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WILD APPLES

THE HISTORY OF THE APPLE-TREE

It is remarkable how closely the history of the Apple-tree is connected with that of man. The geologist tells us that the order of the *Rosaceae*, which includes the Apple, also the true Grasses, and the *Labiatae*, or Mints, were introduced only a short time previous to the appearance of man on the globe.

It appears that apples made a part of the food of that unknown primitive people whose traces have lately been found at the bottom of the Swiss lakes, supposed to be older than the foundation of Rome, so old that they had no metallic implements. An entire black and shrivelled Crab-Apple has been recovered

from their stores.

Tacitus says of the ancient Germans, that they satisfied their hunger with wild apples (*agrestia poma*) among other things.

Niebuhr observes that "the words for a house, a field, a plough, ploughing, wine, oil, milk, sheep, apples, and others relating to agriculture and the gentler way of life, agree in Latin and Greek, while the Latin words for all objects pertaining to war or the chase are utterly alien from the Greek." Thus the apple-tree may be considered a symbol of peace no less than the olive.

The apple was early so important, and generally distributed, that its name traced to its root in many languages signifies fruit in general. [Greek: Maelon], in Greek, means an apple, also the fruit of other trees, also a sheep and any cattle, and finally riches in general.

The apple-tree has been celebrated by the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, and Scandinavians. Some have thought that the first human pair were tempted by its fruit. Goddesses are fabled to have contended for it, dragons were set to watch it, and heroes were employed to pluck it.

The tree is mentioned in at least three places in the Old Testament, and its fruit in two or three more. Solomon sings,— "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons." And again,— "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples." The noblest part of man's noblest feature is named from this fruit, "the apple of the eye."

The apple-tree is also mentioned by Homer and Herodotus.

Ulysses saw in the glorious garden of Alcinoüs "pears and pomegranates, and apple-trees bearing beautiful fruit" ([Greek: *kahi maeleai aglaokarpoi*]). And according to Homer, apples were among the fruits which Tantalus could not pluck, the wind ever blowing their boughs away from him. Theophrastus knew and described the apple-tree as a botanist.

According to the Prose Edda, "Iduna keeps in a box the apples which the gods, when they feel old age approaching, have only to taste of to become young again. It is in this manner that they will be kept in renovated youth until Ragnarök" (or the destruction of the gods).

I learn from Loudon that "the ancient Welsh bards were rewarded for excelling in song by the token of the apple-spray;" and "in the Highlands of Scotland the apple-tree is the badge of the clan Lamont."

The apple-tree (*Pyrus malus*) belongs chiefly to the northern temperate zone. Loudon says, that "it grows spontaneously in every part of Europe except the frigid zone, and throughout Western Asia, China, and Japan." We have also two or three varieties of the apple indigenous in North America. The cultivated apple-tree was first introduced into this country by the earliest settlers, and it is thought to do as well or better here than anywhere else. Probably some of the varieties which are now cultivated were first introduced into Britain by the Romans.

Pliny, adopting the distinction of Theophrastus, says,—"*Of trees there are some which are altogether wild (sylvestres), some*

more civilized (*urbaniores*)." Theophrastus includes the apple among the last; and, indeed, it is in this sense the most civilized of all trees. It is as harmless as a dove, as beautiful as a rose, and as valuable as flocks and herds. It has been longer cultivated than any other, and so is more humanized; and who knows but, like the dog, it will at length be no longer traceable to its wild original? It migrates with man, like the dog and horse and cow: first, perchance, from Greece to Italy, thence to England, thence to America; and our Western emigrant is still marching steadily toward the setting sun with the seeds of the apple in his pocket, or perhaps a few young trees strapped to his load. At least a million apple-trees are thus set farther westward this year than any cultivated ones grew last year. Consider how the Blossom-Week, like the Sabbath, is thus annually spreading over the prairies; for when man migrates, he carries with him not only his birds, quadrupeds, insects, vegetables, and his very sward, but his orchard also.

The leaves and tender twigs are an agreeable food to many domestic animals, as the cow, horse, sheep, and goat; and the fruit is sought after by the first, as well as by the hog. Thus there appears to have existed a natural alliance between these animals and this tree from the first. "The fruit of the Crab in the forests of France" is said to be "a great resource for the wild-boar."

Not only the Indian, but many indigenous insects, birds, and quadrupeds, welcomed the apple-tree to these shores. The tent-caterpillar saddled her eggs on the very first twig that was

formed, and it has since shared her affections with the wild cherry; and the canker-worm also in a measure abandoned the elm to feed on it. As it grew apace, the blue-bird, robin, cherry-bird, king-bird, and many more, came with haste and built their nests and warbled in its boughs, and so became orchard-birds, and multiplied more than ever. It was an era in the history of their race. The downy woodpecker found such a savory morsel under its bark, that he perforated it in a ring quite round the tree, before he left it,—a thing which he had never done before, to my knowledge. It did not take the partridge long to find out how sweet its buds were, and every winter eve she flew, and still flies, from the wood, to pluck them, much to the farmer's sorrow. The rabbit, too, was not slow to learn the taste of its twigs and bark; and when the fruit was ripe, the squirrel half-rolled, half-carried it to his hole; and even the musquash crept up the bank from the brook at evening, and greedily devoured it, until he had worn a path in the grass there; and when it was frozen and thawed, the crow and the jay were glad to taste it occasionally. The owl crept into the first apple-tree that became hollow, and fairly hooted with delight, finding it just the place for him; so, settling down into it, he has remained there ever since.

My theme being the Wild Apple, I will merely glance at some of the seasons in the annual growth of the cultivated apple, and pass on to my special province.

The flowers of the apple are perhaps the most beautiful of any tree's, so copious and so delicious to both sight and scent.

The walker is frequently tempted to turn and linger near some more than usually handsome one, whose blossoms are two-thirds expanded. How superior it is in these respects to the pear, whose blossoms are neither colored nor fragrant!

By the middle of July, green apples are so large as to remind us of coddling, and of the autumn. The sward is commonly strewed with little ones which fall still-born, as it were,—Nature thus thinning them for us. The Roman writer Palladius said,—"If apples are inclined to fall before their time, a stone placed in a split root will retain them." Some such notion, still surviving, may account for some of the stones which we see placed to be overgrown in the forks of trees. They have a saying in Suffolk, England,—

"At Michaelmas time, or a little before,
Half an apple goes to the core."

Early apples begin to be ripe about the first of August; but I think that none of them are so good to eat as some to smell. One is worth more to scent your handkerchief with than any perfume which they sell in the shops. The fragrance of some fruits is not to be forgotten, along with that of flowers. Some gnarly apple which I pick up in the road reminds me by its fragrance of all the wealth of Pomona,—carrying me forward to those days when they will be collected in golden and ruddy heaps in the orchards and about the cider-mills.

A week or two later, as you are going by orchards or gardens, especially in the evenings, you pass through a little region possessed by the fragrance of ripe apples, and thus enjoy them without price, and without robbing anybody.

There is thus about all natural products a certain volatile and ethereal quality which represents their highest value, and which cannot be vulgarized, or bought and sold. No mortal has ever enjoyed the perfect flavor of any fruit, and only the god-like among men begin to taste its ambrosial qualities. For nectar and ambrosia are only those fine flavors of every earthly fruit which our coarse palates fail to perceive,—just as we occupy the heaven of the gods without knowing it. When I see a particularly mean man carrying a load of fair and fragrant early apples to market, I seem to see a contest going on between him and his horse, on the one side, and the apples on the other, and, to my mind, the apples always gain it. Pliny says that apples are the heaviest of all things, and that the oxen begin to sweat at the mere sight of a load of them. Our driver begins to lose his load the moment he tries to transport them to where they do not belong, that is, to any but the most beautiful. Though he gets out from time to time, and feels of them, and thinks they are all there, I see the stream of their evanescent and celestial qualities going to heaven from his cart, while the pulp and skin and core only are going to market. They are not apples, but pomace. Are not these still Iduna's apples, the taste of which keeps the gods forever young? and think you that they will let Loki or Thjassi carry them off to Jötunheim,

while they grow wrinkled and gray? No, for Ragnarök, or the destruction of the gods, is not yet.

There is another thinning of the fruit, commonly near the end of August or in September, when the ground is strewn with windfalls; and this happens especially when high winds occur after rain. In some orchards you may see fully three-quarters of the whole crop on the ground, lying in a circular form beneath the trees, yet hard and green,—or, if it is a hill-side, rolled far down the hill. However, it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. All the country over, people are busy picking up the windfalls, and this will make them cheap for early apple-pies.

In October, the leaves falling, the apples are more distinct on the trees. I saw one year in a neighboring town some trees fuller of fruit than I remembered to have ever seen before, small yellow apples hanging over the road. The branches were gracefully drooping with their weight, like a barberry-bush, so that the whole tree acquired a new character. Even the topmost branches, instead of standing erect, spread and drooped in all directions; and there were so many poles supporting the lower ones, that they looked like pictures of banyan-trees. As an old English manuscript says, "The mo appelen the tree bereth, the more sche boweth to the folk."

Surely the apple is the noblest of fruits. Let the most beautiful or the swiftest have it. That should be the "going" price of apples.

Between the fifth and twentieth of October I see the barrels lie under the trees. And perhaps I talk with one who is selecting

some choice barrels to fulfil an order. He turns a specked one over many times before he leaves it out. If I were to tell what is passing in my mind, I should say that every one was specked which he had handled; for he rubs off all the bloom, and those fugacious ethereal qualities leave it. Cool evenings prompt the farmers to make haste, and at length I see only the ladders here and there left leaning against the trees.

It would be well, if we accepted these gifts with more joy and gratitude, and did not think it enough simply to put a fresh load of compost about the tree. Some old English customs are suggestive at least. I find them described chiefly in Brand's "Popular Antiquities." It appears that "on Christmas eve the farmers and their men in Devonshire take a large bowl of cider, with a toast in it, and carrying it in state to the orchard, they salute the apple-trees with much ceremony, in order to make them bear well the next season." This salutation consists in "throwing some of the cider about the roots of the tree, placing bits of the toast on the branches," and then, "encircling one of the best bearing trees in the orchard, they drink the following toast three several times:—

'Here's to thee, old apple-tree,
Whence thou mayst bud, and whence thou mayst blow,
And whence thou mayst bear apples enow!
Hats-full! caps-full!
Bushel, bushel, sacks-full!
And my pockets full, too! Hurra!'"

Also what was called "apple-howling" used to be practised in various counties of England on New-Year's eve. A troop of boys visited the different orchards, and, encircling the apple-trees, repeated the following words:—

"Stand fast, root! bear well, top!
Pray God sent! us a good howling crop:
Every twig, apples big;
Every bough, apples enow!"

"They then shout in chorus, one of the boys accompanying them on a cow's horn. During this ceremony they rap the trees with their sticks." This is called "wassailing" the trees, and is thought by some to be "a relic of the heathen sacrifice to Pomona."

Herrick sings,—

"Wassaile the trees that they may beare
You many a plum and many a peare;
For more or less fruits they will bring
As you so give them wassailing."

Our poets have as yet a better right to sing of cider than of wine; but it behooves them to sing better than English Phillips did, else they will do no credit to their Muse.

THE WILD APPLE

So much for the more civilized apple-trees (*urbaniores*, as Pliny calls them). I love better to go through the old orchards of ungrafted apple-trees, at whatever season of the year,—so irregularly planted: sometimes two trees standing close together; and the rows so devious that you would think that they not only had grown while the owner was sleeping, but had been set out by him in a somnambulic state. The rows of grafted fruit will never tempt me to wander amid them like these. But I now, alas, speak rather from memory than from any recent experience, such ravages have been made!

Some soils, like a rocky tract called the Easterbrooks Country in my neighborhood, are so suited to the apple, that it will grow faster in them without any care, or if only the ground is broken up once a year, than it will in many places with any amount of care. The owners of this tract allow that the soil is excellent for fruit, but they say that it is so rocky that they have not patience to plough it, and that, together with the distance, is the reason why it is not cultivated. There are, or were recently, extensive orchards there standing without order. Nay, they spring up wild and bear well there in the midst of pines, birches, maples, and oaks. I am often surprised to see rising amid these trees the rounded tops of apple-trees glowing with red or yellow fruit, in harmony with the autumnal tints of the forest.

Going up the side of a cliff about the first of November, I saw a vigorous young apple-tree, which, planted by birds or cows, had shot up amid the rocks and open woods there, and had now much fruit on it, uninjured by the frosts, when all cultivated apples were gathered. It was a rank wild growth, with many green leaves on it still, and made an impression of thorniness. The fruit was hard and green, but looked as if it would be palatable in the winter. Some was dangling on the twigs, but more half-buried in the wet leaves under the tree, or rolled far down the hill amid the rocks. The owner knows nothing of it. The day was not observed when it first blossomed, nor when it first bore fruit, unless by the chickadee. There was no dancing on the green beneath it in its honor, and now there is no hand to pluck its fruit,—which is only gnawed by squirrels, as I perceive. It has done double duty,—not only borne this crop, but each twig has grown a foot into the air. And this is *such* fruit! bigger than many berries, we must admit, and carried home will be sound and palatable next spring. What care I for Iduna's apples so long as I can get these?

