

# ABBOTT JOHN CABOT

THE EMPIRE OF RUSSIA:  
FROM THE REMOTEST  
PERIODS TO THE PRESENT  
TIME

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# **John S. C. Abbott**

## **The Empire of Russia: From the Remotest Periods to the Present Time**

### **PREFACE**

The world is now too busy to read voluminous history. The interminable details of battles, and the petty intrigues of courtiers and mistresses, have lost their interest. In this volume it has been our object to trace perspicuously the path which Russia has trod from earliest infancy to the present hour. The career of this empire has been so wild and wonderful that the historian can have no occasion to call in the aid of fancy for the embellishment of his narrative.

The author has not deemed it necessary to incumber his pages with notes to substantiate his statements. The renowned Russian historian, Karamsin, who wrote under the patronage of Alexander I., gives ample authentication to all the facts which are stated up to the reign of that emperor. His voluminous history, in classic beauty, is unsurpassed by any of the annals of Greece or Rome. It has been admirably translated into French by Messrs.

St. Thomas and Jauffret in eleven imperial quarto volumes. In the critical citations of this author, the reader, curious in such researches, will find every fact in the early history of Russia, here stated, confirmed.

There are but few valuable works upon Russia in the English language. Nearly all, which can be relied upon as authorities, are written either in French or German. The writer would refer those who seek a more minute acquaintance with this empire, now rising so rapidly in importance, first of all to Karamsin. The "*Histoire Philosophique et Politique de Russie Depuis les Temps les Plus Reculés Jusqu'au Nos Jours*, par J. Esneaux," Paris, five volumes, is a valuable work. The "*Histoire de Russie* par Pierre Charles Levesque," eight volumes, is discriminating and reliable. The various volumes of William Tooke upon Russian history in general, and upon the reign of Catharine, contain much information.

It is only since the reign of Peter the Great that Russia has begun to attract much attention among the enlightened nations of Europe. Voltaire's life of this most renowned of the Russian sovereigns, at its first publication, attracted much notice. Since then, many books have been written upon fragments of Russian history and individual reigns. From most of these the author has selected such events as have appeared to him most instructive and best adapted to give the reader a clear conception of the present condition and future prospects of this gigantic empire. The path she has trod, since her first emergence into civilization

from the chaos of barbarism, can be very distinctly traced, and one can easily count the concentric accretions of her growth. This narrative reveals the mistakes which have overwhelmed her with woe, and the wisdom which has, at times, secured for Russia peace and prosperity.

In writing these histories of the monarchies of Continental Europe, the author has no wish to conceal his abhorrence of aristocratic usurpation. Believing in the universal brotherhood of man, his sympathies are most cordially with the oppressed masses. If the people are weak and debased, the claim is only the more urgent upon the powerful and the wise to act the part of elder brothers, holding out the helping hand to those who have fallen. The author feels grateful for the reception which the first number of this series, the Empire of Austria, has received from the American public. He hopes that this volume will not prove less interesting or instructive. In the course of a few months it will be followed by the History of Italy.

# CHAPTER I

## PARENTAGE AND BIRTH OF RUSSIA

Primeval Russia.—Explorations of the Greeks.—Scythian Invasion.—Character of the Scythians.—Sarmatia.—Assaults upon the Roman Empire.—Irruption of the Alains.—Conquests of Trajan.—The Gothic Invasion.—The Huns.—Their Character and Aspect.—The Devastations of Attila.—The Avars.—Results of Comminglings of these Tribes.—Normans.—Birth of the Russian Empire.—The Three Sovereigns Rurik, Sineous and Truvor.—Adventures of Ascolod and Dir.—Introduction of Christianity.—Usurpation of Oleg.—His Conquests.—Expedition Against Constantinople.

### **From 600 B.C. to A.D. 910**

Those vast realms of northern Europe, now called Russia, have been inhabited for a period beyond the records of history, by wandering tribes of savages. These barbaric hordes have left no monuments of their existence. The annals of Greece and of Rome simply inform us that they were there. Generations came and departed, passing through life's tragic drama, and no one has

told their story.

About five hundred years before the birth of our Saviour, the Greeks, sailing up the Bosphorus and braving the storms of the Black Sea, began to plant their colonies along its shores. Instructed by these colonists, Herodotus, who wrote about four hundred and forty years before Christ, gives some information respecting the then condition of interior Russia. The first great irruption into the wastes of Russia, of which history gives us any record, was about one hundred years before our Saviour. An immense multitude of conglomerated tribes, taking the general name of Scythians, with their wives and their children, their flocks and their herds, and their warriors, fiercer than wolves, crossed the Volga, and took possession of the whole country between the Don and the Danube. These barbarians did not molest the Greek colonies, but, on the contrary, were glad to learn of them many of the rudiments of civilization. Some of these tribes retained their ancestral habits of wandering herdsmen, and, with their flocks, traversed the vast and treeless plains, where they found ample pasture. Others selecting sunny and fertile valleys, scattered their seed and cultivated the soil. Thus the Scythians were divided into two quite distinct classes, the herdsmen and the laborers.

The tribes who then peopled the vast wilds of northern Europe and Asia, though almost innumerable, and of different languages and customs, were all called, by the Greeks, Scythians, as we have given the general name of Indians to all the tribes who



formerly ranged the forests of North America. The Scythians were as ferocious a race as earth has ever known. They drank the blood of their enemies; tanned their skins for garments; used their skulls for drinking cups; and worshiped a sword as the image or emblem of their favorite deity, the God of War. Philip of Macedon was the first who put any check upon their proud spirit. He conquered them in a decisive battle, and thus taught them that they were not invincible. Alexander the Great assailed them and spread the terror of his arms throughout all the region between the Danube and the Dnieper. Subsequently the Roman legions advanced to the Euxine, and planted their eagles upon the heights of the Caucasus.

The Roman historians seem to have dropped the Scythian name, and they called the whole northern expanse of Europe and Asia, Sarmatia, and the barbarous inhabitants Sarmatians. About the time of our Saviour, some of these fierce tribes from the banks of the Theiss and the Danube, commenced their assaults upon the frontiers of the Roman empire. This was the signal for that war of centuries, which terminated in the overthrow of the throne of the Cæsars. The Roman Senate, enervated by luxury, condescended to purchase peace of these barbarians, and nations of savages, whose names are now forgotten, exacted tribute, under guise of payment for alliance, from the proud empire. But neither bribes, nor alliances, nor the sword in the hands of enervated Rome, could effectually check the incursions of these bands, who were ever emerging, like wolves, from the mysterious

depths of the North.

In the haze of those distant times and remote realms, we catch dim glimpses of locust legions, emerging from the plains and the ravines between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and sweeping like a storm cloud over nearly all of what is now called Russia. These people, to whom the name of Alains was given, had no fixed habitations; they conveyed their women and children in rude carts. Their devastations were alike extended over Europe and Asia, and in the ferocity of their assaults they were as insensible to death as wild beasts could be.

In the second century, the emperor Trajan conquered and took possession of the province of Dacia, which included all of lower Hungary, Transylvania, Moldavia, Wallachia and Bessarabia. The country was divided into Roman provinces, over each of which a prefect was established. In the third century, the Goths, from the shores of the Baltic, came rushing over the wide arena, with the howling of wolves and their gnashing of teeth. They trampled down all opposition, with their war knives drove out the Romans, crossed the Black Sea in their rude vessels, and spread conflagration and death throughout the most flourishing cities and villages of Bythinia, Gallacia and Cappadocia. The famous temple of Diana at Ephesus, these barbarians committed to the flames. They overran all Greece and took Athens by storm. As they were about to destroy the precious libraries of Athens, one of their chieftains said,

"Let us leave to the Greeks their books, that they, in

reading them may forget the arts of war; and that we thus may more easily be able to hold them in subjection."

These Goths established an empire, extending from the Black Sea to the Baltic, and which embraced nearly all of what is now European Russia. Towards the close of the fourth century, another of these appalling waves of barbaric inundation rolled over northern Europe. The Huns, emerging from the northern frontiers of China, traversed the immense intervening deserts, and swept over European Russia, spreading everywhere flames and desolation. The historians of that day seem to find no language sufficiently forcible to describe the hideousness and the ferocity of these savages. They pressed down on the Roman empire as merciless as wolves, and the Cæsars turned pale at the recital of their deeds of blood.

It is indeed a revolting picture which contemporaneous history gives us of these barbarians. In their faces was concentrated the ugliness of the hyena and the baboon. They tattooed their cheeks, to prevent the growth of their beards. They were short, thick-set, and with back bones curved almost into a semicircle. Herbs, roots and raw meat they devoured, tearing their food with their teeth or hewing it with their swords. To warm and soften their meat, they placed it under their saddles when riding. Nearly all their lives they passed on horseback. Wandering incessantly over the vast plains, they had no fixed habitations, but warmly clad in the untanned skins of beasts, like the beasts they slept wherever the night found them. They had no religion nor laws,

no conception of ideas of honor; their language was a wretched jargon, and in their nature there seemed to be no moral sense to which compassion or mercy could plead.

Such were the Huns as described by the ancient historians. The Goths struggled against them in vain. They were crushed and subjugated. The king of the Goths, Hermanric, in chagrin and despair, committed suicide, that he might escape slavery. Thousands of the Goths, in their terror, crowded down into the Roman province of Thrace, now the Turkish province of Romania. The empire, then in its decadence, could not drive them back, and they obtained a permanent foothold there. The Huns thus attained the supremacy throughout all of northern Europe. There were then very many tribes of diverse names peopling these vast realms, and incessant wars were waged between them. The domination which the Huns attained was precarious, and not distinctly defined.

The terrible Attila ere long appears as the king of these Huns, about the middle of the fifth century. This wonderful barbarian extended his sway from the Volga to the Rhine, and from the Bosphorus to the shores of the Baltic. Where-ever he appeared, blood flowed in torrents. He swept the valley of the Danube with flame and sword, destroying cities, fortresses and villages, and converting the whole region into a desert. At the head of an army of seven hundred thousand men, he plunged all Europe into dismay. Both the Eastern and Western empire were compelled to pay him tribute. He even invaded Gaul, and upon the plains

of Chalons was defeated in one of the most bloody battles ever fought in Europe. Contemporary historians record that one hundred and six thousand dead were left upon the field. With the death of Attila, the supremacy of the Huns vanished. The irruption of the Huns was a devastating scourge, which terrified the world. Whole nations were exterminated in their march, until at last the horrible apparition disappeared, almost as suddenly as it arose.

With the disappearance of the Huns, central Russia presents to us the aspect of a vast waste, thinly peopled, with the wrecks of nations and tribes, debased and feeble, living upon the cattle they herded, and occasionally cultivating the soil. And now there comes forward upon this theater of violence and of blood another people, called the Slavonians, more energetic and more intelligent than any who had preceded them. The origin of the Slavonians is quite lost in the haze of distance, and in the savage wilds where they first appeared. The few traditions which have been gleaned respecting them are of very little authority.

From about the close of the fifth century the inhabitants of the whole region now embraced by European Russia, were called Slavonians; and yet it appears that these Slavonians consisted of many nations, rude and warlike, with various distinctive names. They soon began to crowd upon the Roman empire, and became more formidable than the Goths or the Huns had been. Wading through blood they seized province after province of the empire, destroying and massacring often in mere wantonness.

The emperor Justinian was frequently compelled to purchase peace with them and to bribe them to alliance.

And now came another wave of invasion, bloody and overwhelming. The Avars, from the north of China, swept over Asia, seized all the provinces on the Black Sea, overran Greece, and took possession of most of the country between the Volga and the Elbe. The Slavonians of the Danube, however, successfully resisted them, and maintained their independence. Generations came and went as these hordes, wild, degraded and wretched, swept these northern wilds, in debasement and cruelty rivaling the wolves which howled in their forests. They have left no traces behind them, and the few records of their joyless lives which history has preserved, are merely the gleanings of uncertain tradition. The thinking mind pauses in sadness to contemplate the spectacle of these weary ages, when his brother man was the most ferocious of beasts, and when all the discipline of life tended only to sink him into deeper abysses of brutality and misery. There is here a problem in the divine government which no human wisdom can solve. There is consolation only in the announcement that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. All these diverse nations blending have formed the present Russians.

Along the shores of the Baltic, these people assumed the name of Scandinavians, and subsequently Normans. Toward the close of the eighth century, the Normans filled Europe with the renown of their exploits, and their banners bade defiance even to the

armies of Charlemagne. Early in the ninth century they ravaged France, Italy, Scotland, England, and passed over to Ireland, where they built cities which remain to the present day. "There is no manner of doubt," writes M. Karamsin in his history of Russia, "that five hundred years before Christopher Columbus, they had discovered North America, and instituted commerce with the natives."

It is not until the middle of the ninth century, that we obtain any really reliable information respecting the inhabitants of central Russia. They are described as a light-complexioned, flaxen-haired race, robust, and capable of great endurance. Their huts were cheerless, affording but little shelter, and they lived upon the coarsest food, often devouring their meat raw. The Greeks expressed astonishment at their agility in climbing precipitous cliffs, and admired the hardihood with which they plunged through bogs, and swam the most rapid and swollen streams. He who had the most athletic vigor was the greatest man, and all the ambition and energy of the nation were expended in the acquisition of strength and agility.

They are ever described as strangers to fear, rushing unthinkingly upon certain death. They were always ready to accept combat with the Roman legions. Entire strangers to military strategy, they made no attacks in drilled lines or columns, but the whole tumultuous mass, in wild disorder rushed upon the foe, with the most desperate daring, having no guide but their own ferocity and the chieftains who led small bands. Their

weapons consisted of swords, javelins and poisoned arrows, and each man carried a heavy shield. As they crossed the Danube in their bloody forays, incited by love of plunder, the inhabitants of the Roman villages fled before them. When pursued by an invincible force they would relinquish life rather than their booty, even when the plunder was of a kind totally valueless in their savage homes. The ancient annals depict in appalling colors the cruelties they exercised upon their captives. They were, however, as patient in endurance as they were merciless in infliction. No keenness of torture could force from them a cry of pain.

Yet these people, so ferocious, are described as remarkably amiable among themselves, seldom quarreling, honest and truthful, and practicing hospitality with truly patriarchal grace. Whenever they left home, the door was unfastened and food was left for any chance wayfarer. A guest was treated as a heavenly messenger, and was guided on his way with the kindest expressions for his welfare.

The females, as in all barbaric countries, were exposed to every indignity. All the hard labor of life was thrown upon them. When the husband died, the widow was compelled to cast herself upon the funeral pile which consumed his remains. It is said that this barbarous custom, which Christianity abolished, was introduced to prevent the wife from secretly killing her husband. The wife was also regarded as the slave of the husband, and they imagined that if she died at the same time with her husband, she would serve him in another world. The wives often followed



their husbands to the wars. From infancy the boys were trained to fight, and were taught that nothing was more disgraceful than to forgive an injury.

A mother was permitted, if she wished, to destroy her female children; but the boys were all preserved to add to the military strength of the nation. It was lawful, also, for the children to put their parents to death when they had become infirm and useless. "Behold," exclaims a Russian historian, "how a people naturally kind, when deprived of the light of revelation can remorselessly outrage nature, and surpass in cruelty the most ferocious animals."

In different sections of this vast region there were different degrees of debasement, influenced by causes no longer known. A tribe called Drevliens, Nestor states, lived in the most gloomy forests with the beasts and like the beasts. They ate any food which a pig would devour, and had as little idea of marriage as have sheep or goats. Among the Sclavonians generally there appears to have been no aristocracy. Each family was an independent republic. Different tribes occasionally met to consult upon questions of common interest, when the men of age, and who had acquired reputation for wisdom, guided in counsel.

Gradually during the progress of their wars an aristocracy arose. Warriors of renown became chiefs, and created for themselves posts of authority and honor. By prowess and plunder they acquired wealth. In their incursions into the empire, they saw the architecture of Greece and Rome, and thus incited, they

began to rear castles and fortresses. He who was recognized as the leading warrior in time of battle, retained his authority in the days of peace, which were very few. The castle became necessary for the defense of the tribe or clan, and the chieftain became the feudal noble, invested with unlimited power. At one time every man who was rich enough to own a horse was deemed a noble. The first power recognized was only military authority. But the progress of civilization developed the absolute necessity of other powers to protect the weak, to repress crime, and to guide in the essential steps of nations emerging from darkness into light. With all nations advancing from barbarism, the process has ever been slow by which the civil authority has been separated from the military. It is impossible to educe from the chaos of those times any established principles. Often the duke or leader was chosen with imposing ceremonies. Some men of commanding abilities would gather into their hands the reins of almost unlimited power, and would transmit that power to their sons. Others were chiefs but in name.

We have but dim glimpses of the early religion of this people. In the sixth century they are represented as regarding with awe the deity whom they designated as the creator of thunder. The spectacle of the majestic storms which swept their plains and the lightning bolts hurled from an invisible hand, deeply impressed these untutored people. They endeavored to appease the anger of the supreme being by the sacrifice of bulls and other animals. They also peopled the groves, the fountains, the rivers with

deities; statues were rudely chiseled, into which they supposed the spirits of their gods entered, and which they worshiped. They deemed the supreme being himself too elevated for direct human adoration, and only ventured to approach him through gods of a secondary order. They believed in a fallen spirit, a god of evil, who was the author of all the calamities which afflict the human race.

The polished Greeks chiseled their idols, from snow-white marble, into the most exquisite proportions of the human form. Many they invested with all the charms of loveliness, and endowed them with the most amiable attributes. The voluptuous Venus and the laurel-crowned Bacchus were their gods. But the Sclavonians, regarding their deities only as possessors of power and objects of terror, carved their idols gigantic in stature, and hideous in aspect.

From these rude, scattered and discordant populations, the empire of Russia quite suddenly sprang into being. Its birth was one of the most extraordinary events history has transmitted to us. We have seen that the Normans, dwelling along the southern and eastern shores of the Baltic, and visiting the most distant coasts with their commercial and predatory fleets, had attained a degree of power, intelligence and culture, which gave them a decided preëminence over the tribes who were scattered over the wilds of central Russia.

A Sclavonian, whose name tradition says was Gostomysle, a man far superior to his countrymen in intelligence and sagacity,

deploring the anarchy which reigned everywhere around him, and admiring the superior civilization of the Normans, persuaded several tribes unitedly to send an embassy to the Normans to solicit of them a king. The embassy was accompanied by a strong force of these fierce warriors, who knew well how to fight, but who had become conscious that they did not know how to govern themselves. Their message was laconic but explicit:

"Our country," said they, "is grand and fertile, but under the reign of disorder. Come and govern us and reign over us."

Three brothers, named Rurik, Sineous and Truvor, illustrious both by birth and achievements, consented to assume the sovereignty, each over a third part of the united applicants; each engaging to coöperate with and uphold the others. Escorted by the armed retinue which had come to receive them, they left their native shores, and entered the wilds of Scandinavia. Rurik established himself at Novgorod, on lake Ilmen. Sineous, advancing some three hundred miles further, north-east, took his station at Bielo Ozero, on the shores of lake Bielo. Truvor went some hundred miles further south to Truvor, in the vicinity of Smolensk.

Thus there were three sovereigns established in Russia, united by the ties of interest and consanguinity. It was then that this region acquired the name of Russia, from the Norman tribe who furnished these three sovereigns. The Russia which thus emerged into being was indeed an infant, compared with the gigantic empire in this day of its growing and vigorous manhood.

It embraced then but a few thousand square miles, being all included in the present provinces of St. Petersburg, Novgorod and Pskov. But two years passed away ere Sineous and Truvor died, and Rurik united their territories with his own, and thus established the Russian monarchy. The realms of Rurik grew, rapidly by annexation, and soon extended east some two hundred miles beyond where Moscow now stands, to the head waters of the Volga. They were bounded on the south-west by the Dwina. On the north they reached to the wild wastes of arctic snows. Over these distant provinces, Rurik established governors selected from his own nation, the Normans. These provincial governors became feudal lords; and thus, with the monarchy, the feudal system was implanted.

Feudality was the natural first step of a people emerging from barbarism. The sovereign rewarded his favorites, or compensated his servants, civil and military, by ceding to them provinces of greater or less extent, with unlimited authority over the people subject to their control. These lords acknowledged fealty to the sovereign, paid a stipulated amount of tribute, and, in case of war, were bound to enter the field with a given number of men in defense of the crown. It was a system essential, perhaps, to those barbarous times when there was no easy communication between distant regions, no codes of laws, and no authority, before which savage men would bow, but that of the sword.

