environs of the city are several villas or country-seats, which surprise all travellers by their magnificence. There is one in particular which has water-works superior to those of Versailles. There was nothing of all this in 1702, the whole being then an impassable morass. Petersburg is considered as the capital of Ingria, a small province subdued by Peter I. Wyburg, another of his conquests, and that part of Finland which was lost, and ceded by the Swedes in 1742, make another government.

ARCHANGEL

Higher up, proceeding towards the north, is the province of Archangel, a country entirely new to the southern nations of Europe. It took its name from St. Michael, the Archangel, under whose patronage it was put long after the Russians had embraced Christianity, which did not happen till the beginning of the eleventh century; and they were not known to the other nations of Europe till the middle of the sixteenth. The English, in 1533, endeavouring to find out a north-east passage to the East Indies, Chancellor, captain of one of the ships fitted out for this expedition, discovered the port of Archangel in the White Sea; at that time it was a desert place, having only one convent, and a little church, dedicated to St. Michael, the Archangel.

⁴ A collection of water lying between the gulf of Finland and lake Onega; it is the largest, and said to contain a greater number of fish than any other in Europe.

The English sailing up the river Dwina,⁵ arrived at the midland part of the country, and at length at Moscow. Here they easily made themselves masters of the trade of Russia, which was removed from the city of Novogorod, where it was carried on by land to this sea-port, which is inaccessible indeed during seven months in the year; but, nevertheless, this trade proved more beneficial to the empire than the fairs of Novogorod, that had fallen to decay in consequence of the wars with Sweden. The English obtained the privilege of trading thither without paying any duties; a manner of trading which is apparently the most beneficial to all nations. The Dutch soon came in for a share of the trade of Archangel, then unknown to other nations.

Long before this time, the Genoese and Venetians had established a trade with the Russians by the mouth of the Tanais or Don,⁶ where they had built a town called Tana. This branch of the Italian commerce was destroyed by the ravages of Tamerlane, in that part of the world; but that of Archangel continued, with great advantages both to the English and Dutch, till the time that Peter the Great opened a passage into his dominions by the Baltic Sea.

RUSSIAN LAPLAND

Of the Government of Archangel.

To the west of Archangel, and within its government, lies Russian Lapland, the third part of this country, the other two belonging to Sweden and Denmark. This is a very large tract, occupying about eight degrees of longitude, and extending in latitude from one polar circle to the North Cape⁷. The natives of this country were confusedly known to the ancients, under the name of troglodytes and northern pigmies; appellations suitable enough to men, who, for the most part, are not above four feet and a half high, and dwell in caverns; they are just the same people they were at that time. They are of a tawny complexion, though the other people of the north are white, and for the most part very low in stature; though their neighbours, and the people of Iceland, under the polar circle, are tall: they seem made for their mountainous country, being nimble, squat, and robust; their skins are hard, the better to resist the cold, their thighs and legs are slender, their feet small, to enable them to run more nimbly amongst the rocks, with which their province is covered. They are passionately fond of their own country, which none but themselves can be pleased with, and are able to live no where else. Some have affirmed, upon the credit of Olaus, that these people were originally natives of Finland, and that they removed into Lapland, where they diminished in stature: but why might they not as well have made choice of lands less northerly, where the conveniences of life were to be had in greater plenty? How comes it that they differ so totally from their pretended ancestors in features, figure, and complexion? Methinks we might, with as great reason, suppose that the grass which grows in Lapland is produced from that of Denmark, and that the fishes, peculiar to their lakes, came from those of Sweden. It is most likely that the Laplanders are, like their animals, the produce of their own country, and that nature has made the one for the other.

Those who inhabit the frontiers of Finland, have adopted some of the expressions of their neighbours, as happens to every people: but when two nations give to things of common use, to objects which are continually before their eyes, names absolutely different, it affords a strong presumption, that one of them is not a colony from the other. The Finlanders call a bear Karu, the Laplanders Muriet: the sun in the Finnish language is called Auringa, in the Lapland tongue Beve. Here is not the least analogy. The inhabitants of Finland, and Swedish Lapland, formerly worshipped an idol

⁵ We must not confound this river with another of the same name that runs through Lithuania in Poland, and dividing Livonia and Courland, falls into the Baltic at Dunamunder fort, below Riga.

⁶ This was by the ancients reckoned among the most famous rivers in the world, and the boundary between Asia and Europe. It issues from St. John's Lake, not far from Tula, and after a long course, divides itself into three arms, and falls into the sea below Azoph.

⁷ A promontory of the island of Maggero in the north of Norway, and is the most northern point in Europe.

whom they called Iumalac, and since the reign of Gustavus Adolphus, to whom they are indebted for the appellation of Lutherans, they call Jesus Christ the son of Iumalac. The Muscovite or Russian Laplanders, are at present thought to be of the Greek church; but those who wander about the mountains of the North Cape, are satisfied with adoring one God under certain rude forms, as has been the ancient custom of all the nations called Nomades, or wandering nations.

This race of people, who are inconsiderable in numbers, have but very few ideas, and are happy in not having more, which would only occasion them to have new wants which they could not satisfy: at present they live contented, and free from diseases, notwithstanding the excessive coldness of their climate; they drink nothing but water, and attain to a great age. The custom imputed to them of entreating strangers to lie with their wives and daughters, which they esteem as an honour done to them, probably arose from a notion of the superiority of strangers, and a desire of amending, by their means, the defects of their own race. This was a custom established amongst the virtuous Lacedemonians. A husband would entreat a favour of a comely young man, to give him handsome children, whom he might adopt. Jealousy, and the laws, prevent the rest of mankind from giving their wives up to the embraces of another; but the Laplanders have few or no laws, and are in all probability, strangers to jealousy.

MOSCOW

Ascending the river Dwina from north to south, we travel up the country till we come to Moscow, the capital of the empire. This city was long the centre of the Russian dominions, before they were extended on the side of China and Persia.

Moscow, lying in 55 degrees and a half, north latitude, in a warmer climate, and more fruitful soil than that of Petersburg, is situated in the midst of a large and delightful plain on the river Moskwa, and two lesser rivers, which with the former lose themselves in the Occa, and afterwards help to swell the stream of the Wolga. This city, in the 13th century, was only a collection of huts inhabited by a set of miserable wretches, oppressed by the descendants of Gengis Khan.

The Kremlin, or ancient palace of the great dukes, was not built till the 14th century; of such modern date are cities in this part of the world. This palace was built by Italian architects, as were several churches in the Gothic taste which then prevailed throughout all Europe. There are two built by the famous Aristotle, of Bologna, who flourished in the 15th century; but the private houses were no better than wooden huts.

The first writer who brought us acquainted with Moscow, was Olearius; who, in 1633, went thither as the companion of an embassy from the duke of Holstein. A native of Holstein must naturally be struck with wonder at the immense extent of the city of Moscow, with its five quarters, especially the magnificent one belonging to the czars, and with the Asiatic splendour which then reigned at that court. There was nothing equal to it in Germany at that time, nor any city by far so extensive or well peopled.

On the contrary, the earl of Carlisle, who was ambassador from Charles II. to the czar Alexis, in 1633, complains in his relation that he could not meet with any one convenience of life in Moscow; no inns on the road, nor refreshments of any kind. One judged as a German, the other as an Englishman, and both by comparison. The Englishman was shocked to see most of the Boyards or Muscovite noblemen, sleep upon boards or benches, with only the skins of animals under them; but this was the ancient practice of all nations. The houses, which were almost all built of wood, had scarcely any furniture, few or none of their tables were covered with cloth; there was no pavement in the streets; nothing agreeable; nothing convenient; very few artificers, and those few extremely awkward, and employed only in works of absolute necessity. These people might have passed for Spartans, had they been sober.

But, on public days, the court displays all the splendour of a Persian monarch. The earl says, he could see nothing but gold and precious stones on the robes of the czar and his courtiers. These dresses were not manufactured in the country; and yet, it is evident, that the people might be rendered industrious long before that time. In the reign of the czar Boris Godonow, the largest bell was cast at Moscow, in Europe; and in the patriarchal church there were several ornaments in silver, worked in a very curious manner. These pieces of workmanship, which were made under the direction of Germans and Italians, were only transient efforts. It is daily industry, and the continual exercise of a great number of arts, that makes a nation flourishing. Poland, and the neighbouring nations, were at that time very little superior to the Russians. The handicraft trades were not in greater perfection in the north of Germany, nor were the polite arts much better known, than in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Though the city of Moscow, at that time, had neither the magnificence nor arts of our great cities in Europe, yet its circumference of twenty miles; the part called the Chinese town, where all the rarities of China are exhibited; the spacious quarter of the Kremlin, where stood the palace of the czars; the gilded domes, the lofty and conspicuous turrets; and, lastly, the prodigious number of its inhabitants, amounting to near 500,000. All this together, rendered Moscow one of the most considerable cities in the world.

Theodore, or Fædor, eldest brother to Peter the Great, began to improve Moscow. He ordered several large houses to be built of stone, though without any regular architecture. He encouraged the principal persons of his court to build, advancing them sums of money, and furnishing them with materials. He was the first who collected studs of fine horses, and made several useful embellishments. Peter, who was attentive to every thing, did not neglect Moscow at the time he was building Petersburg; for he caused it to be paved, adorned it with noble edifices, and enriched it with manufactures; and, within these few years, M. de Showalow, high chamberlain to the empress Elizabeth, daughter to Peter the Great, has founded an university in this city. This is the same person who furnished me with the memorials, from which I have compiled the present history, and who was himself much more capable to have done it, even in the French language, had not his great modesty determined him to resign the task to me, as will evidently appear from his own letters on this subject, which I have deposited in the public library of Geneva.

SMOLENSKO

Westward of the duchy of Moscow, is that of Smolensko, a part of the ancient Sarmatia Europea. The duchies of Moscow and Smolensko composed what is properly called White Russia. Smolensko, which at first belonged to the great dukes of Russia, was conquered by the great duke of Lithuania, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, and was retaken one hundred years afterwards by its old masters. Sigismund III. king of Poland, got possession of it in 1611. The czar Alexis, father of Peter I. recovered it again in 1654, since which time it has always constituted part of the Russian empire. The panegyric of Peter the Great, pronounced in the academy of sciences at Paris, takes notice, that before his time the Russians had made no conquests either to the west or south; but this is evidently a mistake.

Of the Governments of NOVOGOROD and KIOW, or the UKRAINE

Between Petersburg and Smolensko, lies the province of Novogorod;⁸ and is said to be the country in which the ancient *Slavi*, or Sclavonians, made their first settlements. But from whence

⁸ Grod, or gorod, signifies city in the Russian language.

came these *Slavi*, whose language has spread over all the north-east part of Europe? *Sla* signifies a chief, and *slave* one belonging to a chief. All that we know concerning these ancient *Slaves* is, that they were a race of conquerors; that they built the city of Novogorod the Great, at the head of a navigable river; and that this city was for a long time in possession of a flourishing trade, and was a potent ally to the Hanse Towns. Czar Iwan Wassiliawitsch (or John Basilowitz) made a conquest of it in 1467, and carried away all its riches, which contributed to the magnificence of the court of Moscow, till then almost unknown.

To the south of the province of Smolensko, we meet with the province of Kiow, otherwise called the Lesser Russia, Red Russia, or the Ukraine, through which runs the Dnieper, called by the Greeks the Boristhenes. The difference of these two names, the one so harsh to pronounce, and the other so melodious, served to shew us, together with a hundred other like instances, the rudeness of all the ancient people of the North, in comparison with the graces of the Greek language. Kiow, the capital city, formerly Kisow, was built by the emperors of Constantinople, who made it a colony: here are still to be seen several Greek inscriptions upwards of twelve hundred years old. This is the only city of any antiquity in these countries, where men lived so long together without building walls. Here it was that the great dukes of Russia held their residence in the eleventh century, before the Tartars brought it under their subjection.

The inhabitants of the Ukraine, called Cossacks, are a mixture of the ancient Roxolaniens, Sarmatians, and Tartars, blended together. Rome and Constantinople, though so long the mistress of other nations, are not to compare in fertility of country with the Ukraine. Nature has there exerted her utmost efforts for the service of mankind; but they have not seconded those efforts by industry, living only upon the spontaneous productions of an uncultivated, but fruitful soil, and the exercise of rapine. Though fond, to a degree of enthusiasm, of that most valuable of all blessings, liberty; yet they were always in subjection, either to the Poles or to the Turks, till the year 1654, when they threw themselves into the arms of Russia, but with some limitations. At length they were entirely subdued by Peter the Great.

Other nations are divided into cities and towns; this into ten regiments. At the head of which is a chief, who used to be elected by a majority of votes, and is called by the name of Hetman, or Itman. This captain of the nation was not invested with supreme power. At present the itman is a person nominated by the czar, from among the great lords of the court; and is, in fact, no more than the governor of the province, like governors of the *pays d'etats* in France, that have retained some privileges.

At first the inhabitants of this country were all either Pagans or Mahometans; but, when they entered into the service of Poland, they were baptized Christians of the Roman communion; and now, that they are in the service of Russia, they belong to the Greek church.

Amongst these are comprehended the Zaporavian Cossacks, who are much the same as our Bucaniers, or freebooters, living upon rapine. They are distinguished from all other people, by never admitting women to live among them; as the Amazons are said never to have admitted any man. The women, whom they make use of for propagation, live upon other islands on the river; they have no marriages amongst them, nor any domestic economy; they inroll the male children in their militia, and leave the girls to the care of their mothers. A brother has frequently children by his sister, and a father by his daughter. They know no other laws than customs, introduced by necessity; however, they make use of some prayers from the Greek ritual. Fort St. Elizabeth has been lately built on the Boristhenes, to keep them in awe. They serve as irregulars in the Russian armies, and hapless is the fate of those who fall into their hands.

Of the Governments of BELGOROD, WORONITZ, and NISCHGOROD

To the north-east of the province of Kiow, between the Boristhenes and the Tanais, or Don, is the government of Belgorod, which is as large as that of Kiow. This is one of the most fruitful provinces of Russia, and furnishes Poland with a prodigious number of that large cattle known by the name of Ukraine oxen. These two provinces are secured from the incursions of the petty Tartar tribes, by lines extending from the Boristhenes to the Tanais, and well furnished with forts and redoubts.

Farther northward we cross the Tanais, and come into the government of Worownitz, or Veronise, which extends as far as the banks of the Palus Mæotis. In the neighbourhood of the capital of this province, which is called, by the Russians, Woronestch, at the mouth of the river of the same name, which falls into the Don, Peter the Great built his first fleet; an undertaking which was at that time entirely new to the inhabitants of these vast dominions. From thence we come to the government of Nischgorod, abounding with grain, and is watered by the river Wolga.

ASTRACAN

From the latter province we proceed southward to the kingdom of Astracan. This country reaches from forty-three and a half degrees north latitude (in a most delightful climate) to near fifty, including about as many degrees of longitude as of latitude. It is bounded on one side by the Caspian Sea, and on the other by the mountains of Circassia, projecting beyond the Caspian, along mount Caucasus. It is watered by the great river Wolga, the Jaick, and several other lesser streams, between which, according to Mr. Perry, the English engineer, canals might be cut, that would serve as reservoirs to receive the overflowing of the waters; and by that means answer the same purposes as the canals of the Nile, and make the soil more fruitful: but to the right and left of the Wolga and Jaick, this fine country was inhabited, or rather infested, by Tartars, who never apply themselves to agriculture, but have always lived as strangers and sojourners upon the face of the earth.

The above named engineer, Perry, who was employed by Peter the Great in these parts, found a vast track of land covered with pasture, leguminous plants, cherry and almond trees, and large flocks of wild sheep, who fed in these solitary places, and whose flesh was excellent. The inhabitants of these countries must be conquered and civilized, in order to second the efforts of nature, who has been forced in the climate of Petersburg.

The kingdom of Astracan is a part of the ancient Capshak, conquered by Gengis-Khan, and afterwards by Tamerlane, whose dominion extended as far as Moscow. The czar, John Basilides, grandson of John Basilowitz, and the greatest conqueror of all the Russian princes, delivered his country from the Tartarian yoke, in the sixteenth century, and added the kingdom of Astracan to his other conquests, in 1554.

Astracan is the boundary of Asia and Europe, and is so situated as to be able to carry on a trade with both; as merchandizes may be conveyed from the Caspian Sea, up to this town, by means of the Wolga. This was one of the grand schemes of Peter the Great, and has been partly carried into execution. An entire suburb of Astracan is inhabited by Indians.