When I go by this shrub thus late and hardy, and see its dangling fruit, I respect the tree, and I am grateful for Nature's bounty, even though I cannot eat it. Here on this rugged and woody hill-side has grown an apple-tree, not planted by man, no relic of a former orchard, but a natural growth, like the pines and oaks. Most fruits which we prize and use depend entirely on our care. Corn and grain, potatoes, peaches, melons, etc., depend altogether on our planting; but the apple emulates man's

independence and enterprise. It is not simply carried, as I have said, but, like him, to some extent, it has migrated to this New World, and is even, here and there, making its way amid the aboriginal trees; just as the ox and dog and horse sometimes run wild and maintain themselves.

Even the sourest and crabbedest apple, growing in the most unfavorable position, suggests such thoughts as these, it is so noble a fruit.

THE CRAB

Nevertheless, *our* wild apple is wild only like myself, perchance, who belong not to the aboriginal race here, but have strayed into the woods from the cultivated stock. Wilder still, as I have said, there grows elsewhere in this country a native and aboriginal Crab-Apple, *Malus coronaria*, "whose nature has not yet been modified by cultivation." It is found from Western New-York to Minnesota, and southward. Michaux says that its ordinary height "is fifteen or eighteen feet, but it is sometimes found twenty-five or thirty feet high," and that the large ones "exactly resemble the common apple-tree." "The flowers are white mingled with rose-color, and are collected in corymbs." They are remarkable for their delicious odor. The fruit, according to him, is about an inch and a half in diameter, and is intensely acid. Yet they make fine sweetmeats, and also cider of them. He concludes, that, "if, on being cultivated, it does not yield new and palatable varieties, it will at least be celebrated for the beauty of its flowers, and for the sweetness of its perfume."

I never saw the Crab-Apple till May, 1861. I had heard of it through Michaux, but more modern botanists, so far as I know, have not treated it as of any peculiar importance. Thus it was a half-fabulous tree to me. I contemplated a pilgrimage to the "Glades," a portion of Pennsylvania where it was said to grow to perfection. I thought of sending to a nursery for it, but doubted

if they had it, or would distinguish it from European varieties. At last I had occasion to go to Minnesota, and on entering Michigan I began to notice from the cars a tree with handsome rose-colored flowers. At first I thought it some variety of thorn; but it was not long before the truth flashed on me, that this was my long-sought Crab-Apple. It was the prevailing flowering shrub or tree to be seen from the cars at that season of the year,—about the middle of May. But the cars never stopped before one, and so I was launched on the bosom of the Mississippi without having touched one, experiencing the fate of Tantalus. On arriving at St. Anthony's Falls, I was sorry to be told that I was too far north for the Crab-Apple. Nevertheless I succeeded in finding it about eight miles west of the Falls; touched it and smelled it, and secured a lingering corymb of flowers for my herbarium. This must have been near its northern limit.

HOW THE WILD APPLE GROWS

But though these are indigenous, like the Indians, I doubt whether they are any hardier than those backwoodsmen among the apple-trees, which, though descended from cultivated stocks, plant themselves in distant fields and forests, where the soil is favorable to them. I know of no trees which have more difficulties to contend with, and which more sturdily resist their foes. These are the ones whose story we have to tell. It oftentimes reads thus:—

Near the beginning of May, we notice little thickets of apple-trees just springing up in the pastures where cattle have been,—as the rocky ones of our Easter-brooks Country, or the top of Nobscot Hill, in Sudbury. One or two of these perhaps survive the drought and other accidents,—their very birthplace defending them against the encroaching grass and some other dangers, at first.

In two years' time 't had thus
Reached the level of the rocks,
Admired the stretching world,
Nor feared the wandering flocks.

But at this tender age
Its sufferings began;
There came a browsing ox

And cut it down a span.

This time, perhaps, the ox does not notice it amid the grass; but the next year, when it has grown more stout, he recognizes it for a fellow-emigrant from the old country, the flavor of whose leaves and twigs he well knows; and though at first he pauses to welcome it, and express his surprise, and gets for answer, "The same cause that brought you here brought me," he nevertheless browses it again, reflecting, it may be, that he has some title to it.

Thus cut down annually, it does not despair; but, putting forth two short twigs for every one cut off, it spreads out low along the ground in the hollows or between the rocks, growing more stout and scrubby, until it forms, not a tree as yet, but a little pyramidal, stiff, twiggy mass, almost as solid and impenetrable as a rock. Some of the densest and most impenetrable clumps of bushes that I have ever seen, as well on account of the closeness and stubbornness of their branches as of their thorns, have been these wild-apple scrubs. They are more like the scrubby fir and black spruce on which you stand, and sometimes walk, on the tops of mountains, where cold is the demon they contend with, than anything else. No wonder they are prompted to grow thorns at last, to defend themselves against such foes. In their thorniness, however, there is no malice, only some malic acid.

The rocky pastures of the tract I have referred to—for they maintain their ground best in a rocky field—are thickly sprinkled with these little tufts, reminding you often of some rigid gray

mosses or lichens, and you see thousands of little trees just springing up between them, with the seed still attached to them.

Being regularly clipped all around each year by the cows, as a hedge with shears, they are often of a perfect conical or pyramidal form, from one to four feet high, and more or less sharp, as if trimmed by the gardener's art. In the pastures on Nobscot Hill and its spurs, they make fine dark shadows when the sun is low. They are also an excellent covert from hawks for many small birds that roost and build in them. Whole flocks perch in them at night, and I have seen three robins' nests in one which was six feet in diameter.

No doubt many of these are already old trees, if you reckon from the day they were planted, but infants still when you consider their development and the long life before them. I counted the annual rings of some which were just one foot high, and as wide as high, and found that they were about twelve years old, but quite sound and thrifty! They were so low that they were unnoticed by the walker, while many of their contemporaries from the nurseries were already bearing considerable crops. But what you gain in time is perhaps in this case, too, lost in power,—that is, in the vigor of the tree. This is their pyramidal state.

The cows continue to browse them thus for twenty years or more, keeping them down and compelling them to spread, until at last they are so broad that they become their own fence, when some interior shoot, which their foes cannot reach, darts upward with joy: for it has not forgotten its high calling, and bears its

own peculiar fruit in triumph.

Such are the tactics by which it finally defeats its bovine foes. Now, if you have watched the progress of a particular shrub, you will see that it is no longer a simple pyramid or cone, but that out of its apex there rises a sprig or two, growing more lustily perchance than an orchard-tree, since the plant now devotes the whole of its repressed energy to these upright parts. In a short time these become a small tree, an inverted pyramid resting on the apex of the other, so that the whole has now the form of a vast hour-glass. The spreading bottom, having served its purpose, finally disappears, and the generous tree permits the now harmless cows to come in and stand in its shade, and rub against and redden its trunk, which has grown in spite of them, and even to taste a part of its fruit, and so disperse the seed.

Thus the cows create their own shade and food; and the tree, its hour-glass being inverted, lives a second life, as it were.

It is an important question with some nowadays, whether you should trim young apple-trees as high as your nose or as high as your eyes. The ox trims them up as high as he can reach, and that is about the right height, I think.

In spite of wandering kine, and other adverse circumstances, that despised shrub, valued only by small birds as a covert and shelter from hawks, has its blossom-week at last, and in course of time its harvest, sincere, though small.

By the end of some October, when its leaves have fallen, I frequently see such a central sprig, whose progress I have

watched, when I thought it had forgotten its destiny, as I had, bearing its first crop of small green or yellow or rosy fruit, which the cows cannot get at over the bushy and thorny hedge which surrounds it, and I make haste to taste the new and undescribed variety. We have all heard of the numerous varieties of fruit invented by Van Mons and Knight. This is the system of Van Cow, and she has invented far more and more memorable varieties than both of them.

Through what hardships it may attain to bear a sweet fruit! Though somewhat small, it may prove equal, if not superior, in flavor to that which has grown in a garden,—will perchance be all the sweeter and more palatable for the very difficulties it has had to contend with. Who knows but this chance wild fruit, planted by a cow or a bird on some remote and rocky hill-side, where it is as yet unobserved by man, may be the choicest of all its kind, and foreign potentates shall hear of it, and royal societies seek to propagate it, though the virtues of the perhaps truly crabbed owner of the soil may never be heard of,—at least, beyond the limits of his village? It was thus the Porter and the Baldwin grew.

Every wild-apple shrub excites our expectation thus, somewhat as every wild child. It is, perhaps, a prince in disguise. What a lesson to man! So are human beings, referred to the highest standard, the celestial fruit which they suggest and aspire to bear, browsed on by fate; and only the most persistent and strongest genius defends itself and prevails, sends a tender scion upward at last, and drops its perfect fruit on the ungrateful

earth. Poets and philosophers and statesmen thus spring up in the country pastures, and outlast the hosts of unoriginal men.

Such is always the pursuit of knowledge. The celestial fruits, the golden apples of the Hesperides, are ever guarded by a hundred-headed dragon which never sleeps, so that it is an Herculean labor to pluck them.

This is one, and the most remarkable way, in which the wild apple is propagated; but commonly it springs up at wide intervals in woods and swamps, and by the sides of roads, as the soil may suit it, and grows with comparative rapidity. Those which grow in dense woods are very tall and slender. I frequently pluck from these trees a perfectly mild and tamed fruit. As Palladius says, "*Et injussu consternitur ubere mali*": And the ground is strewn with the fruit of an unbidden apple-tree.

It is an old notion, that, if these wild trees do not bear a valuable fruit of their own, they are the best stocks by which to transmit to posterity the most highly prized qualities of others. However, I am not in search of stocks, but the wild fruit itself, whose fierce gust has suffered no "inteneration," It is not my

"highest plot To plant the Bergamot."

THE FRUIT, AND ITS FLAVOR

The time for wild apples is the last of October and the first of November. They then get to be palatable, for they ripen late, and they are still perhaps as beautiful as ever. I make a great account of these fruits, which the farmers do not think it worth the while to gather,—wild flavors of the Muse, vivacious and inspiriting. The farmer thinks that he has better in his barrels, but he is mistaken, unless he has a walker's appetite and imagination, neither of which can he have.

Such as grow quite wild, and are left out till the first of November, I presume that the owner does not mean to gather. They belong to children as wild as themselves,—to certain active boys that I know,—to the wild-eyed woman of the fields, to whom nothing comes amiss, who gleans after all the world,—and, moreover, to us walkers. We have met with them, and they are ours. These rights, long enough insisted upon, have come to be an institution in some old countries, where they have learned how to live. I hear that "the custom of gripping, which may be called apple-gleaning, is, or was formerly, practised in Herefordshire. It consists in leaving a few apples, which are called the gripplles, on every tree, after the general gathering, for the boys, who go with climbing-poles and bags to collect them."

As for those I speak of, I pluck them as a wild fruit, native to this quarter of the earth,—fruit of old trees that have been

dying ever since I was a boy and are not yet dead, frequented only by the woodpecker and the squirrel, deserted now by the owner, who has not faith enough to look under their boughs. From the appearance of the tree-top, at a little distance, you would expect nothing but lichens to drop from it, but your faith is rewarded by finding the ground strewn with spirited fruit,—some of it, perhaps, collected at squirrel-holes, with the marks of their teeth by which they carried them,—some containing a cricket or two silently feeding within, and some, especially in damp days, a shellless snail. The very sticks and stones lodged in the tree-top might have convinced you of the savoriness of the fruit which has been so eagerly sought after in past years.

I have seen no account of these among the "Fruits and Fruit-Trees of America," though they are more memorable to my taste than the grafted kinds; more racy and wild American flavors do they possess, when October and November, when December and January, and perhaps February and March even, have assuaged them somewhat. An old farmer in my neighborhood, who always selects the right word, says that "they have a kind of bow-arrow tang."

Apples for grafting appear to have been selected commonly, not so much for their spirited flavor, as for their mildness, their size, and bearing qualities,—not so much for their beauty, as for their fairness and soundness. Indeed, I have no faith in the selected lists of pomological gentlemen. Their "Favorites" and "None-suches" and "Seek-no-farthens," when I have fruited

them, commonly turn out very tame and forgettable. They are eaten with comparatively little zest, and have no real *tang* nor *smack* to them.

What if some of these wildings are acrid and puckery, genuine *verjuice*, do they not still belong to the *Pomaceae*, which are uniformly innocent and kind to our race? I still begrudge them to the cider-mill. Perhaps they are not fairly ripe yet.

No wonder that these small and high-colored apples are thought to make the best cider. Loudon quotes from the "Herefordshire Report," that "apples of a small size are always, if equal in quality, to be preferred to those of a larger size, in order that the rind and kernel may bear the greatest proportion to the pulp, which affords the weakest and most watery juice." And he says, that, "to prove this, Dr. Symonds, of Hereford, about the year 1800, made one hogshead of cider entirely from the rinds and cores of apples, and another from the pulp only, when the first was found of extraordinary strength and flavor, while the latter was sweet and insipid."

Evelyn says that the "Red-strake" was the favorite cider-apple in his day; and he quotes one Dr. Newburg as saying, "In Jersey 't is a general observation, as I hear, that the more of red any apple has in its rind, the more proper it is for this use. Pale-faced apples they exclude as much as may be from their cider-vat." This opinion still prevails.