At this time two young Norman nobles, inspired with that love of war and spirit of adventure which characterized their

countrymen, left the court of Rurik at Novgorod, where they had been making a visit, and with well-armed retainers, commenced a journey to Constantinople to offer their services to the emperor. It was twelve hundred miles, directly south, from Novgorod to the imperial city. The adventurers had advanced about half way, when they arrived at a little village, called Kief, upon the banks of the Dnieper. The location of the city was so beautiful, upon a commanding bluff, at the head of the navigation of this majestic stream, and the region around seemed so attractive, that the Norman adventurers, Ascolod and Dir by name, decided to remain there. They were soon joined by others of their warlike countrymen. The natives appear to have made no opposition to their rule, and thus Kief became the center of a new and independent Russian kingdom. These energetic men rapidly extended their territories, raised a large army, which was thoroughly drilled in all the science of Norman warfare, and then audaciously declared war against Greece and attempted its subjugation. The Dnieper, navigable for boats most of the distance from Kief to the Euxine, favored their enterprise. They launched upon the stream two hundred barges, which they filled with their choicest troops. Rapidly they floated down the stream, spread their sails upon the bosom of the Euxine, entered the Bosphorus, and anchoring their fleet at the mouth of the Golden Horn, laid siege to the city. The Emperor Michael III. then reigned at Constantinople. This Northmen invasion was entirely unexpected, and the emperor was absent, engaged in war with

the Arabs. A courier was immediately dispatched to inform him of the peril of the city. He hastily returned to his capital which he finally reached, after eluding, with much difficulty, the vigilance of the besiegers. Just as the inhabitants of the city were yielding to despair, there arose a tempest, which swept the Bosphorus with resistless fury. The crowded barges were dashed against each other, shattered, wrecked and sunk. The Christians of Constantinople justly attributed their salvation to the interposition of God. Ascolod and Dir, with the wrecks of their army, returned in chagrin to Kief.

The historians of that period relate that the idolatrous Russians were so terrified by this display of the divine displeasure that they immediately sent ambassadors to Constantinople, professing their readiness to embrace Christianity, and asking that they might receive the rite of baptism. In attestation of the fact that Christianity at this period entered Russia, we are referred to a well authenticated letter, of the patriarch Photius, written at the close of the year 866.

"The Russians," he says, "so celebrated for their cruelty, conquerors of their neighbors, and who, in their pride, dared to attack the Roman empire, have already renounced their superstitions, and have embraced the religion of Jesus Christ. Lately our most formidable enemies, they have now become our most faithful friends. We have recently sent them a bishop and a priest, and they testify the greatest zeal for Christianity."

It was in this way, it seems, that the religion of our Saviour

first entered barbaric Russia. The gospel, thus welcomed, soon became firmly established at Kief, and rapidly extended its conquests in all directions. The two Russian kingdoms, that of Rurik in the north, and that of Ascolod and Dir on the Dnieper, rapidly extended as these enterprising kings, by arms, subjected adjacent nations to their sway. Rurik remained upon the throne fifteen years, and then died, surrendering his crown to his son Igor, still a child. A relative, Oleg, was intrusted with the regency, during the minority of the boy king. Such was the state of Russia in the year 879.

In that dark and cruel age, war was apparently the only thought, military conquest the only glory. The regent, Oleg, taking with him the young prince Igor, immediately set out with a large army on a career of conquest. Marching directly south some hundred miles, and taking possession of all the country by the way, he arrived at last at the head waters of the Dnieper. The renown of the kingdom of Ascolod and Dir had reached his ears; and aware of their military skill and that the ranks of their army were filled with Norman warriors, Oleg decided to seize the two sovereigns by stratagem. As he cautiously approached Kief, he left his army in a secluded encampment, and with a few chosen troops floated down the stream in barges, disguised as merchant boats. Landing in the night beneath the high and precipitous banks near the town, he placed a number of his soldiers in ambuscade, and then calling upon the princes of Kief, informed them that he had been sent by the king of Novgorod, with a



commercial adventure down the Dnieper, and invited them to visit his barges.

The two sovereigns, suspecting no guile, hastened to the banks of the river. Suddenly the men in ambush rose, and piercing them with arrows and javelins, they both fell dead at the feet of Oleg. The two victims of this perfidy were immediately buried upon the spot where they fell. In commemoration of this atrocity, the church of St. Nicholas has been erected near the place, and even to the present day the inhabitants of Kief conduct the traveler to the tomb of Ascolod and Dir. Oleg, now marshaling his army, marched triumphantly into the town, and, without experiencing any formidable opposition, annexed the conquered realm to the northern kingdom.

Oleg was charmed with his conquest. The beautiful site of the town, the broad expanse of the river, the facilities which the stream presented for maritime and military adventures so delighted him that he exclaimed,

"Let Kief be the mother of all the Russian cities."

Oleg established his army in cantonments, strengthened it with fresh recruits, commenced predatory excursions on every side, and soon brought the whole region, for many leagues around, under his subjection. All the subjugated nations were compelled to pay him tribute, though, with the sagacity which marked his whole course, he made the tax so light as not to be burdensome. The territories of Oleg were now vast, widely scattered, and with but the frailest bond of union between them.

Between the two capitals of Novgorod and Kief, which were separated by a distance of seven or eight hundred miles, there were many powerful tribes still claiming independence.

Oleg directed his energies against them, and his march of conquest was resistless. In the course of two years he established his undisputed sway over the whole region, and thus opened unobstructed communication between his northern and southern provinces. He established a chain of military posts along the line, and placed his renowned warriors in feudal authority over numerous provinces. Each lord, in his castle, was supreme in authority over the vassals subject to his sway. Life and death were in his hands. The fealty he owed his sovereign was paid in a small tribute, and in military service with an appointed number of soldiers whom he led into the field and supported.

Having thus secured safety in the north, Oleg turned his attention to the south. With a well-disciplined army, he marched down the left bank of the river, sweeping the country for an hundred miles in width, everywhere planting his banners and establishing his simple and effective government of baronial lords. It was easy to weaken any formidable or suspected tribe, by the slaughter of the warriors. There were two safeguards against insurrection. The burdens imposed upon the vassals were so light as to induce no murmurings; and all the feudal lords were united to sustain each other. The first movement towards rebellion was drowned in blood.

Igor, the legitimate sovereign, had now attained his majority;

but, accustomed as he had long been, to entire obedience, he did not dare to claim the crown from a regent flushed with the brilliancy of his achievements, who had all power in his hands, and who, by a nod, could remove him for ever out of his way.

Igor was one day engaged in the chase, when at the door of a cottage, in a small village near Kief, he saw a young peasant girl, of marvelous grace and beauty. She was a Norman girl of humble parentage. Young Igor, inflamed by her beauty, immediately rode to the door and addressed her. Her voice was melody, her smile ravishing, and in her replies to his questionings, she developed pride of character, quickness of intelligence and invincible modesty, which charmed him and instantly won his most passionate admiration. The young prince rode home sorely wounded. Cupid had shot one of his most fiery arrows into the very center of his heart. Though many high-born ladies had been urged upon Igor, he renounced them all, and allowing beauty to triumph over birth, honorably demanded and received the hand of the lowly-born yet princely-minded and lovely Olga. They were married at Kief in the year 903.

The revolution at Kief had not interrupted the friendly relations existing between Kief and Constantinople. The Christians of the imperial city made great efforts, by sending missionaries to Kief, to multiply the number of Christians there. Oleg, though a pagan, granted free toleration to Christianity, and reciprocated the presents and friendly messages he received from the emperor. But at length Oleg, having consolidated his realms,

and ambitions of still greater renown, wealth and power, resolved boldly to declare war against the empire itself, and to march upon Constantinople. The warriors from a hundred tribes, each under their feudal lord, were ranged around his banners. For miles along the banks of the Dnieper at Kief, the river was covered with barges, two thousand in number. An immense body of cavalry accompanied the expedition, following along the shore.

The navigation of the river, which poured its flood through a channel nearly a thousand miles in length from Kief to the Euxine, was difficult and perilous. It required the blind, unthinking courage of semi-barbarians to undertake such an enterprise. There were many cataracts, down which the flotilla would be swept over foaming billows and amidst jagged rocks. In many places the stream was quite impassable by boats, and it was necessary to take all the barges, with their contents, on shore, and drag them for miles through the forest, again to launch them upon smoother water; and all this time they were exposed to attacks from numerous and ferocious foes. Having arrived at the mouth of the Dnieper, they had still six or eight hundred miles of navigation over the waves of that storm-swept sea. And then, at the close, they had to encounter, in deadly fight, all the power of the Roman empire. But unintimidated by these perils, Oleg, leaving Igor with his bride at Kief, launched his boats upon the current, and commenced his desperate enterprise.

# CHAPTER II

## GROWTH AND CONSOLIDATION OF RUSSIA

**From 910 to 973**

Expedition to Constantinople.—Treaty with the Emperor.—Last Days of Oleg.—His Death.—Igor Assumes the Scepter.—His Expedition to the Don.—Descent upon Constantinople.—His Defeat.—Second Expedition.—Pusillanimity of the Greeks.—Death of Igor.—Regency of Olga.—Her Character.—Succession of Sviatoslaf.—His Impiety and Ambition.—Conquest of Bulgaria.—Division of the Empire.—Defeat, Ruin and Death of Sviatoslaf.—Civil War.—Death of Oleg.—Flight of Vlademer.—Supremacy of Yaropolk.

The fleet of Oleg successfully accomplished the navigation of the Dnieper, followed by the horse along the shores. Each barge carried forty warriors. Entering the Black Sea, they spread their sails and ran along the western coast to the mouth of the Bosphorus. The enormous armament approaching the imperial city of Constantine by sea and by land, completely invested it. The superstitious Leon, surnamed the Philosopher, sat then upon

the throne. He was a feeble man engrossed with the follies of astrology, and without making preparations for any vigorous defense, he contented himself with stretching a chain across the Golden Horn to prevent the hostile fleet from entering the harbor. The cavalry of Oleg, encountering no serious opposition, burnt and plundered all the neighboring regions. The beautiful villas of the wealthy Greeks, their churches and villages all alike fell a prey to the flames. Every species of cruelty and barbarity was practiced by the ruthless invaders.

The effeminate Greeks from the walls of the city gazed upon this sweep of desolation, but ventured not to march from behind their ramparts to assail the foe. Oleg drew his barges upon the shore and dragged them on wheels towards the city, that he might from them construct instruments and engines for scaling the walls. The Greeks were so terrified at this spectacle of energy, that they sent an embassy to Oleg, imploring peace, and offering to pay tribute. To conciliate the invader they sent him large presents of food and wine. Oleg, apprehensive that the viands were poisoned, refused to accept them. He however demanded enormous tribute of the emperor, to which terms the Greeks consented, on condition that Oleg would cease hostilities, and return peaceably to his country. Upon this basis of a treaty, the Russian array retired to some distance from the city, and Oleg sent four commissioners to arrange with the emperor the details of peace. The humiliating treaty exacted was as follows:

I. The Greeks engage to give twelve *grivnas* to each man of

the Russian army, and the same sum to each of the warriors in the cities governed by the dependent princes of Oleg.

**II.** The ambassadors, sent by Russia to Constantinople, shall have all their expenses defrayed by the emperor. And, moreover, the emperor engages to give to every Russian merchant in Greece, bread, wine, meat, fish and fruits, for the space of six months; to grant him free access to the public baths, and to furnish him, on his return to his country, with food, anchors, sails, and, in a word, with every thing he needs.

On the other hand the Greeks propose that the Russians, who visit Constantinople for any other purposes than those of commerce, shall not be entitled to this supply of their tables. The Russian prince shall forbid his ambassadors from giving any offense to the inhabitants of the Grecian cities or provinces. The quarter of Saint Meme shall be especially appropriated to the Russians, who, upon their arrival, shall give information to the city council. Their names shall be inscribed, and there shall be paid to them every month the sums necessary for their support, no matter from what part of Russia they may have come. A particular gate shall be designated by which they may enter the city, accompanied by an imperial commissary. They shall enter without arms, and never more than fifty at a time; and they shall be permitted, freely, to engage in trade in Constantinople without the payment of any tax.

This treaty, by which the emperor placed his neck beneath the feet of Oleg, was ratified by the most imposing ceremonies

of religion. The emperor took the oath upon the evangelists. Oleg swore by his sword and the gods of Russia. In token of his triumph Oleg proudly raised his shield, as a banner, over the battlements of Constantinople, and returned, laden with riches, to Kief, where he was received with the most extravagant demonstrations of adulation and joy.

The treaty thus made with the emperor, and which is preserved in full in the Russian annals, shows that the Russians were no longer savages, but that they had so far emerged from that gloomy state as to be able to appreciate the sacredness of law, the claims of honor and the authority of treaties. It is observable that no signatures are attached to this treaty but those of the Norman princes, which indicates that the original Sclavonic race were in subjection as the vassals of the Normans. Oleg appears to have placed in posts of authority only his own countrymen.

Oleg now, as old age was advancing, passed many years in quietude. Surrounded by an invincible army, and with renown which pervaded the most distant regions, no tribes ventured to disturb his repose. His distance from southern Europe protected him from annoyance from the powerful nations which were forming there. His latter years seem to have been devoted to the arts of peace, for he secured to an unusual degree the love, as well as the admiration, of his subjects. Ancient annalists record that all Russia moaned and wept when he died. He is regarded, as more prominently than any other man, the founder of the



Russian empire. He united, though by treachery and blood, the northern and southern kingdoms under one monarch. He then, by conquest, extended his empire over vast realms of barbarians, bringing them all under the simple yet effective government of feudal lords. He consolidated this empire, and by sagacious measures, encouraging arts and commerce, he led his barbarous people onward in the paths of civilization. He gave Russia a name and renown, so that it assumed a position among the nations of the globe, notwithstanding its remote position amidst the wilds of the North. His usurpation, history can not condemn. In those days any man had the right to govern who had the genius of command. Genius was the only legitimacy. But he was an assassin, and can never be washed clean from that crime. He died after a reign of thirty-three years, and was buried, with all the displays of pomp which that dark age could furnish, upon one of the mountains in the vicinity of Kief, which mountain for many generations was called the Tomb of Oleg.

Igor now assumed the reins of government. He had lived in Kief a quiet, almost an effeminate life, with his beautiful bride Olga. A very powerful tribe, the Drevolians, which had been rather restive, even under the rigorous sway of Oleg, thought this a favorable opportunity to regain their independence. They raised the standard of revolt. Igor crushed the insurrection with energy which astonished all who knew him, and which spread his fame far and wide through all the wilds of Russia, as a monarch thoroughly capable of maintaining his command.

Far away in unknown realms, beyond the eastern boundary of Russia, where the gloomy waves of the Irtysh, the Tobol, the Oural and the Volga flow through vast deserts, washing the base of fir-clad mountains, and murmuring through wildernesses, the native domain of wolves and bears, there were wandering innumerable tribes, fierce, cruel and barbarous, who held the frontiers of Russia in continual terror. They were called by the general name of Petchénègues. Igor was compelled to be constantly on the alert to defend his vast frontier from the irruptions of these merciless savages. This incessant warfare led to the organization of a very efficient military power, but there was no glory to be acquired in merely driving back to their dens these wild assailants. Weary of the conflict, he at last consented to purchase a peace with them; and then, seeking the military renown which Oleg had so signally acquired, he resolved to imitate his example and make a descent upon Constantinople. The annals of those days, which seem to be credible, state that he floated down the Dnieper with ten thousand barges, and spread his sails upon the waves of the Euxine. Entering the Bosphorus, he landed on both shores of that beautiful strait, and, with the most wanton barbarity, ravaged the country far and near, massacring the inhabitants, pillaging the towns and committing all the buildings to the flames.

There chanced to be at Constantinople, a very energetic Roman general, who was dispatched against them with a Greek fleet and a numerous land force. The Greeks in civilization

were far in advance of the Russians. The land force drove the Russians to their boats, and then the Grecian fleet bore down upon them. A new instrument of destruction had been invented, the terrible Greek fire. Attached to arrows and javelins, and in great balls glowing with intensity of flame which water would not quench, it was thrown into the boats of the Russians, enkindling conflagration and exciting terror indescribable. It seemed to the superstitious followers of Igor, that they were assailed by foes hurling the lightnings of Jove. In this fierce conflict Igor, having lost a large number of barges, and many of his men, drew off his remaining forces in disorder, and they slowly returned to their country in disgrace, emaciate and starving. Many of the Russians taken captive by the Greeks were put to death with the most horrible barbarities.

Igor, exasperated rather than intimidated by this terrible disaster, resolved upon another expedition, that he might recover his lost renown by inflicting the most terrible vengeance upon the Greeks. He spent two years in making preparations for the enterprise; called to his aid warriors from the most distant tribes of the empire, and purchased the alliance of the Petchénègues. With an immense array of barges, which for leagues covered the surface of the Dnieper, and with an immense squadron of cavalry following along the banks, he commenced the descent of the river. The emperor was informed that the whole river was filled with barges, descending for the siege and sack of Constantinople. In terror he sent ambassadors to Igor to endeavor to avert the

storm.

The imperial ambassadors met the flotilla near the mouth of the Dnieper, and offered, in the name of the emperor, to pay the same tribute to Igor which had been paid to Oleg, and even to increase that tribute. At the same time they endeavored to disarm the cupidity of the foe by the most magnificent presents. Igor halted his troops, and collecting his chieftains in counsel, communicated to them the message of the emperor. They replied,

"If the emperor will give us the treasure we demand, without our exposing ourselves to the perils of battle, what more can we ask? Who can tell on which side will be the victory?"

Thus influenced, Igor consented to a treaty. The opening words of this curious treaty are worthy of being recorded. They were as follows:

"We, the ambassadors of Igor, solemnly declare that this treaty shall continue so long as the sun shall shine, in defiance of the machinations of that evil spirit who is the enemy of peace and the fomentor of discord. The Russians promise never to break this alliance with the horde; those who have been baptized, under penalty of temporal and eternal punishment from God; others, under the penalty of being for ever deprived of the protection of Péroune;<sup>1</sup> of never being able to protect themselves with their shields; of being doomed to lacerate themselves with their own swords, arrows and other arms, and of being slaves in this world

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<sup>1</sup> One of the Gods of the Russians.

and that which is to come."

This important treaty consisted of fourteen articles, drawn up with great precision, and in fact making the Greek emperor as it were but a vassal of the Russian monarch. One of the articles of the treaty is quite illustrative of the times. It reads,

"If a Christian kills a Russian, or if a Russian kills a Christian, the friends of the dead have a right to seize the murderer and kill him."

This treaty was concluded at Constantinople, between the emperor and the ambassadors of Igor. Imperial ambassadors were sent with the written treaty to Kief. Igor, with imposing ceremonies, ascended the sacred hill where was erected the Russian idol of Péroune, and with his chieftains took a solemn oath of friendship to the emperor, and then as a gage of their sincerity deposited at the feet of the idol their arms and shields of gold. The Christian nobles repaired to the cathedral of St. Elias, the most ancient church of Kief, and there took the same oath at the altar of the Christian's God. The renowned Russian historian, Nestor, who was a monk in the monastery at Kief, records that at that time there were numerous Christians in Kief.

Igor sent the imperial ambassadors back to Constantinople laden with rich presents. Elated by wealth and success, the Russian king began to impose heavier burdens of taxation upon subjugated nations. The Drevliens resisted. With an insufficient force Igor entered their territories. The Drevliens, with the fury of desperation, fell upon him and he was slain, and his soldiers

put to rout. During his reign he held together the vast empire Oleg had placed in his hands, though he had not been able to extend the boundaries of his country. It is worthy of notice, and of the highest praise, that Igor, though a pagan, imitating the example of Oleg, permitted perfect toleration throughout his realms. The gospel of Christ was freely preached, and the Christians enjoyed entire freedom of faith and worship. His reign continued thirty-two years.

Sviatoslaf, the son of Igor, at the time of his father's unhappy death was in his minority. The empire was then in great peril. The Drevliens, one of the most numerous and warlike tribes, were in open and successful revolt. The army accustomed to activity, and now in idleness, was very restive. The old Norman generals, ambitious and haughty, were disposed to pay but little respect to the claims of a prince who was yet in his boyhood. But Providence had provided for this exigence. Olga, the mother of Sviatoslaf, assumed the regency, and developed traits of character which place her in the ranks of the most extraordinary and noble of women. Calling to her aid two of the most influential of the nobles, one of whom was the tutor of her son and the other commander-in-chief of the army, she took the helm of state, and developed powers of wisdom and energy which have rarely been equaled and perhaps never surpassed.