OREMBURG

To the south-east of the kingdom of Astracan, is a small country, newly planted, called Oremburg. The town of this name was built in the year 1734, on the banks of the river Jaick. This province is thick covered with hills, that are parts of Mount Caucasus. The passes in these mountains, and of the rivers that run down from them, are defended by forts raised at equal distances. In this

region, formerly uninhabited, the Persians come at present, to hide from the rapacity of robbers, such of their effects as have escaped the fury of the civil wars. The city of Oremburg is become the asylum of the Persians and their riches, and is grown considerable by their calamities. The natives of Great Bukari come hither to trade, so that it is become the mart of Asia.

Of the Government of CASAN, and of GREAT PERMIA

Beyond the Wolga and Jaick, towards the north, lies the kingdom of Casan, which, like that of Astracan, fell by partition to one of the sons of Gengis Khan, and afterwards to a son of Tamerlane, and was at length conquered by John Basilides. It is still inhabited by a number of Mahometan Tartars. This vast country stretches as far as Siberia; it is allowed to have been formerly very flourishing and rich, and still retains some part of its pristine opulence. A province of this kingdom, called Great Permia, and since Solikam, was the staple for the merchandizes of Persia, and the furs of Tartary. There has been found in Permia a great quantity of the coin of the first Caliphs, and some Tartarian idols, made of gold;⁹ but these monuments of ancient opulence were found in the midst of barren deserts and extreme poverty, where there were not the least traces of commerce: revolutions of this nature may easily happen to a barren country, seeing they are so soon brought about in the most fruitful provinces.

The famous Swedish prisoner, Strahlemberg, who made such advantageous use of his misfortunes, and who examined those extensive countries with so much attention, was the first who gave an air of probability to a fact, which before had been always thought incredible; namely, concerning the ancient commerce of these provinces. Pliny and Pomponius Mela relate, that, in the reign of Augustus, a king of the Suevi made a present to Metellus Celer of some Indians who had been cast by a storm upon the coasts bordering on the Elbe. But how could inhabitants of India navigate the Germanic seas? This adventure was deemed fabulous by all our moderns, especially after the change made in the commerce of our hemisphere by the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. But formerly it was no more extraordinary to see an Indian trading to the parts to the north west of his country, than to see a Roman go from India by the way of Arabia. The Indians went to Persia, and thence embarked on the Hyrcanian Sea, and ascending the Rha, now the Wolga, got to Great Permia through the river Kama; from whence they might take shipping again on the Black Sea, or the Baltic. They have, in all times, been enterprising men. The Tyrians undertook most surprising voyages.

If after surveying all these vast provinces, we direct our view towards the east, we shall find the limits of Europe and Asia again confounded. A new name is wanting for a considerable part of the globe. The ancients divided their known world into Europe, Asia, and Africa: but they had not seen the tenth part of it: hence it happens, that when we pass the Palus Mæotis we are at a loss to know where Europe ends, or Asia begins; all that tract of country lying beyond mount Taurus was distinguished by the general appellation of Scythia, and afterwards by that of Tartary. It might not be improper, perhaps, to give the name of Terræ Arcticæ, or Northern Lands, to the country extending from the Baltic Sea to the confines of China; as that of Terræ Australes, or Southern Lands, are to that equally extensive part of the world, situated under the Antarctic Pole, and which serves to counterpoise the globe.

⁹ Memoirs of Strahlemberg, confirmed by those sent me from Russia.

***Of the Governments of SIBERIA, of the
SAMOJEDES, the OSTIAKS KAMTSHATKA, &c***

Siberia, with the territories beyond it, extends from the frontiers of the provinces of Archangel, Casan, and Astracan, eastward as far as the sea of Japan: it joined the southern parts of Russia by Mount Caucasus; from thence, to the country of Kamtshatka, is about one thousand two hundred computed French leagues; and from southern Tartary, which serves as its boundary, to the Frozen Sea, about four hundred, which is the least breadth of the Russian empire. This country produces the richest furs; and this occasioned the discovery of it in the year 1563.

In the sixteenth century, in the reign of the czar, John Basilides, and not in that of Fœdor Johannowitz, a private person in the neighbourhood of Archangel, named Anika, one tolerably rich for his condition of life and country, took notice that certain men of an extraordinary figure, and dressed in a manner unknown to that country, and who spoke a language understood by none but themselves, came every year down a river which falls into the Dwina,¹⁰ and brought martens and black foxes, which they trucked for nails and pieces of glass; just as the first savages of America used to exchange their gold with the Spaniards: he caused them to be followed by his sons and servants, as far as their own country. These were the Samojedes, a people who seem to resemble the Laplanders, but are of a different race. They are, like that people, unacquainted with the use of bread; and like them, they yoke rein-deer to draw their sledges. They live in caverns and huts, amidst the snow;¹¹ but in other respects, nature has made a visible difference between this species of men and the Laplanders. Their upper jaw projects forward, so as to be on a level with their nose, and their ears are placed higher. Both the men and women have no hair in any other part of their bodies, but their heads; and their nipple is of a deep black, like ebony. The Lapland men and women are distinguished by no such marks. By memoirs sent from these countries so little known, I have been informed, that the author of the curious natural history of the king's garden, is mistaken, where, in speaking of the many curiosities of human nature, he confounds the Lapland race with that of the Samojedes. There are many more different species of men than is commonly thought. The Samojedes, and the Hottentots, seem to be the two extremes of our continent; and if we observe the black nipples of the Samojedian women, and the apron with which nature has furnished the Hottentot females, and which hangs half way down their thighs, we may have some idea of the great variety of our animal species, a variety unknown to those inhabiting great cities, who are generally strangers to almost every thing that is not immediately within their view.

The Samojedes are as singular in their moral as in their physical distinctions; they pay no worship to the Supreme Being; they border upon Manicheism, or rather upon the religion of the ancient Magi in this one point, that they acknowledge a good and an evil principle. The horrible climate they inhabit may in some measure excuse this belief, which is of such ancient date, and so natural to those who are ignorant and unhappy.

Theft, or murder, is never heard of amongst them; being in a manner devoid of passions, they are strangers to injustice; they have no terms in their language to denote vice and virtue, their extreme simplicity has not yet permitted them to form abstract ideas, they are wholly guided by sensation, and this is perhaps an incontestable proof that men naturally love justice, when not blinded by inordinate passions.

Some of these savages were prevailed on to suffer themselves to be carried to Moscow, where many things they saw struck them with admiration. They gazed upon the emperor as their god, and voluntarily engaged for themselves and countrymen a present of two martens, or sables, every year for

¹⁰ Memoirs sent from Petersburg.

¹¹ Memoirs sent from Petersburg.

each inhabitant. Colonies were soon settled beyond the Oby,¹² and the Irtis,¹³ and some forts built. In the year 1595, a Cossack officer was sent into this country, who conquered it for the czar with only a few soldiers and some artillery, as Cortez did Mexico; but he only made a conquest of barren deserts.

In sailing up the Oby to the junction of the river Irtis with the Tobol, they found a petty settlement, which they converted into the town of Tobol,¹⁴ now the capital of Siberia, and a considerable place. Who could imagine that this country was for a long time the residence of those very Huns, who under Attila carried their depredations as far as the gates of Rome, and that these Huns came from the north of China? The Usbeck Tartars succeeded the Huns, and the Russians the Usbecks. The possession of these savage countries has been disputed with as much murderous fury, as that of the most fruitful provinces. Siberia was formerly better peopled than it is at present, especially towards the southern parts; if we may judge from the rivers and sepulchral monuments.

All this part of the world, from the sixtieth degree of latitude, or thereabouts, as far as those mountains of perpetual ice which border the north seas, is totally different from the regions of the temperate zone, the earth produces neither the same plants, nor the same animals, nor are there the same sort of fishes in their lakes and rivers.

Below the country of the Samojedes lies that of the Ostiaks, along the river Oby. These people have no resemblance in any respect with the Samojedes, save that like them and all the first race of men, they are hunters, fishermen, and shepherds; some of them have no religion, not being formed into any society, and the others who live together in herds or clans, have a kind of worship, and pray to the principal object of their wants; they adore the skin of a sheep, because this creature is of all others the most serviceable to them; just as the Egyptian husbandmen made choice of an ox, as an emblem of the Deity who created that creature for the use of man.

The Ostiaks have likewise other idols, whose origin and worship are as little deserving our notice as their worshippers. There were some converts to Christianity made amongst them in the year 1712; but these, like the lowest of our peasants, are Christians without knowing what they profess. Several writers pretend that these people were natives of Great Permian, but as Great Permian is in a manner a desert, how comes it that its inhabitants should settle themselves at such a distance, and so inconveniently? This is a difficulty not worth clearing up. Every nation which has not cultivated the polite arts, deserves to remain in obscurity.

In the country of the Ostiaks in particular, and amongst their neighbours the Burates and Jakutians, they often discover a kind of ivory under ground, the nature of which is as yet unknown. Some take it to be a sort of fossil, and others the tooth of a species of elephants, the breed of which have been destroyed: but where is the country that does not afford some natural productions, which at once astonish and confound philosophy.

Several mountains in this country abound with the amianthes or asbestos, a kind of incombustible flax, of which a sort of cloth and paper is sometimes made.

To the south of the Ostiaks are the Burates, another people, who have not yet been made Christians. Eastward there are several hordes, whom the Russians have not as yet entirely subdued.

None of these people have the least knowledge of the calendar: they reckon their time by snows, and not by the apparent motion of the sun: as it snows regularly, and for a long time every winter, they say, 'I am so many snows old,' just as we say, I am so many years.

And here I must relate the accounts given by the Swedish officer Strahlenberg, who was taken prisoner in the battle of Pultowa, and lived fifteen years in Siberia, and made the entire tour of that country. He says, that there are still some remains of an ancient people, whose skin is spotted

¹² Called also the Ob. This large river issues from the lake Altin in Calmuck Tartary, in Asia, from whence running north it forms the boundary between Europe and Asia, and after traversing a vast tract of above two thousand miles, it falls into a bay of the Frozen Sea.

¹³ In the Russian language Irtish. This river runs from N. to S. through all Russia, and falling into the former river, forms part of the boundary between Asia and Europe.

¹⁴ In the Russian language Tobolsky.

or variegated with different colours, and that he himself had seen some of them, and the fact has been confirmed to me by Russians born at Tobolsky. The variety of the human species seems to be greatly diminished, as we find very few of these extraordinary people, and they have probably been exterminated by some other race: for instance there are very few Albinos, or White Moors; one of them was presented to the academy of sciences at Paris, which I saw. It is the same with respect to several other species of animals which are rare.

As to the Borandians, of whom mention is made so frequently in the learned history of the king's garden, my memoirs say, that this race of people is entirely unknown to the Russians.

All the southern part of these countries is peopled by numerous hordes of Tartars. The ancient Turks came from this part of Tartary to conquer these extensive countries, of which they are at present in possession. The Calmucs and Monguls are the very Scythians who, under Madies, made themselves masters of Upper Asia, and conquered Cyaxares, king of the Medes. They are the men, whom Gengis Khan and his sons led afterwards as far as Germany, and was termed the Mogul empire under Tamerlane. These people afford a lively instance of the vicissitudes which have happened to all nations; some of their hordes, so far from being formidable now, are become vassals to Russia.

Among these is a nation of Calmucs, dwelling between Siberia and the Caspian Sea, where, in the year 1720, there was discovered a subterraneous house of stone, with urns, lamps, earrings, an equestrian statue of an oriental prince, with a diadem on his head, two women seated on thrones, and a roll of manuscripts, which were sent by Peter the Great to the academy of inscriptions at Paris, and proved to be written in the Thibet language: all these are striking proofs, that the liberal arts formerly resided in this now barbarous country, and are lasting evidences of the truth of what Peter the Great was wont several times to say, viz. that the arts had made the tour of the globe.

The last province is Kamtshatka, the most eastern part of the continent. The inhabitants were absolutely void of all religion when they were first discovered. The north part of this country likewise affords fine furs, with which the inhabitants clothed themselves in winter, though they went naked all the summer season. The first discoverers were surprised to find in the southern parts men with long beards, while in the northern parts, from the country of the Samojedes, as far as the mouth of the river Amur, they have no more beards than the Americans. Thus, in the empire of Russia, there is a greater number of different species, more singularities, and a greater diversity of manners and customs, than in any country in the known world.

The first discovery of this country was made by a Cossack officer, who went by land from Siberia to Kamtshatka, in 1701, by order of Peter the Great, who, notwithstanding his misfortune at Narva, still continued to extend his care from one extremity of the continent to the other. Afterwards, in 1725, some time before death surprised him, in the midst of his great exploits, he sent Captain Bering, a Dane, with express orders to find out, if possible, a passage by the sea of Kamtshatka, to the coast of America. Bering did not succeed in his first attempt; but the empress Anne sent him out again in 1733. M. Spengenberg, captain of a ship, his associate in this voyage, set out the first from Kamtshatka, but could not put to sea till the year 1739, so much time was taken up in getting to the port where they were to embark, in building and fitting out the ships, and providing the necessaries. Spengenberg sailed as far as the north part of Japan, through a streight, formed by a long chain of islands, and returned without having discovered the passage.

In 1741, Bering cruised all over this sea, in company with De Lisle de la Croyere, the astronomer, of the same family of L'Isle, which has produced such excellent geographers: another captain likewise went upon the same discovery. They both made the coast of America, to the northward of California. Thus the north-east passage, so long sought after, was at length discovered, but there were no refreshments to be met with in those barren coasts. Their fresh water failed them, and part of the crew perished with the scurvy. They saw the northern bank of California for above a hundred miles, and saw some leathern canoes, with just such a sort of people in them as the Canadians. All their endeavours however proved fruitless: Bering ended his life in an island, to which he gave his

name. The other captain, happening to be closer in with the Californian coast, sent ten of his people on shore, who never returned. The captain, after waiting for them in vain, found himself obliged to return back to Kamtshatka, and De Lisle died as he was going on shore. Such are the disasters that have generally attended every new attempt upon the northern seas. But what advantages may yet arise from these powerful and dangerous discoveries, time alone can prove.

We have now described all the different provinces that compose the Russian dominions, from Finland to the sea of Japan. The largest parts of this empire have been all united at different times, as has been the case in all other kingdoms in the world. The Scythians, Huns, Massagetes, Slavians, Cimbrians, Getes, and Sarmatians, are now subjects of the czar. The Russians, properly so called, are the ancient Roxolani or Slavi.

Upon reflection, we shall find that most states were formed in the same manner. The French are an assemblage of Goths, of Danes called Normands, of northern Germans, called Burgundians; of Franks, Allmans, and some Romans, mixed with the ancient Celtæ. In Rome and Italy there are several families descended from the people of the North, but none that we know of from the ancient Romans. The supreme pontiff is frequently the offspring of a Lombard, a Goth, a Teuton, or a Cimbrian. The Spaniards are a race of Arabs, Carthaginians, Jews, Tyrians, Visigoths, and Vandals, incorporated with the ancient inhabitants of the country. When nations are thus intermixed, it is a long time before they are civilized, or even before their language is formed. Some, indeed, receive these sooner, others later. Polity and the liberal arts are so difficult to establish, and the new raised structure is so often destroyed by revolutions, that we may wonder all nations are not so barbarous as Tartars.

CHAP. II

Continuation of the description of Russia, population, finances, armies, customs, religion: state of Russia before Peter the Great.

The more civilized a country is, the better it is peopled. Thus China and India are more populous than any other empires, because, after a multitude of revolutions, which changed the face of sublunary affairs, these two nations made the earliest establishments in civil society: the antiquity of their government, which has subsisted upwards of four thousand years, supposes, as we have already observed, many essays and efforts in preceding ages. The Russians came very late; but the arts having been introduced amongst them in their full perfection, it has happened, that they have made more progress in fifty years, than any other nation had done before them in five hundred. The country is far from being populous, in proportion to its extent; but, such as it is, it has as great a number of inhabitants as any other state in Christendom. From the capitulation lists, and the register of merchants, artificers, and male peasants, I might safely assert, that Russia, at present, contains at least twenty-four millions of male inhabitants: of these twenty-four millions, the greatest part are villains or bondmen, as in Poland, several provinces of Germany, and formerly throughout all Europe. The estate of a gentleman in Russia and Poland is computed, not by his increase in money, but by the number of his slaves.

The following is a list, taken in 1747, of all the males who paid the capitation or poll-tax: —

[illegible]

Here we have a round number of six millions six hundred forty-six thousand three hundred and ninety male persons, who pay the poll-tax. In this number are included boys and old men, but girls and women are not reckoned, nor boys born between the making of one register of the lands and another. Now, if we only reckon triple the number of heads subject to be taxed, including women and girls, we shall find near twenty millions of souls.

To this number we may add the military list, which amounts to three hundred and fifty thousand men: besides, neither the nobility nor clergy, who are computed at two hundred thousand, are subject to this capitation.

Foreigners, of whatever country or profession, are likewise exempt: as also the inhabitants of the conquered countries, namely, Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, Carelia, and a part of Finland, the Ukraine,

and the Don Cossacks, the Calmucks, and other Tartars, Samojedes, the Laplanders, the Ostiaks, and all the idolatrous people of Siberia, a country of greater extent than China.