All apples are good in November. Those which the farmer leaves out as unsalable, and unpalatable to those who frequent

the markets, are choicest fruit to the walker. But it is remarkable that the wild apple, which I praise as so spirited and racy when eaten in the fields or woods, being brought into the house, has frequently a harsh and crabbed taste. The Saunterer's Apple not even the saunterer can eat in the house. The palate rejects it there, as it does haws and acorns, and demands a tamed one; for there you miss the November air, which is the sauce it is to be eaten with. Accordingly, when Tityrus, seeing the lengthening shadows, invites Melibaeus to go home and pass the night with him, he promises him *mild* apples and soft chestnuts,—*mitia poma, castaneae molles*. I frequently pluck wild apples of so rich and spicy a flavor that I wonder all orchardists do not get a scion from that tree, and I fail not to bring home my pockets full. But perchance, when I take one out of my desk and taste it in my chamber, I find it unexpectedly crude,—sour enough to set a squirrel's teeth on edge and make a jay scream.

These apples have hung in the wind and frost and rain till they have absorbed the qualities of the weather or season, and thus are highly *seasoned*, and they *pierce* and *sting* and *permeate* us with their spirit. They must be eaten in *season*, accordingly,—that is, out-of-doors.

To appreciate the wild and sharp flavors of these October fruits, it is necessary that you be breathing the sharp October or November air. The out-door air and exercise which the walker gets give a different tone to his palate, and he craves a fruit which the sedentary would call harsh and crabbed. They must be eaten

in the fields, when your system is all aglow with exercise, when the frosty weather nips your fingers, the wind rattles the bare boughs or rustles the few remaining leaves, and the jay is heard screaming around. What is sour in the house a bracing walk makes sweet. Some of these apples might be labelled, "To be eaten in the wind."

Of course no flavors are thrown away; they are intended for the taste that is up to them. Some apples have two distinct flavors, and perhaps one-half of them must be eaten in the house, the other out-doors. One Peter Whitney wrote from Northborough in 1782, for the Proceedings of the Boston Academy, describing an apple-tree in that town "producing fruit of opposite qualities, part of the same apple being frequently sour and the other sweet;" also some all sour, and others all sweet, and this diversity on all parts of the tree.

There is a wild apple on Nawshawtuct Hill in my town which has to me a peculiarly pleasant bitter tang, not perceived till it is three-quarters tasted. It remains on the tongue. As you eat it, it smells exactly like a squash-bug. It is a sort of triumph to eat and relish it.

I hear that the fruit of a kind of plum-tree in Provence is "called *Prunes sibarelles*, because it is impossible to whistle after having eaten them, from their sourness." But perhaps they were only eaten in the house and in summer, and if tried out-of-doors in a stinging atmosphere, who knows but you could whistle an octave higher and clearer?

In the fields only are the sours and bitters of Nature appreciated; just as the wood-chopper eats his meal in a sunny glade, in the middle of a winter day, with content, basks in a sunny ray there and dreams of summer in a degree of cold which, experienced in a chamber, would make a student miserable. They who are at work abroad are not cold, but rather it is they who sit shivering in houses. As with temperatures, so with flavors; as with cold and heat, so with sour and sweet. This natural raciness, the sours and bitters which the diseased palate refuses, are the true condiments.

Let your condiments be in the condition of your senses. To appreciate the flavor of these wild apples requires vigorous and healthy senses, *papillae* firm and erect on the tongue and palate, not easily flattened and tamed.

From my experience with wild apples, I can understand that there may be reason for a savage's preferring many kinds of food which the civilized man rejects. The former has the palate of an out-door man. It takes a savage or wild taste to appreciate a wild fruit.

What a healthy out-of-door appetite it takes to relish the apple of life, the apple of the world, then!

"Nor is it every apple I desire,
Nor that which pleases every palate best;
'T is not the lasting Deuxan I require,
Nor yet the red-cheeked Greening I request,
Nor that which first beshrewed the name of

wife,

Nor that whose beauty caused the golden
strife:

No, no! bring me an apple from the tree of
life!"

So there is one thought for the field, another for the house. I
would have my thoughts, like wild apples, to be food for walkers,
and will not warrant them to be palatable, if tasted in the house.

THEIR BEAUTY

Almost all wild apples are handsome. They cannot be too gnarly and crabbed and rusty to look at. The gnarliest will have some redeeming traits even to the eye. You will discover some evening redness dashed or sprinkled on some protuberance or in some cavity. It is rare that the summer lets an apple go without streaking or spotting it on some part of its sphere. It will have some red stains, commemorating the mornings and evenings it has witnessed; some dark and rusty blotches, in memory of the clouds and foggy, mildewy days that have passed over it; and a spacious field of green reflecting the general face of Nature,—green even as the fields; or a yellow ground, which implies a milder flavor,—yellow as the harvest, or russet as the hills.

Apples, these I mean, unspeakably fair,—apples not of Discord, but of Concord! Yet not so rare but that the homeliest may have a share. Painted by the frosts, some a uniform clear bright yellow, or red, or crimson, as if their spheres had regularly revolved, and enjoyed the influence of the sun on all sides alike,—some with the faintest pink blush imaginable,—some brindled with deep red streaks like a cow, or with hundreds of fine blood-red rays running regularly from the stem-dimple to the blossom-end, like meridional lines, on a straw-colored ground,—some touched with a greenish rust, like a fine lichen, here and there, with crimson blotches or eyes more or less confluent and fiery

when wet,—and others gnarly, and freckled or peppered all over on the stem side with fine crimson spots on a white ground, as if accidentally sprinkled from the brush of Him who paints the autumn leaves. Others, again, are sometimes red inside, perfused with a beautiful blush, fairy food, too beautiful to eat,—apple of the Hesperides, apple of the evening sky! But like shells and pebbles on the sea-shore, they must be seen as they sparkle amid the withering leaves in some dell in the woods, in the autumnal air, or as they lie in the wet grass, and not when they have wilted and faded in the house.

THE NAMING OF THEM

It would be a pleasant pastime to find suitable names for the hundred varieties which go to a single heap at the cider-mill. Would it not tax a man's invention,—no one to be named after a man, and all in the *lingua vernacula*? Who shall stand godfather at the christening of the wild apples? It would exhaust the Latin and Greek languages, if they were used, and make the *lingua vernacula* flag. We should have to call in the sunrise and the sunset, the rainbow and the autumn woods and the wild flowers, and the woodpecker and the purple finch and the squirrel and the jay and the butterfly, the November traveller and the truant boy, to our aid.

In 1836 there were in the garden of the London Horticultural Society more than fourteen hundred distinct sorts. But here are species which they have not in their catalogue, not to mention the varieties which our Crab might yield to cultivation.

Let us enumerate a few of these. I find myself compelled, after all, to give the Latin names of some for the benefit of those who live where English is not spoken,—for they are likely to have a world-wide reputation.

There is, first of all, the Wood-Apple (*Malus sylvatica*); the Blue-Jay Apple; the Apple which grows in Dells in the Woods, (*sylvestrivallis*,) also in Hollows in Pastures (*campestrivallis*); the Apple that grows in an old Cellar-Hole (*Malus cellaris*);

the Meadow-Apple; the Partridge-Apple; the Truant's Apple, (*Cessaloris*), which no boy will ever go by without knocking off some, however *late* it may be; the Saunterer's Apple,—you must lose yourself before you can find the way to that; the Beauty of the Air (*Decus Aëris*); December-Eating; the Frozen-Thawed, (*gelato-soluta*) good only in that state; the Concord Apple, possibly the same with the *Musketaquidensis*; the Assabet Apple; the Brindled Apple; Wine of New England; the Chickaree Apple; the Green Apple (*Malus viridis*);—this has many synonymes; in an imperfect state, it is the *Cholera morbifera aut dysenterifera, puerulis dilectissima*;—the Apple which Atalanta stopped to pick up; the Hedge-Apple (*Malus Sepium*); the Slug-Apple (*limacea*); the Railroad-Apple, which perhaps came from a core thrown out of the cars; the Apple whose Fruit we tasted in our Youth; our Particular Apple, not to be found in any catalogue,—*Pedestrium Solatium*; also the Apple where hangs the Forgotten Scythe; Iduna's Apples, and the Apples which Loki found in the Wood; and a great many more I have on my list, too numerous to mention,—all of them good. As Bodaeus exclaims, referring to the cultivated kinds, and adapting Virgil to his case, so I, adapting Bodaeus,—

"Not if I had a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths,
An iron voice, could I describe all the forms
And reckon up all the names of these *wild apples*."

THE LAST GLEANING

By the middle of November the wild apples have lost some of their brilliancy, and have chiefly fallen. A great part are decayed on the ground, and the sound ones are more palatable than before. The note of the chickadee sounds now more distinct, as you wander amid the old trees, and the autumnal dandelion is half-closed and tearful. But still, if you are a skilful gleaner, you may get many a pocket-full even of grafted fruit, long after apples are supposed to be gone out-of-doors. I know a Blue-Pearmain tree, growing within the edge of a swamp, almost as good as wild. You would not suppose that there was any fruit left there, on the first survey, but you must look according to system. Those which lie exposed are quite brown and rotten now, or perchance a few still show one blooming cheek here and there amid the wet leaves. Nevertheless, with experienced eyes, I explore amid the bare alders and the huckleberry-bushes and the withered sedge, and in the crevices of the rocks, which are full of leaves, and pry under the fallen and decaying ferns, which, with apple and alder leaves, thickly strew the ground. For I know that they lie concealed, fallen into hollows long since and covered up by the leaves of the tree itself,—a proper kind of packing. From these lurking-places, anywhere within the circumference of the tree, I draw forth the fruit, all wet and glossy, maybe nibbled by rabbits and hollowed out by crickets and perhaps with a leaf or two

cemented to it, (as Curzon an old manuscript from a monastery's mouldy cellar,) but still with a rich bloom on it, and at least as ripe and well kept, if not better than those in barrels, more crisp and lively than they. If these resources fail to yield anything, I have learned to look between the bases of the suckers which spring thickly from some horizontal limb, for now and then one lodges there, or in the very midst of an alder-clump, where they are covered by leaves, safe from crows which may have smelled them out. If I am sharp-set, for I do not refuse the Blue-Pearmain, I fill my pockets on each side; and as I retrace my steps in the frosty eve, being perhaps four or five miles from home, I eat one first from this side, and then from that, to keep my balance.

I learn from Topsell's *Gesner*, whose authority appears to be Albertus, that the following is the way in which the hedgehog collects and carries home his apples. He says,—“His meat is apples, worms, or grapes: when he findeth apples or grapes on the earth, he rolleth himself upon them, until he have filled all his prickles, and then carrieth them home to his den, never bearing above one in his mouth; and if it fortune that one of them fall off by the way, he likewise shaketh off all the residue, and walloweth upon them afresh, until they be all settled upon his back again. So, forth he goeth, making a noise like a cart-wheel; and if he have any young ones in his nest, they pull off his load wherewithal he is loaded, eating thereof what they please, and laying up the residue for the time to come.”

THE "FROZEN-THAWED" APPLE

Toward the end of November, though some of the sound ones are yet more mellow and perhaps more edible, they have generally, like the leaves, lost their beauty, and are beginning to freeze. It is finger-cold, and prudent farmers get in their barrelled apples, and bring you the apples and cider which they have engaged; for it is time to put them into the cellar. Perhaps a few on the ground show their red cheeks above the early snow, and occasionally some even preserve their color and soundness under the snow throughout the winter. But generally at the beginning of the winter they freeze hard, and soon, though undecayed, acquire the color of a baked apple.

Before the end of December, generally, they experience their first thawing. Those which a month ago were sour, crabbed, and quite unpalatable to the civilized taste, such at least as were frozen while sound, let a warmer sun come to thaw them, for they are extremely sensitive to its rays, are found to be filled with a rich sweet cider, better than any bottled cider that I know of, and with which I am better acquainted than with wine. All apples are good in this state, and your jaws are the cider-press. Others, which have more substance, are a sweet and luscious food,—in my opinion of more worth than the pine-apples which are imported from the West Indies. Those which lately even I tasted only to repent of it,—for I am semi-civilized,—which the farmer

willingly left on the tree, I am now glad to find have the property of hanging on like the leaves of the young oaks. It is a way to keep cider sweet without boiling. Let the frost come to freeze them first, solid as stones, and then the rain or a warm winter day to thaw them, and they will seem to have borrowed a flavor from heaven through the medium of the air in which they hang. Or perchance you find, when you get home, that those which rattled in your pocket have thawed, and the ice is turned to cider. But after the third or fourth freezing and thawing they will not be found so good.

What are the imported half-ripe fruits of the torrid South, to this fruit matured by the cold of the frigid North? These are those crabbed apples with which I cheated my companion, and kept a smooth face that I might tempt him to eat. Now we both greedily fill our pockets with them,—bending to drink the cup and save our lappets from the overflowing juice,—and grow more social with their wine. Was there one that hung so high and sheltered by the tangled branches that our sticks could not dislodge it?

It is a fruit never carried to market, that I am aware of,—quite distinct from the apple of the markets, as from dried apple and cider,—and it is not every winter that produces it in perfection.