She immediately sent an army into the country of the Drevliens, and punished with terrible severity the murderers of her husband. The powerful tribe was soon brought again into

subjection to the Russian crown. As a sort of defiant parade of her power, and to overawe the turbulent Drevliens, she traversed their whole country, with her son, accompanied by a very imposing retinue of her best warriors. Having thus brought them to subjection, she instituted over them a just and benevolent system of government, that they might have no occasion again to rise in revolt. They soon became so warmly attached to her that they ever were foremost in support of her power.

One year had not passed ere Olga was seated as firmly upon the throne as Oleg or Igor had ever been. She then, leaving her son Sviatoslaf at Kief, set out on a tour through her northern provinces. Everywhere, by her wise measures and her deep interest in the welfare of her subjects, she won admiration and love. The annals of those times are full of her praises. The impression produced by this visit was not effaced from the popular mind for five hundred years, being handed down from father to son. The sledge in which she traveled was for many generations preserved as a sacred relic.

She returned to Kief, and there resided with her son, for many years, in peace and happiness. The whole empire was tranquil, and in the lowly cabins of the Russians there was plenty, and no sounds of war or violence disturbed the quiet of their lives. This seems to have been one of the most serene and pleasant periods of Russian history. This noble woman was born a pagan. But the gospel of Christ was preached in the churches of Kief, and she heard it and was deeply impressed with its sublimity and

beauty. Her life was drawing to a close. The grandeur of empire she was soon to lay aside for the darkness and the silence of the tomb. These thoughts oppressed her mind, which was, by nature, elevated, sensitive and refined. She sent for the Christian pastors and conversed with them about the immortality of the soul, and salvation through faith in the atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The good seed of Christian truth fell into good soil. Cordially she embraced the gospel.

That her renunciation of paganism, and her confession of the Saviour might be more impressive, she decided to go to Constantinople to be baptized by the venerable Christian patriarch, who resided there. The Christian emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenete, informed of her approach, prepared to receive her with all the pomp worthy of so illustrious a princess of so powerful a people. He has himself left a record of these most interesting ceremonies. Olga approached the imperial palace, with a very splendid suite composed of nobles of her court, of ladies of distinction, and of the Russian ambassadors and merchants residing at Constantinople. The emperor, with a corresponding suite of splendor, met the Russian queen at a short distance from the palace, and conducted her, with her retinue, to the apartments arranged for their entertainment. It was the 9th of September, 955. In the great banqueting hall of the palace there was a magnificent feast prepared. The guests were regaled with richest music. After such an entertainment as even the opulence of the East had seldom furnished, there was an exchange of



presents. The emperor and the queen strove to outvie each other in the richness and elegance of their gifts. Every individual in the two retinues, received presents of great value.

The queen at her baptism received the Christian name of Helen. We do not find any record of the ceremonies performed at her baptism. It is simply stated that the emperor himself stood as her sponsor. Olga, as she returned to Kief, with her baptismal vows upon her, and in the freshness of her Christian hopes, manifested great solicitude for her son, who still continued a pagan. But Sviatoslaf was a wild, pleasure-seeking young man, who turned a deaf ear to all his mother's counsels. The unbridled license which paganism granted, was much more congenial to his unrenewed heart than the salutary restraints of the gospel of Christ. The human heart was then and there, as now and here. The Russian historian Karamsin says,

"In vain this pious mother spoke to her son of the happiness of being a Christian; of the peaceful spirit he would find in the worship of the true God. 'How can I,' replied Sviatoslaf, 'make a profession of this new religion, which will expose me to the ridicule of all my companions in arms?' In vain Olga urged upon him that his example might induce others to embrace the gospel of Christ. The young prince was inflexible. He made no effort to prevent others from becoming Christians, but did not disguise his contempt for the Christian faith, and so persistently rejected all the exhortations of his mother, whom he still tenderly loved, that she was at last forced to silence, and could only pray, in sadness,

that God would open the eyes and touch the heart of her child."

The young prince having attained his majority in the year 964, assumed the crown. His soul was fired with the ambition of signalizing himself by great military exploits. The blood of Igor, of Oleg and of Rurik coursed through his veins, and he resolved to lead the Russian arms to victories which should eclipse all their exploits. He gathered an immense army, and looked eagerly around to find some arena worthy of the display of his genius.

His character was an extraordinary one, combining all the virtues of ancient chivalry; virtues which guided by Christian faith, constitute the noblest men, but which without piety constitute a man the scourge of his race. *Fame* was the God of Sviatoslaf. To acquire the reputation of a great warrior, he was willing to whelm provinces in blood. But he was too magnanimous to take any mean advantage of their weakness. He would give them fair warning, that no blow should be struck, assassin-like, stealthily and in the dark.

He accustomed his body, Spartan-like, to all the fatigues and exposures of war. He indulged in no luxury of tents or carriages, and ate the flesh of horses and wild beasts, which he roasted himself, over the coals. In his campaigns the ground was his bed, the sky his curtain, his horse blanket his covering, and the saddle his pillow; and he seemed equally regardless of both heat and cold. His soldiers looked to him as their model and emulated his hardihood. Turning his attention first to the vast and almost unknown realms spreading out towards the East, he

sent word to the tribes on the Don and the Volga, that he was coming to fight them. As soon as they had time to prepare for their defense he followed his word. Here was chivalric crime and chivalric magnanimity. Marching nine hundred miles directly east from Kief, over the Russian plains, he came to the banks of the Don. The region was inhabited by a very powerful nation called the Khozars. They were arrayed under their sovereign, on the banks of the river to meet the foe. The Khozars had even sent for Greek engineers to aid them in throwing up their fortifications; and they were in an intrenched camp constructed with much military skill. A bloody battle ensued, in which thousands were slain. But Sviatoslaf was victor, and the territory was annexed to Russia, and Russian nobles were placed in feudal possession of its provinces. The conqueror then followed down the Don to the Sea of Azof, fighting sanguinary battles all the way, but everywhere victorious. The terror of his arms inspired wide-spread consternation, and many tribes, throwing aside their weapons, bowed the neck to the Russian king, and implored his clemency.

Sviatoslaf returned to Kief with waving banners, exulting in his renown. He was stimulated, not satiated, by this success; and now planned another expedition still more perilous and grand. On the south of the Danube, near its mouth, was Bulgaria, a vast realm, populous and powerful, which had long bid defiance to all the forces of the Roman empire. The conquest of Bulgaria was an achievement worthy of the chivalry even of Sviatoslaf.

With an immense fleet of barges, containing sixty thousand men, he descended the Dnieper to the Euxine. Coasting along the western shore his fleet entered the mouth of the Danube. The Bulgarians fought like heroes to repel the invaders. All their efforts were in vain. The Russians sprang from their barges on the shore, and, protected by their immense bucklers, sword in hand, routed the Bulgarians with great slaughter. Cities and villages rapidly submitted to the conqueror. The king of Bulgaria in his despair rushed upon death. Sviatoslaf, laden with the spoils of the vanquished and crowned with the laurels of victory, surrendered himself to rejoicing and to all the pleasures of voluptuous indulgence.

From these dissipations Sviatoslaf was suddenly recalled by the tidings that his own capital was in danger; that a neighboring tribe, of great military power, taking advantage of his absence with his army, had invested Kief and were hourly expected to take it by assault. In dismay he hastened his return, and found, to his inexpressible relief, that the besiegers had been routed by the stratagem and valor of a Russian general, and that the city and its inhabitants were thus rescued from destruction.

But the Russian king, having tasted the pleasures of a more sunny clime, and having rioted in the excitements of sensual indulgence, soon became weary of tranquil life in Kief. He was also anxious to escape from the reproof which he always felt from the pious life of his mother. He therefore resolved to return to his conquered kingdom of Bulgaria. He said to his mother:

"I had rather live in Bulgaria than at Kief. Bulgaria is the center of wealth, nature and art. The Greeks send there gold and cloths; the Hungarians silver and horses; the Russians furs, wax, honey and slaves."

"Wait, my son, at least till after my death," exclaimed Olga. "I am aged and infirm, and very soon shall be conveyed to my tomb."

This interview hastened the death of Olga. In four days she slept in Jesus. She earnestly entreated her son not to admit of any pagan rites at her funeral. She pointed out the place of her burial, and was interred with Christian prayers, accompanied by the lamentations and tears of all the people. Sviatoslaf, in his foreign wars, which his mother greatly disapproved, had left with her the administration of internal affairs. Nestor speaks of this pious princess in beautiful phrase as *the morning star of salvation for Russia*.

Sviatoslaf, having committed his mother to the tomb, made immediate preparations to transfer his capital from Kief to the more genial clime of Bulgaria. Had he been influenced by statesmanlike considerations it would have been an admirable move. The climate was far preferable to that of Kief, the soil more fertile, and the openings for commerce, through the Danube and the Euxine, immeasurably superior. But Sviatoslaf thought mainly of pleasure.

It was now the year 970. Sviatoslaf had three sons, whom he established, though all in their minority, in administration of

affairs in the realms from which he was departing. Yaropolk received the government of Kief. His second son, Oleg, was placed over the powerful nation of Drevliens. A third son, Vlademer, the child of dishonor, not born in wedlock, was intrusted with the command at Novgorod. Having thus arranged these affairs, Sviatoslaf, with a well-appointed army, eagerly set out for his conquered province of Bulgaria. But in the meantime the Bulgarians had organized a strong force to resist the invader. The Russians conquered in a bloody battle, and, by storm, retook Pérégeslavetz, the beautiful capital of Bulgaria, where Sviatoslaf established his throne.

The Greeks at Constantinople were alarmed by this near approach of the ever-encroaching and warlike Russians, and trembled lest they should next fall a prey to the rapacity of Sviatoslaf. The emperor, Jean Zimisce, immediately entered into an alliance with the Bulgarians, offering his daughter in marriage to Boris, son of their former king. A bloody war ensued. The Greeks and Bulgarians were victors, and Sviatoslaf, almost gnashing his teeth with rage, was driven back again to the cold regions of the North. The Greek historians give the following description of the personal appearance of Sviatoslaf. He was of medium height and well formed. His physiognomy was severe and stern. His breast was broad, his neck thick, his eyes blue, with heavy eyebrows. He had a broad nose, heavy moustaches, but a slight beard. The large mass of hair which covered his head indicated his nobility. From one of his ears there was suspended

a ring of gold, decorated with two pearls and a ruby.

As Sviatoslaf, with his shattered army, ascended the Dnieper in their boats, the Petchénègues, fierce tribes of barbarians, whom Sviatoslaf had subdued, rose in revolt against him. They gathered, in immense numbers, at one of the cataracts of the Dnieper, where it would be necessary for the Russians to transport their boats for some distance by land. They hoped to cut off his retreat and thus secure the entire destruction of their formidable foe. The situation of Sviatoslaf was now desperate. Nothing remained for him but death. With the abandonment of despair he rushed into the thickest of the foe, and soon fell a mangled corpse. How much more happy would have been his life, how much more happy his death, had he followed the counsels of his pious mother. Kouria, chief of the Petchénègues, cut off the head of Sviatoslaf, and ever after used his skull for a drinking cup. The annalist Strikofski, states that he had engraved upon the skull the words, "In seeking the destruction of others you met with your own."

A few fugitives from the army of Sviatoslaf succeeded in reaching Kief, where they communicated the tidings of the death of the king. The empire now found itself divided into three portions, each with its sovereign. Yaropolk was supreme at Kief. Oleg reigned in the spacious country of the Drevliens. Vladimir was established at Novgorod. No one of these princes was disposed to yield the supremacy to either of the others. They were soon in arms. Yaropolk marched against his brother Oleg.

The two armies met about one hundred and fifty miles north-west of Kief, near the present town of Obroutch. Oleg and his force were utterly routed. As the whole army, in confusion and dismay, were in pell-mell flight, hotly pursued, the horse of Oleg fell. Nothing could resist, even, for an instant, the onswelling flood. He was trampled into the mire, beneath the iron hoofs of squadrons of horse and the tramp of thousands of mailed men. After the battle, his body was found, so mutilated that it was with difficulty recognized. As it was spread upon a mat before the eyes of Yaropolk, he wept bitterly, and caused the remains to be interred with funeral honors. The monument raised to his memory has long since perished; but even to the present day the inhabitants of Obroutch point out the spot where Oleg fell.

Vladimir, prince of Novgorod, terrified by the fate of his brother Oleg, and apprehensive that a similar doom awaited him, sought safety in flight. Forsaking his realm he retired to the Baltic, and took refuge with the powerful Normans from whom his ancestors had come. Yaropolk immediately dispatched lieutenants to take possession of the government, and thus all Russia, as a united kingdom, was again brought under the sway of a single sovereign.

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# **CHAPTER III**

## **REIGNS OF VLADEMER, YAROSLAF, YSIASLAF AND VSEVOLOD**

**From 973 to 1092**

Flight of Vlademer.—His Stolen Bride.—The March Upon Kief.—Debauchery of Valdemar.—Zealous Paganism.—Introduction of Christianity.—Baptism in the Dnieper.—Entire Change in the Character of Valdemar.—His Great Reforms.—His Death.—Usurpation of Sviatopolk the Miserable.—Accession of Yaroslaf.—His Administration And Death.—Accession of Ysiaslaf.—His Strange Reverses.—His Death.—Vsevolod Ascends the Throne.—His Two Flights to Poland.—Appeals to the Pope.—Wars, Famine And Pestilence.—Character of Vsevolod.

Though Vlademer had fled from Russia, it was by no means with the intention of making a peaceful surrender of his realms to his ambitious brother. For two years he was incessantly employed, upon the shores of the Baltic, the home

of his ancestors, in gathering adventurers around his flag, to march upon Novgorod, and chase from thence the lieutenants of Yaropolk. He at length, at the head of a strong army, triumphantly entered the city. Half way between Novgorod and Kief, was the city and province of Polotsk. The governor was a Norman named Rovgolod. His beautiful daughter Rogneda was affianced to Yaropolk, and they were soon to be married. Vlademer sent ambassadors to Rovgolod soliciting an alliance, and asking for the hand of his daughter.

The proud princess, faithful to Yaropolk, returned the stinging reply, that *she would never marry the son of a slave*. We have before mentioned that the mother of Vlademer was not the wife of his father. She was one of the maids of honor of Olga. This insult roused the indignation of Vlademer to the highest pitch. Burning with rage he marched suddenly upon Polotsk, took the city by storm, killed Rovgolod and his two sons and compelled Rogneda, his captive, to marry him, paying but little attention to the marriage ceremony. Having thus satiated his vengeance, he marched upon Kief, with a numerous army, composed of chosen warriors from various tribes. Yaropolk, alarmed at the strength with which his brother was approaching, did not dare to give him battle, but accumulated all his force behind the ramparts of Kief. The city soon fell into the hands of Vlademer, and Yaropolk, basely betrayed by one of his generals, was assassinated by two officers of Vlademer, acting under his authority.

Vlademer was now in possession of the sovereign power, and

he displayed as much energy in the administration of affairs as he had shown in the acquisition of the crown. He immediately imposed a heavy tax upon the Russians, to raise money to pay his troops. Having consolidated his power he became a very zealous supporter of the old pagan worship, rearing several new idols upon the sacred hill, and placing in his palace a silver statue of Péroune. His soul seems to have been harrowed by the consciousness of crime, and he sought, by the cruel rites of a debasing superstition, to appease the wrath of the Gods.

Still remorse did not prevent him from plunging into the most revolting excesses of debauchery. The chronicles of those times state that he had three hundred concubines in one of his palaces, three hundred in another at Kief, and two hundred at one of his country seats. It is by no means certain that these are exaggerations, for every beautiful maiden in the empire was sought out, to be transferred to his harems. Paganism had no word of remonstrance to utter against such excesses. But Vlademer, devoted as he was to sensual indulgence, was equally fond of war. His armies were ever on the move, and the cry of battle was never intermitted. On the south-east he extended his conquests to the Carpathian mountains, where they skirt the plains of Hungary. In the north-west he extended his sway, by all the energies of fire and blood, even to the shores of the Baltic, and to the Gulf of Finland.

Elated beyond measure by his victories, he attributed his success to the favor of his idol gods, and resolved to express his

homage by offerings of human blood. He collected a number of handsome boys and beautiful girls, and drew lots to see which of them should be offered in sacrifice. The lot fell upon a fine boy from one of the Christian families. The frantic father interposed to save his child. But the agents of Vlademer fell fiercely upon them, and they both were slain and offered in sacrifice. Their names, Ivan and Theodore, are still preserved in the Russian church as the first Christian martyrs of Kief.

A few more years of violence and crime passed away, when Vlademer became the subject of that marvelous change which, nine hundred years before, had converted the persecuting Saul into the devoted apostle. The circumstances of his conversion are very peculiar, and are very minutely related by Nestor. Other recitals seem to give authenticity to the narrative. For some time Vlademer had evidently been in much anxiety respecting the doom which awaited him beyond the grave. He sent for the teachers of the different systems of religion, to explain to him the peculiarities of their faith. First came the Mohammedans from Bulgaria; then the Jews from Jerusalem; then the Christians from the papal church at Rome, and then Christians from the Greek church at Constantinople. The Mohammedans and the Jews he rejected promptly, but was undecided respecting the claims of Rome and Constantinople. He then selected ten of the wisest men in his kingdom and sent them to visit Rome and Constantinople and report in which country divine worship was conducted in the manner most worthy of the Supreme Being. The

ambassadors returning to Kief, reported warmly in favor of the Greek church. Still the mind of Vlademer was oppressed with doubts. He assembled a number of the most virtuous nobles and asked their advice. The question was settled by the remark of one who said, "Had not the religion of the Greek church been the best, the sainted Olga would not have accepted it."

This wonderful event is well authenticated; Nestor gives a recital of it in its minute details; and an old Greek manuscript, preserved in the royal library at Paris, records the visit of these ambassadors to Rome and Constantinople. Vlademer's conversion, however, seems, at this time, to have been intellectual rather than spiritual, a change in his policy of administration rather than a change of heart. Though this external change was a boundless blessing to Russia, there is but little evidence that Vlademer then comprehended that moral renovation which the gospel of Christ effects as its crowning glory. He saw the absurdity of paganism; he felt tortured by remorse; perhaps he felt in some degree the influence of the gospel which was even then faithfully preached in a few churches in idolatrous Kief; and he wished to elevate Russia above the degradation of brutal idolatry.

He deemed it necessary that his renunciation of idolatry and adoption of Christianity should be accompanied with pomp which should produce a wide-spread impression upon Russia. He accordingly collected an immense army, descended the Dnieper in boats, sailed across the Black Sea, and entering the

Gulf of Cherson, near Sevastopol, after several bloody battles took military possession of the Crimea. Thus victorious, he sent an embassy to the emperors Basil and Constantine at Constantinople, that he wished the young Christian princess Anne for his bride, and that if they did not promptly grant his request, he would march his army to attack the city.

The emperors, trembling before the approach of such a power, replied that they would not withhold from him the hand of the princess if he would first embrace Christianity. Vlademer of course assented to this, which was the great object he had in view; but demanded that the princess, who was a sister of the emperors, should first be sent to him. The unhappy maiden was overwhelmed with anguish at the reception of these tidings. She regarded the pagan Russians as ferocious savages; and to be compelled to marry their chief was to her a doom more dreadful than death.

But policy, which is the religion of cabinets, demanded the sacrifice. The princess, weeping in despair, was conducted, accompanied by the most distinguished ecclesiastics and nobles of the empire, to the camp of Vlademer, where she was received with the most gorgeous demonstrations of rejoicing. The whole army expressed their gratification by all the utterances of triumph. The ceremony of baptism was immediately performed in the church of St. Basil, in the city of Cherson, and then, at the same hour, the marriage rites with the princess were solemnized. Vlademer ordered a large church to be built at

Cherson in memory of his visit. He then returned to Kief, taking with him some preachers of distinction; a communion service wrought in the most graceful proportions of Grecian art, and several exquisite specimens of statuary and sculpture, to inspire his subjects with a love for the beautiful.