By the same calculation, it is impossible that the total of the inhabitants of Russia should amount to less than twenty-four millions. At this rate, there are eight persons to every square mile. The English ambassador, whom I have mentioned before, allows only five; but he certainly was not furnished with such faithful memoirs as those with which I have been favoured.

Russia therefore is exactly five times less populous than Spain, but contains near four times the number of inhabitants: it is almost as populous as France or Germany; but, if we consider its vast extent, the number of souls is thirty times less.

There is one important remark to be made in regard to this enumeration, namely, that out of six million six hundred and forty thousand people liable to the poll-tax, there are about nine hundred thousand that belong to the Russian clergy, without reckoning either the ecclesiastics of the conquered countries, of the Ukraine, or of Siberia.

Therefore, out of seven persons liable to the poll-tax, the clergy have one; but, nevertheless, they are far from possessing the seventh part of the whole revenues of the state, as is the case in many other kingdoms, where they have at least a seventh of all estates; for their peasants pay a capitation to the sovereign; and the other taxes of the crown of Russia, in which the clergy have no share, are very considerable.

This valuation is very different from that of all other writers, on the affairs of Russia; so that foreign ministers, who have transmitted memoirs of this state to their courts, have been greatly mistaken. The archives of the empire are the only things to be consulted.

It is very probable, that Russia has been better peopled than it is at present; before the small-pox, that came from the extremities of Arabia, and the great-pox that came from America, had spread over these climates, where they have now taken root. The world owes these two dreadful scourges, which have depopulated it more than all its wars, the one to Mahomet, and the other to Christopher Columbus. The plague, which is a native of Africa, seldom approached the countries of the North: besides, the people of those countries, from Sarmatia to the Tartars, who dwell beyond the great wall, having overspread the world by their irruptions, this ancient nursery of the human species must have been surprisingly diminished.

In this vast extent of country, there are said to be about seventy-four thousand monks, and five thousand nuns, notwithstanding the care taken by Peter the Great to reduce their number; a care worthy the legislator of an empire where the human race is so remarkably deficient. These thirteen thousand persons, thus immured and lost to the state, have, as the reader may have observed, seventy-two thousand bondmen to till their lands, which is evidently too great a number: there cannot be a stronger proof how difficult it is to eradicate abuses of a long standing.

I find, by a list of the revenues of the empire in 1735, that reckoning the tribute paid by the Tartars, with all taxes and duties in money, the sum total amounted to thirteen millions of rubles, which makes sixty-five millions of French livres, exclusive of tributes in kind. This moderate sum was at that time sufficient to maintain three hundred and thirty-nine thousand five hundred, as well sea as land forces: but both the revenues and troops are augmented since that time.

The customs, diets, and manners of the Russians, ever bore a greater affinity to those of Asia than to those of Europe: such was the old custom of receiving tributes in kind, of defraying the expenses of ambassadors on their journeys, and during their residence in the country, and of never appearing at church, or in the royal presence with a sword; an oriental custom, directly the reverse of that ridiculous and barbarous one amongst us, of addressing ourselves to God, to our king, to our friends, and to our women, with an offensive weapon, which hangs down to the bottom of the leg. The long robe worn on public days, had a more noble air than the short habits of the western nations of Europe. A vest lined and turned up with fur, with a long scimar, adorned with jewels for festival days; and those high turbans, which add to the stature, were much more striking to the eye than our

perukes and close coats, and more suitable to cold climates; but this ancient dress of all nations seems to be not so well contrived for war, nor so convenient for working people. Most of their other customs were rustic; but we must not imagine, that their manners were so barbarous as some writers would have us believe. Albert Krants relates a story of an Italian ambassador, whom the czar ordered to have his hat nailed to his head, for not pulling it off while he was making his speech to him. Others attribute this adventure to a Tartar, and others again to a French ambassador.

Olearius pretends, that the czar Michael Theodorowitz, banished the marquis of Exideüil, ambassador from Henry IV. of France, into Siberia; but it is certain, that this monarch sent no ambassador to Moscow, and that there never was a marquis of Exideüil in France. In the same manner do travellers speak about the country of Borandia, and of the trade they have carried on with the people of Nova Zémbla, which is scarcely inhabited at all, and the long conversations they have had with some of the Samojedes, as if they understood their language. Were the enormous compilations of voyages to be cleared of every thing that is not true nor useful in them, both the works and the public would be gainers by it.

The Russian government resembled that of the Turks, in respect to the standing forces, or guards, called Strelitzes, who, like the janissaries, sometimes disposed of the crown, and frequently disturbed the state as much as they defended it. Their number was about forty thousand. Those who were dispersed in the provinces, subsisted by rapine and plunder; those in Moscow lived like citizens, followed trades, did no duty, and carried their insolence to the greatest excess: in short, there was no other way to preserve peace and good order in the kingdom, but by breaking them; a very necessary, and at the same time a very dangerous step.

The public revenues did not exceed five millions of rubles, or about twenty-five millions of French livres. This was sufficient when czar Peter came to the crown to maintain the ancient mediocrity, but was not a third part of what was necessary to go certain lengths, and to render himself and people considerable in Europe: but at the same time many of their taxes were paid in kind, according to the Turkish custom, which is less burthensome to the people than that of paying their tributes in money.

OF THE TITLE OF CZAR

As to the title of czar, it may possibly come from the tzars or tchars of the kingdom of Casan. When John, or Ivan Basilides, completed the conquest of this kingdom in the sixteenth century, which had been begun by his grandfather, who afterwards lost it, he assumed this title, which his successors have retained ever since. Before John Basilides, the sovereign of Russia, took the title of Welike Knez, i. e. great prince, great lord, great chief, which the Christian nations afterwards rendered by that of great duke. Czar Michael Theodorowitz, when he received the Holstein embassy, took to himself the following titles: 'Great knez, and great lord, conservator of all the Russias, prince of Wolodomer, Moscow, Novogorod, &c. tzar of Casan, tzar of Astracan, and tzar of Siberia.' Tzar was, therefore, a title belonging to these eastern princes; and, therefore, it is more probable to have been derived from the tshas of Persia, than from the Roman Cæsars, whom the Siberian tzars, on the banks of the Oby, can hardly be supposed to have ever heard.

No title, however pompous, is of any consequence, if those who bear it are not great and powerful themselves. The word emperor, which originally signified no more than general of the army, became the title of the sovereign of the Roman republic: it is now given to the supreme governor of all the Russias, more justly than to any other potentate, if we consider the power and extent of his dominions.

RELIGION

The established religion of this country has, ever since the eleventh century, been that of the Greek church, so called in opposition to the Latin; though there were always a greater number of Mahometan and Pagan provinces, than of those inhabited by Christians. Siberia, as far as China, was in a state of idolatry; and, in some of the provinces, they were utter strangers to all kind of religion.

Perry, the engineer, and baron Strahlemburg, who both resided so many years in Russia, tell us, that they found more sincerity and probity among the Pagans than the other inhabitants; not that paganism made them more virtuous, but their manner of living, which, was that of the primitive ages, as they are called, freed them from all the tumultuous passions; and, in consequence, they were known for their integrity.

Christianity did not get footing in Russia and the other countries of the North, till very late. It is said, that a princess, named Olha, first introduced it, about the end of the tenth century, as Clotilda, niece to an Arian prince, did among the Franks; the wife of Miceslaus, duke of Poland, among the Poles; and the sister of the emperor Henry II. among the Hungarians. Women are naturally easily persuaded by the ministers of religion, and as easily persuade the other part of mankind.

It is further added, that the princess Olha caused herself to be baptized at Constantinople, by the name of Helena; and that, as soon as she embraced Christianity, the emperor John Zimisces fell in love with her. It is most likely that she was a widow; however, she refused the emperor. The example of the princess Olha, or Olga, as she is called, did not at first make many proselytes. Her son,¹⁵ who reigned a long time, was not of the same way of thinking as his mother, but her grandson, Wolodomer, who was born of a concubine, having murdered his brother and mounted the throne, sued for the alliance of Basiles, emperor of Constantinople, but could obtain it only on condition of receiving baptism: and this event, which happened in the year 987, is the epocha when the Greek church was first established in Russia. Photius, the patriarch, so famous for his immense erudition, his disputes with the church of Rome, and for his misfortunes, sent a person to baptize Wolodomer, in order to add this part of the world to the patriarchal see.¹⁶

Wolodimer, or Wolodomer, therefore completed the work which his grandmother had begun. A Greek was made the first metropolitan, or patriarch of Russia; and from this time the Russians adopted an alphabet, taken partly from the Greek. This would have been of advantage to them, had they not still retained the principles of their own language, which is the Sclavonian in every thing, but a few terms relating to their liturgy and church government. One of the Greek patriarchs, named Jeremiah, having a suit depending before the divan, came to Moscow to solicit it; where, after some time, he resigned his authority over the Russian churches, and consecrated patriarch, the archbishop of Novogorod, named Job. This was in the year 1588, from which time the Russian church became as independent as its empire. The patriarch of Russia has ever since been consecrated by the Russian bishops, and not by the patriarch of Constantinople. He ranked in the Greek church next to the patriarch of Jerusalem, but he was in fact the only free and powerful patriarch; and, consequently, the only real one. Those of Jerusalem, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, are mercenary chiefs of a church, enslaved by the Turks; and even the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch are no longer considered as such, having no more credit or influence in Turkey, than the rabbins of the Jewish synagogues settled there.

It was from a person who was a patriarch of all the Russias, that Peter the Great was descended in a right line. These new prelates soon wanted to share the sovereign authority with the czars. They

¹⁵ His name was Sowastowslaw.

¹⁶ This anecdote is taken from a private MS. entitled 'The Ecclesiastical Government of Russia,' which is like wise deposited in the public library.

thought it not enough that their prince walked bare-headed, once a year before the patriarch, leading his horse by the bridle. These external marks of respect only served to increase their thirst for rule; a passion which proved the source of great troubles in Russia, as well as in other countries.

Nicon, a person whom the monks look upon as a saint, and who was patriarch in the reign of Alexis, the father of Peter the Great, wanted to raise his dignity above that of the throne; for he not only assumed the privilege of sitting by the side of the czar in the senate, but pretended that neither war nor peace could be made without his consent. His authority was so great, that, being supported by his immense wealth, and by his intrigues with the clergy and the people, he kept his master in a kind of subjection. He had the boldness to excommunicate some senators who opposed his excessive insolence; till at last, Alexis, finding himself not powerful enough to depose him by his own authority, was obliged to convene a synod of all the bishops. There the patriarch was accused of having received money from the Poles; and being convicted, was deposed, and confined for the remainder of his days in a monastery, after which the prelates chose another patriarch in his stead.

From the first infancy of Christianity in Russia, there have been several sects there, as well as in other countries; for sects are as frequently the fruits of ignorance, as of pretended knowledge: but Russia is the only Christian state of any considerable extent, in which religion has not excited civil wars, though it has felt some occasional tumults.

The Raskolnikys, who consist at present of about two thousand males, and who are mentioned in the foregoing list,¹⁷ are the most ancient sect of any in this country. It was established in the twelfth century, by some enthusiasts, who had a superficial knowledge of the New Testament: they made use then, and still do, of the old pretence of all sectaries, that of following the letter, and accused all other Christians of remissness. They would not permit a priest, who had drank brandy, to confer baptism; they affirmed, in the words of our Saviour, that there is neither a first nor a last, among the faithful; and held, that one of the elect might kill himself for the love of his Saviour. According to them it is a great sin to repeat the hallelujah three times; and, therefore, repeat it only twice. The benediction is to be given only with three fingers. In other respects, no society can be more regular, or strict in its morals. They live like the quakers, and, like them, do not admit any other Christians into their assemblies, which is the reason that these have accused them of all the abominations of which the heathens accused the primitive Galileans: these latter, the gnostics, and with which the Roman catholics have charged the protestants. They have been frequently accused of cutting the throat of an infant, and drinking its blood; and of mixing together in their private ceremonies, without distinction of kindred, age, or even of sex. They have been persecuted at times, and then they shut themselves up in their hamlets, set fire to their houses, and thrown themselves into the flames. Peter took the only method of reclaiming them, which was by letting them live in peace.

But to conclude, in all this vast empire, there are but twenty-eight episcopal sees; and in Peter's time there were but twenty-two. This small number was, perhaps, one of the causes to which the Russian church owes its tranquillity. So very circumscribed was the knowledge of the clergy, that czar Theodore, brother to Peter the Great, was the first who introduced the custom of singing Psalms in churches.

Theodore and Peter, especially the latter, admitted indifferently, into their councils and their armies, those of the Greek, the Latin, the Lutheran, and the Calvinist communion, leaving every one at liberty to serve God after his own conscience, provided he did his duty to the state. At that time there was not one Latin church in this great empire of two thousand leagues, till Peter established some new manufactures at Astracan, when there were about sixty Roman catholic families, under the direction of the capuchins; but the jesuits endeavouring to establish themselves in his dominions, he drove them out by an edict, published in the month of April, 1718. He tolerated the capuchins as an insignificant set of monks, but considered the jesuits as dangerous politicians.

¹⁷ See page 35.

The Greek church has at once the honour and satisfaction to see its communion extended throughout an empire of two thousand leagues in length, while that of Rome is not in possession of half that tract in Europe. Those of the Greek communion have, at all times, been particularly attentive to maintain an equality between theirs and the Latin church; and always upon their guard against the zeal of the see of Rome, which they look upon as ambition; because, in fact, that church, whose power is very much circumscribed in our hemisphere, and yet assumes the title of universal, has always endeavoured to act up to that title.

The Jews never made any settlements in Russia, as they have done in most of the other states of Europe, from Constantinople to Rome. The Russians have carried on their trade by themselves, or by the help of the nations settled amongst them. Theirs is the only country of the Greek communion, where synagogues are not seen by the side of Christian temples.

Conclusion of the State of RUSSIA before PETER the GREAT

Russia is indebted solely to czar Peter for its great influence in the affairs of Europe; being of no consideration in any other reign, since it embraced Christianity. Before this period, the Russians made the same figure on the Black Sea, that the Normans did afterwards on the coasts of the ocean. In the reign of the emperor Heraclius, they fitted out an armament of forty thousand small barks; appeared before Constantinople, which they besieged, and imposed a tribute on the Greek emperors; but the grand knez Wolodimar, being wholly taken up with the care of establishing Christianity in his dominions, and wearied out with intestine broils in his own family, weakened his dominions by dividing them between his children. They almost all fell a prey to the Tartars, who held Russia in subjection near two hundred years. At length John Basilides freed it from slavery, and enlarged its boundaries: but, after his time, it was ruined again by civil wars.

Before the time of Peter the Great, Russia was neither so powerful, so well cultivated, so populous, nor so rich as at present. It had no possessions in Finland, nor in Livonia; and this latter alone had long been worth more than all Siberia. The Cossacks were still unsubjected, nor were the people of Astracan reduced to obedience; what little trade was carried on, was rather to their disadvantage. The White Sea, the Baltic, the Pontus Euxinus, the sea of Azoph, and the Caspian Sea, were entirely useless to a nation that had not a single ship, nor even a term in their language to express a fleet. If nothing more had been wanting but to be superior to the Tartars, and the other nations of the north, as far as China, the Russians undoubtedly had that advantage, but they were to be brought upon an equality with civilized nations, and to be in a condition, one day, of even surpassing several of them. Such an undertaking appeared altogether impracticable, inasmuch as they had not a single ship at sea, and were absolutely ignorant of military discipline by land: nay, the most common manufactures were hardly encouraged, and agriculture itself, that *primum mobile* of trade, was neglected. This requires the utmost attention and encouragement on the part of a government; and it is to this that the English are indebted, for finding in their corn a treasure far superior to their woollen manufacture.

This gross neglect of the necessary arts, sufficiently shews that the people of Russia had no idea of the polite arts, which become necessary, in their turn, when we have cultivated the others. They might indeed, have sent some of the natives to gain instruction among foreigners, but the difference of languages, manners, and religion, opposed it. Besides, there was a law of state and religion, equally sacred and pernicious, which prohibited any Russian from going out of his country, and thus seemed to devote this people to eternal ignorance. They were in possession of the most extensive dominions in the universe, and yet every thing was wanted amongst them. At length Peter was born, and Russia became a civilized state.

Happily, of all the great lawgivers who have lived in the world, Peter is the only one whose history is well known. Those of Theseus and Romulus, who did far less than him, and of the founders

of all well-governed states, are blended with the most absurd fictions: whereas here, we have the advantage of written truths, which would pass for fictions, were they not so well attested.

CHAP. III

The ancestors of Peter the Great.