* * * * *

The era of the Wild Apple will soon be past. It is a fruit which will probably become extinct in New England. You may still wander through old orchards of native fruit of great extent, which for the most part went to the cider-mill, now all gone to

decay. I have heard of an orchard in a distant town, on the side of a hill, where the apples rolled down and lay four feet deep against a wall on the lower side, and this the owner cut down for fear they should be made into cider. Since the temperance reform and the general introduction of grafted fruit, no native apple-trees, such as I see everywhere in deserted pastures, and where the woods have grown up around them, are set out. I fear that he who walks over these fields a century hence will not know the pleasure of knocking off wild apples. Ah, poor man, there are many pleasures which he will not know! Notwithstanding the prevalence of the Baldwin and the Porter, I doubt if so extensive orchards are set out to-day in my town as there were a century ago, when those vast straggling cider-orchards were planted, when men both ate and drank apples, when the pomace-heap was the only nursery, and trees cost nothing but the trouble of setting them out. Men could afford then to stick a tree by every wall-side and let it take its chance. I see nobody planting trees to-day in such out-of-the-way places, along the lonely roads and lanes, and at the bottom of dells in the wood. Now that they have grafted trees, and pay a price for them, they collect them into a plat by their houses, and fence them in,—and the end of it all will be that we shall be compelled to look for our apples in a barrel.

This is the word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

"Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land!

Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?...

"That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

"Awake, ye drunkards, and weep! and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine! for it is cut off from your mouth.

"For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek-teeth of a great lion.

"He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white....

"Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen! howl, O ye vine-dressers!
...

"The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men."

* * * * *

LIFE IN THE OPEN AIR

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CECIL DREEME" AND
"JOHN BRENT."

KATAHDIN AND THE PENOBSCOT.

CHAPTER VII

MOOSEHEAD

Moosehead Lake is a little bigger than the Lago di Guarda, and therefore, according to our American standard, rather more important. It is not very grand, not very picturesque, but considerably better than no lake,—a meritorious mean; not pretty and shadowy, like a thousand lakelets all over the land, nor tame, broad, and sham-oceanic, like the tanks of Niagara. On the west, near its southern end, is a well-intended blackness and roughness called Squaw Mountain. The rest on that side is undistinguished pine woods.

Mount Kinneo is midway up the lake, on the east. It is the show-piece of the region,—the best they can do for a precipice, and really admirably done. Kinneo is a solid mass of purple flint rising seven hundred feet upright from the water. By the side of this block could some Archimedes appear, armed with a suitable

"*pou stô*" and a mallet heavy enough, he might strike fire to the world. Since percussion-guns and friction cigar-lighters came in, flint has somewhat lost its value; and Kinneo is of no practical use at present. We cannot allow inutilities in this world. Where is the Archimedes? He could make a handsome thing of it by flashing us off with a spark into a new system of things.

Below this dangerous cliff on the lake-bank is the Kinneo House, where fishermen and sportsmen may dwell, and kill or catch, as skill or fortune favors. The historical success of all catchers and killers is well balanced, since men who cannot master facts are always men of imagination, and it is as easy for them to invent as for the other class to do. Boston men haunt Kinneo. For a hero who has not skill enough or imagination enough to kill a moose stands rather in Nowhere with Boston fashion. The tameness of that pleasant little capital makes its belles ardent for tales of wild adventure. New-York women are less exacting; a few of them, indeed, like a dash of the adventurous in their lover; but most of them are business-women, fighting their way out of vulgarity into style, and romance is an interruption.

Kinneo was an old station of Iglesias's, in those days when he was probing New England for the picturesque. When the steamer landed, he acted as cicerone, and pointed out to me the main object of interest thereabouts, the dinner-table. We dined with lumbermen and moose-hunters, scufflingly.

The moose is the lion of these regions. Near Greenville,

a gigantic pair of moose-horns marks a fork in the road. Thenceforth moose-facts and moose-legends become the staple of conversation. Moose-meat, combining the flavor of beefsteak and the white of turtle, appears on the table. Moose-horns with full explanations, so that the buyer can play the part of hunter, are for sale. Tame mooselings are exhibited. Sportsmen at Kinneo can choose a *matinée* with the trout or a *soirée* with the moose.

The chief fact of a moose's person is that pair of strange excrescences, his horns. Like fronds of tree-fern, like great corals or sea-fans, these great palmated plates of bone lift themselves from his head, grand, useless, clumsy. A pair of moose-horns overlooks me as I write; they weigh twenty pounds, are nearly five feet in spread, on the right horn are nine developed and two undeveloped antlers, the plates are sixteen inches broad,—a doughty head-piece.

Every year the great, slow-witted animal must renew his head-gear. He must lose the deformity, his pride, and cultivate another. In spring, when the first anemone trembles to the vernal breeze, the moose nods welcome to the wind, and as he nods feels something rattle on his skull. He nods again, as Homer sometimes did. Lo! something drops. A horn has dropped, and he stands a bewildered unicorn. For a few days he steers wild; in this ill-balanced course his lone horn strikes every tree on this side as he dodges from that side. The unhappy creature is staggered, body and mind. In what Jericho of the forest can he hide his diminished head? He flies frantic. He runs amuck

through the woods. Days pass by in gloom, and then comes despair; another horn falls, and he becomes defenceless; and not till autumn does his brow bear again its full honors.

I make no apology for giving a few lines to the great event of a moose's life. He is the hero of those evergreen-woods,—a hero too little recognized, except by stealthy assassins, meeting him by midnight for massacre. No one seems to have viewed him in his dramatic character, as a forest-monarch enacting every year the tragi-comedy of decoronation and recoronation.

The Kinneo House is head-quarters for moose-hunters. This summer the waters of Maine were diluvial, the feeding-grounds were swamped. Of this we took little note: we were in chase of something certain not to be drowned; and the higher the deluge, the easier we could float to Katahdin. After dinner we took the steamboat again for the upper end of the lake.

It was a day of days for sunny summer sailing. Purple haziness curtained the dark front of Kinneo,—a delicate haze purpled by this black promontory, but melting blue like a cloud-fall of cloudless sky upon loftier distant summits. The lake rippled pleasantly, flashing at every ripple.

Suddenly, "Katahdin!" said Iglesias.

Yes, there was a dim point, the object of our pilgrimage.

Katahdin,—the more I saw of it, the more grateful I was to the three powers who enabled me to see it: to Nature for building it, to Iglesias for guiding me to it, to myself for going.

We sat upon the deck and let Katahdin grow,—and sitting,

talked of mountains, somewhat to this effect:—

Mountains are the best things to be seen. Within the keen outline of a great peak is packed more of distance, of detail, of light and shade, of color, of all the qualities of space, than vision can get in any other way. No one who has not seen mountains knows how far the eye can reach. Level horizons are within cannon-shot. Mountain horizons not only may be a hundred miles away, but they lift up a hundred miles at length, to be seen at a look. Mountains make a background against which blue sky can be seen; between them and the eye are so many miles of visible atmosphere, domesticated, brought down to the regions of earth, not resting overhead, a vagueness and a void. Air, blue in full daylight, rose and violet at sunset, gray like powdered starlight by night, is collected and isolated by a mountain, so that the eye can comprehend it in nearer acquaintance. There is nothing so refined as the outline of a distant mountain: even a rose-leaf is stiff-edged and harsh in comparison. Nothing else has that definite indefiniteness, that melting permanence, that evanescent changelessness. Clouds in vain strive to imitate it; they are made of slighter stuff; they can be blunt or ragged, but they cannot have that solid positiveness.

Mountains, too, are very stationary,—always at their post. They are characters of dignity, not without noble changes of mood; but these changes are not bewildering, capricious shifts. A mountain can be studied like a picture; its majesty, its grace can be got by heart. Purple precipice, blue pyramid, cone or dome of

snow, it is a simple image and a positive thought. It is a delicate fact, first, of beauty,—then, as you approach, a strong fact of majesty and power. But even in its cloudy, distant fairness there is a concise, emphatic reality altogether uncloudlike.

Manly men need the wilderness and the mountain. Katahdin is the best mountain in the wildest wild to be had on this side the continent. He looked at us encouragingly over the hills. I saw that he was all that Iglesias, connoisseur of mountains, had promised, and was content to wait for the day of meeting.

The steamboat dumped us and our canoe on a wharf at the lake-head about four o'clock. A wharf promised a settlement, which, however, did not exist. There was population,—one man and one great ox. Following the inland-pointing nose of the ox, we saw, penetrating the forest, a wooden railroad. Ox-locomotive, and no other, befitted such rails. The train was one great go-cart. We packed our traps upon it, roofed them with our birch, and, without much ceremony of whistling, moved on. As we started, so did the steamboat. The link between us and the inhabited world grew more and more attenuated. Finally it snapped, and we were in the actual wilderness.

I am sorry to chronicle that Iglesias hereupon turned to the ox and said impatiently,—

"Now, then, bullgine!"

Why a railroad, even a wooden one, here? For this: the Penobscot at this point approaches within two and a half miles of Moosehead Lake, and over this portage supplies are taken

conveniently for the lumbermen of an extensive lumbering country above, along the river.

Corduroy railroad, ox-locomotive, and go-cart train up in the pine woods were a novelty and a privilege. Our cloven-hoofed engine did not whirr turbulently along, like a thing of wheels. Slow and sure must the knock-kneed chewer of cuds step from log to log. Creakingly the wain followed him, pausing and starting and pausing again with groans of inertia. A very fat ox was this, protesting every moment against his employment, where speed, his duty, and sloth, his nature, kept him bewildered by their rival injunctions. Whenever the engine-driver stopped to pick a huckleberry, the train, self-braking, stopped also, and the engine took in fuel from the tall grass that grew between the sleepers. It was the sensation of sloth at its uttermost.

Iglesias and I, meanwhile, marched along and shot the game of the country, namely, one *Tetrao Canadensis*, one spruce-partridge, making in all one bird, quite too pretty to shoot with its red and black plumage. The spruce-partridge is rather rare in inhabited Maine, and is malignantly accused of being bitter in flesh, and of feeding on spruce-buds to make itself distasteful. Our bird we found sweetly berry-fed. The bitterness, if any, was that we had not a brace.

So, at last, in an hour, after shooting one bird and swallowing six million berries, for the railroad was a shaft into a mine of them, we came to the terminus. The chewer of cuds was disconnected, and plodded off to his stable. The go-cart slid

down an inclined plane to the river, the Penobscot.

We paid quite freely for our brief monopoly of the railroad to the superintendent, engineer, stoker, poker, switch-tender, brakeman, baggage-master, and every other official in one. But who would grudge his tribute to the enterprise that opened this narrow vista through toward the Hyperboreans, and planted these once not crumbling sleepers and once not rickety rails, to save the passenger a portage? Here, at Bullgineville, the pluralist railroad-manager had his cabin and clearing, ox-engine house and warehouse.

To balance these symbols of advance, we found a station of the rear-guard of another army. An Indian party of two was encamped on the bank. The fusty sagamore of this pair was lying wounded; his fusty squaw tended him tenderly, minding, meanwhile, a very witch-like caldron of savory fume. No skirmish, with actual war-whoop and sheen of real scalping-knife, had put this prostrate chieftain here *hors du combat*. He had shot himself cruelly by accident. So he informed us feebly, in a muddy, guttural *patois* of Canadian French. This aboriginal meeting was of great value; it helped to eliminate the railroad.

CHAPTER VIII

PENOBSCOT

It was now five o'clock of an August evening. Our work-day was properly done. But we were to camp somewhere, "anywhere out of the world" of railroads. The Penobscot glimmered winningly. Our birch looked wistful for its own element. Why not marry shallop to stream? Why not yield to the enticement of this current, fleet and clear, and gain a few beautiful miles before nightfall? All the world was before us where to choose our bivouac. We dismounted our birch from the truck, and laid its lightness upon the stream. Then we became stevedores, stowing cargo. Sheets of birch-bark served for dunnage. Cancut, in flamboyant shirt, ballasted the after-part of the craft. For the present, I, in flamboyant shirt, paddled in the bow, while Iglesias, similarly glowing, sat *à la Turque* midships among the traps. Then, with a longing sniff at the caldron of Soggysampcook, we launched upon the Penobscot.

Upon no sweeter stream was voyager ever launched than this of our summer-evening sail. There was no worse haste in its more speed; it went fleetly lingering along its leafy dell. Its current, unrippingly smooth, but dimpled ever, and wrinkled with the whirls that mark an underflow deep and shady, bore on our bark.

The banks were low and gently wooded. No Northern forest, rude and gloomy with pines, stood stiffly and unsympathizingly watching the graceful water, but cheerful groves and delicate coppices opened in vistas where level sunlight streamed, and barred the river with light, between belts of lightsome shadow. We felt no breeze, but knew of one, keeping pace with us, by a tremor in the birches as it shook them. On we drifted, mile after mile, languidly over sweet calms. One would seize his paddle, and make our canoe quiver for a few spasmodic moments. But it seemed needless and impertinent to toil, when noiselessly and without any show of energy the water was bearing us on, over rich reflections of illumined cloud and blue sky, and shadows of feathery birches, bearing us on so quietly that our passage did not shatter any fair image, but only drew it out upon the tremors of the water.

So, placid and beautiful as an interview of first love, went on our first meeting with this Northern river. But water, the feminine element, is so mobile and impressible that it must protect itself by much that seems caprice and fickleness. We might be sure that the Penobscot would not always flow so gently, nor all the way from forests to the sea conduct our bark without one shiver of panic, where rapids broke noisy and foaming over rocks that showed their grinding teeth at us.

Sunset now streamed after us down the river. The arbor-vitae along the banks marked tracery more delicate than any ever wrought by deftest craftsman in western window of an antique

fane. Brighter and richer than any tints that ever poured through painted oriel flowed the glories of sunset. Dear, pensive glooms of nightfall drooped from the zenith slowly down, narrowing twilight to a belt of dying flame. We were aware of the ever fresh surprise of starlight: the young stars were born again.