He accepted the Christian teachers as his guides, and devoted himself with extraordinary zeal to the work of persuading all his subjects to renounce their idol-worship and accept Christianity. Every measure was adopted to throw contempt upon paganism. The idols were collected and burned in huge bonfires. The sacred statue of Péroune, the most illustrious of the pagan Gods, was dragged ignominiously through the streets, pelted with mud and scourged with whips, until at last, battered and defaced, it was dragged to the top of a precipice and tumbled headlong into the river, amidst the derision and hootings of the multitude.

Our zealous new convert now issued a decree to all the people of Russia, rich and poor, lords and slaves, to repair to the river in the vicinity of Kief to be baptized. At an appointed day the people assembled by thousands on the banks of the Dnieper. Vlademer at length appeared, accompanied by a great number of Greek priests. The signal being given, the whole multitude, men, women and children, waded slowly into the stream. Some boldly advanced out up to their necks in the water; others, more timid, ventured only waist deep. Fathers and mothers led their children by the hand. The priests, standing upon the shore, read the baptismal prayers, and chaunted the praises of God, and then

conferred the name of Christians upon these barbarians. The multitude then came up from the water.

Vlademer was in a transport of joy. His strange soul was not insensible to the sublimity of the hour and of the scene. Raising his eyes to heaven he uttered the following prayer:

"Creator of heaven and earth, extend thy blessing to these thy new children. May they know thee as the true God, and be strengthened by thee in the true religion. Come to my help against the temptations of the evil spirit, and I will praise thy name."

Thus, in the year 988, paganism was, by a blow, demolished in Russia, and nominal Christianity introduced throughout the whole realm. A Christian church was erected upon the spot where the statue of Péroune had stood. Architects were brought from Constantinople to build churches of stone in the highest artistic style. Missionaries were sent throughout the whole kingdom, to instruct the people in the doctrines of Christianity, and to administer the rite of baptism. Nearly all the people readily received the new faith. Some, however, attached to the ancient idolatry, refused to abandon it. Vlademer, nobly recognizing the rights of conscience, resorted to no measures of violence. The idolaters were left undisturbed save by the teachings of the missionaries. Thus for several generations idolatry held a lingering life in the remote sections of the empire. Schools were established for the instruction of the young, learned teachers from Greece secured, and books of Christian biography translated into the Russian tongue.



Vlademer had then ten sons. Three others were afterwards born to him. He divided his kingdom into ten provinces or states, over each of which he placed one of these sons as governor. On the frontiers of the empire he caused cities, strongly fortified, to be erected as safeguards against the invasion of remote barbarians. For several years Russia enjoyed peace with but trivial interruptions. The character of Vlademer every year wonderfully improved. Under his Christian teachers he acquired more and more of the Christian spirit, and that spirit was infused into all his public acts. He became the father of his people, and especially the friend and helper of the poor. The king was deeply impressed with the words of our Saviour, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," and with the declaration of Solomon, "He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord."

In the excess of his zeal of benevolence he was disposed to forgive all criminals. Thus crime was greatly multiplied, and the very existence of the state became endangered. The clergy, in a body, remonstrated with him, assuring him that God had placed him upon the throne expressly that he might punish the wicked and thus protect the good. He felt the force of this reasoning, and instituted, though with much reluctance, a more rigorous government. War had been his passion. In this respect also his whole nature seemed to be changed, and nothing but the most dire necessity could lead him to an appeal to arms. The princess Anne appears to have been a sincere Christian, and to have exerted the most salutary influence upon the mind of

her husband. In the midst of these great measures of reform, sudden sickness seized Vlademer in his palace, and he died, in the year 1015, so unexpectedly that he appointed no successor. His death caused universal lamentations, and thousands crowded to the church of Notre Dame, to take a last look of their beloved sovereign, whose body reposed there for a time in state, in a marble coffin. The remains were then deposited by the side of his last wife, the Christian princess Anne, who had died a few years before. The Russian historian, Karamsin, says:

"This prince, whom the church has recognized as equal to the apostles, merits from history the title of Great. It is God alone who can know whether Vlademer was a true Christian at heart, or if he were influenced simply by political considerations. It is sufficient for us to state that, after having embraced that divine religion, Vlademer appears to have been sanctified by it, and he developed a totally different character from that which he exhibited when involved in the darkness of paganism."

One of the sons of Vlademer, whose name was Sviatopolk, chanced to be at Kief at the time of his father's death. He resolved to usurp the throne and to cause the assassination of all the brothers from whom he could fear any opposition. Three of his brothers speedily fell victims to his bloody perfidy. Yaroslaf, who had been entrusted with the feudal government of Novgorod, being informed of the death of his father, of the usurpation of Sviatopolk and of the assassination of three of his brothers, raised an army of forty thousand men and marched upon Kief.

Sviatopolk, informed of his approach, hastened, with all his troops to meet him. The two armies encountered each other upon the banks of the Dnieper about one hundred and fifty miles above Kief. The river separated them, and neither dared to attempt to cross in the presence of the other. Several weeks passed, the two camps thus facing each other, without any collision.

At length Yaroslaf, with the Novgorodians, crossed the stream stealthily and silently in a dark night, and fell fiercely upon the sleeping camp of Sviatopolk. His troops, thus taken by surprise, fought for a short time desperately. They were however soon cut to pieces or dispersed, and Sviatopolk, himself, saved his life only by precipitate flight. Yaroslaf, thus signally victorious, continued his march, without further opposition, to Kief, and entered the capital in triumph. Sviatopolk fled to Poland, secured the coöperation of the Polish king, whose daughter he had married, returned with a numerous army, defeated his brother in a sanguinary battle, drove him back to Novgorod, and again, with flying banners, took possession of Kief. The path of history now leads us through the deepest sloughs of perfidy and crime. Two of the sisters of Yaroslaf were found in Kief. One of them had previously refused the hand of the king of Poland. The barbarian in revenge seized her as his concubine. Sviatopolk, jealous of the authority which his father-in-law claimed, and which he could enforce by means of the Polish army, administered poison in the food of the troops. A terrible and unknown disease broke out in the camp, and thousands perished. The wretch even attempted

to poison his father-in-law, but the crime was suspected, and the Polish king, Boleslas, fled to his own realms.

Sviatopolk was thus again left so helpless as to invite attack. Yaroslaf with eagerness availed himself of the opportunity. Raising a new army, he marched upon Kief, retook the city and drove his brother again into exile. The energetic yet miserable man fled to the banks of the Volga, where he formed a large army of the ferocious Petchénègues, exciting their cupidity with promises of boundless pillage. With these wolfish legions, he commenced his march back again upon his own country. The terrible encounter took place on the banks of the Alta. Russian historians describe the conflict as one of the most fierce in which men have ever engaged. The two armies precipitated themselves upon each other with the utmost fury, breast to breast, swords, javelins and clubs clashing against brazen shields. The Novgorodians had taken a solemn oath that they would conquer or die. Three times the combatants from sheer exhaustion ceased the strife. Three times the deadly combat was renewed with redoubled ardor. The sky was illumined with the first rays of the morning when the battle commenced. The evening twilight was already darkening the field before the victory was decided. The hordes of the wretched Sviatopolk were then driven in rabble rout from the field, leaving the ground covered with the slain. The defeat was so awful that Sviatopolk was plunged into utter despair. Half dead with terror, tortured by remorse, and pursued by the frown of Heaven, he fled into the deserts of Bohemia,

where he miserably perished, an object of universal execration. In the annals of Russia the surname of *miserable* is ever affixed to this infamous prince.

Yaroslaf, thus crowned by victory, received the undisputed title of sovereign of Russia. It was now the year 1020. For several years Yaroslaf reigned in prosperity. There were occasional risings of barbaric tribes, which, by force of arms, he speedily quelled. Much time and treasure were devoted to the embellishment of the capital; churches were erected; the city was surrounded by brick walls; institutions of learning were encouraged, and, most important of all, the Bible was translated into the Russian language. It is recorded that the king devoutly read the Scriptures himself, both morning and evening, and took great interest in copying the sacred books with his own hands.

The closing years of life this illustrious prince passed in repose and in the exercises of piety, while he still continued, with unintermitted zeal, to watch over the welfare of the state. Nearly all the pastors of the churches were Greeks from Constantinople, and Yaroslaf, apprehensive that the Greeks might acquire too much influence in the empire, made great efforts to raise up Russian ecclesiastics, and to place them in the most important posts. At length the last hours of the monarch arrived, and it was evident that death was near. He assembled his children around his bed, four sons and five daughters, and thus affectingly addressed them:

"I am about to leave the world. I trust that you, my dear

children, will not only remember that you are brothers and sisters, but that you will cherish for each other the most tender affection. Ever bear in mind that discord among you will be attended with the most funereal results, and that it will be destructive of the prosperity of the state. By peace and tranquillity alone can its power be consolidated.

"Ysiaslaf will be my successor to ascend the throne of Kief. Obey him as you have obeyed your father. I give Tchernigof to Sviatoslaf; Pereaslavle to Vsevolod; and Smolensk to Viatcheslaf. I hope that each of you will be satisfied with his inheritance. Your oldest brother, in his quality of sovereign prince, will be your natural judge. He will protect the oppressed and punish the guilty."

On the 19th of February, 1054, Yaroslaf died, in the seventy-first year of his age. His subjects followed his remains in tears to the tomb, in the church of St. Sophia, where his marble monument, carved by Grecian artists, is still shown. Influenced by a superstition common in those days, he caused the bones of Oleg and Yaropolk, the two murdered brothers of Vlademer, who had perished in the errors of paganism, to be disinterred, baptized, and then consigned to Christian burial in the church of Kief. He established the first public school in Russia, where three hundred young men, sons of the priests and nobles, received instruction in all those branches which would prepare them for civil or ecclesiastical life. Ambitious of making Kief the rival of Constantinople, he expended large sums in its decoration.

Grecian artists were munificently patronized, and paintings and mosaics of exquisite workmanship added attraction to churches reared in the highest style of existing art. He even sent to Greece for singers, that the church choirs might be instructed in the richest utterances of music. He drew up a code of laws, called Russian Justice, which, for that dark age, is a marvelous monument of sagacity, comprehensive views and equity.

The death of Yaroslaf proved an irreparable calamity; for his successor was incapable of leading on in the march of civilization, and the realm was soon distracted by civil war. It is a gloomy period, of three hundred years, upon which we now must enter, while violence, crime, and consequently misery, desolated the land. It is worthy of record that Nestor attributes the woes which ensued, to the general forgetfulness of God, and the impiety which commenced the reign immediately after the death of Yaroslaf.

"God is just," writes the historian. "He punishes the Russians for their sins. We dare to call ourselves Christians, and yet we live like idolaters. Although multitudes throng every place of entertainment, although the sound of trumpets and harps resounds in our houses, and mountebanks exhibit their tricks and dances, the temples of God are empty, surrendered to solitude and silence."

Bands of barbarians invaded Russia from the distant regions of the Caspian Sea, plundering, killing and burning. They came suddenly, like the thunder-cloud in a summer's day, and

as suddenly disappeared where no pursuit could find them. Ambitious nobles, descendants of former kings, plied all the arts of perfidy and of assassination to get possession of different provinces of the empire, each hoping to make his province central and to extend his sway over all the rest of Russia. The brothers of Ysiaslaf became embroiled, and drew the sword against each other. An insurrection was excited in Kief, the populace besieged the palace, and the king saved his life only by a precipitate abandonment of his capital. The military mob pillaged the palace and proclaimed their chieftain, Vseslaf, king.

Ysiaslaf fled to Poland. The Polish king, Boleslas II., who was a grandson of Vlademer, and who had married a Russian princess, received the fugitive king with the utmost kindness. With a strong Polish army, accompanied by the King of Poland, Ysiaslaf returned to Kief, to recover his capital by the sword. The insurgent chief who had usurped the throne, in cowardly terror fled. Ysiaslaf entered the city with the stern strides of a conqueror and wreaked horrible vengeance upon the inhabitants, making but little discrimination between the innocent and the guilty. Seventy were put to death. A large number had their eyes plucked out; and for a long time the city resounded with the cries of the victims, suffering under all kinds of punishments from the hands of this implacable monarch. Thus the citizens were speedily brought into abject submission. The Polish king, with his army, remained a long time at Kief, luxuriating in every indulgence at the expense of the inhabitants. He then returned to



his own country laden with riches.

Ysiaslaf re-ascended the throne, having been absent ten months. Disturbances of a similar character agitated the provinces which were under the government of the brothers of Ysiaslaf, and which had assumed the authority and dignity of independent kingdoms. Thus all Russia was but an arena of war, a volcanic crater of flame and blood. Three years of conflict and woe passed away, when two of the brothers of Ysiaslaf united their armies and marched against him; and again he was compelled to seek a refuge in Poland. He carried with him immense treasure, hoping thus again to engage the services of the Polish army. But Boleslas infamously robbed him of his treasure, and then, to use an expression of Nestor, "*showed him the way out of his kingdom.*"

The woe-stricken exile fled to Germany, and entreated the interposition of the emperor, Henry IV., promising to reward him with immense treasure, and to hold the crown of Russia as tributary to the German empire. The emperor was excited by the alluring offer, and sent ambassadors to Sviatoslaf, now enthroned at Kief, ostensibly to propose reconciliation, but in reality to ascertain what the probability was of success in a warlike expedition to so remote a kingdom. The ambassadors returned with a very discouraging report.

The banished prince thus disappointed, turned his steps to Rome, and implored the aid of Gregory VII., that renowned pontiff, who was ambitious of universal sovereignty, and who had

assumed the title of King of kings. Ysiaslaf, in his humiliation, was ready to renounce his fidelity to the Greek church, and also the dignity of an independent prince. He promised, in consideration of the support of the pope, to recognize not only the spiritual power of Rome, but also the temporal authority of the pontiff. He also entered bitter complaints against the King of Poland. Ysiaslaf did not visit Rome in person, but sent his son to confer with the pope. Gregory, rejoiced to acquire spiritual dominion over Russia, received the application in the most friendly manner, and sent ambassadors to the fugitive prince with the following letter:

"Gregory, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to Ysiaslaf, prince of the Russians, safety, health and the apostolic benediction.

"Your son, after having visited the sacred places at Rome, has humbly implored that he might be reëstablished in his possessions by the authority of Saint Peter, and has given his solemn vow to be faithful to the chief of the apostles. We have consented to grant his request, which we understand is in accordance with your wishes; and we, in the name of the chief of the apostles, confer upon him the government of the Russian kingdom.

"We pray that Saint Peter may preserve your health, that he will protect your reign and your estates, even to the end of your life, and that you may then enjoy a day of eternal glory.

"Wishing also to give a proof of our desire to be useful to

you hereafter, we have charged our ambassadors, one of whom is your faithful friend, to treat with you verbally upon all those subjects alluded to in your communication to us. Receive them with kindness as the ambassadors of Saint Peter, and receive without restriction all the propositions they may make in our name.

"May God, the all-powerful, illumine your heart with divine light and with temporal blessings, and conduct you to eternal glory. Given at Rome the 15th of May, in the year 1075."

Thus adroitly the pope assumed the sovereignty of Russia, and the right, and the power, by the mere utterance of a word, to confer it upon whom he would. The all-grasping pontiff thus annexed Russia to the domains of Saint Peter. Another short letter Gregory wrote to the King of Poland. It was as follows:

"In appropriating to yourself illegally the treasures of the Russian prince, you have violated the Christian virtues. I conjure you, in the name of God, to restore to him all the property of which you and your subjects have deprived him; for robbers can never enter the kingdom of heaven unless they first restore the plunder they have taken."

Fortunately for the fugitive prince, his usurping brother Sviatoslaf just at this time died, in consequence of a severe surgical operation. The Polish king appears to have refunded the treasure of which he had robbed the exiled monarch, and Ysiaslaf, hiring an army of Polish mercenaries, returned a second time in triumph to his capital. It does not appear that he

subsequently paid any regard to the interposition of the pope.

We have now but a long succession of conspiracies, insurrections and battles. In one of these civil conflicts, Ysiaslaf, at the head of a formidable force, met another powerful army, but a few leagues from Kief. In the hottest hour of the battle a reckless cavalier, in the hostile ranks, perceiving Ysiaslaf in the midst of his infantry, precipitated himself on him, pierced him with his lance and threw him dead upon the ground. His body was conveyed in a canoe to Kief, and buried with much funeral pomp in the church of Notre Dame, by the side of the beautiful monument which had been erected to the memory of Vlademer.

Ysiaslaf expunged from the Russian code of laws the death penalty, and substituted, in its stead, heavy fines. The Russian historians, however, record that it is impossible to decide whether this measure was the dictate of humanity, or if he wished in this way to replenish his treasury.

Vsevolod succeeded to the throne of his brother Ysiaslaf in the year 1078. The children of Ysiaslaf had provinces assigned them in appanage. Vsevolod was a lover of peace, and yet devastation and carnage were spread everywhere before his eyes. Every province in the empire was torn by civil strife. Hundreds of nobles and princes were inflamed with the ambition for supremacy, and with the sword alone could the path be cut to renown. The wages offered the soldiers, on all sides, was pillage. Cities were everywhere sacked and burned, and the realm was crimsoned with blood. Civil war is necessarily followed

by the woes of famine, which woes are ever followed by the pestilence. The plague swept the kingdom with terrific violence, and whole provinces were depopulated. In the city of Kief alone, seven thousand perished in the course of ten weeks. Universal terror, and superstitious fear spread through the nation. An earthquake indicated that the world itself was trembling in alarm; an enormous serpent was reported to have been seen falling from heaven; invisible and malignant spirits were riding by day and by night through the streets of the cities, wounding the citizens with blows which, though unseen, were heavy and murderous, and by which blows many were slain. All hearts sank in gloom and fear. Barbarian hordes ravaged both banks of the Dnieper, committing towns and villages to the flames, and killing such of the inhabitants as they did not wish to carry away as captives.

Vsevolod, an amiable man of but very little force of character, was crushed by the calamities which were overwhelming his country. Not an hour of tranquillity could he enjoy. It was the ambition of his nephews, ambitious, energetic, unprincipled princes, struggling for the supremacy, which was mainly the cause of all these disasters.

# CHAPTER IV

## YEARS OF WAR AND WOE

**From 1092 to 1167**

Character of Vsevolod.—Succession of Sviatopolk.—His Discomfiture.—Deplorable Condition of Russia.—Death of Sviatopolk.—His Character.—Accession of Monomaque.—Curious Festival at Kief.—Energy of Monomaque.—Alarm of the Emperor at Constantinople.—Horrors of War.—Death of Monomaque.—His Remarkable Character.—Pious Letter to his Children.—Accession of Mstislaf.—His Short but Stormy Reign.—Struggles for the Throne.—Final Victory of Ysiaslaf.—Moscow in the Province of Souzdal.—Death of Ysiaslaf.—Wonderful Career of Rostislaf.—Rising Power of Moscow.—Georgievitch, Prince of Moscow.

Vsevolod has the reputation of having been a man of piety. But he was quite destitute of that force of character which one required to hold the helm in such stormy times. He was a man of great humanity and of unblemished morals. The woes which desolated his realms, and which he was utterly unable to avert, crushed his spirit and hastened his death. Perceiving that his

dying hour was at hand, he sent for his two sons, Vlademer and Rostislaf, and the sorrowing old man breathed his last in their arms.

Vsevolod was the favorite son of Yaroslaf the Great, and his father, with his dying breath, had expressed the wish that Vsevolod, when death should come to him, might be placed in the tomb by his side. These affectionate wishes of the dying father were gratified, and the remains of Vsevolod were deposited, with the most imposing ceremonies of those days, in the church of Saint Sophia, by the side of those of his father. The people, forgetting his weakness and remembering only his amiability, wept at his burial.

Vlademer, the eldest son of Vsevolod, with great magnanimity surrendered the crown to his cousin Sviatopolk, saying,

"His father was older than mine, and reigned at Kief before my father. I wish to avoid dissension and the horrors of civil war."

He then proclaimed Sviatopolk sovereign of Russia. The new sovereign had been feudal lord of the province of Novgorod; he, however, soon left his northern capital to take up his residence in the more imperial palaces of Kief. But disaster seemed to be the doom of Russia, and the sounds of rejoicing which attended his accession to the throne had hardly died away ere a new scene of woe burst upon the devoted land.