The family of Peter the Great have been in possession of the throne ever since the year 1613. Before that time, Russia had undergone revolutions, which had retarded the reformation of her police, and the introduction of the liberal arts. This has been the fate of all human societies. No kingdom ever experienced more cruel troubles. In the year 1597, the tyrant Boris Godonow assassinated Demetrius (or Demetri, as he was called), the lawful heir, and usurped the empire. A young monk took the name of Demetrius, pretending to be that prince who had escaped from his murderers; and with the assistance of the Poles, and a considerable party (which every tyrant has against him), he drove out the usurper, and seized the crown himself. The imposture was discovered as soon as he came to the sovereignty, because the people were not pleased with him; and he was murdered. Three other false Demetrius's started up, one after another. Such a succession of impostors, supposes a country in the utmost distraction. The less men are civilized, the more easily they are imposed on. It may readily be conceived, how much these frauds augmented the public confusion and misfortunes. The Poles, who had begun the revolutions, by setting up the first false Demetrius, were on the point of being masters of Russia. The Swedes shared in the spoils on the coast of Finland, and laid claim to the crown. The state seemed on the verge of utter destruction.

In the midst of these calamities, an assembly, composed of the principal boyards, chose for their sovereign a young man of fifteen years of age: this happened in 1613, and did not seem a very likely method of putting an end to these troubles. This young man was Michael Romanow,¹⁸ grandfather to czar Peter, and son to the archbishop of Rotow, surnamed Philaretus, and of a nun, and related by the mother's side to the ancient czars.

It must be observed, that this archbishop was a powerful nobleman, whom the tyrant Boris had obliged to become priest. His wife, Scheremetow, was likewise compelled to take the veil; this was the ancient custom of the western tyrants of the Latin church, as that of putting out the eyes was with the Greek Christians. The tyrant Demetrius made Philaretus archbishop of Rostow, and sent him ambassador to Poland, where he was detained prisoner by the Poles, who were then at war with the Russians; so little was the law of nations known to the different people of these times. During his father's confinement, young Romanow was elected czar. The archbishop was exchanged against some Polish prisoners; and, at his return, his son created him patriarch, and the old man was in fact king, under his son's name.

If such a government appears extraordinary to strangers, the marriages of czar Michael Romanow, will seem still more so. The Russian princes had never intermarried with foreign states since the year 1490, or after they became masters of Casan and Astracan; they seem to have followed the Asiatic customs in almost every thing, and especially in that of marrying only among their own subjects.

This conformity to the ancient customs of Asia, was still more conspicuous at the ceremonies observed at the marriage of a czar. A number of the most beautiful women in the provinces were sent for to court, where they were received by the grand gouvernante of the court, who provided apartments for them in her own house, where they all eat together. The czar paid them visits, sometimes incognito, and sometimes in his real character. The wedding-day was fixed, without its being declared on whom the choice had fallen. At the appointed time, the happy she was presented with a rich wedding-suit,

¹⁸ Thus the Russians call this young man; but in all French authors we find Romano, that language having no such letter as the W; others again call him Romanoff.

and other dresses were given to the rest of the fair candidates, who then returned home. There have been four instances of these marriages.

In this manner was Michael Romanow espoused to Eudocia, the daughter of a poor gentleman, named Streschneu. He was employed in ploughing his grounds with his servants, when the lords of the bed-chamber came to him with presents from the czar, and to acquaint him that his daughter was placed on the throne. The name of the princess is still held in the highest veneration by the Russians. This custom is greatly different from ours, but not the less respectable on that account.

It is necessary to observe, that before Romanow was elected czar, a strong party had made choice of prince Ladislaus, son to Sigismund III. king of Poland. At the same time, the provinces bordering on Sweden had offered the crown to a brother of Gustavus Adolphus: so that Russia was in the same situation then in which we have so frequently seen Poland, where the right of electing a king has been the source of civil wars. But the Russians did not follow the example of the Poles, who entered into a compact with the prince whom they elected; notwithstanding they had smarted from the oppression of tyrants, yet they voluntarily submitted to a young man, without making any conditions with him.

Russia never was an elective kingdom; but the male issue of the ancient sovereigns failing, and six czars, or pretenders, having perished miserably in the late troubles, there was, as we have observed, a necessity for electing a monarch; and this election occasioned fresh wars with Poland and Sweden, who maintained, with force of arms, their pretended rights to the crown of Russia. The right of governing a nation against its own will, can never be long supported. The Poles, on their side, after having advanced as far as Moscow, and exercised all the ravages in which the military expeditions of those times chiefly consisted, concluded a truce for fourteen years. By this truce, Poland remained in possession of the duchy of Smolensko, in which the Boristhenes has its source. The Swedes also made peace, in virtue of which they remained in possession of Ingria, and deprived the Russians of all communication with the Baltic Sea, so that this empire was separated more than ever from the rest of Europe.

Michael Romanow, after this peace, reigned quietly, without making any alteration in the state, either to the improvement or corruption of the administration. After his death, which happened in 1645, his son, Alexis Michaelowitz (or son of Michael), ascended the throne by hereditary right. It may be observed, that the czars were crowned by the patriarch of Russia, according to the ceremonies in use at Constantinople, except that the patriarch of Russia, was seated on the same ascent with the sovereign, and constantly affected an equality highly insulting to the supreme power.

ALEXIS MICHAELOWITZ

Alexis was married in the same manner as his father, and from among the young women presented, he chose the one who appeared the most amiable in his eyes. He married a daughter of the boyard Meloslauski, in 1647; his second wife, whom he married in 1671, was of the family of Nariskin, and his favourite Morosow was married to another. There cannot be a more suitable title found for this favourite than that of vizier, for he governed the empire in a despotic manner; and, by his great power, excited several commotions among the strelitzes and the populace, as frequently happens at Constantinople.

The reign of Alexis was disturbed by bloody insurrections, and by domestic and foreign wars. A chief of the Don Cossacks, named Stenko-Rasin, endeavoured to make himself king of Astracan, and was for a long time very formidable; but, being at length defeated and taken prisoner, he ended his life by the hands of the executioner; like all those of this stamp, who have nothing to expect but a throne or a scaffold. About twelve thousand of his adherents are said to have been hanged on the high road to Astracan. In this part of the world, men being uninfluenced by morality, were to be

governed only by rigour; and from this severity, frequently carried on to a degree of cruelty, arose slavery, and a secret thirst of revenge.

Alexis had a war with the Poles that proved successful, and terminated in a peace, which secured to him the possession of Smolensko, Kiow, and the Ukraine: but he was unfortunate against the Swedes, and the boundaries of the Russian empire were contracted within a very narrow compass on that side of the kingdom.

The Turks were at that time his most formidable enemies: they invaded Poland, and threatened the dominions of the czar that bordered upon Crim Tartary, the ancient Taurica Chersonesus. In 1671, they took the important city of Kaminiek, and all that belonged to Poland in the Ukraine. The Cossacks of that country, ever averse to subjection, knew not whether they belonged to the Turks, Poland, or Russia. Sultan Mahomet IV. who had conquered the Poles, and had just imposed a tribute upon them, demanded, with all the haughtiness of an Ottoman victor, that the czar should evacuate his possessions in the Ukraine, but received as haughty a denial from that prince. Men did not know at that time how to disguise their pride, by an outside of civility. The sultan, in his letter, styled the sovereign of the Russias only Christian Hospodar, and entitled himself 'most gracious majesty, king of the universe.' The czar replied in these terms, 'that he scorned to submit to a Mahometan dog, and that his scimeter was as good as the grand seignior's sabre.'

Alexis at that time formed a design which seemed to presage the influence which the Russian empire would one day obtain in the Christian world. He sent ambassadors to the pope, and to almost all the great sovereigns in Europe, excepting France (which was in alliance with the Turks), in order to establish a league against the Ottoman Porte. His ambassadors at the court of Rome succeeded only in not being obliged to kiss the pope's toe; and in other courts they met with only unprofitable good wishes; the quarrels of the Christian princes between themselves, and the jarring interests arising from those quarrels, having constantly prevented them from uniting against the common enemy of Christianity.

In the mean time, the Turks threatened to chastise the Poles, who refused to pay their tribute: czar Alexis assisted on the side of Crim Tartary, and John Sobieski, general of the crown, wiped off his country's stain in the blood of the Turks, at the famous battle of Choczim,¹⁹ in 1674, which paved his way to the throne. Alexis disputed this very throne with him, and proposed to unite his extensive dominions to Poland, as the Jagellons had done; but in regard to Lithuania, the greatness of his offer was the cause of its being rejected. He is said to have been very deserving of the new kingdom, by the manner in which he governed his own. He was the first who caused a body of laws to be digested in Russia, though imperfect; and introduced both linen and silk manufactures, which indeed were not long kept up; nevertheless, he had the merit of their first establishment. He peopled the deserts about the Wolga and the Kama, with Lithuanian, Polish, and Tartarian families, whom he had taken prisoners in his wars: before his reign, all prisoners of war were the slaves of those to whose lot they fell. Alexis employed them in agriculture: he did his utmost endeavours to introduce discipline among his troops. In a word, he was worthy of being the father of Peter the Great; but he had no time to perfect what he had begun, being snatched away by a sudden death, at the age of forty-six, in the beginning of the year 1677, according to our style, which is eleven days forwarder than that of Russia.

FEDOR, or THEODORE ALEXIOWITZ

Upon the death of Alexis, son of Michael, all fell again into confusion. He left, by his first marriage, two princes, and six princesses. Theodore, the eldest, ascended the throne at fifteen years of age. He was a prince of a weak and sickly constitution, but of merit superior to his bodily infirmities.

¹⁹ Or Chotsin, a town of Upper Moldavia in European Turkey, well fortified both by nature and art, situated on the Dniester, and subject to the Turks, from whom it was taken by the Russians in 1739.

His father Alexis had caused him to be acknowledged his successor, a year before his death: a conduct observed by the kings of France from Hugh Capet down to Lewis the Young, and by many other crowned heads.

The second son of Alexis was Iwan, or John, who was still worse treated by nature than his brother Theodore, being almost blind and dumb, very infirm, and frequently attacked with convulsions. Of six daughters, born of this first marriage, the only one who made any figure in Europe was the princess Sophia, who was remarkable for her great talents; but unhappily still more so for the mischief she intended against Peter the Great.

Alexis, by his second marriage with another of his subjects, daughter of the boyard Nariskin, had Peter and the princess Nathalia. Peter was born the 30th of May (or the 10th of June new stile), in the year 1672, and was but four years old when he lost his father. As the children of a second marriage were not much regarded in Russia, it was little expected that he would one day mount the throne.

It had ever been the character of the family of Romanow to civilize their state. It was also that of Theodore. We have already remarked, in speaking of Moscow, that this prince encouraged the inhabitants of that city to build a great number of stone houses. He likewise enlarged that capital, and made several useful regulations in the general police; but, by attempting to reform the boyards, he made them all his enemies: besides, he was not possessed of sufficient knowledge, vigour, or resolution, to venture upon making a general reformation. The war with the Turks, or rather with the Crim Tartars, in which he was constantly engaged with alternate success, would not permit a prince of his weak state of health to attempt so great a work. Theodore, like the rest of his predecessors, married one of his own subjects, a native of the frontiers of Poland; but having lost her in less than a year after their nuptials, he took for his second wife, in 1682, Martha Matweowna, daughter of the secretary Nariskin.²⁰ Some months after this marriage, he was seized with the disorder which ended his days, and died without leaving any children. As the czars married without regard to birth, they might likewise (at least at that time) appoint a successor without respect to primogeniture. The dignity of consort and heir to the sovereign seemed to be entirely the reward of merit; and, in that respect, the custom of this empire was much preferable to the customs of more civilized states.

Theodore, before he expired, seeing that his brother Iwan was by his natural infirmities incapable of governing, nominated his younger brother Peter, heir to the empire of Russia. Peter, who was then only in his tenth year, had already given the most promising hopes.

If, on the one hand, the custom of raising a subject to the rank of czarina, was favourable to the females, there was another which was no less hard upon them; namely, that the daughters of the czars were very seldom married, but were most of them obliged to pass their lives in a monastery.

The princess Sophia, third daughter of czar Alexis, by his first marriage, was possessed of abilities, equally great and dangerous. Perceiving that her brother Theodore had not long to live, she did not retire to a convent; but finding herself situated between two brothers, one of whom was incapable of governing, through his natural inability; and the other, on account of his youth, she conceived the design of placing herself at the head of the empire. Hence, in the last hours of czar Theodore, she attempted to act the part that Pulcheria had formerly played with her brother, the emperor Theodosius.

²⁰ This must certainly be a mistake of M. de Voltaire, or an error in the press; for the lady here spoken of was the daughter of Matthias Apraxim, a person on whom Theodore had lately conferred nobility.

CHAP. IV

JOHN AND PETER.

Horrible Sedition among the Strelitzes.²¹
1682.

Czar Theodore's eyes were scarcely closed, when the nomination of a prince of only ten years old to the throne, the exclusion of the elder brother, and the intrigues of the princess Sophia, their sister, excited a most bloody revolt among the strelitzes. Never did the janissaries, nor the prætorian guards, exercise more horrible barbarities. The insurrection began two days after the interment of Theodore, when they all ran to arms in the Kremlin, which is the imperial palace at Moscow. There they began with accusing nine of their colonels, for keeping back part of their pay. The ministry was obliged to break the colonels, and to pay the strelitzes the money they demanded: but this did not satisfy them, they insisted upon having these nine officers delivered up to them, and condemned them, by a majority of votes, to suffer the Battogs, or Knout; the manner of which punishment is as follows: —

The delinquent is stripped naked, and laid flat on his belly, while two executioners beat him over the back with switches, or small canes, till the judge, who stands by to see the sentence put in execution, says, 'It is enough.' The colonels, after being thus treated by their men, were obliged to return them thanks, according to the custom of the eastern nations; where criminals, after undergoing their punishment, must kiss the judge's hand. Besides complying with this custom, the officers gave them a sum of money, which was something more than the custom.

While the strelitzes thus began to make themselves formidable, the princess Sophia, who secretly encouraged them, in order to lead them by degrees from crime to crime, held a meeting at her house, consisting of the princesses of the blood, the generals of the army, the boyards, the patriarch, the bishops, and even some of the principal merchants; where she represented to them, that prince John, by right of birth and merit, was entitled to the empire, the reins of which she intended to keep in her own hands. At the breaking up of the assembly, she caused a promise to be made to the strelitzes, of an augmentation of pay, besides considerable presents. Her emissaries were in particular employed to stir up the soldiery against the Nariskin family, especially the two brothers of the young dowager czarina, the mother of Peter the First. These persuaded the strelitzes, that one of the brothers, named John, had put on the imperial robes, had seated himself on the throne, and had attempted to strangle prince John; adding, moreover, that the late czar Theodore had been poisoned by a villain, named Daniel Vongad, a Dutch physician. At last Sophia put into their hands a list of forty noblemen, whom she stiled enemies to their corps, and to the state, and as such worthy of death. These proceedings exactly resembled the proscriptions of Sylla, and the Roman triumvirate, which had been revived by Christian II. in Denmark and Sweden. This may serve to shew, that such cruelties prevail in all countries in times of anarchy and confusion. The mutineers began the tragedy with throwing the two knez, or princes, Dolgorouki and Matheof, out of the palace-windows; whom the strelitzes received upon the points of their spears, then stripped them, and dragged their dead bodies into the great square; after this they rushed into the palace, where meeting with Athanasius Nariskin, a brother of the young czarina, and one of the uncles of czar Peter, they murdered him in like manner; then breaking open the door of a neighbouring church, where three of the proscribed persons had taken refuge, they drag them from the altar, strip them naked, and stab them to death with knives.

They were so blinded with their fury, that seeing a young nobleman of the family of Soltikoff, a great favourite of theirs, and who was not included in the list of the proscribed, and some of them

²¹ Extracted wholly from the memoirs sent from Moscow and Petersburg.

mistaking him for John Nariskin, whom they were in search of, they murdered him upon the spot; and what plainly shews the manners of those times, after having discovered their error, they carried the body of young Soltikoff, to his father to bury it; and the wretched parent, far from daring to complain, gave them a considerable reward for bringing him the mangled body of his son. Being reproached by his wife, his daughters, and the widow of the deceased, for his weakness, 'Let us wait for an opportunity of being revenged,' said the old man. These words being overheard by some of the soldiers, they returned furiously back into the room, dragged the aged parent by the hair, and cut his throat at his own door.

Another party of the strelitzes, who were scouring the city in search of the Dutch physician, Vongad, met with his son, of whom they inquired for his father; the youth trembling, replied, he did not know where he was, upon which they immediately dispatched him. Soon after, a German physician falling in their way, 'You are a doctor,' said they, 'and if you did not poison our master, Theodore, you have poisoned others, and therefore merit death;' and thereupon killed him.