Sweet is the charm of starlit sailing where no danger is. And in days when the Munki Mannakens were foes of the pale-face, one might dash down rapids by night in the hurry of escape. Now the danger was before, not pursuing. We must camp before we were hurried into the first "rips" of the stream, and before night made bush-ranging and camp-duties difficult.

But these beautiful thickets of birch and alder along the bank, how to get through them? We must spy out an entrance. Spots lovely and damp, circles of ferny grass beneath elms offered themselves. At last, as to patience always, appeared the place of wisest choice. A little stream, the Ragmuff, entered the Penobscot. "Why Ragmuff?" thought we, insulted. Just below its mouth two spruces were *propylaea* to a little glade, our very spot. We landed. Some hunters had once been there. A skeleton lodge and frame of poles for drying moose-hides remained.

Like skilful campaigners, we at once distributed ourselves over our work. Cancut wielded the axe; I the match-box; Iglesias the *batterie de cuisine*. Ragmuff drifted one troutling and sundry chubby chub down to nip our hooks. We re-roofed our camp with its old covering of hemlock-bark, spreading over a light tent-cover we had provided. The last glow of twilight dulled away;

monitory mists hid the stars.

Iglesias, as *chef*, with his two *marmitons*, had, meanwhile, been preparing supper. It was dark when he, the colorist, saw that fire with delicate touches of its fine brushes had painted all our viands to perfection. Then, with the same fire stirred to illumination, and dashing masterly glows upon landscape and figures, the trio partook of the supper and named it sublime.

Here follows the *carte* of the Restaurant Ragmuff,—woodland fare, a banquet simple, but elegant:—

POISSON.

Truite. Meunier.

ENTRÉES.

Porc frit au naturel.

Côtelettes d'Élan.

RÔTI.

Tetrao Canadensis

DESSERT

Hard-Tack. Fromage.

VINS.

Ragmuff blanc. Penobscot mousseux.

Thé. Chocolat de Bogotá.

Petit verre de Cognac.

At that time I had a temporary quarrel with the frantic nineteenth century's best friend, tobacco,—and Iglesias, being totally at peace with himself and the world, never needs antidynes. Cancut, therefore, was the only cloud-blower.

We two solaced ourselves with scorning civilization from our vantage-ground. We were beyond fences, away from the clash of town-clocks, the clink of town-dollars, the hiss of town-scandals. As soon as one is fairly in camp and has begun to eat with his fingers, he is free. He and truth are at the bottom of a well,—a hollow, fire-lighted cylinder of forest. While the manly man of the woods is breathing Nature like an Amreeta draught, is it anything less than the *summum bonum*?

"Yet some call American life dull."

"Ay, to dullards!" ejaculated Iglesias.

Moose were said to haunt these regions. Toward midnight our would-be moose-hunter paddled about up and down, seeking them and finding not. The waters were too high. Lily-pads were drowned. There were no moose looming duskily in the shallows, to be done to death at their banquet. They were up in the pathless woods, browsing on leaves and deappetizing with bitter bark. Starlight paddling over reflected stars was enchanting, but somniferous. We gave up our vain quest and glided softly home,—already we called it home,—toward the faint embers of our fire. Then all slept, as only wood-men sleep, save when for moments Cancut's trumpet-tones sounded alarms, and we others awoke to punch and batter the snorer into silence.

In due time, bird and cricket whistled and chirped the reveille. We sprang from our lair. We dipped in the river and let its gentle friction polish us more luxuriously than ever did any hair-gloved polisher of an Oriental bath. Our joints crackled for

themselves as we beat the current. From bath like this comes no unmanly kief, no sensuous, slumberous, dreamy indifference, but a nervous, intent, keen, joyous activity. A day of deeds is before us, and we would be doing.

When we issue from the Penobscot, from our baptism into a new life, we need no valet for elaborate toilet. Attire is simple, when the woods are the tiring-room.

When we had taken off the water and put on our clothes, we simultaneously thought of breakfast. Like a circle of wolves around the bones of a banquet, the embers of our fire were watching each other over the ashes; we had but to knock their heads together and fiery fighting began. The skirmish of the brands boiled our coffee and fried our pork, and we embarked and shoved off. A thin blue smoke, floating upward, for an hour or two, marked our bivouac; soon this had gone out, and the banks and braes of Ragmuff were lonely as if never a biped had trodden them. Nature drops back to solitude as easily as man to peace;—how little this fair globe would miss mankind!

The Penobscot was all asteam with morning mist. It was blinding the sun with a matinal oblation of incense. A crew of the profane should not interfere with such act of worship. Sacrilege is perilous, whoever be the God. We were instantly punished for irreverence. The first "rips" came up-stream under cover of the mist, and took us by surprise. As we were paddling along gently, we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of a boiling rapid. Gnashing rocks, with cruel foam upon their lips, sprang

out of the obscure, eager to tear us. Great jaws of ugly blackness snapped about us as if we were introduced into a coterie of crocodiles. Symplegades clanged together behind; mighty gulfs, below seducing bends of smooth water, awaited us before. We were in for it. We spun, whizzed, dashed, leaped, "cavorted;" we did whatever a birch running the gantlet of whirlpools and breakers may do, except the fatal finality of a somerset. That we escaped, and only escaped. We had been only reckless, not audacious; and therefore peril, not punishment, befell us. The rocks smote our frail shallop; they did not crush it. Foam and spray dashed in our faces; solid fluid below the crest did not overwhelm us. There we were, presently, in water tumultuous, but not frantic. There we were, three men floating in a birch, not floundering in a maelstrom,—on the water, not under it,—sprinkled, not drowned,—and in a wild wonder how we got into it and how we got out of it.

Cancut's paddle guided us through. Unwieldy he may have been in person, but he could wield his weapon well. And so, by luck and skill, we were not drowned in the magnificent uproar of the rapid. Success, that strange stirabout of Providence, accident, and courage, were ours. But when we came to the next cascading bit, though the mist had now lifted, we lightened the canoe by two men's avoir-dupois, that it might dance, and not blunder heavily, might seek the safe shallows, away from the dangerous bursts of mid-current, and choose passages where Cancut, with the setting-pole, could let it gently down. So Iglesias and I plunged

through the labyrinthine woods, the stream along.

Not long after our little episode of buffeting, we shot out again upon smooth water, and soon, for it is never smooth but it is smoothest, upon a lake, Chesuncook.

CHAPTER IX

CHESUNCOOK

Chesuncook is a "bulge" of the Penobscot: so much for its topography. It is deep in the woods, except that some miles from its opening there is a lumbering-station, with house and barns. In the wilderness, man makes for man by a necessity of human instinct. We made for the log-houses. We found there an ex-barkeeper of a certain well-known New-York cockney coffee-house, promoted into a frontiersman, but mindful still of flesh-pots. Poor fellow, he was still prouder that he had once tossed the foaming cocktail than that he could now fell the forest-monarch. Mixed drinks were dearer to him than pure air. When we entered the long, low log-cabin, he was boiling doughnuts, as was to be expected. In certain regions of America every cook who is not baking pork and beans is boiling doughnuts, just as in certain other gastronomic quarters *frijoles* alternate with *tortillas*.

Doughnuts, like peaches, must be eaten with the dew upon them. Caught as they come bobbing up in the bubbling pot, I

will not say that they are despicable. Woodsmen and canoemen, competent to pork and beans, can master also the alternative. The ex-barkeeper was generous with these brown and glistening langrage-shot, and aimed volley after volley at our mouths. Nor was he content with giving us our personal fill; into every crevice of our firkin he packed a pellet of future indigestion. Besides this result of foraging, we took the hint from a visible cow that milk might be had. Of this also the ex-barkeeper served us out galore, sighing that it was not the punch of his metropolitan days. We put our milk in our tea-pot, and thus, with all the ravages of the past made good, we launched again upon Chesuncook.

Chesuncook, according to its quality of lake, had no aid to give us with current. Paddling all a hot August mid-day over slothful water would be tame, day-laborer's work. But there was a breeze. Good! Come, kind Zephyr, fill our red blanket-sail! Cancut's blanket in the bow became a substitute for Cancut's paddle in the stern. We swept along before the wind, unsteadily, over Lake Chesuncook, at sea in a bowl,—"rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard," in our keelless craft. Zephyr only followed us, mild as he was strong, and strong as he was mild. Had he been puffy, it would have been all over with us. But the breeze only sang about our way, and shook the water out of sunny calm. Katahdin to the North, a fair blue pyramid, lifted higher and stooped forward more imminent, yet still so many leagues away that his features were undefined, and the gray of his scalp undistinguishable from the green of his beard of forest. Every mile, however, as we

slid drowsily over the hot lake, proved more and more that we were not befooled,—Iglesias by memory, and I by anticipation. Katahdin lost nothing by approach, as some of the grandees do: as it grew bigger, it grew better.

Twenty miles, or so, of Chesuncook, of sun-cooked Chesuncook, we traversed by the aid of our blanket-sail, pleasantly wafted by the unboisterous breeze. Undrowned, unducked, as safe from the perils of the broad lake as we had come out of the defiles of the rapids, we landed at the carry below the dam at the lake's outlet.

The skin of many a slaughtered varmint was nailed on its shingle, and the landing-place was carpeted with the fur. Doughnuts, ex-barkeepers, and civilization at one end of the lake, and here were muskrat-skins, trappers, and the primeval. Two hunters of moose, in default of their fern-horned, blubber-lipped game, had condescended to muskrat, and were making the lower end of Chesuncook fragrant with muskiness.

It is surprising how hospitable and comrade a creature is man. The trappers of muskrats were charmingly brotherly. They guided us across the carry; they would not hear of our being porters. "Pluck the superabundant huckleberry," said they, "while we, suspending your firkin and your traps upon the setting-pole, tote them, as the spies of Joshua toted the grape-clusters of the Promised Land."

Cancut, for his share, carried the canoe. He wore it upon his head and shoulders. Tough work he found it, toiling through the

underwood, and poking his way like an elongated and mobile mushroom through the thick shrubbery. Ever and anon, as Iglesias and I paused, we would be aware of the canoe thrusting itself above our heads in the covert, and a voice would come from an unseen head under its shell,—"It's soul-breaking, carrying is!"

The portage was short. We emerged from the birchen grove upon the river, below a brilliant cascading rapid. The water came flashing gloriously forward, a far other element than the tame, flat stuff we had drifted slowly over all the dullish hours. Water on the go is nobler than water on the stand; recklessness may be as fatal as stagnation, but it is more heroic.

Presently, over the edge, where the foam and spray were springing up into sunshine, our canoe suddenly appeared, and had hardly appeared, when, as if by one leap, it had passed the rapid, and was gliding in the stiller current at our feet. One of the muskraters had relieved Cancut of his head-piece, and shot the lower rush of water. We again embarked, and, guided by the trappers in their own canoe, paddled out upon Lake Pepogenus.

LOUIS LEBEAU'S CONVERSION

Yesterday, while I moved with the languid crowd on the Riva,
Musing with idle eyes on the wide lagoons and the islands,
And on the dim-seen seaward glimmering sails in the
distance,

Where the azure haze, like a vision of Indian-Summer,
Haunted the dreamy sky of the soft Venetian December,—
While I moved unwilling in the mellow warmth of the
weather,

Breathing air that was full of Old-World sadness and beauty,
Into my thought came this story of free, wild life in Ohio,
When the land was new, and yet by the Beautiful River
Dwelt the pioneers and Indian hunters and boatmen.

Pealed from the campanile, responding from island to island,
Bells of that ancient faith whose incense and solemn
devotions

Rise from a hundred shrines in the broken heart of the city;
But in my reverie heard I only the passionate voices
Of the people that sang in the virgin heart of the forest.
Autumn was in the land, and the trees were golden and
crimson,

And from the luminous boughs of the over-elms and the
maples

Tender and beautiful fell the light in the worshippers' faces,

Softer than lights that stream through the saints on the
windows of
churches,

While the balsamy breath of the hemlocks and pines by the
river

Stole on the winds through the woodland aisles like the breath
of a
censer.

Loud the people sang old camp-meeting anthems that quaver
Quaintly yet from lips forgetful of lips that have kissed them:
Loud they sang the songs of the Sacrifice and Atonement,
And of the end of the world, and the infinite terrors of
Judgment;

Songs of ineffable sorrow, and wailing compassionate
warning

For the generations that hardened their hearts to their
Saviour;

Songs of exultant rapture for them that confessed Him and
followed,

Bearing His burden and yoke, enduring and entering with
Him

Into the rest of His saints, and the endless reward of the
blessed.

Loud the people sang: but through the sound of their singing
Broke inarticulate cries and moans and sobs from the
mourners,

As the glory of God, that smote the apostle of Tarsus,
Smote them and strewed them to earth like leaves in the
breath of the

whirlwind.

Hushed at last was the sound of the lamentation and singing;
But from the distant hill the throbbing drum of the pheasant
Shook with its heavy pulses the depths of the listening silence,
When from his place arose a white-haired exhorter and
faltered:

"Brethren and sisters in Jesus! the Lord hath heard our
petitions,

And the hearts of His servants are awed and melted within
them,—

Even the hearts of the wicked are touched by His infinite
mercy.

All my days in this vale of tears the Lord hath been with me,
He hath been good to me, He hath granted me trials and
patience;

But this hour hath crowned my knowledge of Him and His
goodness.