The young king was rash and headstrong. He provoked the ire of one of the strong neighboring provinces, which was under the sway of an energetic feudal prince, ostensibly a vassal of the

crown, but who, in his pride and power, arrogated independence. The banners of a hostile army were soon approaching Kief. Sviatopolk marched heroically to meet them. A battle was fought, in which he and his army were awfully defeated. Thousands were driven by the conquerors into a stream, swollen by the rains, where they miserably perished. The fugitives, led by Sviatopolk, in dismay fled back to Kief and took refuge behind the walls of the city. The enemy pressed on, ravaging, with the most cruel desolation, the whole region around Kief, and in a second battle conquered the king and drove him out of his realms. The whole of southern Russia was abandoned to barbaric destruction. Nestor gives a graphic sketch of the misery which prevailed:

"One saw everywhere," he writes, "villages in flames; churches, houses, granaries were reduced to heaps of ashes; and the unfortunate citizens were either expiring beneath the blows of their enemies, or were awaiting death with terror. Prisoners, half naked, were dragged in chains to the most distant and savage regions. As they toiled along, they said, weeping, one to another, *'I am from such a village, and I from such a village.* No horses or cattle were to be seen upon our plains. The fields were abandoned to weeds, and ferocious beasts ranged the places but recently occupied by Christians."

The whole reign of Sviatopolk, which continued until the year 1113, was one continued storm of war. It would only weary the reader to endeavor to disentangle the labyrinth of confusion, and



to describe the ebbings and floodings of battle. Every man's hand was against his neighbor; and friends to-day were foes to-morrow. Sviatopolk himself was one of the most imperfect of men. He was perfidious, ungrateful and suspicious; haughty in prosperity, mean and cringing in adversity. His religion was the inspiration of superstition and cowardice, not of intelligence and love. Whenever he embarked upon any important expedition, he took an ecclesiastic to the tomb of Saint Theodosius, there to implore the blessing of Heaven. If successful in the enterprise, he returned to the tomb to give thanks. This was the beginning and the end of his piety. Without any scruple he violated the most sacred laws of morality. The marriage vow was entirely disregarded, and he was ever ready to commit any crime which would afford gratification to his passions, or which would advance his interests.

The death of Sviatopolk occurred in a season of general anarchy, and it was uncertain who would seize the throne. The citizens of Kief met in solemn and anxious assembly, and offered the crown to an illustrious noble, Monomaque, a brother of Sviatopolk, and a man who had acquired renown in many enterprises of most desperate daring. In truth it required energy and courage of no ordinary character for a man at that time to accept the crown. Innumerable assailants would immediately fall upon him, putting to the most imminent peril not only the crown, but the head which wore it. By the Russian custom of descent, the crown incontestably belonged to the oldest son of

Sviatoslaf, and Monomaque, out of regard to his rights, declined the proffered gift. This refusal was accompanied by the most melancholy results. A terrible tumult broke out in the city. There was no arm of law sufficiently powerful to restrain the mob, and anarchy, with all its desolation, reigned for a time triumphant. A deputation of the most influential citizens of Kief was immediately sent to Monomaque, with the most earnest entreaty that he would hasten to rescue them and their city from the impending ruin. The heroic prince could not turn a deaf ear to this appeal. He hastened to the city, where his presence, combined with the knowledge which all had of his energy and courage, at once appeased the tumult. He ascended the throne, greeted by the acclamations of the whole city. No opposition ventured to manifest itself, and Monomaque was soon in the undisputed possession of power.

Nothing can give one a more vivid idea of the state of the times than the festivals appointed in honor of the new reign as described by the ancient annalists. The bones of two saints were transferred from one church to another in the city. A magnificent coffin of silver, embellished with gold, precious stones, and *bas reliefs*, so exquisitely carved as to excite the admiration even of the Grecian artists, contained the sacred relics, and excited the wonder and veneration of the whole multitude. The imposing ceremony drew to Kief the princes, the clergy, the lords, the warriors, even, from the most distant parts of the empire. The gates of the city and the streets were encumbered with such

multitudes that, in order to open a passage for the clergy with the sarcophagus, the monarch caused cloths, garments, precious furs and pieces of silver to be scattered to draw away the throng. A luxurious feast was given to the princes, and, for three days, all the poor of the city were entertained at the expense of the public treasure.

Monomaque now fitted out sundry expeditions under his enterprising son to extend the territories of Russia and to bring tumultuous tribes and nations into subjection and order. His son Mstislaf was sent into the country of the Tchoudes, now Livonia, on the shores of the Baltic. He overran the territory, seized the capital and established order. His son Vsevolod, who was stationed at Novgorod, made an expedition into Finland. His army experienced inconceivable sufferings in that cold, inhospitable clime. Still they overawed the inhabitants and secured tranquillity. Another son, Georges, marched to the Volga, embarked his army in a fleet of barges, and floated along the stream to eastern Bulgaria, conquered an army raised to oppose him, and returned to his principality laden with booty. Another son, Yaropolk, assailed the tumultuous tribes upon the Don. Brilliant success accompanied his enterprise. Among his captives he found one maiden of such rare beauty that he made her his wife. At the same time the kingdom of Russia was invaded by barbarous hordes from the shores of the Caspian. Monomaque himself headed an army and assailed the invaders with such impetuosity that they were driven, with much loss,

back again to their wilds.

The military renown Monomaque thus attained made his name a terror even to the most distant tribes, and, for a time, held in awe those turbulent spirits who had been filling the world with violence. Elated by his conquests, Monomaque fitted out an expedition to Greece. A large army descended the Dnieper, took possession of Thrace, and threatened Adrianople. The emperor, in great alarm, sent ambassadors to Monomaque with the most precious presents. There was a cornelian exquisitely cut and set, a golden chain and necklace, a crown of gold, and, most precious of all, a crucifix made of wood of the true cross! The metropolitan bishop of Ephesus, who was sent with these presents, was authorized, in the name of the church and of the empire, to place the crown upon the brow of Monomaque in gorgeous coronation in the cathedral church of Kief, and to proclaim Monomaque Emperor of Russia. This crown, called the *golden bonnet of Monomaque*, is still preserved in the Museum of Antiquities at Moscow.

These were dark and awful days. Horrible as war now is, it was then attended with woes now unknown. Gleb, prince of Minsk, with a ferocious band, attacked the city of Sloutsk; after a terrible scene of carnage, in which most of those capable of bearing arms were slain, the city was burned to ashes, and all the survivors, men, women and children, were driven off as captives to the banks of the Dwina, where they were incorporated with the tribe of their savage conqueror. In revenge, Monomaque sent his son

Yaropolk to Droutsk, one of the cities of Gleb. No pen can depict the horrors of the assault. After a few hours of dismay, shriekings and blood, the city was in ashes, and the wretched victims of man's pride and revenge were conducted to the vicinity of Kief, where they reared their huts, and in widowhood, orphanage and penury, commenced life anew. Gleb himself in this foray was taken prisoner, conducted to Kief, and detained there a captive until he died.

Monomaque reigned thirteen years, during which time he was incessantly engaged in wars with the audacious nobles of the provinces who refused to recognize his supremacy, and many of whom were equal to him in power. He died May 19, 1126, in the seventy-third year of his age, renowned, say the ancient annalists, for the splendor of his victories and the purity of his morals. He was fully conscious of the approach of death, and seems to have been sustained, in that trying hour, by the consolations of religion. He lived in an age of darkness and of tumult; but he was a man of prayer, and, according to the light he had, he walked humbly with God. Commending his soul to the Saviour he fell asleep. It is recorded that he was a man of such lively emotions that his voice often trembled, and his eyes were filled with tears as he implored God's blessing upon his distracted country. He wrote, just before his death, a long letter to his children, conceived in the most lovely spirit of piety. We have space but for a few extracts from these Christian counsels of a dying father. The whole letter, written on parchment, is still

preserved in the archives of the monarchy.

"The foundation of all virtue," he wrote, "is the fear of God and the love of man. O my dear children, praise God and love your fellow-men. It is not fasting, it is not solitude, it is not a monastic life which will secure for you the divine approval—it is doing good to your fellow-creatures alone. Never forget the poor. Take care of them, and ever remember that your wealth comes from God, and that it is only intrusted to you for a short time. Do not hoard up your riches; that is contrary to the precepts of the Saviour. Be a father to the orphans, the protectors of widows, and never permit the powerful to oppress the weak. Never take the name of God in vain, and never violate your oath. Do not envy the triumph of the wicked, or the success of the impious; but abstain from everything that is wrong. Banish from your hearts all the suggestions of pride, and remember that we are all perishable—to-day full of life, to-morrow in the tomb. Regard with horror, falsehood, intemperance and impurity—vices equally dangerous to the body and to the soul. Treat aged men with the same respect with which you would treat your parents, and love all men as your brothers.

"When you make a journey in your provinces, do not suffer the members of your suite to inflict the least injury upon the inhabitants. Treat with particular respect strangers, of whatever quality, and if you can not confer upon them favors, treat them with a spirit of benevolence, since, upon the manner with which they are treated, depends the evil or good report which they

will take back with them to their own land. Salute every one whom you meet. Love your wives, but do not permit them to govern you. When you have learned any thing useful, endeavor to imprint it upon your memory, and be always seeking to acquire information. My father spoke five languages, a fact which excited the admiration of strangers.

"Guard against idleness, which is the mother of all vices. Man ought always to be occupied. When you are traveling on horseback, instead of allowing your mind to wander upon vain thoughts, recite your prayers, or, at least, repeat the shortest and best of them all: '*Oh, Lord, have mercy upon us.*' Never retire at night without falling upon your knees before God in prayer, and never let the sun find you in your bed. Always go to church at an early hour in the morning to offer to God the homage of your first and freshest thoughts. This was the custom of my father and of all the pious people who surrounded him. With the first rays of the sun they praised the Lord, and exclaimed, with fervor, '*Condescend, O Lord, with thy divine light to illumine my soul.*'"

The faults of Monomaque were those of his age, *non vitia hominis, sed vitia sæculi*; but his virtues were truly Christian, and it can hardly be doubted that, as his earthly crown dropped from his brow, he received a brighter crown in heaven. The devastations of the barbarians in that day were so awful, burning cities and churches, and massacring women and children, that they were regarded as enemies of the human race, and were pursued with exterminating vengeance.

Monomaque left several children and a third wife. One of his wives, Gyda, was a daughter of Harold, King of England. His oldest son, Mstislaf, succeeded to the crown. His brothers received, as their inheritance, the government of extensive provinces. The new monarch, inheriting the energies and the virtues of his illustrious sire, had long been renowned. The barbarians, east of the Volga, as soon as they heard of the death of Monomaque, thought that Russia would fall an easy prey to their arms. In immense numbers they crossed the river, spreading far and wide the most awful devastation. But Mstislaf fell upon them with such impetuosity that they were routed with great slaughter and driven back to their wilds. Their chastisement was so severe that, for a long time, they were intimidated from any further incursions. With wonderful energy, Mstislaf attacked many of the tributary nations, who had claimed a sort of independence, and who were ever rising in insurrection. He speedily brought them into subjection to his sway, and placed over them rulers devoted to his interests. In the dead of winter an expedition was marched against the Tchoudes, who inhabited the southern shores of the bay of Finland. The men were put to death, the cities and villages burned; the women and children were brought away as captives and incorporated with the Russian people.

Mstislaf reigned but about four years, when he suddenly died in the sixtieth year of his age. His whole reign was an incessant warfare with insurgent chiefs and barbarian invaders. There is



an awful record, at this time, of the scourge of famine added to the miseries of war. All the northern provinces suffered terribly from this frown of God. Immense quantities of snow covered the ground even to the month of May. The snow then melted suddenly with heavy rains, deluging the fields with water, which slowly retired, converting the country into a wide-spread marsh. It was very late before any seed could be sown. The grain had but just begun to sprout when myriads of locusts appeared, devouring every green thing. A heavy frost early in the autumn destroyed the few fields the locusts had spared, and then commenced the horrors of a universal famine. Men, women and children, wasted and haggard, wandered over the fields seeking green leaves and roots, and dropped dead in their wanderings. The fields and the public places were covered with putrefying corpses which the living had not strength to bury. A fetid miasma, ascending from this cause, added pestilence to famine, and woes ensued too awful to be described.

Immediately after the death of Mstislaf, the inhabitants of Kief assembled and invited his brother Vladimirovitch to assume the crown. This prince then resided at Novgorod, which city he at once left for the capital. He proved to be a feeble prince, and the lords of the remote principalities, assuming independence, bade defiance to his authority. There was no longer any central power, and Russia, instead of being a united kingdom, became a conglomeration of antagonistic states; every feudal lord marshaling his serfs in warfare against his neighbor.

In the midst of this state of universal anarchy, caused by the weakness of a virtuous prince who had not sufficient energy to reign, Vladimirovitch died in 1139.

The death of the king was a signal for a general outbreak—a multitude of princes rushing to seize the crown. Viatcheslaf, prince of a large province called Pereiaslavle, was the first to reach Kief with his army. The inhabitants of the city, to avoid the horrors of war, marched in procession to meet him, and conducted him in triumph to the throne. Viatcheslaf had hardly grasped the scepter and stationed his army within the walls, when from the steeples of the city the banners of another advancing host were seen gleaming in the distance, and soon the tramp of their horsemen, and the defiant tones of the trumpet were heard, as another and far more mighty host encircled the city. This new army was led by Vsevolod, prince of a province called Vouychegorod. Viatcheslaf, convinced of the impossibility of resisting such a power as Vsevolod had brought against Kief, immediately consented to retire, and to surrender the throne to his more powerful rival. Vsevolod entered the city in triumph and established himself firmly in power.

There is nothing of interest to be recorded during his reign of seven years, save that Russia was swept by incessant billows of flame and blood. The princes of the provinces were ever rising against his authority. Combinations were formed to dethrone the king, and the king formed combinations to crush his enemies. The Hungarians, the Swedes, the Danes, the Poles, all made war

against this energetic prince; but with an iron hand he smote them down. Toil and care soon exhausted his frame, and he was prostrate on his dying bed. Bequeathing his throne to his brother Igor, he died, leaving behind him the reputation of having been one of the most energetic of the kings of this blood deluged land.

Igor was fully conscious of the perils he thus inherited. He was very unpopular with the inhabitants of Kief, and loud murmurs greeted his accession to power. A conspiracy was formed among the most influential inhabitants of Kief, and a secret embassy was sent to the grand prince, Ysiaslaf, a descendant of Monomaque, inviting him to come, and with their aid, take possession of the throne. The prince attended the summons with alacrity, and marched with a powerful army to Kief. Igor was vanquished in a sanguinary battle, taken captive, imprisoned in a convent, and Ysiaslaf became the nominal monarch of Russia.

Sviatoslaf, the brother of Igor, overwhelmed with anguish in view of his brother's fall and captivity, traversed the expanse of Russia to enlist the sympathies of the distant princes, to march for the rescue of the captive. He was quite successful. An allied army was soon raised, and, under determined leaders, was on the march for Kief. The king, Ysiaslaf, with his troops, advanced to meet them. In the meantime Igor, crushed by misfortune, and hopeless of deliverance, sought solace for his woes in religion. "For a long time," said he, "I have desired to consecrate my heart to God. Even in the height of prosperity this was my strongest

wish. What can be more proper for me now that I am at the very gates of the tomb?" For eight days he laid in his cell, expecting every moment to breathe his last. He then, reviving a little, received the tonsure from the hands of the bishop, and renouncing the world, and all its cares and ambitions, devoted himself to the prayers and devotions of the monk.

The king pressed Sviatoslaf with superior forces, conquered him in several battles, and drove him, a fugitive, into dense forests, and into distant wilds. Sviatoslaf, like his brother, weary of the storms of life, also sought the solace which religion affords to the weary and the heart-stricken. Pursued by his relentless foe, he came to a little village called Moscow, far back in the interior. This is the first intimation history gives of this now renowned capital of the most extensive monarchy upon the globe. A prince named Georges reigned here, over the extensive province then called Souzdal, who received the fugitive with heartfelt sympathy. Aided by Georges and several of the surrounding princes, another army was raised, and Sviatoslaf commenced a triumphal march, sweeping all opposition before him, until he arrived a conqueror before the walls of Novgorod.

The people of Kief, enraged by this success of the foe of their popular king, rose in a general tumult, burst into a convent where Igor was found at his devotions, tied a rope about his neck, and dragged him, a mutilated corpse, through the streets.

The king, Ysiaslaf, called for a *levy en masse*, of the inhabitants of Kief, summoned distant feudal barons with their

armies to his banner, and marched impetuously to meet the conquering foe. Fierce battles ensued, in which Sviatoslaf was repeatedly vanquished, and retreated to Souzdal again to appeal to Georges for aid. Ysiaslaf summoned the Novgorodians before him, and in the following energetic terms addressed them:

"My brethren," said he, "Georges, the prince of Souzdal, has insulted Novgorod. I have left the capital of Russia to defend you. Do you wish to prosecute the war? The sword is in my hands. Do you desire peace? I will open negotiations."

"War, war," the multitude shouted. "You are our monarch, and we will all follow you, from the youngest to the oldest."

A vast army was immediately assembled on the shores of the lake of Ilmen, near the city of Novgorod, which commenced its march of three hundred miles, to the remote realms of Souzdal. Georges was unprepared to meet them. He fled, surrendering his country to be ravaged by the foe. His cities and villages were burned, and seven thousand of his subjects were carried captive to Kief. But Georges was not a man to bear such a calamity meekly. He speedily succeeded in forming an alliance with the barbarian nations around him, and burning with rage, followed the army of the retiring foe. He overtook them near the city of Periaslavle. It was the evening of the 23d of August. The unclouded sun was just sinking at the close of a sultry day, and the vesper chants were floating through the temples of the city. The storm of war burst as suddenly as the thunder peals of an autumnal tempest. The result was most awful and fatal to

the king. His troops were dispersed and cut to pieces. Ysiaslaf himself with difficulty escaped and reached the ramparts of Kief. The terrified inhabitants entreated him not to remain, as his presence would only expose the city to the horror of being taken by storm.

"Our fathers, our brothers, our sons," they said, "are dead upon the field of battle, or are in chains. We have no arms. Generous prince, do not expose the capital of Russia to pillage. Flee for a time to your remote principalities, there to gather a new army. You know that we will never rest contented under the government of Georges. We will rise in revolt against him, as soon as we shall see your standards approaching."

Ysiaslaf fled, first to Smolensk, some three hundred miles distant, and thence traversed his principalities seeking aid. Georges entered Kief in triumph. Calling his warriors around him, he assigned to them the provinces which he had wrested from the feudal lords of the king.

Hungary, Bohemia and Poland then consisted of barbaric peoples just emerging into national existence. The King of Hungary had married Euphrosine, the youngest sister of Ysiaslaf. He immediately sent to his brother-in-law ten thousand cavaliers. The Kings of Bohemia and of Poland also entered into an alliance with the exiled prince, and in person led the armies which they contributed to his aid. A war of desperation ensued. It was as a conflict between the tiger and the lion.

The annals of those dark days contained but a weary recital of

deeds of violence, blood and woe, which for ten years desolated the land. All Russia was roused. Every feudal lord was leading his vassals to the field. There were combinations and counter-combinations innumerable. Cities were taken and retaken; to-day, the banners of Ysiaslaf float upon the battlements of Kief, to-morrow, those banners are hewn down and the standards of Georges are unfurled to the breeze. Now, we see Ysiaslaf a fugitive, hopeless, in despair. Again, the rolling wheel of fortune raises him from his depression, and, with the strides of a conqueror, he pursues his foe, in his turn vanquished and woe-stricken. But

"The pomp of heraldry, the pride of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Alike await the inevitable hour;  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

Death, which Ysiaslaf had braved in a hundred battles, approached him by the slow but resistless march of disease. For a few days the monarch tossed in fevered restlessness on his bed at Kief, and then, from his life of incessant storms on earth, his spirit ascended to the God who gave it. Georges was, at that time, in the lowest state of humiliation. His armies had all perished, and he was wandering in exile, seeking new forces with which to renew the strife.