At length they found the Dutchman, of whom they were in quest, disguised in the garb of a beggar; they instantly drag him before the palace. The princesses who loved this worthy man, and placed great confidence in his skill, begged the strelitzes to spare him, assuring them that he was a very good physician, and had taken all possible care of their brother Theodore. The strelitzes made answer, that he not only deserved to die as a physician, but also as a sorcerer; and that they had found in his house, a great dried toad, and the skin of a serpent. They furthermore required to have young Nariskin delivered up to them, whom they had searched for in vain for two days: alleging, that he was certainly in the palace, and that they would set fire to it, unless he was put into their hands. The sister of John Nariskin, and the other princesses, terrified by their menaces, went to acquaint their unhappy brother in the place of his concealment, with what had passed; upon which the patriarch heard his confession, administers the viaticum, and extreme unction to him, and then, taking an image of the blessed Virgin, which was said to perform miracles, he leads the young man forth by the hand, and presents him to the strelitzes, shewing them, at the same time, the image of the Virgin. The princesses, who in tears surrounded Nariskin, falling upon their knees before the soldiers, besought them, in the name of the blessed Virgin, to spare their relation's life; but the inhuman wretches tore him from their arms, and dragged him to the foot of the stairs, together with the physician Vongad, where they held a kind of tribunal among themselves, and condemned them both to be put to the torture. One of the soldiers, who could write, drew up a form of accusation, and sentenced the two unfortunate princes to be cut in pieces; a punishment inflicted in China and Tartary on parricides, and called the punishment of ten thousand slices. After having thus used Nariskin and Vongad, they exposed their heads, feet, and hands, on the iron points of a balustrade.

While this party of the strelitzes were thus glutting their fury in the sight of the princesses, the rest massacred every one who was obnoxious to them, or suspected by the princess Sophia.

This horrid tragedy concluded with proclaiming the two princes, John and Peter, in June, 1682, joint sovereigns, and associating their sister Sophia with them, in the quality of co-regent; who then publicly approved of all their outrages, gave them rewards, confiscated the estates of the proscribed, and bestowed them upon their murderers. She even permitted them to erect a monument, with the names of the persons they had murdered, as being traitors to their country: and to crown all, she published letters-patent, thanking them for their zeal and fidelity.

CHAP. V

Administration of the princess Sophia. Extraordinary quarrel about religion.
A conspiracy.

Such were the steps by which the princess Sophia did in effect ascend the throne of Russia, though without being declared czarina; and such the examples that Peter the First had before his eyes. Sophia enjoyed all the honours of a sovereign; her bust was on the public coin; she signed all dispatches, held the first place in council, and enjoyed a power without control. She was possessed of a great share of understanding, and some wit; made verses in the Russian language, and both spoke and wrote extremely well. These talents were set off by the addition of an agreeable person, and sullied only by her ambition.

She procured a wife for her brother John, in the manner already described in several examples. A young lady named Soltikoff, of the family with the nobleman of that name who had been assassinated by the seditious strelitzes, was sent for from the heart of Siberia, where her father commanded a fortress, to be presented to czar John at Moscow. Her beauty triumphed over all the intrigues of her rivals, and John was married to her in 1684. At every marriage of a czar we seem to read the history of Ahasuerus, or that of Theodosius the Younger.

In the midst of the rejoicings on account of this marriage, the strelitzes raised a new insurrection, and (who would believe it?) on account of religion! of a particular tenet! Had they been mere soldiers, they would never have become controvertists, but they were also citizens of Moscow. Whosoever has, or assumes a right of speaking in an authoritative manner to the populace, may found a sect. This has been seen in all ages, and all parts of the world, especially since the passion of dogmatizing has become the instrument of ambition, and the terror of weak minds.

Russia had experienced some previous disturbances on occasion of a dispute, whether the sign of the cross was to be made with three fingers, or with two! One Abakum, who was also a priest, had set up some new tenets at Moscow, in regard to the Holy Spirit; which according to the Scriptures, enlightened all the faithful; as likewise with respect to the equality of the primitive Christians, and these words of Christ: – 'There shall be amongst you neither first nor last.' Several citizens and many of the strelitzes, embraced the opinions of Abakum. One Raspop²² was the chief of this party, which became considerable. The sectaries, at length, entered (July 16, 1682, new stile) the cathedral, where the patriarch and his clergy were officiating; drove them out of the church with stones, and seated themselves very devoutly in their places, to receive the Holy Spirit. They called the patriarch the 'ravenous wolf in the sheepfold;' a title which all sects have liberally bestowed on each other. The princess Sophia, and the two czars, were immediately made acquainted with these disturbances: and the other strelitzes, who were staunch to the good old cause, were given to understand, that the czars and the church were in danger. Upon this the strelitzes and burghers of the patriarchal party attacked the Abakumists: but a stop was put to the carnage, by publishing a convocation of a council, which was immediately assembled in a hall of the palace. This took up very little time, for they obliged every priest they met to attend. The patriarch, and a bishop, disputed against Raspop; but at the second syllogism, they began to throw stones at one another. The council ended with ordering Raspop, and some of his faithful disciples to have their heads struck off; and the sentence was executed by the sole order of the three sovereigns, Sophia, John, and Peter.

²² Here M. de Voltaire seems to have greatly mistaken the sense of this word. Raspop not being a proper name, in which sense he takes it, but signifies a degraded priest.

During these troubles, there was a knez, named Chowanskoi, who having been instrumental in raising the princess Sophia to the dignity she then held, wanted, as a reward for his services, to have a share in the administration.

It may be supposed, that he found Sophia not so grateful as he could wish; upon which he espoused the cause of religion, and the persecuted Raspopians, and stirred up a party among the strelitzes and the people, in defence of God's name.

This conspiracy proved a more serious affair than the enthusiastic riot of Raspop. An ambitious hypocrite always carries things farther than a simple fanatic. Chowanskoi aimed at no less than the imperial dignity; and to rid himself of all cause of fear, he resolved to murder the two czars, Sophia, the other princesses, and every one who was attached to the imperial family. The czars and the princesses were obliged to retire to the monastery of the Holy Trinity, within twelve leagues of Petersburg.²³ This was, at the same time, a convent, a palace, and a fortress, like Mount Cassino,²⁴ Corhy,²⁵ Fulda,²⁶ Kempten,²⁷ and several others belonging to the Latin church. This monastery of the Trinity belongs to the monks of St. Basil. It is surrounded by deep ditches, and ramparts of brick, on which is planted a numerous artillery. The monks are possessed of all the country round for four leagues. The imperial family were in full safety there, but more on account of the strength, than the sanctity of the place. Here Sophia treated with the rebel knez; and having decoyed him half way, caused his head to be struck off, together with those of one of his sons, and thirty-seven strelitzes who accompanied him.

1682.

The body of strelitzes upon this news, fly to arms, and march to attack the convent of Trinity, threatening to destroy every thing that came in their way. The imperial family stood upon their defence; the boyards arm their vassals, all the gentlemen flocked in, and a bloody civil war seemed on the point of beginning. The patriarch somewhat pacified the strelitzes, who began to be intimidated with the number of troops that were marching towards them on all sides: in short, their fury was changed into fear, and their fear into the most abject submission; a change common to the multitude. Three thousand seven hundred of this corps, followed by their wives and children, with ropes tied about their necks, went in procession to the convent of the Trinity, which three days before they had threatened to burn to the ground. In this condition, these unhappy wretches present themselves before the gate of the convent, two by two, one carrying a block and another an axe; and prostrating themselves on the ground, waited for their sentence. They were pardoned upon their submission, and returned back to Moscow, blessing their sovereigns; and still disposed, though unknown to themselves, to commit the same crime upon the very first opportunity.

These commotions being subsided, the state resumed an exterior of tranquillity; but Sophia still remained possessed of the chief authority, leaving John to his incapacity, and keeping Peter in the subjection of a ward. In order to strengthen her power, she shared it with Prince Basil Galitzin, whom she created generalissimo, minister of state, and lord keeper. Galitzin was in every respect superior to any person in that distracted court: he was polite, magnificent, full of great designs, more learned than any of his countrymen, as having received a much better education, and was even master of the Latin tongue, which was, at that time, almost entirely unknown in Russia. He was of an active and

²³ We suppose the author means Moscow.

²⁴ Or Cossano, a small town and abbey in the Milanese. On the Adda, near this place, an obstinate battle was fought between the Germans and French, in 1705, when prince Eugene defeated the duke of Vendome.

²⁵ A town and abbey on the borders of Westphalia, in Germany; the abbot of which is a sovereign prince, and has a seat in the imperial diet.

²⁶ Or Fuld, a town and abbey of Hesse, in Germany; situate on a river of the same name. It is governed by an abbot, who is a prince of the empire.

²⁷ An imperial city of Suabia, in Germany, situate on the Ifar.

indefatigable spirit, had a genius superior to the times he lived in, and capable, had he had leisure and power, as he had inclination, to have changed the face of things in Russia. This is the eulogium given of him by La Neuville, at that time the Polish envoy in Russia; and the encomiums of foreigners are seldom to be suspected.

This minister bridled the insolence of the strelitzes, by distributing the most mutinous of that body among the several regiments in the Ukraine, in Casan, and Siberia. It was under his administration that the Poles, long the rivals of Russia, gave up, in 1686, all pretensions to the large provinces of Smolensko and the Ukraine. He was the first who sent an embassy to France, in 1687; a country which had, for upwards of twenty years, been in the zenith of its glory, by the conquests, new establishments, and the magnificence of Lewis XIV. and especially by the improvement of the arts, there can be not only external grandeur, but solid glory. France had not then entered into any correspondence with Russia, or rather was unacquainted with that empire; and the academy of inscriptions ordered a medal to be struck to commemorate this embassy, as if it had come from the most distant part of the Indies; but notwithstanding all this, the ambassador Dolgorouski miscarried in his negotiation, and even suffered some gross affronts on account of the behaviour of his domestics, whose mistakes it would have been better to have overlooked; but the court of Lewis XIV. could not then foresee, that France and Russia would one day reckon among the number of their advantages, that of being cemented by the closest union.

Russia was now quiet at home, but she was still pent up on the side of Sweden, though enlarged towards Poland, her new ally, in continual alarms on the side of Crim Tartary, and at variance with China in regard to the frontiers.

The most intolerable circumstance for their empire, and which plainly shewed, that it had not yet attained to a vigorous and regular administration, was, that the khan of the Crim Tartars exacted an annual tribute of 6000 rubles, in the nature of that which the Turk had imposed on the Poles.

Crim Tartary is the ancient Taurica Chersonesus, formerly so famous by the commerce of the Greeks, and still more by their fables, a fruitful but barbarous country. It took its name of Crimea, or Crim, from the title of its first khans, who took this name before the conquests of the sons of Gengis Khan. To free his country from this yoke, and wipe off the disgrace of such tribute, the prime minister, Galitzin, marched in person (1687, 1688,) into Crim Tartary, at the head of a numerous army. These armies were not to be compared to the present troops; they had no discipline; there was hardly one regiment completely armed; they had no uniform clothing, no regularity: their men indeed were inured to hard labour and a scarcity of provisions, but then they carried with them such a prodigious quantity of baggage, as far exceeded any thing of the kind in our camps, where the greatest luxury prevails. Their vast numbers of waggons for carrying ammunition and provisions, in an uninhabitable and desert country, greatly retarded the expedition against Crim Tartary. The army found itself in the midst of the vast deserts, on the river Samara, unprovided with magazines. Here Galitzin did what in my opinion, was never done any where else: he employed thirty thousand men in building a town on the banks of the Samara, to serve as a place for magazines in the ensuing campaign: it was begun in one year, and finished in the third month of the following; the houses indeed were all wood except two, which were brick; the ramparts were of turf, but well lined with artillery; and the whole place was in a tolerable state of defence.

This was all that was done of any consequence in this ruinous expedition. In the mean while Sophia continued to govern in Moscow, while John had only the name of czar; and Peter, now at the age of seventeen, had already the courage to aim at real sovereignty. La Neuville, the Polish envoy, then resident at Moscow, and who was eye-witness to all that passed, pretends that Sophia and Galitzin had engaged the new chief of the strelitzes, to sacrifice to them their young czar: it appears, at least, that six hundred of these strelitzes were to have made themselves masters of his person. The private memoirs which have been entrusted to my perusal by the court of Russia, affirm, that a scheme had actually been laid to murder Peter the First: the blow was on the point of being struck, and Russia for

ever deprived of the new existence she has since received. The czar was once more obliged to take refuge in the convent of the Trinity, the usual asylum of the court when threatened by the soldiers. There he assembled the boyards of his party, raised a body of forces, treats with the captains of the strelitzes, and called in the assistance of certain Germans, who had been long settled in Moscow, and were all attached to his person from his having already shewn himself the encourager of strangers. Sophia and John, who continued at Moscow, used every means to engage the strelitzes to remain firm to their interests; but the cause of young Peter, who loudly complained of an attempt meditated against himself and his mother, prevailed over that of the princess, and of a czar, whose very aspect alienated all hearts. All the accomplices were punished with a severity to which that country was as much accustomed as to the crimes which occasioned it. Some were beheaded after undergoing the punishment of the knout or battocks. The chief of the strelitzes was put to death in the same manner, and several other suspected persons had their tongues cut out. Prince Galitzin escaped with his life, through the intercession of one of his relations, who was a favourite of czar Peter; but he was stripped of all his riches, which were immense, and banished to a place in the neighbourhood of Archangel. La Neuville, who was present at the whole of this catastrophe, relates, that the sentence pronounced upon Galitzin was in these terms: 'Thou art commanded, by the most clement czar, to repair to Karga, a town under the pole, and there to continue the remainder of thy days. His majesty, out of his extreme goodness, allows thee three pence per day for thy subsistence.'

There is no town under the pole. Karga is in the 62nd degree of latitude, and only six degrees and a half further north than Moscow. Whoever pronounced this sentence must have been a very bad geographer. La Neuville was probably imposed upon by a false account.

1689.] At length the princess Sophia was once more sent back to her monastery at Moscow,²⁸ after having so long held the reins of government; and this revolution proved, to a woman of her disposition, a sufficient punishment.

From this instant Peter began to reign in reality; his brother John having no other share in the government, but that of seeing his name to all public acts. He led a retired life, and died in 1696.

²⁸ How are we to reconcile this with what the author tells us in the latter part of the third chapter, where he says, that this princess, perceiving that her brother Theodore was near his end, declined retiring to a convent, as was the usual custom of the princesses of the imperial family.

CHAP. VI

The reign of Peter the First. – Beginning of the grand reformation.

Peter the Great was tall, genteel, well made, with a noble aspect, piercing eyes and a robust constitution, fitted for all kinds of hardship and bodily exercise. He had a sound understanding, which is the basis of all real abilities; and to this was joined an active disposition, which prompted him to undertake and execute the greatest things. His education was far from being worthy of his genius. The princess Sophia was, in a peculiar manner, interested to let him remain in ignorance, and to indulge himself in those excesses which youth, idleness, custom, and the high rank he held, made but too allowable. Nevertheless, he had been lately married, (June 1689) like others of his predecessors, to one of his own subjects, the daughter of colonel Lapuchin; but, as he was young, and for some time enjoyed none of the prerogatives of the crown, but that of indulging his pleasures without restraint, the ties of wedlock were not always sufficient to keep him within just bounds. The pleasures of the table, in which he indulged himself rather too freely, with foreigners, who had been invited to Moscow by prince Galitzin, seemed not to presage that he would one day become the reformer of his country; however, in spite of bad examples, and even the allurements of pleasure, he applied himself to the arts of war and government, and which, even then, shewed that he had the seeds of greatness in him.

It was still less expected, that a prince, who was subject to such a constitutional dread of water, as to subject him to cold sweats, and even convulsions, when he was obliged to cross a small river or brook, should become one of the best seamen in all the north. In order to get the better of nature, he began by jumping into the water, notwithstanding the horror he felt at it, till at length this aversion was changed into a fondness for that element.²⁹

He often blushed at the ignorance in which he had been brought up. He learned, almost of himself, without the help of a master, enough of German and high Dutch, to be able to write and explain himself tolerably well in both those languages. The Germans and Dutch appeared to him as the most civilized nations, because the former had already erected, in Moscow, some of those arts and manufactures which he was desirous of seeing established in his empire, and the latter excelled in the art of navigation, which he already began to look upon as the most necessary of all others.

Such were the dispositions which Peter cherished, notwithstanding the follies of his youth. At the same time, he found himself disturbed by factions at home, had the turbulent spirit of the strelitzes to keep under, and an almost uninterrupted war to manage against the Crim Tartars. For though hostilities had been suspended in 1689, by a truce, it had no long continuance.

During this interval, Peter became confirmed in his design of introducing the arts into his country.