Truly, but that it is well this day for me to be with you,

Now might I say to the Lord,—'I know Thee, my God, in all
fulness;

Now let Thy servant depart in peace to the rest Thou hast
promised!'"

Faltered and ceased. And now the wild and jubilant music
Of the singing burst from the solemn profound of the silence,
Surged in triumph and fell, and ebbed again into silence.

Then from the group of the preachers arose the greatest

among them,—

He whose days were given in youth to the praise of the Saviour,—

He whose lips seemed touched like the prophet's of old from the altar,

So that his words were flame, and burned to the hearts of his hearers,

Quickening the dead among them, reviving the cold and the doubting.

There he charged them pray, and rest not from prayer while a sinner

In the sound of their voices denied the Friend of the sinner:
"Pray till the night shall fall,—till the stars are faint in the morning,—

Yea, till the sun himself be faint in that glory and brightness,
In that light which shall dawn in mercy for penitent sinners."

Kneeling, he led them in prayer, and the quick and sobbing responses

Spoke how their souls were moved with the might and the grace of the

Spirit.

Then while the converts recounted how God had chastened and saved

them,—

Children whose golden locks yet shone with the lingering effulgence

Of the touches of Him who blessed little children forever,—

Old men whose yearning eyes were dimmed with the far-streaming

brightness

Seen through the opening gates in the heart of the heavenly city,—

Stealthily through the harking woods the lengthening shadows

Chased the wild things to their nests, and the twilight died into

darkness.

Now the four great pyres that were placed there to light the encampment,

High on platforms raised above the people, were kindled.

Flaming aloof, as if from the pillar by night in the Desert,

Fell their crimson light on the lifted orbs of the preachers,

On the withered brows of the old men, and Israel's mothers,

On the bloom of youth, and the earnest devotion of manhood,

On the anguish and hope in the tearful eyes of the mourners.

Flaming aloof, it stirred the sleep of the luminous maples

With warm summer-dreams, and faint, luxurious languor.

Near the four great pyres the people closed in a circle,

In their midst the mourners, and, praying with them, the exhorters,

And on the skirts of the circle the unrepentant and scorners,

—

Ever fewer and sadder, and drawn to the place of the mourners,

One after one, by the prayers and tears of the brethren and sisters,

And by the Spirit of God, that was mightily striving within

them,

Till at the last alone stood Louis Lebeau, unconverted.

Louis Lebeau, the boatman, the trapper, the hunter, the fighter,

From the unlucky French of Gallipolis he descended,

Heir to Old-World want and New-World love of adventure.

Vague was the life he led, and vague and grotesque were the rumors

Wherethrough he loomed on the people, the hero of mythical hearsay,—

Quick of hand and of heart, *insouciant*, generous, Western,—

Taking the thought of the young in secret love and in envy.

Not less the elders shook their heads and held him for outcast,

Reprobate, roving, ungodly, infidel, worse than a Papist,

With his whispered fame of lawless exploits at St. Louis,

Wild affrays and loves with the half-breeds out on the Osage,

Brawls at New-Orleans, and all the towns on the rivers,

All the godless towns of the many-ruffianed rivers.

Only she that loved him the best of all, in her loving,

Knew him the best of all, and other than that of the rumors.

Daily she prayed for him, with conscious and tender effusion,

That the Lord would convert him. But when her father forbade him

Unto her thought, she denied him, and likewise held him for outcast,

Turned her eyes when they met, and would not speak, though her heart

broke.

Bitter and brief his logic that reasoned from wrong unto error:
"This is their praying and singing," he said, "that makes you
reject

me,—

You that were kind to me once. But I think my fathers'
religion,

With a light heart in the breast, and a friendly priest to absolve
one,

Better than all these conversions that only bewilder and vex
me,

And that have made man so hard and woman fickle and cruel.

Well, then, pray for my soul, since you would not have spoken
to save

me,—

Yes,—for I go from these saints to my brethren and sisters,
the
sinners."

Spake and went, while her faint lips fashioned unuttered
entreaties,—

Went, and came again in a year at the time of the meeting,
Haggard and wan of face, and wasted with passion and
sorrow.

Dead in his eyes was the careless smile of old, and its
phantom

Haunted his lips in a sneer of restless incredulous mocking.

Day by day he came to the outer skirts of the circle,

Dwelling on her, where she knelt by the white-haired
exhorter, her

father,
With his hollow looks, and never moved from his silence.

Now, where he stood alone, the last of impenitent sinners,
Weeping, old friends and comrades came to him out of the
circle,

And with their tears besought him to hear what the Lord had
done for
them.

Ever he shook them off, not roughly, nor smiled at their
transports.

Then the preachers spake and painted the terrors of
Judgment,

And of the bottomless pit, and the flames of hell everlasting.
Still and dark he stood, and neither listened nor heeded:

But when the fervent voice of the while-haired exhorter was
lifted,

Fell his brows in a scowl of fierce and scornful rejection.

"Lord, let this soul be saved!" cried the fervent voice of the
old man;

"For that the shepherd rejoiceth more truly for one that hath
wandered,

And hath been found again, than for all the others that strayed
not."

Out of the midst of the people, a woman old and decrepit,
Tremulous through the light, and tremulous into the shadow,
Wavered toward him with slow, uncertain paces of palsy,
Laid her quivering hand on his arm and brokenly prayed him:

"Louis Lebeau, I closed in death the eyes of your mother.
On my breast she died, in prayer for her fatherless children,
That they might know the Lord, and follow Him always, and
serve Him.

Oh, I conjure you, my son, by the name of your mother in
glory,

Scorn not the grace of the Lord!" As when a summer-noon's
tempest

Breaks in one swift gush of rain, then ceases and gathers
Darker and gloomier yet on the lowering front of the heavens,
So brake his mood in tears, as he soothed her, and stilled her
entreaties,

And so he turned again with his clouded looks to the people.

Vibrated then from the hush the accents of mournfullest pity,

His who was gifted in speech, and the glow of the fires
illumined

All his pallid aspect with sudden and marvellous splendor:
"Louis Lebeau," he spake, "I have known you and loved you
from
childhood;

Still, when the others blamed you, I took your part, for I knew
you.

Louis Lebeau, my brother, I thought to meet you in heaven,
Hand in hand with her who is gone to heaven before us,
Brothers through her dear love! I trusted to greet you and lead
you

Up from the brink of the River unto the gates of the City.

Lo! my years shall be few on the earth. Oh, my brother,
If I should die before you had known the mercy of Jesus,
Yea, I think it would sadden the hope of glory within me!"

Neither yet had the will of the sinner yielded an answer;
But from his lips there broke a cry of unspeakable anguish,
Wild and fierce and shrill, as if some demon within him
Rent his soul with the ultimate pangs of fiendish possession,
And with the outstretched arms of bewildered imploring
toward them,
Death-white unto the people he turned his face from the
darkness.

Out of the sedge by the creek a flight of clamorous killdees
Rose from their timorous sleep with piercing and iterant
challenge,
Wheeled in the starlight and fled away into distance and
silence.
White on the other hand lay the tents, and beyond them glided
the river,
Where the broadhorn¹ drifted slow at the will of the current,
And where the boatman listened, and knew not how, as he
listened,
Something touched through the years the old lost hopes of his
childhood,—
Only his sense was filled with low monotonous murmurs,
As of a faint-heard prayer, that was chorused with deeper
responses.

¹ The old-fashioned flat-boats were so called.

Not with the rest was lifted her voice in the fervent responses,
But in her soul she prayed to Him that heareth in secret,
Asking for light and for strength to learn His will and to do it:
"Oh, make me clear to know, if the hope that rises within me
Be not part of a love unmeet for me here, and forbidden!
So, if it be not that, make me strong for the evil entreaty
Of the days that shall bring me question of self and
reproaches,

When the unrighteous shall mock, and my brethren and
sisters shall
doubt me!

Make me worthy to know Thy will, my Saviour, and do it!"
In her pain she prayed, and at last, through her mute
adoration,

Rapt from all mortal presence, and in her rapture uplifted,
Glorified she rose, and stood in the midst of the people,
Looking on all with the still, unseeing eyes of devotion,
Vague, and tender, and sweet, as the eyes of the dead, when
we dream
them

Living and looking on us, but they cannot speak, and we
cannot:

Knowing only the peril that threatened his soul's
unrepentance,

Knowing only the fear and error and wrong that withheld him,
Thinking, "In doubt of me, his soul had perished forever!"
Touched with no feeble shame, but trusting her power to save
him,

Through the circle she passed, and straight to the side of her

lover,—

Took his hand in her own, and mutely implored him an instant,

Answering, giving, forgiving, confessing, beseeching him all things,—

Drew him then with her, and passed once more through the circle

Unto her place, and knelt with him there by the side of her father,

Trembling as women tremble who greatly venture and triumph,—

But in her innocent breast was the saint's sublime exultation.

So was Louis converted; and though the lips of the scorner
Spared not in after-years the subtle taunt and derision,
(What time, meeker grown, his heart held his hand from its answer,)

Not the less lofty and pure her love and her faith that had saved him,

Not the less now discerned was her inspiration from heaven
By the people, that rose, and embracing, and weeping together,

Poured forth their jubilant songs of victory and of thanksgiving,

Till from the embers leaped the dying flame to behold them,
And the hills of the river were filled with reverberant echoes,

—

Echoes that out of the years and the distance stole to me hither,

While I moved unwilling in the mellow warmth of the
weather,—
Echoes that mingled and fainted and fell with the fluttering
murmurs
In the hearts of the hushing bells, as from island to island
Swooned the sound on the wide lagoons into palpitant silence.

* * * * *

THE DEVELOPMENT AND OVERTHROW OF THE RUSSIAN SERF-SYSTEM

Close upon the end of the fifteenth century, the Muscovite ideas of Right were subjected to the strong mind of Ivan the Great, and compressed into a code.

Therein were embodied the best processes known to his land and time: for discovering crime, torture and trial by battle; for punishing crime, the knout and death.

But hidden in this tough mass was one law of greater import than all others. Thereby were all peasants forbidden to leave the lands they were then tilling, except during the eight days before and after Saint George's day. This provision sprang from Ivan's highest views of justice and broadest views of political economy; the nobles received it with plaudits, which have found echoes even in these days;² the peasants received it with no murmurs which History has found any trouble in drowning.

Just one hundred years later, there sat upon the Muscovite throne, as *nominal* Tzar, the weakling Feodor I.; but behind the throne stood, as *real* Tzar, hard, strong Boris Godounoff.

Looking forward to Feodor's death, Boris makes ready to mount the throne; and he sees—what all other "Mayors of the

² See Gerebtzoff, *Histoire de la Civilisation en Russie*.

Palace," climbing into the places of *fainéant* kings, have seen—that he must link to his fortunes the fortunes of some strong body in the nation; he breaks, however, from the general rule among usurpers,—bribing the Church,—and determines to bribe the nobility.

The greatest grief of the Muscovite nobles seemed to be that the peasants could escape from their oppression by the emigration allowed at Saint George's day.

Boris saw his opportunity: he cut off the privilege of Saint George's day; the peasant was fixed to the soil forever. No Russian law ever *directly* enslaved the peasantry,^{3]} but, through this decree of Boris, the lord who owned the soil came to own the peasants upon it, just as he owned its immovable boulders and ledges.

To this the peasants submitted, but over this wrong History has not been able to drown their sighs; their proverbs and ballads make Saint George's day representative of all ill-luck and disappointment.

A few years later, Boris made another bid for oligarchic favor. He issued a rigorous fugitive-serf law, and even wrenched liberty from certain free peasants who had entered service for wages before his edicts. This completed the work, and Russia, which never had the benefits of feudalism, had now fastened upon her feudalism's worst curse,—a serf-caste bound to the glebe.

The great waves of wrong which bore serfage into Russia seem

³ Haxthausen.

to have moved with a kind of tidal regularity, and the distance between their crests in those earlier times appears to have been just a hundred years,—for, again, at the end of the next century, surge over the nation the ideas of Peter the Great.

The great good things done by Peter the world knows by heart. The world knows well how he tore his way out of the fetichism of his time,—how, despite ignorance and unreason, he dragged his nation after him,—how he dowered the nation with things and thoughts which transformed it from a petty Asiatic horde to a great European power.

And the praise due to this work can never be diminished. Time shall but increase it; for the world has yet to learn most of the wonderful details of his activity. We were present a few years since, when one of those lesser triumphs of his genius was first unfolded.

It was in that room at the Hermitage—adjoining the Winter Palace—set apart for the relics of Peter. Our companions were two men noted as leaders in American industry,—one famed as an inventor, the other famed as a champion of inventors' rights.

Suddenly from the inventor,⁴ pulling over some old dust-covered machines in a corner, came loud cries of surprise. The cries were natural indeed. In that heap of rubbish he had found a lathe for turning irregular forms, and a screw-cutting engine once used by Peter himself: specimens of his unfinished work were still in them. They had lain there unheeded a hundred and

⁴ The late Samuel Colt.

fifty years; their principle had died with Peter and his workmen; and not many years since, they were reinvented in America, and gave their inventors fame and fortune. At the late Paris Universal Exposition crowds flocked about an American lathe for copying statuary; and that lathe was, in principle, identical with this old, forgotten machine of Peter's.

Yet, though Peter fought so well, and thought so well, he made some mistakes which hang to this day over his country as bitter curses. For in all his plan and work to advance the mass of men was one supreme lack,—lack of any account of the worth and right of the individual man.