Rostislaf, grand prince of Novgorod, succeeded to the throne. But Georges, animated by the death of Ysiaslaf, soon found

enthusiastic adventurers rallying around his banners. He marched vigorously to Kief, drove Rostislaf from the capital and seized the scepter. But there was no lull in the tempest of human ambition. Georges had attained the throne by the energies of his sword, and, acting upon the principle that "to the victors belong the spoils," he had driven from their castles all the lords who had been supporters of the past administration. He had conferred their mansions and their territories upon his followers. Human nature has not materially changed. Those in office were fighting to retain their honors and emoluments. Those out of office were struggling to attain the posts which brought wealth and renown. The progress of civilization has, in our country, transferred this fierce battle from the field to the ballot-box. It is, indeed, a glorious change. The battle can be fought thus just as effectually, and infinitely more humanely. It has required the misery of nearly six thousand years to teach, even a few millions of mankind, that the ballot-box is a better instrument for political conflicts than the cartridge-box.

Armies were gathering in all directions to march upon Georges. He was now an old man, weary of war, and endeavored to bribe his foes to peace. He was, however, unsuccessful, and found it to be necessary again to lead his armies into the field. It was the 20th of March, 1157, when Georges, entering Kief in triumph, ascended the throne. On the 1st of May he dined with some of his lords. Immediately after dinner he was taken sick, and, after languishing a fortnight in ever-increasing debility, on



the 15th he died.

The inhabitants of Kief, regarding him as an usurper, rejoiced at his death, and immediately sent an embassy to Davidovitch, prince of Tchernigof, a province about one hundred and fifty miles north of Kief, inviting him to hasten to the capital and seize the scepter of Russia.

Kief, and all occidental Russia, thus ravaged by interminable wars, desolated by famine and by flame, was rapidly on the decline, and was fast lapsing into barbarism. Davidovitch had hardly ascended the throne ere he was driven from it by Rostislaf, whom Georges had dethroned. But the remote province of Souzdal, of which Moscow was the capital, situated some seven hundred miles north-east of Kief, was now emerging from barbaric darkness into wealth and civilization. The missionaries of Christ had penetrated those remote realms. Churches were reared, the gospel was preached, peace reigned, industry was encouraged, and, under their influence, Moscow was attaining that supremacy which subsequently made it the heart of the Russian empire.

The inhabitants of Kief received Rostislaf with demonstrations of joy, as they received every prince whom the fortunes of war imposed upon them, hoping that each one would secure for their unhappy city the blessings of tranquillity. Davidovitch fled to Moldavia. There was then in Moldavia, between the rivers Pruth and Sereth, a piratic city called Berlad. It was the resort of vagabonds of all nations and creeds, who

pillaged the shores of the Black Sea and plundered the boats ascending and descending the Danube and the Dnieper. These brigands, enriched by plunder and strengthened by accessions of desperadoes from every nation and every tribe, had bidden defiance both to the grand princes of Russia and the powers of the empire.

Eagerly these robber hordes engaged as auxiliaries of Davidovitch. In a tumultuous band they commenced their march to Kief. They were, however, repulsed by the energetic Rostislaf, and Davidovitch, with difficulty escaping from the sanguinary field, fled to Moscow and implored the aid of its independent prince, Georgievitch. The prince listened with interest to his representations, and, following the example of the more illustrious nations of modern times, thought it a good opportunity to enlarge his territories.

The city of Novgorod, capital of the extensive and powerful province of the same name, was some seven hundred miles north of Kief. It was not more than half that distance west of Moscow. The inhabitants were weary of anarchy and blood, and anxious to throw themselves into the arms of any prince who could secure for them tranquillity. The fruit was ripe and was ready to drop into the hands of Georgievitch. He sent word to the Novgorodians that he had decided to take their country under his protection—that he had no wish for war, but that if they manifested any resistance, he should subdue them by force of arms. The Novgorodians received the message with delight, rose

in insurrection, and seized their prince, who was the oldest son of Rostislaf, imprisoned him, his wife and children, in a convent, and with tumultuous joy received as their prince the nephew of Georgievitch. Rostislaf was so powerless that he made no attempt to avenge this insult. Davidovitch made one more desperate effort to obtain the throne. But he fell upon the field of battle, his head being cleft with a saber stroke.

# CHAPTER V

## MSTISLAF AND ANDRÉ

**From 1167 to 1212**

Centralization of Power at Kief.—Death of Rostislaf.  
—His Religious Character.—Mstislaf Ysiaslavitch  
Ascends the Throne.—Proclamation of the King.—  
Its Effect.—Plans of André.—Scenes at Kief.—Return  
and Death of Mstislaf.—War in Novgorod.—Peace  
Concluded Throughout Russia.—Insult of André and its  
Consequences.—Greatness of Soul Displayed by André.  
—Assassination of André.—Renewal of Anarchy.—  
Emigration from Novgorod.—Reign of Michel.—Vsevolod  
III.—Evangelization of Bulgaria.—Death of Vsevolod III.  
—His Queen Maria.

The prince of Souzdal watched the progress of events in occidental Russia with great interest. He saw clearly that war was impoverishing and ruining the country, and this led him to adopt the most wise and vigorous measures to secure peace within his own flourishing territories. He adopted the system of centralized power, keeping the reins of government firmly in his own hands, and appointing governors over remote provinces, who were

merely the executors of his will, and who were responsible to him for all their acts. At Kief the system of independent apanages prevailed. The lord placed at the head of a principality was an unlimited despot, accountable to no one but God for his administration. His fealty to the king consisted merely in an understanding that he was to follow the banner of the sovereign in case of war. But in fact, these feudal lords were more frequently found claiming entire independence, and struggling against their nominal sovereign to wrest from his hands the scepter.

Rostislaf was now far advanced in years. Conscious that death could not be far distant, he took a journey, though in very feeble health, to some of the adjacent provinces, hoping to induce them to receive his son as his successor. On this journey he died at Smolensk, the 14th of March, 1167. Religious thoughts had in his latter years greatly engrossed his attention. He breathed his last, praying with a trembling voice, and fixing his eyes devoutly on an image of the Saviour which he held devoutly in his hand. He exhibited many Christian virtues, and for many years manifested much solicitude that he might be prepared to meet God in judgment. The earnest remonstrances, alone, of his spiritual advisers, dissuaded him from abdicating the throne, and adopting the austerities of a monastic life. He was not a man of commanding character, but it is pleasant to believe that he was, though groping in much darkness, a sincere disciple of the Saviour, and that he passed from earth to join the spirits of the just made perfect in Heaven.

Mstislaf Ysiaslavitch, a nephew of the deceased king, ascended the throne. He had however uncles, nephews and brothers, who were quite disposed to dispute with him the possession of power, and soon civil war was raging all over the kingdom with renewed virulence. Several years of destruction and misery thus passed away, during which thousands of the helpless people perished in their blood, to decide questions of not the slightest moment to them. The doom of the peasants was alike poverty and toil, whether one lord or another lord occupied the castle which overshadowed their huts.

The Dnieper was then the only channel through which commerce could be conducted between Russia and the Greek empire. Barbaric nations inhabited the shores of this stream, and they had long been held in check by the Russian armies. But now the kingdom had become so enfeebled by war and anarchy, all the energies of the Russian princes being exhausted in civil strife, that the barbarians plundered with impunity the boats ascending and descending the stream, and eventually rendered the navigation so perilous, that commercial communication with the empire was at an end. The Russian princes thus debarred from the necessities and luxuries which they had been accustomed to receive from the more highly civilized and polished Greeks, were impelled to measures of union for mutual protection. The king, in this emergence, issued a proclamation which met with a general response.

"Russia, our beloved country," exclaimed Mstislaf, "groans

beneath the stripes which the barbarians are laying upon her, and which we are unable to avenge. They have taken solemn oaths of friendship, they have received our presents, and now, regardless of the faith of treaties, they capture our Christian subjects and drag them as slaves into their desert wilds. There is no longer any safety for our merchant boats navigating the Dnieper. The barbarians have taken possession of that only route through which we can pass into Greece. It is time for us to resort to new measures of energy. My friends and my brothers, let us terminate our unnatural war; let us look to God for help, and, drawing, the sword of vengeance, let us fall in united strength upon our savage foes. It is glorious to ascend to Heaven from the field of honor, thus to follow in the footsteps of our father."

This spirited appeal was effective. The princes rallied each at the head of a numerous band of vassals, and thus a large army was soon congregated. The desire to punish the insulting barbarians inspired universal enthusiasm. The masses of the people were aroused to avenge their friends who had been carried into captivity. The priests, with prayers and anthems, blessed the banners of the faithful, and, on the 2d of March, 1168, the army, elate with hope and nerved with vengeance, commenced their descent of the river. The barbarians, terrified by the storm which they had raised, and from whose fury they could attain no shelter, fled so precipitately that they left their wives and their children behind them. The Russians, abandoning the incumbrance of their baggage, pursued them in the hottest haste. Over the hills, and

through the valleys, and across the streams pursuers and pursued rushed on, until, at last, the fugitives were overtaken upon the banks of a deep and rapid stream, which they were unable to cross. Mercilessly they were massacred, many Russian prisoners were rescued, and booty to an immense amount was taken, for these river pirates were rich, having for years been plundering the commerce of Greece and Russia. According to the custom of those days the booty was divided between the princes and the soldiers—each man receiving according to his rank.

As the army returned in triumph to the Dniester, to their boundless satisfaction they saw the pennants of a merchant fleet ascending the river from Constantinople, laden with the riches of the empire. The army crowded the shores and greeted the barges with all the demonstrations of exultation and joy.

The punishment of the barbarians being thus effectually accomplished, the princes immediately commenced anew their strife. All their old feuds were revived. Every lord wished to increase his own power and to diminish that of his natural rival. André, of Souzdal, to whom we have before referred, whose capital was the little village of Moscow far away in the interior, deemed the moment favorable for dethroning Mstislaf and extending the area of such freedom as his subjects enjoyed over the realms of Novgorod and Kiev. He succeeded in uniting eleven princes with him in his enterprise. His measures were adopted with great secresy. Assembling his armies, curtained by leagues of forests, he, unobserved, commenced his march



toward the Dnieper. The banners of the numerous army were already visible from the steeples of Kief before the sovereign was apprised of his danger. For two days the storms of war beat against the walls and roared around the battlements of the city, when the besiegers, bursting over the walls, swept the streets in horrid carnage.

This mother of the Russian cities had often been besieged and often capitulated, but never before had it been taken by storm, and never before, and never since, have the horrors of war been more sternly exhibited. For three days and three nights the city and its inhabitants were surrendered to the brutal soldiery. The imagination shrinks from contemplating the awful scene. The world of woe may be challenged to exhibit any thing worse. Fearful, indeed, must be the corruption when man can be capable of such inhumanity to his fellow man. War unchains the tiger and shows his nature.

Mstislaf, the sovereign, in the midst of the confusion, the uproar and the blood, succeeded almost as by miracle in escaping from the wretched city, basely, however, abandoning his wife and his children to the enemy. Thus fell Kief. For some centuries it had been the capital of Russia. It was such no more. The victorious André, of Moscow, was now, by the energies of his sword, sovereign of the empire. Kief became but a provincial and a tributary city, which the sovereign placed under the governorship of his brother Gleb.

Nearly all the provinces of known Russia were now more

or less tributary to André. Three princes only preserved their independence. As the army of André retired, Gleb was left in possession of the throne of Kief. In those days there were always many petty princes, ready to embark with their followers in any enterprise which promised either glory or booty. Mstislaf, the fugitive sovereign, soon gathered around him semi-savage bands, entered the province of Kief, plundering and burning the homes of his former subjects. As he approached Kief, Gleb, unprepared for efficient resistance, was compelled to seek safety in flight. The inhabitants of the city, to escape the horrors of another siege and sack, threw open their gates, and crowded out to meet their former monarch as a returning friend. Mstislaf entered the city in triumph and quietly resealed himself upon the throne. He however ascended it but to die. A sudden disease seized him, and the songs of triumph which greeted his entrance, died away in requiems and wailings, as he was borne to the silent tomb. With dying breath he surrendered his throne to his younger brother Yaroslaf.

André, at Moscow, had other formidable engagements on hand, which prevented his interposition in the affairs of Kief. The Novgorodians had bidden defiance to his authority, and their subjugation was essential, before any troops could be spared to chastise the heir of Mstislaf. The Novgorodian army had even penetrated the realms of André, and were exacting tribute from his provinces. The grand prince, André himself, was far advanced in years, opposed to war, and had probably been

pushed on in his enterprises by the ambition of his son, who was also named Mstislaf. This young prince was impetuous and fiery, greedy for military glory, and restless in his graspings for power. The Novgorodians were also warlike and indomitable. The conflict between two such powers arrested the attention of all Russia. Mstislaf made the most extensive preparations for the attack upon the Novgorodians, and they, in their turn, were equally energetic in preparations for the defense. The army marched from Moscow, and following the valley of the Masta, entered the spacious province of Novgorod. They entered the region, not like wolves, not like men, but like demons. The torch was applied to every hut, to every village, to every town. They amused themselves with tossing men, women and children upon their camp-fires, glowing like furnaces. The sword and the spear were too merciful instruments of death. The flames of the burning towns blazed along the horizon night after night, and the cry of the victims roused the Novgorodians to the intensest thirst for vengeance.

With the sweep of utter desolation, Mstislaf approached the city, and when his army stood before the walls, there was behind him a path, leagues in width, and two hundred miles in length, covered with ruins, ashes and the bodies of the dead. It was the 25th of February, 1170. The city was immediately summoned to surrender. The Novgorodians appalled by the fate of Kief, and by the horrors which had accompanied the march of Mstislaf, took a solemn oath that they would struggle to the last drop of blood

in defense of their liberties. The clergy in procession, bearing the image of the Virgin in their arms, traversed the fortifications of the city, and with prayers, hymns and the most imposing Christian rites, inspired the soldiers with religious enthusiasm. The Novgorodians threw themselves upon their knees, and in simultaneous prayer cried out, with the blending of ten thousand voices, "O God! come and help us, come and help us." Thus roused to frenzy, with the clergy chanting hymns of battle and pleading with Heaven for success, with the image of the Virgin contemplating their deeds, the soldiers rushed from behind their ramparts upon the foe. Death was no longer dreaded. The only thought of every man was to sell his life as dearly as possible.

Such an onset of maniacal energy no mortal force could stand. The soldiers of Mstislaf fell as the waving grain bows before the tornado. Their defeat was utter and awful. Mercy was not thought of. Sword and javelin cried only for blood, blood. The wretched Mstislaf in dismay fled, leaving two thirds of his army in gory death; and, in his flight, he met that chastisement which his cruelties merited. He had to traverse a path two hundred miles in length, along which not one field of grain had been left undestroyed; where every dwelling was in ashes, and no animal life whatever had escaped his ravages. Starvation was his doom. Every rod of the way his emaciated soldiers dropped dead in their steps. Famine also with all its woes reigned in Novgorod. Under these circumstances, the two parties consented to peace, the Novgorodians retaining their independence, but accepting a

brother of the grand prince André to succeed their own prince, who was then at the point of death.

André, having thus terminated the strife with Novgorod by the peace which he loved, turned his attention to Kief, and with characteristic humanity, gratified the wishes of the inhabitants by allowing them to accept Roman, prince of Smolensk, as their chieftain. Roman entered the city, greeted by the most flattering testimonials of the joy of the inhabitants, while they united with him in the oath of allegiance to André as the sovereign of Russia. André, who was ever disposed to establish his sovereign power, not by armies but by equity and moderation, and who seems truly to have felt that the welfare of Russia required that all its provinces should be united under common laws and a common sovereign, turned his attention again to Novgorod, hoping to persuade its inhabitants to relinquish their independence and ally themselves with the general empire.

Rurik, the brother of André, who had been appointed prince of Novgorod, proved unpopular, and was driven from his command. André, instead of endeavoring to force him back upon them by the energies of his armies, with a wise spirit of conciliation acquiesced in their movement, and sent to them his young son, George, as a prince, offering to assist them with his counsel and to aid them with his military force whenever they should desire it. Thus internal peace was established throughout the empire. By gradual advances, and with great sagacity, André, from his humble palace in Moscow, extended his influence over

the remote provinces, and established his power.

The princes of Kief and its adjacent provinces became jealous of the encroachments of André, and hostile feelings were excited. The king at length sent an ambassador to them with very imperious commands. The ambassador was seized at Kief, his hair and beard shaven, and was then sent back to Moscow with the defiant message,

"Until now we have wished to respect you as a father; but since you do not blush to treat us as vassals and as peasants—since you have forgotten that you speak to princes, we spurn your menaces. Execute them. We appeal to the judgment of God."

This grievous insult of word and deed roused the indignation of the aged monarch as it had never been roused before. He assembled an army of fifty thousand men, who were rendezvoused at Novgorod, and placed under the command of the king's son, Georges. Another army, nearly equal in number, was assembled at Tchernigof, collected from the principalities of Polotsk, Tourof, Grodno, Pinsk and Smolensk. The bands of this army were under the several princes of the provinces. Sviatoslaf, grandson of the renowned Oleg, was entrusted with the supreme command. These two majestic forces were soon combined upon the banks of the Dnieper. All resistance fled before them, and with strides of triumph they marched down the valley to Kief. The princes who had aroused this storm of war fled to Vouoychegorod, an important fortress further down the river, where they strongly entrenched themselves, and

sternly awaited the advance of the foe. The royalist forces, having taken possession of Kief, pursued the fugitives. The march of armies so vast, conducting war upon so grand a scale, excited the astonishment of all the inhabitants upon the river's banks. A little fortress, defended by a mere handful of men, appeared to them an object unworthy of an army sufficiently powerful to crush an empire.

But in the fortress there was perfect unity, and its commander had the soul of a lion. In the camp of the besiegers there was neither harmony nor zeal. Many of the princes were inimical to the king, and were jealous of his growing power. Others were envious of Sviatoslaf, the commander-in-chief, and were willing to sacrifice their own fame that he might be humbled. Not a few even were in sympathy with the insurgents, and were almost disposed to unite under their banners.

It was the 8th of September, 1173, when the royalist forces encircled the fortress. Gunpowder was then unknown, and contending armies could only meet hand to hand. For two months the siege was continued, with bloody conflicts every day. Wintry winds swept the plains, and storms of snow whitened the fields, when, from the battlements of the fortress, the besieged saw the banners of another army approaching the arena. They knew not whether the distant battalions were friends or foes; but it was certain that their approach would decide the strife, for each party was so exhausted as to be unable to resist any new assailants. Soon the signals of war proclaimed that an army was approaching

for the rescue of the fortress. Shouts of exultation rose from the garrison, which fell like the knell of death upon the ears of the besiegers, freezing on the plains. The alarm which spread through the camp was instantaneous and terrible. The darkness of a November night soon settled down over city and plain. With the first rays of the morning the garrison were upon the walls, when, to their surprise, they saw the whole vast army in rapid and disordered flight. The plains around the fortress were utterly deserted and covered with the wrecks of war. The garrison immediately rushed from behind their ramparts united with their approaching friends and pursued the fugitives.

The royalists, in their dismay, attempted to cross the river on the fragile ice. It broke beneath the enormous weight, and thousands perished in the cold stream. The remainder of this great host were almost to a man either slain or taken captive. Their whole camp and baggage fell into the hands of the conquerors. This wonderful victory, achieved by the energies of Mstislaf, has given him a name in Russian annals as one of the most renowned and brave of the princes of the empire.

George, prince of Novgorod, son of André, escaped from the carnage of that ensanguined field, and overwhelmed with shame, returned to his father in Moscow. The king, in this extremity, developed true greatness of soul. He exhibited neither dejection nor anger, but bowed to the calamity as to a chastisement he needed from God. The victory of the insurgents, if they may be so called, who occupied the provinces in the valley of



the Dnieper, was not promotive either of prosperity or peace. Mindful of the former grandeur of Kief, as the ancient capital of the Russian empire, ambitious princes were immediately contending for the possession of that throne. After several months of confusion and blood, André succeeded, by skillful diplomacy, in again inducing them, for the sake of general tranquillity, to come under the general government of the empire. The nobles could not but respect him as the most aged of their princes; as a man of imperial energy and ability, and as the one most worthy to be their chief. He alone had the power to preserve tranquillity in extended Russia. They therefore applied to him to take Kief, under certain restrictions, again into his protection, and to nominate for that city a prince who should be in his alliance. This homage was acceptable to André.