His father Alexis had, in his lifetime, entertained the same views, but he wanted leisure, and a favourable opportunity to carry them into execution; he transmitted his genius to his son, who was more clear-sighted, more vigorous, and more unshaken by difficulties and obstacles.

Alexis had been at a great expense in sending for Bothler,³⁰ a ship builder and sea captain, from Holland, together with a number of shipwrights and sailors. These built a large frigate and a yacht upon the Wolga, which they navigated down that river to Astracan, where they were to be employed

²⁹ We find, in the memoirs of count Strahlemberg, a Swedish officer, who was taken prisoner at the battle of Pultowa, and continued many years at the court of czar Peter, the following account of the true cause of this extraordinary kind of hydrophobia. When Peter was about five years of age, his mother took him with her in a coach for an airing, and having to pass a dam, where there was a great fall of water the child, who was then sleeping in his nurse's lap, was so terrified by the rushing of the water (the noise of which waked him suddenly out of his sleep), that he was seized with a violent fever, and, after his recovery, he retained such a dread of that element, that he could not bear the sight even of any standing water, much less to hear a running stream.

³⁰ Memoirs of Petersburg and Moscow.

in building more vessels, for carrying on an advantageous trade with Persia, by the Caspian Sea. Just at this time the revolt of Stenko-Rasin broke out, and this rebel destroyed these two vessels, which he ought to have preserved for his own sake, and murdered the captain; the rest of the crew fled into Persia, from whence they got to some settlements belonging to the Dutch East India company. A master-builder, who was a good shipwright, staid behind in Russia, where he lived a long time in obscurity.

One day, Peter taking a walk at Ishmaelof, a summer-palace built by his grandfather, he perceived, among several other rarities, an old English shallop, which had lain entirely neglected: upon which he asked Timmerman, a German, and his mathematical teacher, how came that little boat to be of so different a construction from any he had seen on the Moska? Timmerman replied, that it was made to go with sails and oars. The young prince wanted instantly to make a trial of it; but it was first to be repaired and rigged. Brant, the ship-builder abovementioned, was by accident found out at Moscow, where he lived retired; he soon put the boat in order, and worked her upon the river Yauza, which washes the suburbs of the town.

Peter caused his boat to be removed to a great lake, in the neighbourhood of the convent of the Trinity; he likewise made Brant build two more frigates, and three yachts, and piloted them himself. A considerable time afterwards, viz. in 1694, he made a journey to Archangel, and having ordered a small vessel to be built in that port, by the same Brant, he embarked therein on the Frozen Sea, which no sovereign beside himself had ever beheld. On this occasion, he was escorted by a Dutch man of war, under the command of captain Jolson, and attended by all the merchant-vessels then in the port of Archangel. He had already learned the manner of working a ship; and, notwithstanding the pains his courtiers took to imitate their master, he was the only one who made a proficiency in it.

He found it no less difficult to raise a well disciplined body of land forces, on whom he could depend, than to establish a navy. His first essay in navigation, on a lake, previous to his journey to Archangel, was looked upon only as the amusements of a young prince of genius; and his first attempt to form a body of disciplined troops, likewise appeared as nothing more than that of diversion. This happened during the regency of the princess Sophia; and, had he been suspected of meaning any thing serious by this amusement, it might have been attended with fatal consequences to him.

He placed his confidence in a foreigner, the celebrated Le Fort, of a noble and ancient family in Piedmont, transplanted near two centuries ago to Geneva, where they have filled the most considerable posts in the state. He was intended to have been brought up to the trade, to which the town is indebted for the figure it now makes; having formerly been known only as the seat of religious controversies.

But his genius, which prompted him to the greatest undertakings, engaged him to quit his father's house at the age of fourteen; and he served four months³¹ in quality of a cadet in the citadel of Marseilles; from thence he went to Holland, where he served some time as a volunteer, and was wounded at the siege of Grave, a strong fortified town on the Meuse, which the prince of Orange, afterwards king of England, retook from Lewis XIV. in 1674. After this, led by hopes of preferment, wherever he could find it, he embarked with a German colonel, named Verstin, who had obtained a commission from Peter's father, the czar Alexis, to raise soldiers in the Netherlands, and bring them to Archangel. But, when he arrived at that port, after a most fatiguing and dangerous navigation, the czar Alexis was no more; the government was changed, and Russia in confusion. The governor of Archangel suffered Verstin, Le Fort, and his whole troop, to remain a long time, in the utmost poverty and distress, and even threatened to send them into the extremity of Siberia; upon which every man shifted for himself. Le Fort, in want of every thing, repaired to Moscow, where he waited

³¹ This should certainly be four years; as we can hardly suppose a boy of fourteen years and a half, would be received into the military service of any country, and much less by the Dutch at that period of time, when they stood in need of able and experienced soldiers, to withstand the attacks of the French, who breathed nothing less than the utter subversion of their state.

upon the Danish resident, named De Horn, who made him his secretary: there he learned the Russian language, and some time afterwards found means to be introduced to the czar Peter; the elder brother, Iwan, not being a person for his purpose. Peter was taken with him, and immediately gave him a company of foot. Le Fort had seen very little service, he knew but little of letters, not having studied any particular art or science; but he had seen a great deal, and had a talent of making the most of what he saw. Like the czar, he owed every thing to his own genius; he understood the German and Dutch languages, which Peter was learning, as those of two nations that might be of service in his designs. Every thing conspired to make him agreeable to Peter, to whom he strictly attached himself. From being the companion of his pleasures, he became his favourite, and confirmed himself in that station by his abilities. The czar made him his confidant in the most dangerous design that a prince of that country could possibly form, namely, that of putting himself in a condition to be able one day to break the seditious and barbarous body of forces called the strelitzes. It had cost the great sultan or basha Osman his life, for attempting to disband the janissaries. Peter, young as he was, went to work in a much abler manner than Osman.

He began with forming, at his country-seat at Preobrazinski, a company of fifty of his youngest domestics; and some young gentlemen, the sons of boyards, were chosen for their officers: but, in order to teach these young noblemen a subordination, to which they were wholly unaccustomed, he made them pass through all the different military degrees, and himself set them the example, by serving first as a drum, then as a private soldier, a serjeant, and a lieutenant of the company. Nothing was ever more extraordinary, nor more useful, than this conduct. The Russians had hitherto made war in the same manner as our ancestors at the time of the feudal tenures, when the unexperienced nobles took the field at the head of their vassals, undisciplined, and ill armed: a barbarous method, sufficient indeed to act against the like armies, but of no use against regular troops.

This company, which was formed wholly by Peter himself, soon increased in numbers, and became afterwards the regiment of Preobrazinski guards. Another regiment, formed on the same plan, became in time the regiment of Semeniousky guards.

The czar had already a regiment of five thousand men that could be depended upon, trained by general Gordon, a Scotchman, and composed almost entirely of foreigners. Le Fort, who had borne arms but a short time, but whose capacity was equal to every thing, undertook to raise a regiment of twelve thousand men, which he effected: five colonels were appointed to serve under him, and he saw himself on a sudden general of this little army, which had been raised, as much to oppose the strelitzes, as the enemies of the state.

One thing worthy of being remarked,³² and which fully confutes the hasty error of those who pretend that France lost very few of its inhabitants by the revocation of the edict of Nantz, is, that one-third of his army, which was only called a regiment, consisted of French refugees. Le Fort disciplined his new troops, as if he had been all his lifetime a soldier.

Peter was desirous of seeing one of those images of war, the mock fights, which had lately been introduced in times of peace: a fort was erected, which was to be attacked by one part of his new troops, and defended by the other. The difference between this fight, and others of the like nature, was, that instead of a sham engagement, there was a real one, in which some of his men were slain, and a great many wounded.³³ Le Fort, who commanded the attack, received a considerable wound. These bloody sports were intended to initiate the young troops into the service of the field; but it required much labour, and even some degree of sufferings to compass this end.

These warlike amusements did not take off the czar's attention to his naval project. As he had made Le Fort a general by land, notwithstanding his having never borne a command; he now made him admiral, though he had never had the direction of a ship, but he knew him deserving both of

³² General Le Fort's MSS.

³³ General Le Fort's MSS.

the one and the other. It is true, that he was an admiral without a fleet, and a general with only his regiment for an army.

By degrees the czar reformed that great abuse in the army, viz. the independence of the boyards, who, in time of war, used to bring into the field a multitude of their vassals and peasants: this was exactly the ancient government of the Franks, Huns, Goths, and Vandals, who indeed subdued the Roman empire in its state of decline, but would have been totally destroyed, had they had the warlike disciplined legions of ancient Rome to encounter, or such armies as are now brought into the field.

Admiral Le Fort was not long, however, before he had something more than an empty title. He employed some Dutchmen and Venetians in building a number of barcolongos, or kind of long barks, and also two ships of about thirty guns each, at the mouth of the Woronitz, which falls into the Tanais, or Don: these vessels were to fall down the river, and keep in awe the Crim Tartars, with whom hostilities had been renewed.

The czar was now to determine (in 1689) against which of the following powers he would declare war, whether against the Turks, the Swedes, or the Chinese. But here it will be proper to premise on what terms he then stood with China, and which was the first treaty of peace concluded by that nation.

CHAP. VII

Congress and Treaty with the Chinese.³⁴

We must set out by forming a proper idea of the limits of the Chinese and Russian empires at this period. When we leave Siberia, properly so called, and also far behind us to the south, a hundred hordes of Tartars, with white and black Calmucks, and Mahometan and Pagan Monguls, we come to the 130th degree of longitude, and the 52d of latitude upon the river Amur.³⁵ To the northward is a great chain of mountains, that stretches as far as the Frozen Sea, beyond the polar circle. This river, which runs upwards of five hundred leagues,³⁶ through Siberia and Chinese Tartary, falls, after many windings, into the sea of Kamtshatka. It is affirmed for a truth, that at its mouth, which opens with this sea, there is sometimes caught a monstrous fish, much larger than the hippopotamus of the Nile, and that the tooth thereof is the finest ivory. It is furthermore said, that this ivory was formerly an object of trade; that they used to convey it through Siberia, which is the reason why several pieces of it are still found under the ground in that country. This is the most probable account of the fossil ivory, of which we have elsewhere spoken; for it appears highly chimerical to pretend, that there were formerly elephants in Siberia.

This Amur is likewise called the Black River by the Mantchoux Tartars, and the Dragon's River by the Chinese.

It was in these countries, so long unknown, that the Russians and Chinese contested the limits of their empires.³⁷ The Russians had some forts on the river Amur, about three hundred leagues from the great wall. Many hostilities had arisen between these two nations on account of these forts: at length both began to understand their interests better; the emperor Camhi preferred peace and commerce to an unprofitable war, and sent several ambassadors to Niptchou, one of those settlements. The ambassadors had ten thousand men in their retinue, including their escort: this was Asiatic pomp; but what is very remarkable, is, that there was not an example in the annals of the empire, of an embassy being sent to another potentate; and what is still more singular, that the Chinese had never concluded a treaty of peace since the foundation of their monarchy. Though twice conquered by the Tartars, who attacked and subjected them, they never made war upon any people, excepting a few hordes that were quickly subdued, or as quickly left to themselves, without any treaty. So that this nation, so renowned for morality, knew nothing of what we call the 'Law of nations;' that is to say, of those vague rules of war and peace, of the privileges of foreign ministers, of the formalities of treaties, nor of the obligations resulting from thence, nor of the disputes concerning precedency and point of honour.

But in what language were the Chinese to negotiate with the Russians, in the midst of deserts? This difficulty was removed by two jesuits, the one a Portuguese, named Pereira, the other a Frenchman, whose name was Gerbillon; they set out from Pekin with the Chinese ambassadors, and were themselves the real negotiators. They conferred in Latin with a German belonging to the Russian embassy, who understood this language. The chief of that embassy was Golowin, governor of Siberia, who displayed a greater magnificence than the Chinese themselves, and thereby gave a high idea of the Russian empire, to a people who thought themselves the only powerful nation under the sun.

³⁴ Extracted from memoirs sent from China; also from Petersburg, and from letters published in Du Halde's History of China.

³⁵ A famous and considerable river of the Asiatic part of the empire of Russia, which falls into the eastern ocean. It was formerly called Charan Muran, but at present the Chinese and Mauschurs give it the name of Sagalin Ula. It also bears the several appellations of Jamur, Onon, Helong, Kiang, and Skilka. It is formed by the junction of the rivers Sckilk and Argun, and is navigable to the sea.

³⁶ Busching, the famous geographer, says, that its whole length is no more than four hundred miles, so that there must be a very great error in one or other of these authors.

³⁷ Memoirs of the jesuits Pereira and Gerbillon.

The two jesuits settled the limits of both empires at the river Kerbechi, near the spot where the treaty was concluded. All the country, to the southward of this line of partition, was adjudged to the Chinese, and the north to the Russians, who only lost a small fort which was found to have been built beyond the limits: a peace was agreed to, and after some few altercations, both parties swore to observe it, in the name of the same God;³⁸ and in these terms, 'If any of us shall entertain the least thought of kindling anew the flames of war, we beseech the supreme Lord of all things, and who knows all hearts, to punish the traitor with sudden death.'

From this form of treaty, used alike by Chinese and Christians, we may infer two important truths: the first, that the Chinese government is neither atheistical nor idolatrous, as has been so frequently and falsely charged upon it, by contradictory imputations. Secondly, that all nations, who cultivate the gift of reason and understanding, do, in effect, acknowledge the same God, notwithstanding the particular deviations of that reason, through the want of being properly instructed.

The treaty was drawn up in Latin, and two copies were made of it. The Russian ambassadors set their names the first to the copy that remained in their possession, and the Chinese also signed theirs the first, agreeable to the custom observed by European nations, when two equal powers conclude a treaty with each other. On this occasion was observed another custom belonging to the Asiatic nations, and which was indeed, that of the earliest ages. The treaty was engraven on two large marble pillars, erected on the spot, to determine the boundaries of the two empires.

Three years after this, the czar sent Isbrand Ides, a Dane, his ambassador to China; and the commerce he then established between the two nations, continued with advantage to each, till the rupture between them in the year 1722; but since this short interruption, it has been revived with redoubled vigour.

³⁸ 1689, Sept. 8, new style. Memoirs of China.

CHAP. VIII

Expedition to the Palus Mæotis; conquest of Azoph. – The czar sends young gentlemen into foreign countries for improvement.

It was not so easy to have peace with the Turks, and indeed, the time seemed come for the Russians to rise upon their ruins. The republic of Venice, that had long groaned under their yoke, began now to rouse itself. The Doge Morosini, the same who had surrendered Candy to the Turks, afterwards took from them the Peloponnesus, which conquest got him the title of Peloponnesian, an honour which revived the memory of the Roman republic. Leopold, emperor of Germany, had proved successful against the Ottoman power in Hungary; and the Poles made shift to check the incursions of the Crim Tartars.

Peter took advantage of these circumstances, to discipline his troops, and to procure himself the empire of the Black Sea. General Gordon marched along the Tanais, towards Azoph, with his numerous regiment of five thousand men, followed by general Le Fort, with his regiment of twelve thousand; by a body of Strelitzes, under the command of Sheremeto and Schein, natives of Prussia; by a body of Cossacks, and by a large train of artillery: in a word, every thing was ready for this expedition.

1694.] This grand army began its march under the command of marshal Sheremeto, or Scheremetoff, in the beginning of the summer of 1695, to attack the town of Azoph, at the mouth of the Tanais, and at the extremity of the Palus Mæotis, now called the Zaback Sea. The czar himself was with the army, but only in quality of a volunteer, being determined to learn, some time before he took upon him to command. During their march, they stormed two forts which the Turks had built on the banks of the river.

This expedition was attended with some considerable difficulties. The place was well fortified, and defended by a numerous garrison. A number of barcolongos, resembling the Turkish saicks, and built by Venetians, with two small Dutch ships of war, that were to sail out of the Woronitz, could not be got ready soon enough to enter the sea of Azoph. All beginnings meet with obstacles. The Russians had never yet made a regular siege; and the first attempt did not meet with all the success that could be desired.