Lesser examples of this are seen in his grim jest at Westminster Hall,—“What use of so many lawyers? I have but two lawyers in Russia, and one of those I mean to hang as soon as I return;”—or when, at Berlin, having been shown a new gibbet, he ordered one of his servants to be hanged in order to test it;—or, in his reviews and parade-fights, when he ordered his men to use ball, and to take the buttons off their bayonets.

Greater examples are seen in his Battle of Narva, when he threw away an army to learn his opponent's game,—in his building of St. Petersburg, where, in draining marshes, he sacrificed a hundred thousand men the first year.

But the greatest proof of this great lack was shown in his dealings with the serf-system.

Serfage was already recognized in Peter's time as an evil. Peter himself once stormed forth in protestations and invectives against

what he stigmatized as "selling men like beasts,—separating parents from children, husbands from wives,—which takes place nowhere else in the world, and which causes many tears to flow." He declared that a law should be made against it. Yet it was by his misguided hand that serfage was compacted into its final black mass of foulness.

For Peter saw other nations spinning and weaving, and he determined that Russia should at once spin and weave; he saw other nations forging iron, and he determined that Russia should at once forge iron. He never stopped to consider that what might cost little in other lands, as a natural growth, might cost far too much in Russia, as a forced growth.

In lack, then, of quick brain and sturdy spine and strong arm of paid workmen, he forced into his manufactories the flaccid muscle of serfs. These, thus lifted from the earth, lost even the little force in the State they before had; great bodies of serfs thus became slaves; worse than that, the idea of a serf developed toward the idea of a slave.⁵

And Peter, misguided, dealt one blow more. Cold-blooded officials were set at taking the census. These adopted easy classifications; free peasants, serfs, and slaves were often huddled into the lists under a single denomination. So serfage became still more difficult to be distinguished from slavery.⁶

As this base of hideous wrong was thus widened

⁵ Haxthausen, *Études sur la Situation Intérieure*, etc., *de la Russie*.

⁶ Gurowski,—also Wolowski in *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

and deepened, the nobles built higher and stronger their superstructure of arrogance and pretension. Not many years after Peter's death, they so over-awed the Empress Anne that she thrust into the codes of the Empire statutes which allowed the nobles to sell serfs apart from the soil. So did serfage bloom *fully* into slavery.

But in the latter half of the eighteenth century Russia gained a ruler from whom the world came to expect much.

To mount the throne, Catharine II. had murdered her husband; to keep the throne, she had murdered two claimants whose title was better than her own. She then became, with her agents in these horrors, a second Messalina.

To set herself right in the eyes of Europe, she paid eager court to that hierarchy of skepticism which in that age made or marred European reputations. She flattered the fierce Deists by owning fealty to "*Le Roi Voltaire*;" she flattered the mild Deists by calling in La Harpe as the tutor of her grandson; she flattered the Atheists by calling in Diderot as a tutor for herself.

Her murders and orgies were soon forgotten in the new hopes for Russian regeneration. Her dealings with Russia strengthened these hopes. The official style required that all persons presenting petitions should subscribe themselves "Your Majesty's humble serf." This formula she abolished, and boasted that she had cast out the word serf from the Russian language. Poets and philosophers echoed this boast over Europe, —and the serfs waited.

The great Empress spurred hope by another movement. She proposed to an academy the question of serf-emancipation as a subject for their prize-essay. The essay was written and crowned. It was filled with beautiful things about liberty, practical things about moderation, flattering things about "the Great Catharine,"—and the serfs waited.

Again she aroused hope. It was given out that her most intense delight came from the sight of happy serfs and prosperous villages. Accordingly, in her journey to the Crimea, Potemkin squandered millions on millions in rearing pasteboard villages,—in dragging forth thousands of wretched peasants to fill them,—in costuming them to look thrifty,—in training them to look happy. Catharine was rejoiced,—Europe sang paeans,—the serfs waited.⁷

She seemed to go farther: she issued a decree prohibiting the enslavement of serfs. But, unfortunately, the palace-intrigues, and the correspondence with the philosophers, and the destruction of Polish nationality left her no time to see the edict carried out. But Europe applauded,—and the serfs waited.

Two years after this came a deed which put an end to all this uncertainty. An edict was prepared, ordering the peasants of Little Russia to remain forever on the estates where the day of publication should find them. This was vile; but what followed was diabolic. Court-pets were let into the secret. These, by good

⁷ For further growth of the sentimental fashion thus set, see *Memoirs of the Princess Daschkaw*, Vol. I. p. 383.

promises, enticed hosts of peasants to their estates. The edict was now sprung;—in an hour the courtiers were made rich, the peasants were made serfs, and Catharine II. was made infamous forever.

So, about a century after Peter, there rolled over Russia a wave of wrong which not only drowned honor in the nobility, but drowned hope in the people.

As Russia entered the nineteenth century, the hearts of earnest men must have sunk within them. For Paul I., Catharine's son and successor, was infinitely more despotic than Catharine, and infinitely less restrained by public opinion. He had been born with savage instincts, and educated into ferocity. Tyranny was written on his features, in his childhood. If he remained in Russia, his mother sneered and showed hatred to him; if he journeyed in Western Europe, crowds gathered about his coach to jeer at his ugliness. Most of those who have seen Gillray's caricature of him, issued in the height of English spite at Paul's homage to Bonaparte, have thought it hideously overdrawn; but those who have seen the portrait of Paul in the Cadet-Corps at St. Petersburg know well that Gillray did not exaggerate Paul's ugliness, for he could not.

And Paul's face was but a mirror of his character. Tyranny was wrought into his every fibre. He insisted on an Oriental homage. As his carriage whirled by, it was held the duty of all others in carriages to stop, descend into the mud, and bow themselves. Himself threw his despotism into this formula,—“Know, Sir

Ambassador, that in Russia there is no one noble or powerful except the man to whom I speak, and while I speak."

And yet, within that hideous mass glowed some sparks of reverence for right. When the nobles tried to get Paul's assent to more open arrangements for selling serfs apart from the soil, he utterly refused; and when they overtasked their human chattels, Paul made a law that no serf should be required to give more than three days in the week to the tillage of his master's domain.

But, within five years after his accession, Paul had developed into such a ravenous wild-beast that it became necessary to murder him. This duty done, there came a change in the spirit of Russian sovereignty as from March to May; but, sadly for humanity, there came, at the same time, a change in the spirit of European politics as from May to March.

For, although the new Tzar, Alexander I., was mild and liberal, the storm of French ideas and armies had generally destroyed in monarchs' minds any poor germs of philanthropy which had ever found lodgment there. Still Alexander breasted this storm,—found time to plan for his serfs, and in 1803 put his hand to the work of helping them toward freedom. His first edict was for the creation of the class of "free laborers." By this, masters and serfs were encouraged to enter into an arrangement which was to put the serf into immediate possession of himself, of a homestead, and of a few acres,—giving him time to indemnify his master by a series of payments. Alexander threw his heart into this scheme; in his kindness he supposed that the pretended

willingness of the nobles meant something; but the serf-owning caste, without openly opposing, twisted up bad consequences with good, braided impossibilities into possibilities: the whole plan became a tangle, and was thrown aside.

The Tzar now sought to foster other good efforts, especially those made by some earnest nobles to free their serfs by will. But this plan, also, the serf-owning caste entangled and thwarted.

At last, the storm of war set in with such fury that all internal reforms must be lost sight of. Russia had to make ready for those campaigns in which Napoleon gained every battle. Then came that peaceful meeting on the raft at Tilsit,—worse for Russia than any warlike meeting; for thereby Napoleon seduced Alexander, for years, from plans of bettering his Empire into dreams of extending it.

Coming out of these dreams, Alexander had to deal with such realities as the burning of Moscow, the Battle of Leipsic, and the occupation of France; yet, in the midst of those fearful times,—when the grapple of the Emperors was at the fiercest,—in the very year of the burning of Moscow,—Alexander rose in calm statesmanship, and admitted Bessarabia into the Empire under a proviso which excluded serfage forever.

Hardly was the great European tragedy ended, when Alexander again turned sorrowfully toward the wronged millions of his Empire. He found that progress in civilization had but made the condition of the serfs worse. The newly ennobled *parvenus* were worse than the old *boyars*; they hugged the serf-

system more lovingly and the serfs more hatefully.⁸

The sight of these wrongs roused him. He seized a cross, and swore upon it that the serf-system should be abolished.

Straightway a great and good plan was prepared. Its main features were, a period of transition from serfage to personal liberty, extending through twelve or fourteen years,—the arrival of the serf at personal freedom, with ownership of his cabin and the bit of land attached to it,—the gradual reimbursement of masters by serfs,—and after this advance to *personal* liberty, an advance by easy steps to a sort of *political* liberty.

Favorable as was this plan to the serf-owners, they attacked it in various ways; but they could not kill it utterly. Esthonia, Livonia, and Courland became free.

Having failed to arrest the growth of freedom, the serf-holding caste made every effort to blast the good fruits of freedom. In Courland they were thwarted; in Esthonia and Livonia they succeeded during many years; but the eternal laws were too strong for them, and the fruitage of liberty has grown richer and better.

After these good efforts, Alexander stopped, discouraged. A few patriotic nobles stood apart from their caste, and strengthened his hands, as Lafayette and Liancourt strengthened Louis XVI.; they even drew up a plan of voluntary emancipation, formed an association for the purpose, gained many signatures; but the great weight of that besotted serf-owning caste was

⁸ For proofs of this see Haxthausen.

thrown against them, and all came to nought. Alexander was at last walled in from the great object of his ambition. Pretended theologians built, between him and emancipation, walls of Scriptural interpretation,⁹—pretended philosophers built walls of false political economy,—pretended statesmen built walls of sham common-sense.

If the Tzar could but have mustered courage to *cut* the knot! Alas for Russia and for him, he wasted himself in efforts to *untie* it. His heart sickened at it; he welcomed death, which alone could remove him from it.

Alexander's successor, Nicholas I., had been known before his accession as a mere martinet, a good colonel for parade-days, wonderful in detecting soiled uniforms, terrible in administering petty punishments. It seems like the story of stupid Brutus over again. Altered circumstances made a new man of him; and few things are more strange than the change wrought in his whole bearing and look by that week of agony and energy in climbing his brother's throne. The portraits of Nicholas the Grand Duke and Nicholas the Autocrat seem portraits of two different persons. The first face is averted, suspicious, harsh, with little meaning and less grandeur; the second is direct, commanding, not unkind, every feature telling of will to crush opposition, every line marking sense of Russian supremacy.

The great article of Nicholas's creed was a complete, downright faith in Despotism, and in himself as Despotism's

⁹ Gurowski says that they used brilliantly "Cursed beCanaan," etc.

apostle.

Hence he hated, above all things, a limited monarchy. He told De Custine that a pure monarchy or pure republic he could understand; but that anything between these he could *not* understand. Of his former rule of Poland, as constitutional monarch, he spoke with loathing.

Of this hate which Nicholas felt for liberal forms of government there yet remain monuments in the great museum of the Kremlin.

That museum holds an immense number of interesting things, and masses of jewels and plate which make all other European collections mean. The visitor wanders among clumps of diamonds, and sacks of pearls, and a nauseating wealth of rubies and sapphires and emeralds. There rise row after row of jewelled scymitars, and vases and salvers of gold, and old saddles studded with diamonds, and with stirrups of gold,—presents of frightened Asiatic satraps or fawning European allies.

There, too, are the crowns of Muscovy, of Russia, of Kazan, of Astrachan, of Siberia, of the Crimea, and, pity to say it, of Poland. And next this is an index of despotic hate,—for the Polish sceptre is broken and flung aside.

Near this stands the full-length portrait of the first Alexander; and at his feet are grouped captured flags of Hungary and Poland,—some with blood-marks still upon them.

But below all,—far beneath the feet of the Emperor,—in dust and ignominy and on the floor, is flung the very Constitution of

Poland—parchment for parchment, ink for ink, good promise for good promise—which Alexander gave with so many smiles, and which Nicholas took away with so much bloodshed.

And not far from this monument of the deathless hate Nicholas bore that liberty he had stung to death stands a monument of his admiration for straightforward tyranny, even in the most dreaded enemy his house ever knew. Standing there is a statue in the purest of marble,—the only statue in those vast halls. It has the place of honor. It looks proudly over all that glory, and keeps ward over all that treasure; and that statue, in full majesty of imperial robes and bees and diadem and face, is of the first Napoleon. Admiration of his tyrannic will has at last made him peaceful sovereign of the Kremlin.

This spirit of absolutism took its most offensive form in Nicholas's attitude toward Europe. He was the very incarnation of reaction against revolution, and he became the demigod of that horde of petty despots who infest Central Europe.

Whenever, then, any tyrant's lie was to be baptized, he stood its godfather; whenever any God's truth was to be crucified, he led on those who passed by reviling and wagging their heads. Whenever these oppressors revived some old feudal wrong, Nicholas backed them in the name of Religion; whenever their nations struggled to preserve some great right, Nicholas crushed them in the name of Law and Order. With these pauper princes his children intermarried, and he fed them with his crumbs, and clothed them with scraps of his purple. The visitor can see to-

day, in every one of their dwarf palaces, some of his malachite vases, or porcelain bowls, or porphyry columns.