But while he was engaged in this negotiation, a conspiracy was formed against the monarch, and he was cruelly assassinated. It was the night of the 29th of June, 1174. The king was sleeping in a chateau, two miles from Moscow. At midnight the conspirators, twenty in number, having inflamed themselves with brandy, burst into the house and rushed towards the chamber where the aged monarch was reposing. The clamor awoke the king, and he sprang from the bed just as two of the conspirators entered his chamber. Aged as the monarch was, with one blow of his vigorous arm he felled the foremost to the floor. The comrade of the assassin, in the confusion, thinking it was the king who had fallen, plunged his poignard to the hilt in his companion's

breast. Other assassins rushed in and fell upon the monarch. He was a man of gigantic powers, and struggled against his foes with almost supernatural energy, filling the chateau with his shrieks for help. At last, pierced with innumerable wounds, he fell in his blood, apparently silent in death. The assassins, terrified by the horrible scene, and apprehensive that the guard might come to the rescue of the king, caught up their dead comrade and fled.

The monarch had, however, but fainted. He almost instantly revived, and with impetuosity and bravery, seized his sword and gave chase to the murderers, shouting with all his strength to his attendants to hasten to his aid. The assassins turned upon him. They had lanterns in their hands, and were twenty to one. The first blow struck off the right arm of the king; a saber thrust pierced his heart, passed through his body, and the monarch fell dead. His last words were, "Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit." There is, to this day, preserved a cimeter of Grecian workmanship, which tradition says was the sword of André. Upon the blade is inscribed in Greek letters, "Holy mother of God, assist thy servant."

The death of the monarch was the signal for the universal outbreak of violence and crime. Where the sovereign is the only law, the death of the monarch is the destruction of the government. The anarchy which sometimes succeeded his death was awful. The Russian annalists cherish the memory of André affectionately. They say that he was courageous, sagacious and a true Christian, and that he merited the title he has received

of a second Solomon. Had he established his throne in the more central city of Kief instead of the remote village of Moscow, he could more efficiently have governed the empire; but, blinded by his love for his own northern realms, he was ambitious of elevating his own native village, unfavorable as was its location, into the capital of the empire. During his whole reign he manifested great zeal in extending Christianity through the empire, and evinced great interest in efforts for the conversion of the Jews.

Just before the death of the king, a number of the inhabitants of Novgorod, fatigued with civil strife and crowded out by the density of the population, formed a party to emigrate to the uninhabited lands far away in the East. Traversing a region of about three hundred miles on the parallel of fifty-seven degrees of latitude, they reached the head waters of the Volga. Here they embarked in boats and drifted down the wild stream for a thousand miles to the mouth of the river Kama, where they established a colony. At this point they were twelve hundred miles north of the point where the Volga empties into the Caspian. Other adventurers soon followed, and flourishing colonies sprang up all along the banks of the Kama and the Viatha. This region was the Missouri valley of Russia. By this emigration the Russian name, its manners, its institutions, were extended through a sweep of a thousand miles.

The colonists had many conflicts with the aboriginal inhabitants, but Russian civilization steadily advanced over

barbaric force.

Soon after the death of André, the nobles of that region met in a public assembly to organize some form of confederate government. One of the speakers rose and said, "No one is ignorant of the manner in which we have lost our king. He has left but one son, who reigns at Novgorod. The brothers of André are in southern Russia. Who then shall we choose for our sovereign? Let us elect Michel, of Tchernigof. He is the oldest son of Monomaque and the most ancient of the princes of his family."

Embassadors were immediately sent to Michel, offering him the throne and promising him the support of the confederate princes. Michel hastened to Moscow with a strong army, supported by several princes, and took possession of Moscow and the adjacent provinces. A little opposition was manifested, which he speedily quelled with the sword. Great rejoicings welcomed the enthronement of a new prince and the restoration of order. Michel proved worthy of his elevation. He immediately traversed the different provinces in that region, and devoted himself to the tranquillity and prosperity of his people. The popularity of the new sovereign was at its height. All lips praised him, all hearts loved him. He was declared to be a special gift which Heaven, in its boundless mercy, had conferred. Unfortunately, this virtuous prince reigned but one year, leaving, however, in that short time, upon the Russian annals many memorials of his valor and of his virtue. It was a barbaric age,

rife with perfidy and crime, yet not one act of treachery or cruelty has sullied his name. It was his ambition to be the father of his people, and the glory he sought was the happiness and the greatness of his country.

Southern Russia was still the theater of interminable civil war. The provinces were impoverished, and Kief was fast sinking to decay. Michel had a brother, Vsevelod, who had accompanied him to Moscow. The nobles and the leading citizens, their eyes still dim with the tears which they had shed over the tomb of their sovereign, urged him to accept the crown. He was not reluctant to accede to their request, and received their oaths of fidelity to him under the title of Vsevelod III. His title, however, was disputed by distant princes, and an armed band, approaching Moscow by surprise, seized the town and reduced it to ashes, ravaged the surrounding region, and carried off the women and children as captives. Vsevelod was, at the time, absent in the extreme northern portion of his territory, but he turned upon his enemies with the heart and with the strength of a lion. It was midwinter. Regardless of storms, and snow and cold, he pursued the foe like the north wind, and crushed them as with an iron hand. With a large number of prisoners he returned to the ruins of Moscow.

Two of the most illustrious of the hostile princes were among the prisoners. The people, enraged at the destruction of their city, fell upon the captives, and, seizing the two princes, tore out their eyes.

Vsevelod was a young man who had not acquired renown. Many of the warlike princes of the spacious provinces regarded his elevation with envy. Sviatoslaf, prince of Tchernigof, was roused to intense hostility, and gathering around him the nobles of his province, resolved with a vigorous arm to seize for himself the throne. Enlisting in his interests several other princes, he commenced his march against his sovereign. Vsevelod prepared with vigor to repulse his assailants. After long and weary marchings the two armies met in the defiles of the mountains. A swift mountain-stream rushing along its rocky bed, between deep and precipitous banks, separated the combatants. For a fortnight they vainly assailed each other, hurling clouds of arrows and javelins across the stream, which generally fell harmless upon brazen helmet and buckler. But few were wounded, and still fewer slain. Yet neither party dared venture the passage of the stream in the presence of the other. At length, weary of the unavailing conflict, Sviatoslaf, the insurgent chief, sent a challenge to Vsevelod, the sovereign.

"Let God," said he, "decide the dispute between us. Let us enter into the open field with our two armies, and submit the question to the arbitrament of battle. You may choose either side of the river which you please."

Vsevelod did not condescend to make any reply to the rebellious prince. Seizing his ambassadors, he sent them as captives to Vlademer, a fortress some hundred miles east of Moscow. He hoped thus to provoke Sviatoslaf to attempt the

passage of the stream. But Sviatoslaf was not to be thus entrapped. Breaking up his camp, he retired to Novgorod, where he was received with rejoicings by the inhabitants. Here he established himself as a monarch, accumulated his forces, and began, by diplomacy and by arms, to extend his conquests over the adjacent principalities. He sent a powerful army to descend the banks of the Dnieper, capturing all the cities on the right hand and on the left, and binding the inhabitants by oaths of allegiance. The army advancing with resistless strides arrived before the walls of Kief, took possession of the deserted palaces of this ancient capital, and Sviatoslaf proclaimed himself monarch of southern Russia.

But while Sviatoslaf was thus prosecuting his conquests, at the distance of four hundred miles south of Novgorod, Vsevelod advanced with an army to this city, and was in his turn received by the Novgorodians with the ringing of bells, bonfires and shouts of welcome. All the surrounding princes and nobles promptly gave in their adhesion to the victorious sovereign, and Sviatoslaf found that all his conquests had vanished as by magic from beneath his hand.

Under these circumstances, Vsevelod and Sviatoslaf were both inclined to negotiation. As the result, it was agreed that Vsevelod should be recognized as the monarch of Russia, and that Sviatoslaf should reign as tributary prince of Kief. To bind anew the ties of friendship, Vsevelod gave in marriage his beautiful sister to the youngest son of Sviatoslaf. Thus this civil

strife was terminated.

But the gates of the temple of Janus were not yet to be closed. Foreign war now commenced, and raged with unusual ferocity. Six hundred miles east of Moscow, was the country of Bulgaria. It comprehended the present Russian province of Orenburg, and was bounded on the east by the Ural mountains, and on the west by the Volga. A population of nearly a million and a half inhabited this mountainous realm. Commerce and arts flourished, and the people were enriched by their commerce with the Grecian empire. They were, however, barbarians, and as even in the nineteenth century the slave trade is urged as a means of evangelizing the heathen of Africa, war was urged with all its carnage and woe, as the agent of disseminating Christianity through pagan Bulgaria. The motive assigned for the war, was to serve Christ, by the conversion of the infidel. The motives which influenced, were ambition, love of conquest and the desire to add to the opulence and the power of Russia.

Vsevelod made grand preparations for this enterprise. Conferring with the warlike Sviatoslaf and other ambitious princes, a large army was collected at the head waters of the Volga. They floated down the wild stream, in capacious flat-bottomed barges, till they came to the mouth of the Kama. Thus far their expedition had been like the jaunt of a gala day. Summer warmth and sunny skies had cheered them as they floated down the romantic stream, through forests, between mountains and along flowery savannas, with pennants floating



gayly in the air, and music swelling from their martial bands. War has always its commencement of pomp and pageantry, followed by its terminations of woe and despair.

Vsevelod in person led the army. Near the mouth of the Kama they abandoned their flotilla, which could not be employed in ascending the rapid stream. Continuing their march by land, they pushed boldly into the country of the Bulgarians, and laid siege to their capital, which was called "The Great City." For six days the battle raged, and the city was taken. It proved, however, to be but a barren conquest. An arrow from the walls pierced the side of a beloved nephew of Vsevelod. The young man, in excruciating agony, died in the arms of the monarch. Vsevelod was so much affected by the sufferings which he was thus called to witness, that, dejected and disheartened, he made the best terms he could, soothing his pride by extorting from the vanquished a vague acknowledgment of subjection to the empire. He then commenced his long march of toil and suffering back again to Moscow, over vast plains and through dense forests, having really accomplished nothing of any moment.

The reign of Vsevelod continued for thirty-seven years. It was a scene of incessant conflict with insurgent princes disputing his power and struggling for the supremacy. Often his imperial title was merely nominal. Again a successful battle would humble his foes and bring them in subjection to the foot of his throne. But, on the whole, during his reign the fragmentary empire gained solidity, the monarchical arm gained strength, and the

sovereign obtained a more marked supremacy above the rival princes who had so long disputed the power of the throne. Vsevelod died, generally regretted, on the 12th of April, 1212. In the Russian annals, he has received the surname of Great. His reign, compared with that of most of his predecessors, was happy. He left, in churches and in fortresses, many monuments of his devotion and of his military skill.

His wife, Maria, seems to have been a woman of sincere piety. Her brief pilgrimage on earth, passed six hundred years ago, led her through the same joys and griefs which in the nineteenth century oppress human hearts. The last seven years of her life she passed on a bed of sickness and extreme suffering. The patience she displayed caused her to be compared with the patriarch Job. Just before she died, she assembled her six surviving children around her bed. As with tears they gazed upon the emaciated cheeks of their beloved and dying mother, she urged them to love God, to study the Bible, to give their hearts to the Saviour and to live for heaven. She died universally regretted and revered.

The reign of Vsevelod was cotemporaneous with the conquest of Constantinople by the crusaders. The Latin or Roman church thus for a season extended its dominion over the Greek or Eastern church. The French and Venetians; robbed the rich churches of Constantine of their paintings, statuary, relics and all their treasures of art. The Greek emperor himself fled in disguise to Thrace.

The Roman pontiff, Innocent III., deeming this a favorable

moment to supplant the Greek religion in Russia, sent letters to the Russian clergy, in which he said:

"The religion of Rome is becoming universally triumphant. The whole Grecian empire has recognized the spiritual power of the pope. Will you be the only people who refuse to enter into the fold of Christ, and to recognize the Roman church as the ark of salvation, out of which no one can be saved? I have sent to you a cardinal; a man noble, well-instructed, and legate of the successors of the Apostles. He has received full power to enlighten the minds of the Russians, and to rescue them from all their errors."

This pastoral exhortation was entirely unavailing. The bishops and clergy of the Russian church still pertinaciously adhered to the faith of their fathers. The crusaders were ere long driven from the imperial city, and the Greek church again attained its supremacy in the East, a supremacy which it has maintained to the present day.

# **CHAPTER VI**

## **THE GRAND PRINCES OF VLADIMIR, AND THE INVASION OF GENGHIS KHAN**

**From 1212 to 1238**

Accession of Georges.—Famine.—Battle of Lipetsk.—Defeat of Georges.—His Surrender.—Constantin Seizes the Scepter.—Exploits of Mstislaf.—Imbecility of Constantin.—Death of Constantin.—Georges III.—Invasion of Bulgaria.—Progress of the Monarchy.—Right of Succession.—Commerce of the Dnieper.—Genghis Khan.—His Rise and Conquests.—Invasion of Southern Russia.—Death of Genghis Khan.—Succession of his Son Ougadai.—March of Bati.—Entrance into Russia.—Utter Defeat of the Russians.

Moscow was the capital of a province then called Souzdal. North-west of this province there was another large Yaroslavlcity called Vladimir, with a capital of the same name. North of these provinces there was an extensive territory named Yaroslavl. Immediately after the death of Vsevolod, a brother of the

deceased monarch, named Georges, ascended the throne with the assent of all the nobles of Souzdal and Vladimir. At the same time his brother Constantin, prince of Yaroslavle, claimed the crown. Eager partizans rallied around the two aspirants. Constantin made the first move by burning the town of Kostroma and carrying off the inhabitants as captives. Georges replied by an equally sanguinary assault upon Rostof. Such, war has ever been. When princes quarrel, being unable to strike each other, they wreak their vengeance upon innocent and helpless villages, burning their houses, slaying sons and brothers, and either dragging widows and orphans into captivity or leaving them to perish of exposure and starvation.

In this conflict Georges was victor, and he assigned to his brothers and cousins the administration of the provinces of southern Russia. Still the ancient annals give us nothing but a dreary record of war. A very energetic prince arose, by the name of Mstislaf, who, for years, strode over subjugated provinces, desolating them with fire and sword. Another horrible famine commenced its ravages at this time, caused principally by the desolations of war, throughout all northern and eastern Russia. The starving inhabitants ate the bark of trees, leaves and the most disgusting reptiles. The streets were covered with the bodies of the dead, abandoned to the dogs. Crowds of skeleton men and women wandered through the fields, in vain seeking food, and ever dropping in the convulsions of death. Christian faith is stunned in the contemplation of such woes, and yet it sees in them

but the fruits of man's depravity. The enigma of life can find no solution but in divine revelation—and even that revelation does but show in what direction the solution lies.

Mstislaf of Novgorod, encouraged by his military success, and regardless of the woes of the populace, entered into an alliance with Constantin, promising, with his aid, to drive Georges from the throne, and to place the scepter in the hands of Constantin. The king sent an army of ten thousand men against the insurgents. All over Russia there was the choosing of sides, as prince after prince ranged his followers under the banners of one or of the other of the combatants. At last the two armies met upon the banks of the river Kza. The Russian annalists say that the sovereign was surrounded with the banners of thirty regiments, accompanied by a military band of one hundred and forty trumpets and drums.

The insurgent princes, either alarmed by the power of the sovereign, or anxious to spare the effusion of blood, proposed terms of accommodation.

"It is too late to talk of peace," said Georges. "You are now as fishes on the land. You have advanced too far, and your destruction is inevitable."

The ambassadors retired in sadness. Georges then assembled his captains, and gave orders to form the troops in line of battle. Addressing the troops, he said:

"Let no soldier's life be spared. Aim particularly at the officers. The helmets, the clothes and the horses of the dead

shall belong to you. Let us not be troubled with any prisoners. The princes alone may be taken captive, and reserved for public execution."

Both parties now prepared, with soundings of the trumpet and shoutings of the soldiers, for combat. It was in the early dawn of the morning that the celebrated battle of Lipetsk commenced. The arena of strife was a valley, broken by rugged hills, on the head waters of the Don, about two hundred miles south of Moscow. It was a gloomy day of wind, and clouds and rain; and while the cruel tempest of man's passion swept the earth, an elemental tempest wrecked the skies. From the morning till the evening twilight the battle raged, inspired by the antagonistic forces of haughty confidence and of despair. Darkness separated the combatants, neither party having gained any decisive advantage.

The night was freezing cold, a chill April wind sweeping the mists over the heights, upon which the two hosts, exhausted and bleeding, slept upon their arms, each fearing a midnight surprise. With the earliest dawn of the next morning the battle was renewed; both armies defiantly and simultaneously moving down from the hills to meet on the plains. Mstislaf rode along the ranks of his troops, exclaiming:

"Let no man turn his head. Retreat now is destruction. Let us forget our wives and children, and fight for our lives."

His soldiers, with shouts of enthusiasm, threw aside all encumbering clothes, and uttering those loud outcries with which

semi-barbarians ever rush into battle, impetuously fell upon the advancing foe. Mstislaf was a prince of herculean stature and strength. With a battle-ax in his hands, he advanced before the troops, and it is recorded that, striking on the right hand and the left, he cut a path through the ranks of the enemy as a strong man would trample down the grain. A wake of the dead marked his path. It was one of the most deplorable of Russian battles, for the dispute had arrayed the son against the father, brother against brother, friend against friend.

The victory, however, was now not for a moment doubtful. The royal forces were entirely routed, and were pursued with enormous slaughter by the victorious Mstislaf. Nearly ten thousand of the followers of Georges were slain upon the field of battle. Georges having had three horses killed beneath him, escaped, and on the fourth day reached Vladimir, where he found only old men, women, children and ecclesiastics, so entirely had he drained the country for the war. The king himself was the first to announce to the citizens of Vladimir the terrible defeat. Worn from fatigue and suffering, he rode in at the gates, his hair disheveled, and his clothing torn. As he traversed the streets, he called earnestly upon all who remained to rally upon the walls for their defense. It was late in the afternoon when the king reached the metropolis. During the night a throng of fugitives was continually entering the city, wounded and bleeding. In the early morning, the king assembled the citizens in the public square, and urged them to a desperate resistance. But they, disheartened



by the awful reverse, exclaimed:

"Prince, courage can no longer save us. Our brethren have perished on the field of battle. Those who have escaped are wounded, exhausted and unarmed. We are unable to oppose the enemy."

Georges entreated them to make at least a show of resistance, that he might open negotiations with the foe. Soon Mstislaf appeared, leading his troops in solid phalanx, with waving banners and trumpet blasts, and surrounded the city. In the night, a terrible conflagration burst forth within the city, and his soldiers entreated him to take advantage of the confusion for an immediate assault. The magnanimous conqueror refused to avail himself of the calamity, and restrained the ardor of his troops. The next morning, Georges despairing of any further defense, rode from the gates into the camp of Mstislaf.

"You are victorious," said he. "Dispose of me and my fortunes as you will. My brother Constantin will be obedient to your wishes."

The unhappy prince was sent into exile. Embarking, with his wife and children, and a few faithful followers, in barges, at the head waters of the Volga, he floated down the stream towards the Caspian Sea, and disappeared for ever from the observation of history.

Constantin was now raised to the imperial throne through the energies of Mstislaf. This latter prince returned to his domains in Novgorod, and under the protection of the throne he rivaled

the monarch in splendor and power. Constantin established his capital at Vladimir, about one hundred and fifty miles west of Moscow. The warlike Mstislaf, greedy of renown, with the chivalry of a knight-errant, sought to have a hand in every quarrel then raging far or near. Southern Russia continued in a state of incessant embroilments; and the princes of the provinces, but nominally in subjection to the crown, lived in a state of interminable war. Occasionally they would sheath the sword of civil strife and combine in some important expedition against the Hungarians or the Poles.

But tranquillity reigned in the principality of Vladimir; and the adjacent provinces, influenced by the pacific policy of the sovereign, or overawed by his power, cultivated the arts of peace. Constantin, however, was effeminate as well as peaceful. The tremendous energy of Mstislaf had shed some luster upon him, and thus, for a time, it was supposed that he possessed a share, no one knew how great, of that extraordinary vigor which had placed him on the throne. But now, Mstislaf was far away on bloody fields in Hungary, and the princes in the vicinity of Vladimir soon found that Constantin had no spirit to resent any of their encroachments. Enormous crimes were perpetrated with impunity. Princes were assassinated, and the murderers seized their castles and their scepters, while the imbecile Constantin, instead of avenging such outrages, contented himself with shedding tears, building churches, distributing alms, and kissing the relics of the saints, which had been sent to him from

Constantinople. Thus he lived for several years, a superstitious, perhaps a pious man; but, so utterly devoid of energy, of enlightened views respecting his duty as a ruler, that the helpless were unprotected, and the wicked rioted unpunished in crime. He died in the year 1219 at the early age of thirty-three. Finding death approaching, he called his two sons to his bedside, and exhorted them to live in brotherly affection, to be the benefactors of widows and orphans, and especially to be the supporters of religion. The wife of Constantin, imbibing his spirit, immediately upon his death renounced the world, and retiring to the cloisters of a convent, immured herself in its glooms until she also rejoined her husband in the spirit land.