One Jacob, a native of Dantzic, had the direction of the artillery, under the command of general Schein; for as yet they had none but foreign officers belonging to the train, and none but foreign engineers and pilots. This Jacob had been condemned to the bastinade, or *knout*, by Schein, the Russian general. At that time rigorous discipline was thought to be the only method of strengthening command; and the Russians quietly submitted to it, notwithstanding their natural bent to sedition; and after the punishment, did their duty as usual. But the Dane thought in a different manner, and resolved to be revenged for the treatment he had received, and thereupon nailed up the cannon, deserted to the Turks, turned Mahometan, and defended Azoph, with great success, against his former masters. This instance shews, that the lenity which is now practised in Russia, is much preferable to the former severities; and is better calculated to retain those in their duty, who by a good education, have a proper sense of honour. It was absolutely necessary at that time, to use the utmost rigour towards the common people; but since their manners have been changed, the empress Elizabeth³⁹ has completed, by clemency, the work her father begun, by the authority of the laws. This lenity has even been carried, by this princess, to a degree unexampled, in the history of any nation. She has

³⁹ The present reigning empress Catharine seems even to exceed her aunt in lenity, which together with the superior qualifications of this princess, affords her people the most happy presage of a glorious reign; and it is not without reason, that the most sensible amongst them flatter themselves with the hope, that under this august princess, the Russian empire will arrive at its highest pinnacle of glory.

promised, that, during her reign, no person shall be punished with death, and she has kept her word. She is the first sovereign who ever shewed so much regard for the lives of men. By an institution, equally prudent and humane, malefactors are now condemned to serve in the mines, and other public works: by which means their very punishments prove of service to the state. In other countries, they know only how to put a criminal to death, with all the apparatus of execution, without being able to prevent the perpetration of crimes. The apprehension of death makes, perhaps, less impression on those miscreants, who are, for the most part, bred up in idleness, than the fear of punishment and hard labour, renewed every day.

To return to the siege of Azoph, which place was now defended by the same person who had before directed the attacks against it; the Russians, in vain, attempted to take it by storm; and after losing a great number of men, were obliged to raise the siege.

Perseverance in his undertakings, was the distinguishing character of Peter the Great. In the spring of 1696, he brought a still more considerable army before Azoph. About this time died czar John, his brother, who though he had not, while living, been the least curb to Peter's authority, having enjoyed only the bare title of czar, yet he had been some restraint upon him in regard to appearances. The money which had been appropriated to the support of John's dignity and household, were now applied to the maintenance of the army. This proved no small help to a government, whose revenues were not near so great as they are at present. Peter wrote to the emperor Leopold, to the states-general, and to the elector of Brandenburg, to obtain engineers, gunners, and seamen. He likewise took some Calmucks into his pay, whose light horse are very useful against the Crim Tartars.

The most agreeable of the czar's successes, was that of his little fleet, which was at length completed, and well commanded. It defeated the Turkish saicks, sent from Constantinople, and took some of them. The siege was carried on regularly by trenches, but not altogether in our method; the trenches being three times deeper than ours, with parapets as high as ramparts. At length the garrison surrendered, the 28th of July, 1696. N. S. without being allowed the honours of war, or to carry out with them either arms or ammunition: they were likewise obliged to deliver up the renegade, Jacob, to the conquerors.

The czar immediately set about fortifying Azoph, built strong forts to protect it, and made a harbour capable of holding large vessels, with a design to make himself master of the Straights of Caffa, or the Cimmerian Bosphorus, which commands the entrance into the Pontus Euxinus, or Black Sea; places famous in ancient times, by the naval armaments of Mithridates. He left thirty-two armed saicks before Azoph,⁴⁰ and made all the necessary preparations for fitting out a fleet against the Turks, to consist of nine ships of sixty guns, and of forty-one, from thirty to fifty. He obliged his principal nobles, and the richer merchants, to contribute towards this armament; and thinking that the estates of the clergy ought to help towards the common cause, he obliged the patriarch, the bishops, and principal clergy, to pay down a sum of ready money to forward this expedition, in honour of their country, and the advantage of the Christian faith. The Cossacks were employed in building a number of those light boats in use amongst them, and which were excellent for the purpose of cruising on the coast of Crim Tartary. The Ottoman empire was alarmed at this powerful armament; the first that had ever been attempted on the Palus Mæotis. The czar's scheme was to drive the Turks and the Tartars for ever out of the Taurica Chersonesus, and afterwards to establish a free and easy commerce with Persia through Georgia. This is the very trade which the Greeks formerly carried on to Colchos, and to this peninsula of Crim Tartary, which Peter now seemed on the point of conquering.

Having subdued the Turks and the Tartars, he was willing to accustom his people to splendid shows as well as to military labour. He made his army to enter into Moscow, under triumphal arches, in the midst of superb fire-works, and every thing that could add to the lustre of the festival. The soldiers who had fought on board the Venetian saicks against the Turks, and who were a distinct

⁴⁰ Le Fort's Memoirs.

corps of themselves, marched first. Marshal Sheremeto, the generals Gordon and Schein, admiral Le Fort, and the other general officers, all took the precedence of their monarch in this procession, who declared he had no rank in the army, being desirous to convince the nobility, by his example, that the only way to acquire military preferment, was to deserve it.⁴¹

This triumphal entry seemed somewhat a-kin to those of the ancient Romans, in which the conquerors were wont to expose the prisoners they had taken, to public view, and sometimes put them to death: in like manner, the slaves, taken in this expedition, follow the army; and the deserter Jacob, who had betrayed them, was drawn in an open cart, in which was a gibbet, to which his body was fastened after he had been broke upon the wheel.

On this occasion was struck the first medal in Russia, with this remarkable legend, in the language of the country. 'Peter the First, august emperor of Muscovy.' On the reverse was the city of Azoph, with these words; 'Victorious by Fire and Water.'

Peter felt a sensible concern in the midst of all these successes, that his ships and gallies in the sea of Azoph, had been built entirely by the hands of foreigners; and wished as earnestly to have a harbour in the Baltic Sea, as upon the Pontus Euxinus.

Accordingly, in the month of March 1697, he sent threescore young Russians of Le Fort's regiment, into Italy, most of them to Venice, and the rest to Leghorn, to instruct themselves in the naval art, and the manner of constructing gallies. He likewise sent forty others into Holland,⁴² to learn the method of building and working large ships: and others likewise into Germany, to serve in the land forces, and instruct themselves in the military discipline of that nation. At length he took a resolution to absent himself for a few years from his own dominions, in order to learn how to govern them the better. He had an irresistible inclination to improve himself by his own observation and practice in the knowledge of naval affairs, and of the several arts which he was so desirous to establish in his own country. He proposed to travel *incognito* through Denmark, Brandenburg, Holland, Vienna, Venice, and Rome. France and Spain were the only countries he did not take into his plan; Spain, because the arts he was in quest of, were too much neglected there; and France, because in that kingdom they reigned with too much ostentation, and that the parade and state of Lewis XIV. which had disgusted so many crowned heads, ill agreed with the private manner in which he proposed to travel. Moreover, he was in alliance with most of the powers, whose dominions he intended to visit, except those of France and Rome. He likewise remembered, with some degree of resentment, the little respect shewn by Lewis XIV. to his embassy in 1687, which had proved more famous than successful; and lastly he already began to espouse the cause of Augustus, elector of Saxony, with whom the prince of Conti had lately entered into a competition for the crown of Poland.

⁴¹ It is in consequence of this glorious and equitable distinction, that at this day we find nobility gives no precedence in the court of Russia; nor can the son of a prince appear there in any other rank, than that which his situation in the army gives him; while a private citizen, who by his merit has raised himself above his condition, receives all the honours due to his post; or more properly speaking, to the merit which obtained him that post. A reputation of this kind would, methinks, be attended with great advantages, both in England and France, as it would be a means to raise in the youth of all ranks, a virtuous and noble emulation.

⁴² General Le Fort's MSS.

CHAP. IX

Travels of Peter the Great.

1697.

Having thus determined to visit the several countries and courts above-mentioned in a private character, he put himself into the retinue of three ambassadors, in the same manner as he had before mingled in the train of his generals at his triumphant entry into Moscow.

⁴³ The three ambassadors were, general Le Fort, the boyard Alexis Gollowin, commissary-general of war, and governor of Siberia, the same who signed the perpetual treaty of peace with the plenipotentiaries of China, on the frontiers of that empire; and Wonitzin, diak, or secretary of state, who had been long employed in foreign courts. Four principal secretaries, twelve gentlemen, two pages for each ambassador, a company of fifty guards, with their officers, all of the regiment of Preobrazinski, composed the chief retinue of this embassy, which consisted in the whole of two hundred persons; and the czar, reserving to himself only one valet de chambre, a servant in livery, and a dwarf, mingled with the crowd. It was a thing unparalleled in history, for a king of five-and-twenty years of age, to quit his dominions, in order to learn the art of governing. His victory over the Turks and Tartars, the splendour of his triumphant entry into Moscow, the number of foreign troops attached to his service, the death of his brother John, his co-partner in the empire, and the confinement of the princess Sophia to a cloister, and above all the universal respect shewn to his person, seemed to assure him the tranquillity of his kingdom during his absence. He intrusted the regency in the hands of the boyard Strechnef, and the knez or prince Romadonowski, who were to deliberate with the rest of the boyards in cases of importance.

Two troops raised by general Gordon remained behind in Moscow, to keep every thing quiet in that capital. Those strelitzes, who were thought likely to create a disturbance, were distributed in the frontiers of Crim Tartary, to preserve the conquest of Azoph, and to check the incursions of the Tartars. Having provided against every incident, he gave a free scope to his passion and desire of improvement.

As this journey proved the cause, or at least the pretext, of the bloody war, which so long traversed, but in the end promoted, all the designs of the czar; which drove Augustus, king of Poland, from the throne; placed that crown on the head of Stanislaus, and then stript him of it; which made Charles XII. king of Sweden, the first of conquerors for nine years, and the most unfortunate of kings for nine more; it is necessary, in order to enter into a detail of these events, to take a view of the state of Europe at that time.

Sultan Mustapha II. sat at that time on the Ottoman throne; the weakness of whose administration would not permit him to make any great efforts, either against Leopold, emperor of Germany, whose arms were successful in Hungary, nor against the czar, who had lately taken Azoph from him, and threatened to make himself master of the Pontus Euxinus; nor even against the Venetians, who had made themselves masters of all the Peloponnesus.

John Sobieski, king of Poland, for ever famous by the victory of Chocksim, and the deliverance of Vienna, died the 17th of June, 1696, and the possession of that crown was in dispute between Augustus, elector of Saxony, who obtained it, and Armond, prince of Conti, who had only the honour of being elected.

1697.] Sweden had lately lost, but without regret, Charles XI. her sovereign, who was the first king who had ever been really absolute in that country, and who was the father of a prince still more so, and with whom all despotic power ceased. He left the crown to his son Charles XII. a youth of

⁴³ The Petersburg Memoirs, and Memoirs of Le Fort.

only fifteen years of age. This was in all appearance a conjuncture the most favourable for the czar's design; he had it in his power to extend his dominions on the Gulf of Finland, and on the side of Livonia. But he did not think it enough to harass the Turks on the Black Sea; the settlements on the Palus Mæotis, and the borders of the Caspian Sea, were not sufficient to answer his schemes of navigation, commerce, and power. Besides, glory, which is the darling object of every reformer, was to be found neither in Persia, nor in Turkey, but in our parts of Europe, where great talents are rendered immortal. In a word, Peter did not aim at introducing either the Persian or Turkish manners among his subjects.

Germany, then at war both with the Turks and with the French, and united with Spain, England, and Holland, against the single power of Lewis XIV. was on the point of concluding peace, and the plenipotentiaries were already met at the castle of Ryswick, in the neighbourhood of the Hague.

It was during this situation of affairs, that Peter and his ambassador began their journey in the month of April, 1697, by the way of Great Novogorod: from thence they travelled through Esthonia and Livonia, provinces formerly disputed by the Russians, Swedes, and Poles, and which the Swedes at last acquired by superiority of arms.

The fertility of Livonia, and the situation of its capital, Riga, were temptations to the czar, to possess himself of that country. He expressed a curiosity to see the fortifications of the citadel. But count D'Alberg, governor of Riga, taking umbrage at this request, refused him the satisfaction he desired, and affected to treat the embassy with contempt. This behaviour did not at all contribute to cool the inclination the czar might have, to make himself one day master of those provinces.

From Livonia they proceeded to Brandenburg-Prussia, part of which had been inhabited by the ancient Vandals; Polish Prussia had been included in European Sarmatia. Brandenburg-Prussia was a poor country and badly peopled; but its elector, who afterwards took the name of king, displayed a magnificence on this occasion, equally new and destructive to his dominions. He piqued himself upon receiving this embassy in his city of Königsberg, with all the pomp of royalty. The most sumptuous presents were made on both sides. The contrast between the French dress which the court of Berlin affected, and the long Asiatic robes of the Russians, with their caps buttoned up with pearls and diamonds, and their scimitars hanging at their belts, produced a singular effect. The czar was dressed after the German fashion. The prince of Georgia, who accompanied him, was clad in a Persian habit, which displayed a different magnificence. This is the same who was taken prisoner afterwards at the battle of Narva, and died in Sweden.

Peter despised all this ostentation; it was to have been wished that he had shewn an equal contempt for the pleasures of the table, in which the Germans, at that time, placed their chiefest glory. It was at one of those entertainments,⁴⁴ then too much in fashion, and which are alike fatal to health and morality, that he drew his sword upon his favourite, Le Fort; but he expressed as much contrition for this sudden sally of passion, as Alexander did for the murder of Clytus; he asked pardon of Le Fort, saying, that he wanted to reform his subjects, and could not yet reform himself. General Le Fort, in his manuscript praises the czar more for this goodness of heart, than he blames him for his excess of passion.

The ambassadors then went through Pomerania and Berlin; and, from thence, one part took its way through Magdeburg, and the other by Hamburg, a city which already began to be considerable by its extensive commerce, but not so rich and populous as it has become since. From thence they directed their route towards Minden, crossed Westphalia, and at length, by the way of Cleves, arrived at Amsterdam.

The czar reached this city fifteen days before the ambassadors. At his first coming, he lodged in a house belonging to the East India company; but soon afterwards he took a small apartment in the dock-yard, belonging to the admiralty. He then put on the habit of a Dutch skipper, and in that

⁴⁴ Le Fort's MS. memoirs.

dress went to the village of Saardam, a place where a great many more ships were built at that times, than at present. This village is as large, as populous, and as rich, and much neater, than many opulent towns. The czar greatly admired the multitude of people who were constantly employed there, the order and regularity of their times of working, the prodigious dispatch with which they built and fitted out ships, the incredible number of warehouses, and machines, for the greater ease and security of labour. The czar began with purchasing a bark, to which he made a mast with his own hands; after that, he worked upon all the different parts in the construction of a vessel, living in the same manner as the workmen at Saardam, dressing and eating the same as them, and working in the forges, the rope-walks, and in the several mills, which are in prodigious numbers in that village, for sawing timber, extracting oil, making paper, and wire-drawing. He caused himself to be enrolled in the list of carpenters, by the name of Peter Michaelhoff, and was commonly called Peter Bas, or Master Peter: the workmen were at first confounded at having a crowned head for a fellow-labourer, but soon became familiarized to the sight.

While he was thus handling the compass and the axe at Saardam, a confirmation was brought him of the division in Poland, and of the double nomination of the elector Augustus, and the prince of Conti. The carpenter of Saardam immediately promised king Augustus to assist him with thirty thousand men; and, from his work-loft, issued out orders to his army that was assembled in the Ukraine against the Turks.

11th Aug. 1697.] His troops gained a victory over the Tartars near Azoph, and a few months afterwards took from them the city of Or, or Orkapi, which we call Precop.⁴⁵ As to himself, he still continued improving in different arts: he went frequently from Saardam to Amsterdam, to hear the lectures of the celebrated anatomist, Ruysch; and made himself master of several operations in surgery, which, in case of necessity, might be of use both to himself and his officers. He went through a course of natural philosophy, in the house of the burgomaster Witzen, a person for ever estimable for his patriotic virtue, and the noble use he made of his immense riches, which he distributed like a citizen of the world, sending men of abilities, at a great expense, to all parts of the globe, in search of whatever was most rare and valuable, and fitting out vessels at his own charge to make new discoveries.

Peter Bas gave a truce to his labours for a short time, but it was only to pay a private visit at Utrecht, and at the Hague, to William, king of England, and stadtholder of the United Provinces. General Le Fort was the only one admitted to the private conference of the two monarchs. Peter assisted afterwards at the public entry of his ambassadors, and at their audience: they presented, in his name, to the deputy of the states, six hundred of the most beautiful sables that could be procured; and the states, over and above the customary presents on these occasions, of a gold chain and a medal, gave them three magnificent coaches. They received the first visits of all the plenipotentiaries who were at the congress of Ryswick, excepting those of France, to whom they had not notified their arrival, not only because the czar espoused the cause of Augustus against the prince of Conti, but also because king William, whose friendship he was desirous of cultivating, was averse to a peace with France.

At his return to Amsterdam he resumed his former occupations, and completed with his own hands, a ship of sixty guns, that he had begun himself, and sent her to Archangel; which was the only port he had at that time on the ocean.