But the *people* of Western Europe distrusted him as much as their rulers worshipped; and some of these same presents to their rulers have become trifle-monuments of no mean value in showing that popular idea of Russian policy. Foremost among these stand those two bronze masses of statuary in front of the Royal Palace at Berlin,—representing fiery horses restrained by strong men. Pompous inscriptions proclaim these presents from Nicholas; but the people, knowing the man and his measures, have fastened forever upon one of these curbed steeds the name of "Progress Checked," and on the other, "Retrogression Encouraged."

And the people were right. Whether sending presents to gladden his Prussian pupil, or sending armies to crush Hungary, or sending sneering messages to plague Louis Philippe, he remained proud in his apostolate of Absolutism.

This pride Nicholas never relaxed. A few days before his self-will brought him to his death-bed, we saw him ride through the St. Petersburg streets with no pomp and no attendants, yet in as great pride as ever Despotism gave a man. At his approach, nobles uncovered and looked docile, soldiers faced about and became statues, long-bearded peasants bowed to the ground with the air of men on whose vision a miracle flashes. For there was one who could make or mar all fortunes,—the absolute owner of street and houses and passers-by,—one who owned the patent

and dispensed the right to tread that soil, to breathe that air, to be glorified in that sunlight and amid those snow-crystals. And he looked it all. Though at that moment his army was entrapped by military stratagem, and he himself was entrapped by diplomatic stratagem, that face and form were proud as ever and confident as ever.

There was, in this attitude toward Europe,—in this standing forth as the representative man of Absolutism, and breasting the nineteenth century,—something of greatness; but in his attitude toward Russia this greatness was wretchedly diminished.

For, as Alexander I. was a good man enticed out of goodness by the baits of Napoleon, Nicholas was a great man scared out of greatness by the ever-recurring phantom of the French Revolution.

In those first days of his reign, when he enforced loyalty with grape-shot and halter, Nicholas dared much and stood firm; but his character soon showed another side.

Fearless as he was before bright bayonets, he was an utter coward before bright ideas. He laughed at the flash of cannon, but he trembled at the flash of a new living thought. Whenever, then, he attempted a great thing for his nation, he was sure to be scared back from its completion by fear of revolution. And so, to-day, he who looks through Russia for Nicholas's works finds a number of great things he has done, but each is single, insulated,—not preceded logically, not followed effectively.

Take, as an example of this, his railway-building.

His own pride and Russian interest demanded railways. He scanned the world with that keen eye of his,—saw that American energy was the best supplement to Russian capital; his will darted quickly, struck afar, and Americans came to build his road from St. Petersburg to Moscow.

Nothing can be more complete. It is an "air-line" road, and so perfect that the traveller finds few places where the rails do not meet on either side of him in the horizon. The track is double,—the rails very heavy and admirably ballasted,—station-houses and engine-houses are splendid in build, perfect in arrangement, and surrounded by neat gardens. The whole work is worthy of the Pyramid-builders. The traveller is whirled by culverts, abutments, and walls of dressed granite,—through cuttings where the earth on either side is carefully paved or turfed to the summit. Ranges of Greek columns are reared as crossings in the midst of broad marshes,—lions' heads in bronzed iron stare out upon vast wastes where never rose even the smoke from a serf's kennel.

All this seems good; and a ride of four hundred miles through such glories rarely fails to set the traveller at chanting the praises of the Emperor who conceived them. But when the traveller notes that complete isolation of the work from all conditions necessary to its success, his praises grow fainter. He sees that Nicholas held back from continuing the road to Odessa, though half the money spent in making the road an Imperial plaything would have built a good, solid extension to that most important

seaport; he sees that Nicholas dared not untie police-regulations, and that commerce is wretchedly meagre. Contrary to what would obtain under a free system, this great public work found the country wretched and left it wretched. The traveller flies by no ranges of trim palings and tidy cottages; he sees the same dingy groups of huts here as elsewhere,—the same cultivation looking for no morrow,—the same tokens that the laborer is *not* thought worthy of his hire.

This same tendency to great single works, this same fear of great connected systems, this same timid isolation of great creations from principles essential to their growth is seen, too, in Nicholas's church-building.

Foremost of all the edifices on which Nicholas lavished the wealth of the Empire stands the Isak Church in St. Petersburg. It is one of the largest, and certainly the richest, cathedral in Christendom. All is polished pink granite and marble and bronze. On all sides are double rows of Titanic columns,—each a single block of polished granite with bronze capital. Colossal masses of bronze statuary are grouped over each front; high above the roof and surrounding the great drums of the domes are lines of giant columns in granite bearing giant statues in bronze; and crowning all rises the vast central dome, flanked by its four smaller domes, all heavily plated with gold.

The church within is one gorgeous mass of precious marbles and mosaics and silver and gold and jewels. On the tabernacle of the altar, in gold and malachite, on the screen of the altar, with

its pilasters of *lapis-lazuli* and its range of malachite columns fifty feet high, were lavished millions on millions. Bulging from the ceilings are massy bosses of Siberian porphyry and jasper. To decorate the walls with unfading pictures, Nicholas founded an establishment for mosaic work, where sixty pictures were commanded, each demanding, after all artistic labor, the mechanical labor of two men for four years.

Yet this vast work is not so striking a monument of Nicholas's luxury as of his timidity.

For this cathedral and some others almost as grand were, in part, at least, results of the deep wish of Nicholas to wean his people from their semi-idolatrous love for dark, confined, filthy sanctuaries, like those of Moscow; but here, again, is a timid purpose and half-result; Nicholas dared set no adequate enginery working at the popular religious training or moral training. There had been such an organization,—the Russian Bible Society,—favored by the first Alexander; but Nicholas swept it away at one pen-stroke. Evidently, he feared lest Scriptural denunciations of certain sins in ancient politics might be popularly interpreted against certain sins in modern politics.

It was this same vague fear at revolutionary remembrance which thwarted Nicholas in all his battling against official corruption.

The corruption-system in Russia is old, organized, and respectable. Stories told of Russian bribes and thefts exceed belief only until one has been on the ground.

Nicholas began well. He made an Imperial progress to Odessa, —was welcomed in the morning by the Governor in full pomp and robes and flow of smooth words; and at noon the same Governor was working in the streets, with ball and chain, as a convict.

But against such a chronic moral evil no government is so weak as your so-called "*strong*" government. Nicholas set out one day for the Cronstadt arsenals, to look into the accounts there; but before he reached them, stores, storehouses, and account-books were in ashes.

So, at last, Nicholas folded his arms and wrestled no more. For, apart from the trouble, there came ever in his dealings with thieves that old timid thought of his, that, if he examined too closely their thief-tenure, they might examine too closely his despot-tenure.

We have shown this vague fear in Nicholas's mind, thus at length and in different workings, because thereby alone can be grasped the master-key to his dealings with the serf-system.

Toward his toiling millions Nicholas always showed sympathy. Let news of a single wrong to a serf get through the hedges about the Russian majesty, and woe to the guilty master! Many of these wrongs came to Nicholas's notice; and he came to hate the system, and tried to undermine it.

Opposition met him, of course,—not so much the ponderous laziness of Peter's time as an opposition polite and elastic, which never ranted and never stood up,—for then Nicholas would have

throttled it and stamped upon it. But it did its best to entangle his reason and thwart his action.

He was told that the serfs were well fed, well housed, well clothed, well provided with religion,—were contented, and had no wish to leave their owners.

Now Nicholas was not strong at spinning sham reason nor subtle at weaving false conscience; but, to his mind, the very fact that the system had so degraded a man that he could laugh and dance and sing, while other men took his wages and wife and homestead, was the crowning argument *against* the system.

Then the political economists beset him, proving that without forced labor Russia must sink into sloth and poverty.¹⁰

Yet all this could not shut out from Nicholas's sight the great black *fact* in the case. He saw, and winced as he saw, that, while other European nations, even under despots, were comparatively active and energetic, his own people were sluggish and stagnant,—that, although great thoughts and great acts were towering in the West, there were in Russia, after all his galvanizing, no great authors, or scholars, or builders, or inventors, but only those two main products of Russian civilization,—dissolute lords and abject serfs.

But what to do? Nicholas tried to help his Empire by setting right any individual wrongs whose reports broke their way to him.

Nearly twenty years went by in this timid dropping of grains

¹⁰ For choice specimens of these reasonings, see Von Erman, *Archiv für Wissenschaftliche Kunde von Russland*.

of salt into a putrid sea.

But at last, in 1842, Nicholas issued his ukase creating the class of "contracting peasants." Masters and serfs were empowered to enter into contracts,—the serf receiving freedom, the master receiving payment in instalments.

It was a moderate innovation, *very* moderate,—nothing more than the first failure of the first Alexander. Yet, even here, that old timidity of Nicholas nearly spoiled what little good was hidden in the ukase. Notice after notice was given to the serf-owners that they were not to be molested, that no emancipation was contemplated, and that the ukase "contained nothing new."

The result was as feeble as the policy. A few serfs were emancipated, and Nicholas halted. The revolutions of 1848 increased his fear of innovation; and, finally, the war in the Crimea took from him the power of innovation.

The great man died. We saw his cold, dead face, in the midst of crowns and crosses,—very pale then, very powerless then. One might stare at him then, as at a serf's corpse; for he who had scared Europe during thirty years lay before us that day as a poor lump of chilled brain and withered muscle.

And we stood by, when, amid chanting, and flare of torches, and roll of cannon, his sons wrapped him in his shroud of gold-thread, and lowered him into the tomb of his fathers.

But there was shown in those days far greater tribute than the prayers of bishops or the reverence of ambassadors. Massed about the Winter Palace, and the Fortress of Peter and Paul,

stood thousands on thousands who, in far-distant serf-huts, had put on their best, had toiled wearily to the capital, to give their last mute thanks to one who for years had stood between their welfare and their owners' greed. Sad that he had not done more. Yet they knew that he had *wished* their freedom,—that he had loathed their wrongs: for *that* came up the tribute of millions.

The new Emperor, Alexander II., had never been hoped for as one who could light the nation from his brain: the only hope was that he might warm the nation, somewhat, from his heart. He was said to be of a weak, silken fibre. The strength of the family was said to be concentrated in his younger brother Constantine.

But soon came a day when the young Tzar revealed to Europe not merely kindness, but strength.

While his father's corpse was yet lying within his palace, he received the diplomatic body. As the Emperor entered the audience-room, he seemed feeble indeed for such a crisis. That fearful legacy of war seemed to weigh upon his heart; marks of plenteous tears were upon his face; Nesselrode, though old and bent and shrunk in stature, seemed stronger than his young master.

But, as he began his speech, it was seen that a strong man had mounted the throne.

With earnestness he declared that he sorrowed over the existing war,—but that, if the Holy Alliance had been broken, it was not through the fault of Russia. With bitterness he turned toward the Austrian Minister, Esterhazy, and hinted at Russian

services in 1848 and Austrian ingratitude. Calmly, then, not as one who spoke a part, but as one who announced a determination, he declared,—“I am anxious for peace; but if the terms at the approaching congress are incompatible with the honor of my nation, I will put myself at the head of my faithful Russia and die sooner than yield.”¹¹

Strong as Alexander showed himself by these words, he showed himself stronger by acts. A policy properly mingling firmness and conciliation brought peace to Europe, and showed him equal to his father; a policy mingling love of liberty with love of order brought the dawn of prosperity to Russia, and showed him the superior of his father.

The reforms now begun were not stinted, as of old, but free and hearty. In rapid succession were swept away restrictions on telegraphic communication,—on printing,—on the use of the Imperial Library,—on strangers entering the country,—on Russians leaving the country. A policy in public works was adopted which made Nicholas's greatest efforts seem petty: a vast net-work of railways was commenced. A policy in commercial dealings with Western Europe was adopted, in which Alexander, though not apparently so imposing as Nicholas, was really far greater: he dared advance toward freedom of trade.

But soon rose again that great problem of old,—that problem ever rising to meet a new Autocrat, and, at each appearance, more dire than before,—the serf-question.

¹¹ This sketch is given from notes taken at the audience.

The serfs in private hands now numbered more than twenty millions; above them stood more than a hundred thousand owners.

The princely strength of the largest owners was best represented by a few men possessing over a hundred thousand serfs each, and, above all, by Count Scheremetieff, who boasted three hundred thousand. The luxury of the large owners was best represented by about four thousand men possessing more than a thousand serfs each. The pinching propensities of the small owners were best represented by nearly fifty thousand men possessing less than twenty serfs each.¹²

The serfs might be divided into two great classes. The first comprised those working under the old, or *corvée*, system,—giving, generally, three days in the week to the tillage of the owner's domain; the second comprised those working under the new, or *obrok*, system,—receiving a payment fixed by the owner and assessed by the community to which the serfs belonged.

The character of the serfs has been moulded by the serf-system.

They have a simple shrewdness, which, under a better system, had made them enterprising; but this quality has degenerated into cunning and cheatery,—the weapons which the hopelessly oppressed always use.

¹² Gerebtzoff, *Histoire de la Civilisation en Russie*,—Wolowski, in *Revue des Deux Mondes*,—and Tegoborski, *Commentaries on the Productive Forces of Russia*, Vol. I. p. 221.

They have a reverence for things sacred, which, under a better system, might have given the nation a strengthening religion; but they now stand among the most religious peoples on earth, and among the least moral. To the besmudged picture of Our Lady of Kazan they are ever ready to burn wax and oil; to Truth and Justice they constantly omit the tribute of mere common honesty. They keep the Church fasts like saints; they keep the Church feasts like satyrs.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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