He not only engaged in his service several French refugees, Swiss, and Germans; but he also sent all sorts of artists over to Moscow, and he previously made a trial of their several abilities himself. There were few trades or arts which he did not perfectly well understand, in their minutest branches: he took a particular pleasure in correcting with his own hands, the geographical maps, which at that

⁴⁵ Precop, or Perekop, once a fortress on the Isthmus, which joins the peninsula of Crim Tartary to the main land of little Tartary, in European Turkey, and thence considered as the key to that country. It has its name from the ditches cut across for the defence of the peninsula.

time laid down at hazard the positions of the towns and rivers in his vast dominions, then very little known. There is still preserved, a map, on which he marked out, with his own hand, his projected communication of the Caspian and Black Seas, the execution of which he had given in charge to Mr. Brekel, a German engineer. The junction of these two seas was indeed a less difficult enterprise than that of the Ocean and Mediterranean, which was effected in France; but the very idea of joining the sea of Azoph with the Caspian, astonished the imagination at that time: but new establishments in that country became the object of his attention, in proportion as his successes begat new hopes.

His troops, commanded by general Schein and prince Dolgorowski, had lately gained a victory over the Tartars near Azoph, and likewise over a body of janissaries sent by sultan Mustapha to their assistance. (July 1696.) This success served to make him more respected, even by those who blamed him, as a sovereign, for having quitted his dominions, to turn workman at Amsterdam. They now saw, that the affairs of the monarch did not suffer by the labours of the philosopher, the traveller, and the artificer.

He remained at Amsterdam, constantly employed in his usual occupations of shipbuilding, engineering, geography, and the practice of natural philosophy, till the middle of January 1698, and then he set out for England, but still as one of the retinue of his ambassadors.

King William sent his own yacht to meet him, and two ships of war as convoy. In England he observed the same manner of living as at Amsterdam and Saardam; he took an apartment near the king's dockyard, at Deptford, where he applied himself wholly to gain instruction. The Dutch builders had only taught him their method, and the practical part of shipbuilding. In England he found the art better explained; for there they work according to mathematical proportion. He soon made himself so perfect in this science, that he was able to give lessons to others. He began to build a ship according to the English method of construction, and it proved a prime sailor. The art of watchmaking, which was already brought to perfection in London, next attracted his attention, and he made himself complete master of the whole theory. Captain Perry, the engineer, who followed him from London to Russia, says, that from the casting of cannon, to the spinning of ropes, there was not any one branch of trade belonging to a ship that he did not minutely observe, and even put his hand to, as often as he came into the places where those trades were carried on.

In order to cultivate his friendship, he was allowed to engage several English artificers into his service, as he had done in Holland; but, over and above artificers, he engaged likewise some mathematicians, which he would not so easily have found in Amsterdam. Ferguson, a Scotchman, an excellent geometrician, entered into his service, and was the first person who brought arithmetic into use in the exchequer in Russia, where before that time, they made use only of the Tartarian method of reckoning, with balls strung upon a wire; a method which supplied the place of writing, but was very perplexing and imperfect, because, after the calculation, there was no method of proving it, in order to discover any error. The Indian ciphers, which are now in use, were not introduced among us till the ninth century, by Arabs; and they did not make their way into the Russian empire till one thousand years afterwards. Such has been the fate of the arts, to make their progress slowly round the globe. He took with him two young students from a mathematical school,⁴⁶ and this was the beginning of the marine academy, founded afterwards by Peter the Great. He observed and calculated eclipses with Ferguson. Perry, the engineer, though greatly discontented at not being sufficiently rewarded, acknowledges, that Peter made himself a proficient in astronomy; that he perfectly well understood the motions of the heavenly bodies, as well as the laws of gravitation, by which they are directed. This force, now so evidently demonstrated, and before the time of the great Newton so little known, by which all the planets gravitate towards each other, and which retain them in their orbits, was already become familiar to a sovereign of Russia, while other countries amused themselves with imaginary

⁴⁶ These were two scholars from Christ Church Hospital, commonly called blue coat boys.

vertices, and, in Galileo's nation, one set of ignorant persons ordered others, as ignorant, to believe the earth to be immoveable.

Perry set out in order to effect a communication between rivers, to build bridges, and construct sluices. The czar's plan was to open a communication by means of canals between the Ocean, the Caspian, and the Black Seas.

We must not forget to observe, that a set of English merchants, with the marquis of Caermarthen⁴⁷ at their head, gave Peter fifteen thousand pounds sterling, for the permission of vending tobacco in Russia. The patriarch, by a mistaken severity, had interdicted this branch of trade; for the Russian church forbid smoking, as an unclean and sinful action. Peter, who knew better things, and who, amongst his many projected changes, meditated a reformation of the church, introduced this commodity of trade into his dominions.

Before Peter left England, he was entertained by king William with a spectacle worthy such a guest: this was a mock sea-fight. Little was it then imagined, that the czar would one day fight a real battle on this element against the Swedes, and gain naval victories in the Baltic. In fine, William made him a present of the vessel in which he used to go over to Holland, called the Royal Transport, a beautiful yacht, and magnificently adorned. In this vessel Peter returned to Holland the latter end of 1698, taking with him three captains of ships of war, five and twenty captains of merchant ships, forty lieutenants, thirty pilots, as many surgeons, two hundred and fifty gunners, and upwards of three hundred artificers. This little colony of persons skilful in all branches, sailed from Holland to Archangel, on board the Royal Transport, and from thence were distributed into all the different places where their services were necessary. Those who had been engaged at Amsterdam went by the way of Narva, which then belonged to the Swedes.

While he was thus transplanting the arts and manufacture of England and Holland into his own country, the officers, whom he had sent to Rome, and other places in Italy, had likewise engaged some artists in his service. General Sheremeto, who was at the head of his embassy to Italy, took the tour of Rome, Naples, Venice, and Malta, while the czar proceeded to Vienna with his other ambassadors. He had now only to view the military discipline of the Germans, after having seen the English fleets, and the dock-yards of Holland. Politics had likewise as great a share in this journey as the desire of instruction. The emperor was his natural ally against the Turks. Peter had a private audience of Leopold, and the two monarchs conferred standing, to avoid the trouble of ceremony.

There happened nothing worthy remark during his stay at Vienna, except the celebration of the ancient feast of the landlord and landlady, which had been disused for a considerable time, and which Leopold thought proper to revive on the czar's account. This feast, which by the Germans is called Wurtchafft, is celebrated in the following manner: —

The emperor is landlord and the empress landlady, the king of the Romans, the archdukes and the archduchesses are generally their assistants: they entertain people of all nations as their guests, who come dressed after the most ancient fashion of their respective countries: those who are invited to the feast, draw lots for tickets, on each of which is written the name of the nation, and the character or person they are to represent. One perhaps draws a ticket for a Chinese mandarin; another for a Tartarian mirza; a third a Persian satrap; and a fourth for a Roman senator; a princess may, by her ticket, be a gardener's wife, or a milk-maid; a prince a peasant, or a common soldier. Dances are composed suitable to all those characters, and the landlord and landlady with their family wait at table. Such was the ancient institution; but on this occasion⁴⁸ Joseph, king of the Romans, and the countess of Traun, represented the ancient Egyptians. The archduke Charles, and the countess of Walstein, were dressed like Flemings in the time of Charles the Fifth. The archduchess Mary Elizabeth and

⁴⁷ The czar was particularly fond of this nobleman, because he was a great lover of maritime affairs, frequently rowed and sailed with him upon the water, and gave him what information he could concerning shipping.

⁴⁸ Le Fort's MSS. and those of Petersburg.

count Traun were in the habits of Tartars; the archduchess Josephina and the count of Workslaw were habited like Persians, and the archduchess Mariamne and prince Maximilian of Hanover in the character of North Holland peasants. Peter appeared in the dress of a Friesland boor, and all who spoke to him addressed him in that character, at the same time talking to him of the great czar of Muscovy. These are trifling particulars; but whatever revives the remembrance of ancient manners and customs, is in some degree worthy of being recorded.

Peter was ready to set out from Vienna, in order to proceed to Venice, to complete his tour of instruction, when he received the news of a rebellion, which had lately broke out in his dominions.

CHAP. X

A conspiracy punished. – The corps of strelitzes abolished, alterations in customs, manners, church, and state.

Czar Peter, when he left his dominions to set out on his travels, had provided against every incident, even that of rebellion. But the great and serviceable things he had done for his country, proved the very cause of this rebellion.

Certain old boyards, to whom the ancient customs were still dear, and some priests, to whom the new ones appeared little better than sacrilege, began these disturbances, and the old faction of the princess Sophia took this opportunity to rouse itself anew. It is said, that one of her sisters, who was confined to the same monastery, contributed not a little to excite these seditions. Care was taken to spread abroad the danger to be feared from the introduction of foreigners to instruct the nation. In short, who would believe, that⁴⁹ the permission which the czar had given to import tobacco into his empire, contrary to the inclination of the clergy, was one of the chief motives of the insurrection? Superstition, the scourge of every country, yet the darling of the multitude, spread itself from the common people to the strelitzes, who had been scattered on the frontiers of Lithuania: they assembled in a body, and marched towards Moscow, with the intent to place the princess Sophia on the throne, and for ever to prevent the return of a czar who had violated the established customs,⁵⁰ by presuming to travel for instruction among foreigners. The forces commanded by Schein and Gordon, who were much better disciplined than the strelitzes, met them fifteen leagues from Moscow, gave them battle, and entirely defeated them: but this advantage, gained by a foreign general over the ancient militia, among whom were several of the burghers of Moscow, contributed still more to irritate the people.

To quell these tumults, the czar sets out privately from Vienna, passes through Poland, has a private interview with Augustus, concerts measures with that prince for extending the Russian dominions on the side of the Baltic, and at length arrived at Moscow, where he surprised every one with his presence: he then confers rewards on the troops who had defeated the strelitzes, (Sept. 1698,) of whom the prisons were now full. If the crimes of these unhappy wretches were great, their punishment was no less so. Their leaders, with several of their officers and priests, were condemned to death; some were broken upon the wheel,⁵¹ and two women were buried alive; upwards of two thousand of the strelitzes were executed, part of whom were hung round about the walls of the city, and others put to death in different manners, and their dead bodies remained exposed for two days in the high roads,⁵² particularly about the monastery where the princesses Sophia and Eudocia resided.⁵³ Monuments of stone were erected, on which their crimes and punishments were set forth. A great

⁴⁹ Le Fort's MSS.

⁵⁰ A most extraordinary instance of the obstinate attachment of the Russians to their old customs, happened in the time of the czar Basilowitz, and undoubtedly influenced him not a little in the severity with which he treated his people. The king of Poland, Stephen Battori, having recovered Livonia, went himself into that province to establish a new form of government. According to the constant custom there, when any peasant, all of whom were treated as slaves, had committed a fault, he was whipped with a rod till the blood came. The king was willing to commute this barbarous punishment for one that was more moderate; but the peasants, insensible of the favour designed them, threw themselves at his feet, and intreated him not to make any alterations in their ancient customs, because they had experienced, that all innovations, far from procuring them the least redress, had always made their burthens sit the heavier on them.

⁵¹ Memoirs of captain Perry, the engineer, employed by Peter the Great, in Russia, and MSS. of Le Fort.

⁵² Captain Perry, in p. 184 of his memoirs, says, that these executions being performed in the depth of winter, their bodies were immediately frozen; those who were beheaded, were ordered to be left in the same posture as when executed, in ranks upon the ground, with their heads lying by them: and those who were hanged round the three walls of the city, were left hanging the whole winter, to the view of the people, till the warm weather began to come on in the spring, when they were taken down and buried together in a pit, to prevent infection. This author adds, that there were other gibbets placed on all the public roads leading to Moscow, where others of these rebels were hanged.

⁵³ MSS. of Le Fort.

number of them who had wives and children at Moscow, were dispersed with their families into Siberia, the kingdom of Astracan, and the country of Azoph. This punishment was at least of service to the state, as they helped to cultivate and people a large tract of waste land.

Perhaps, if the czar had not found it absolutely necessary to make such terrible examples, he might have employed part of those strelitzes whom he put to death, upon the public works; whereas they were now lost both to him and the state: the lives of men ought to be held in great estimation, especially in a country where the increase of inhabitants ought to have been the principal care of the legislature: but he thought it necessary to terrify and break the spirit of the nation by executions, and the parade attending them. The entire corps of the strelitzes, whose number not one of his predecessors had even dared to think of diminishing, was broke for ever, and their very name abolished. This change was effected without any resistance, because matters had been properly prepared beforehand. The Turkish sultan, Osman, as I have already remarked, was deposed and murdered in the same century, only for giving the janissaries room to suspect that he intended to lessen their number. Peter had better success, because he had taken better measures.

Of this powerful and numerous body of the strelitzes, he left only two feeble regiments, from whom there could no longer be any danger; and yet these still retaining their old spirit of mutiny, revolted again in Astracan, in the year 1705, but were quickly suppressed.

But while we are relating Peter's severity in this affair of state, let us not forget to commemorate the more than equal humanity he shewed some time afterwards, when he lost his favourite Le Fort, who was snatched away by an untimely fate, March 12, N. S. 1699, at the age of 46. He paid him the same funeral honours as are bestowed on the greatest sovereigns, and assisted himself in the procession, carrying a pike in his hand, and marching after the captains, in the rank of a lieutenant, which he held in the deceased general's regiment, hereby setting an example to his nobles, of the respect due to merit and the military rank.

After the death of Le Fort, it appeared plainly, that the changes in the state were not owing to that general, but to the czar himself. Peter had indeed been confirmed in his design by his several conversations with Le Fort; but he had formed and executed them all without his assistance.

As soon as he had suppressed the strelitzes, he established regular regiments on the German model, who were all clothed in a short and commodious uniform, in the room of those long and troublesome coats, which they used to wear before; and, at the same time, their exercise was likewise more regular.

The regiment of Preobrazinski guards was already formed; it had taken its name from the first company of fifty men, whom the czar had trained up in his younger days, in his retreat at Preobrazinski, at the time when his sister Sophia governed the state, and the other regiment of guards was also established.

As he had himself passed through the lowest degrees in the army, he was resolved that the sons of his boyards and great men, should serve as common soldiers before they were made officers. He sent some of the young nobility on board of his fleet at Woronitz and Azoph, where he obliged them to serve their apprenticeship as common seamen. No one dared to dispute the commands of a master who had himself set the example. The English and Dutch he had brought over with him were employed in equipping this fleet for sea, in constructing sluices, and building docks, for careening the ships, and to resume the great work of joining the Tanais, or Don, and the Wolga, which had been dropped by Brekel, the German. And now he began to set about his projected reformatations in the council of state, in the revenue, in the church, and even in society itself.

The affairs of the revenue had been hitherto administered much in the same manner as in Turkey. Each boyard paid a stipulated sum for his lands, which he raised upon the peasants, his vassals; the czar appointed certain burghers and burgomasters to be his receivers, who were not powerful enough to claim the right of paying only such sums as they thought proper into the public

treasury. This new administration of the finances, was what cost him the most trouble: he was obliged to try several methods before he could fix upon a proper one.

The reformation of the church, which in all other countries is looked upon as so dangerous and difficult an attempt, was not so to him. The patriarchs had at times opposed the authority of the crown, as well as the strelitzes; Nikon with insolence, Joachin, one of his successors, in an artful manner.

The bishops had arrogated the power of life and death, a prerogative directly contrary to the spirit of religion, and the subordination of government. This assumed power, which had been of long standing, was now taken from them. The patriarch Adrian, dying at the close of this century, Peter declared that there should for the future be no other.

This dignity then was entirely suppressed, and the great income belonging thereto was united to the public revenue, which stood in need of this addition. Although the czar did not set himself up as the head of the Russian church, as the kings of Great Britain have done in regard to the church of England; yet he was, in fact, absolute master over it, because the synods did not dare either to disobey the commands of a despotic sovereign, or to dispute with a prince who had more knowledge than themselves.

We need only to cast an eye on the preamble to the edict, concerning his ecclesiastical regulations, issued in 1721, to be convinced that he acted at once as master and legislator: 'We should deem ourselves guilty of ingratitude to the Most High, if, after having reformed the military and civil orders, we neglect the spiritual, &c. For this cause, following the example of the most ancient kings, who have been famed for piety, we have taken upon us to make certain wholesome regulations, touching the clergy.' It is true, he convened a synod for carrying into execution his ecclesiastical decrees, but the members of this synod, at entering upon their office, were to take an oath, the form of which had been drawn up and signed by himself. This was an oath of submission and obedience, and was conceived in the following terms: 'I swear to be a faithful and obedient servant and subject to my true and natural sovereign, and to the august successors whom it shall please him to nominate, in virtue of the incontestable right of which he is possessed: I acknowledge him to be the supreme judge of this spiritual college: I swear by the all-seeing God, that I understand and mean this oath in the full force and sense, which the words convey to those who read or hear it.' This oath is much stronger than that of the supremacy in England. The Russian monarch was not, indeed, one of the fathers of the synod, but he dictated their laws; and, though he did not touch the holy censer, he directed the hands that held it.

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