Georges II., son of Vsevelod, now ascended the throne. He signalized the commencement of his reign by a military excursion to oriental Bulgaria. Descending the Volga in barges to the mouth of the Kama, he invaded, with a well-disciplined army, the realm he wished to subjugate. The Russians approached the city of Ochel. It was strongly fortified with palisades and a double wall of wood. The assailants approached, led by a strong party with hatchets and torches. They were closely followed by archers and lancers to drive the defenders from the ramparts. The palisades were promptly cut down and set on fire. The flames spread to the wooden walls; and over the burning ruins the assailants rushed into the city. A high wind arose, and the whole city, whose buildings were constructed of wood only, soon blazed like a volcano. The wretched citizens

had but to choose between the swords of the Russians and the fire. Many, in their despair, plunged their poignards into the bosoms of their wives and children, and then buried the dripping blade in their own hearts. Multitudes of the Russians, even, encircled by the flames in the narrow streets, miserably perished. In a few hours the city and nearly all of its male inhabitants were destroyed. Extensive regions of the country were then ravaged, and Bulgaria, as a conquered province, was considered as annexed to the Russian empire. Georges enriched with plunder and having extorted oaths of allegiance from most of the Bulgarian princes, reascended the Volga to Vladimir. As he was on his return he laid the foundations of a new city, Nijni Novgorod, at the confluence of two important streams about two hundred miles west of Moscow. The city remains to the present day.

It will be perceived through what slow and vacillating steps the Russian monarchy was established. In the earliest dawn of the kingdom, Yaroslaf divided Russia into five principalities. To his eldest son he gave the title of Grand Prince, constituting him, by his will, chief or monarch of the whole kingdom. His younger brothers were placed over the principalities, holding them as vassals of the grand prince at Kief, and transmitting the right of succession to their children. Ysiaslaf, and some of his descendants, men of great energy, succeeded in holding under more or less of restraint the turbulent princes, who were simply entitled *princes*, to distinguish them from the *Grand*

*Prince* or monarch. These princes had under them innumerable vassal lords, who, differing in wealth and extent of dominions, governed, with despotic sway, the serfs or peasants subject to their power. No government could be more simple than this; and it was the necessary resultant of those stormy times.

But in process of time feeble grand princes reigned at Kief. The vassal princes, strengthening themselves in alliances with one another, or seeking aid from foreign semi-civilized nations, such as the Poles, the Danes, the Hungarians, often imposed laws upon their nominal sovereign, and not unfrequently drove him from the throne, and placed upon it a monarch of their own choice. Sviatopolk II. was driven to the humiliation of appearing to defend himself from accusation before the tribunal of his vassal princes. Monomaque and Mstislaf I., with imperial energy, brought all the vassal princes in subjection to their scepter, and reigned as monarchs. But their successors, not possessing like qualities, were unable to maintain the regal dignity; and gradually Kief sank into a provincial town, and the scepter was transferred to the principality of Souzdal.

André, of Souzdal, abolished the system of *appanages*, as it was called, in which the principalities were in entire subjection to the princes who reigned over them, these princes only rendering vassal service to the sovereign. He, in their stead, appointed governors over the distant provinces, who were his agents to execute his commands. This measure gave new energy and consolidation to the monarchy, and added incalculable strength

to the regal arm. But the grand princes, who immediately succeeded André, had not efficiency to maintain this system, and the princes again regained their position of comparative independence. Indeed, they were undisputed sovereigns of their principalities, bound only to recognize the superior rank of the grand prince, and to aid him, when called upon, as allies.

In process of time the princes of the five great principalities, Pereiaslavle, Tchernigof, Kief, Novgorod and Smolensk, were subdivided, through the energies of warlike nobles, into minor appanages, or independent provinces, independent in every thing save feudal service, a service often feebly recognized and dimly defined. The sovereigns of the great provinces assumed the title of Grand Princes. The smaller sovereigns were simply called Princes. Under these princes were the petty lords or nobles. The spirit of all evil could not have devised a system better calculated to keep a nation incessantly embroiled in war. The princes of Novgorod claimed the right of choosing their grand prince. In all the other provinces the scepter was nominally hereditary. In point of fact, it was only hereditary when the one who ascended the throne had sufficient vigor of arm to beat back his assailing foes. For two hundred years, during nearly all of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is with difficulty we can discern any traces of the monarchy. The history of Russia during this period is but a history of interminable battles between the grand princes, and petty, yet most cruel and bloody, conflicts between the minor princes.

The doctrine of the hereditary descent of the governing power was the cause of nearly all these conflicts. A semi-idiot or a brutal ruffian was thus often found the ruler of millions of energetic men. War and bloodshed were, of course, the inevitable result. This absurdity was, perhaps, a necessary consequence of the ignorance and brutality of the times. But happy is that nation which is sufficiently enlightened to choose its own magistrates and to appreciate the sanctity of the ballot-box. The history of the United States thus far, with its elective administrations, is a marvel of tranquillity, prosperity and joy, as it is recorded amidst the bloody pages of this world's annals.

According to the ancient custom of Russia, the right of succession transferred the crown, not to the oldest son, but to the brother or the most aged member belonging to the family connections of the deceased prince. The energetic Monomaque violated this law by transferring the crown to his son, when, by custom, it should have passed to the prince of Tchernigof. Hence, for ages, there was implacable hatred between these two houses, and Russia was crimsoned with the blood of a hundred battle-fields.

Nearly all the commerce of Russia, at this time, was carried on between Kief and Constantinople by barges traversing the Dnieper and the Black Sea. These barges went strongly armed as a protection against the barbarians who crowded the banks of the river. The stream, being thus the great thoroughfare of commerce, received the popular name of *The Road to Greece*.

The Russians exported rich furs in exchange for the cloths and spices of the East. As the Russian power extended toward the rising sun, the Volga and the Caspian Sea became the highways of a prosperous, though an interrupted, commerce. It makes the soul melancholy to reflect upon these long, long ages of rapine, destruction and woe. But for this, had man been true to himself, the whole of Russia might now have been almost a garden of Eden, with every marsh drained, every stream bridged, every field waving with luxuriance, every deformity changed into an object of beauty, with roads and canals intersecting every mile of its territory, with gorgeous cities embellishing the rivers' banks and the mountain sides, and cottages smiling upon every plain. Man has no foe to his happiness so virulent and deadly as his brother man. The heaviest curse is human depravity.

We now approach, in the early part of the thirteenth century, one of the most extraordinary events which has occurred in the history of man: the sweep of Tartar hordes over all of northern Asia and Europe, under their indomitable leader, Genghis Khan.

In the extreme north of the Chinese empire, just south of Irkoutsk, in the midst of desert wilds, unknown to Greek or Roman, there were wandering tribes called Mogols. They were a savage, vagabond race, without any fixed habitations, living by the chase and by herding cattle. The chief of one of these tribes, greedy of renown and power, conquered several of the adjacent tribes, and brought them into very willing subjection to his sway. War was a pastime for their fierce spirits, and



their bold chief led them to victory and abundant booty. This barbarian conqueror, Bayadour by name, died in the prime of life, surrendering his wealth and power to his son, Temoutchin, then but thirteen years of age. This boy thus found himself lord of forty thousand families. Still he was but a subordinate prince or khan, owing allegiance to the Tartar sovereign of northern China. Brought up by his mother in the savage simplicity of a wandering shepherd's hut, he developed a character which made him the scourge of the world, and one of its most appalling wonders. The most illustrious monarchies were overturned by the force of his arms, and millions of men were brought into subjection to his power.

At the death of his father, Bayadour, many of the subjugated clans endeavored to break the yoke of the boy prince. Temoutchin, with the vigor and military sagacity of a veteran warrior, assembled an army of thirty thousand men, defeated the rebels, and plunged their leaders, seventy in number, each into a caldron of boiling water. Elated by such brilliant success, the young prince renounced allegiance to the Tartar sovereign and assumed independence. Terrifying his enemies by severity, rewarding his friends with rich gifts, and overawing the populace by claims of supernatural powers, this extraordinary young man commenced a career of conquest which the world has never seen surpassed.

Assembling his ferocious hordes, now enthusiastically devoted to his service, upon the banks of a rapid river, he

took a solemn oath to share with them all the bitter and the sweet which he should encounter in the course of his life. The neighboring prince of Kerait ventured to draw the sword against him. He forfeited his head for his audacity, and his skull, trimmed with silver, was converted into a drinking cup. At the close of this expedition, his vast army were disposed in nine different camps, upon the head waters of the river Amour. Each division had tents of a particular color. On a festival day, as all were gazing with admiration upon their youthful leader, a hermit, by previous secret appointment, appeared as a prophet from heaven. Approaching the prince, the pretended ambassador from the celestial court, declared, in a loud voice,

"God has given the whole earth to Temoutchin. As the sovereign of the world, he is entitled to the name of Genghis Khan (*the great prince*)."

No one was disposed to question the divine authority of this envoy from the skies. Shouts of applause rent the air, and chiefs and warriors, with unanimous voice, expressed their eagerness to follow their leader wherever he might guide them. Admiration of his prowess and the terror of his arms spread far and wide, and ambassadors thronged his tent from adjacent nations, wishing to range themselves beneath his banners. Even the monarch of Thibet, overawed, sent messengers to offer his service as a vassal prince to Genghis Khan.

The conqueror now made an irruption into China proper, and with his wolfish legions, clambering the world-renowned

wall, routed all the armies raised to oppose him, and speedily was master of ninety cities. Finding himself encumbered with a crowd of prisoners, he selected a large number of the aged and choked them to death. The sovereign, thoroughly humiliated, purchased peace by a gift of five hundred young men, five hundred beautiful girls, three thousand horses and an immense quantity of silks and gold. Genghis Khan retired to the north with his treasures; but soon again returned, and laid siege to Peking, the capital of the empire. With the energies of despair, though all unavailing, the inhabitants attempted their defense. It was the year 1215 when Peking fell before the arms of the Mogol conqueror. The whole city was immediately committed to flames, and the wasting conflagration raged for a whole month, when nothing was left of the once beautiful and populous city but a heap of ashes.

Leaving troops in garrison throughout the subjugated country, the conqueror commenced his march towards the west, laden with the spoils of plundered cities. Like the rush of a torrent, his armies swept along until they entered the vast wilds of Turkomania. Here the "great and the mighty Saladin" had reigned, extending his sway from the Caspian Sea to the Ganges, dictating laws even to the Caliph at Bagdad, who was the Pope of the Mohammedans. Mahomet II. now held the throne, a prince so haughty and warlike, that he arrogated the name of the second Alexander the Great. With two such spirits heading their armies, a horrible war ensued. The capital of this region, Bokhara,

had attained a very considerable degree of civilization, and was renowned for its university, where the Mohammedan youth, of noble families, were educated. The city, after an unavailing attempt at defense, was compelled to capitulate. The elders of the metropolis brought the keys and laid them at the feet of the conqueror. Genghis Khan rode contemptuously on horseback into the sacred mosque, and seizing the Alcoran from the altar, threw it upon the floor and trampled it beneath the hoofs of his steed. The whole city was inhumanly reduced to ashes.

From Bokhara he advanced to Samarcande. This city was strongly fortified, and contained a hundred thousand soldiers within its walls, besides an immense number of elephants trained to fight. The city was soon taken. Thirty thousand were slain, and thirty thousand carried into perpetual slavery. All the adjacent cities soon shared a similar fate. For three years the armies of Genghis Khan ravaged the whole country between the Aral lake and the Indus, with such fearful devastation that for six hundred years the region did not recover from the calamity. Mahomet II., pursued by his indefatigable foe, fled to one of the islands of the Caspian Sea, where he perished in paroxysms of rage and despair.

Genghis Khan having thoroughly subdued this whole region, now sent a division of his army, under two of his most distinguished generals, across the Caspian Sea to subjugate the regions on the western shore. Here, as before, victory accompanied their standards, and, with merciless severity, they

swept the whole country to the sea of Azof. The tidings of their advance, so bloody, so resistless, spread into Russia, exciting universal terror. The conquerors, elated with success, rushed on over the plains of Russia, and were already pouring down into the valley of the Dnieper. Mstislaf, prince of Galitch, already so renowned for his warlike exploits, was eager to measure arms with those soldiers, the terror of whose ravages now filled the world. He hurriedly assembled all the neighboring princes at Kief, and urged immediate and vigorous coöperation to repel the common foe. The Russian army was promptly rendezvoused on the banks of the Dnieper, preparatory to its march. Another large army was collected by the Russian princes who inhabited the valley of the Dniester. In a thousand barges they descended the river to the Black Sea. Then entering the Dnieper they ascended the stream to unite with the main army waiting impatiently their arrival.

On the 21st of May, the whole force was put in motion, and after a march of nine days, met the Tartar army on the banks of the river Kalets. The waving banners and the steeds of the Tartar host, covering the plains as far as the eye could extend, in numbers apparently countless, presented an appalling spectacle. Many of the Russian leaders were quite in despair; others, young, ardent, inexperienced, were eager for the fight. The battle immediately commenced, and the combatants fought with all the ferocity which human energies could engender. But the Russians were, in the end, routed entirely. The Tartars drove the bleeding

fugitives in wild confusion before them back to the Dnieper. Never before had Russia encountered so frightful a disaster. The whole army was destroyed. Not one tenth of their number escaped that field of massacre. Seven princes, and seventy of the most illustrious nobles were among the slain. The Tartars followed up their victory with their accustomed inhumanity, and, as if it were their intention to depopulate the country, swept it in all directions, putting the inhabitants indiscriminately to the sword. They acted upon the maxim which they ever proclaimed, "The conquered can never be the friends of the conquerors; and the death of the one is essential to the safety of the other."

The whole of southern Russia trembled with terror; and men, women and children, in utter helplessness, with groans and cries fled to the churches, imploring the protection of God. That divine power which alone could aid them, interposed in their behalf. For some unknown reason, Genghis Khan recalled his troops to the shores of the Caspian, where this blood-stained conqueror, in the midst of his invincible armies, dictated laws to the vast regions he had subjected to his will. This frightful storm having left utter desolation behind it, passed away as rapidly as it had approached. Scathed as by the lightnings of heaven, the whole of southern Russia east of the Dnieper was left smoking like a furnace.

The nominal king, Georges II., far distant in the northern realms of Souzdal and Vladimir, listened appalled to the reports of the tempest raging over the southern portion of the kingdom;

and when the dark cloud disappeared and its thunders ceased, he congratulated himself in having escaped its fury. After the terrible battle of Kalka, six years passed before the locust legions of the Tartars again made their appearance; and Russia hoped that the scourge had disappeared for ever. In the year 1227, Genghis Khan died. It has been estimated that the ambition of this one man cost the lives of between five and six millions of the human family. He nominated as his successor his oldest son Octai, and enjoined it upon him never to make peace but with vanquished nations. Ambitious of being the conqueror of the world, Octai ravaged with his armies the whole of northern China. In the heart of Tartary he reared his palace, embellished with the highest attainments of Chinese art.

Raising an army of three hundred thousand men, the Tartar sovereign placed his nephew Bati in command, and ordered him to bring into subjection all the nations on the northern shores of the Caspian Sea, and then to continue his conquests throughout all the expanse of northern Russia. A bloody strife of three years planted his banners upon every cliff and through all the defiles of the Ural mountains, and then the victor plunging down the western declivities of this great natural barrier between Europe and Asia, established his troops, for winter quarters, in the valley of the Volga. To strike the region with terror, he burned the capital city of Bulgaria and put all the inhabitants to the sword. Early in the spring of the year 1238, with an army, say the ancient annalists, "as innumerable as locusts," he crossed the Volga, and

threading many almost impenetrable forests, after a march, in a north-west direction, of about four hundred miles, entered the province of Rezdan just south of Souzdal. He then sent an embassy to the king and his confederate princes, saying:

"If you wish for peace with the Tartars you must pay us an annual tribute of one tenth of your possessions."

The heroic reply was returned,

"When you have slain us all, you can then take all that we have."

Bati, at the head of his terrible army, continued his march through the populous province of Rezdan, burning every dwelling and endeavoring, with indiscriminate massacre, to exterminate the inhabitants. City after city fell before them until they approached the capital. This they besieged, first surrounding it with palisades that it might not be possible for any of the inhabitants to escape. The innumerable host pressed the siege day and night, not allowing the defenders one moment for repose. On the sixteenth day, after many had been slain and all the citizens were in utter exhaustion from toil and sleeplessness, they commenced the final assault with ladders and battering rams. The walls of wood were soon set on fire, and, through flame and smoke, the demoniac assailants rushed into the city. Indiscriminate massacre ensued of men, women and children, accompanied with the most revolting cruelty. The carnage continued for many hours, and, when it ceased, the city was reduced to ashes, and not one of its inhabitants was left alive.



The conquerors then rushed on to Moscow. Here the tempest of battle raged for a few days, and then Moscow followed in the footsteps of Rezdán.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE SWAY OF THE TARTAR PRINCES

**From 1238 to 1304**

Retreat of Georges II.—Desolating March of the Tartars.—Capture of Vladimir.—Fall of Moscow.—Utter Defeat of Georges.—Conflict at Torjek.—March of the Tartars Toward the South.—Subjugation of the Polovtsi.—Capture of Kief.—Humiliation of Yaroslaf.—Overthrow of the Russian Kingdom.—Haughtiness of the Tartars.—Reign of Alexander.—Succession of Yaroslaf.—The Reign of Vassuli.—State of Christianity.—Infamy of André.—Struggles with Dmitri.—Independence of the Principalities.—Death of André.

The king, Georges, fled from Moscow before it was invested by the enemy, leaving its defense to two of his sons. Retiring, in a panic, to the remote northern province of Yaroslaf, he encamped, with a small force, upon one of the tributaries of the Mologa, and sent earnest entreaties to numerous princes to hasten, with all the forces they could raise, and join his army.

The Tartars from Moscow marched north-west some one

hundred and fifty miles to the imperial city of Vladimir. They appeared before its walls on the 2d of February. On the evening of the 6th the battering rams and ladders were prepared, and it was evident that the storming of the city was soon to begin. The citizens, conscious that nothing awaited them but death or endless slavery, with one accord resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Accompanied by their wives and their children, they assembled in the churches, partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, implored Heaven's blessing upon them, and then husbands, brothers, fathers, took affecting leave of their families and repaired to the walls for the deadly strife.

Early on the morning of the 7th the assault commenced. The impetuosity of the onset was irresistible. In a few moments the walls were scaled, the streets flooded with the foe, the pavements covered with the dead, and the city on fire in an hundred places. The conquerors did not wish to encumber themselves with captives. All were slain. Laden with booty and crimsoned with the blood of their foes, the victors dispersed in every direction, burning and destroying, but encountering no resistance. During the month they took fourteen cities, slaying all the inhabitants but such as they reserved for slaves.

The monarch, Georges, was still upon the banks of the Sité, near where it empties into the Mologa, when he heard the tidings of the destruction of Moscow and Vladimir, and of the massacre of his wife and his children. His eyes filled with tears, and in

the anguish of his spirit he prayed that God would enable him to exemplify the patience of Job. Adversity develops the energies of noble spirits. Georges rallied his troops and made a desperate onset upon the foe as they approached his camp. It was the morning of the 4th of March. But again the battle was disastrous to Russia. Mogol numbers triumphed over Russian valor, and the king and nearly all his army were slain. Some days after the battle the bishop of Rostof traversed the field, covered with the bodies of the dead. There he discovered the corpse of the monarch, which he recognized by the clothes. The head had been severed from the body. The bishop removed the gory trunk of the prince and gave it respectful burial in the church of Notre Dame at Rostof. The head was subsequently found and deposited in the coffin with the body.

The conquerors, continuing their march westerly one hundred and fifty miles, burning and destroying as they went, reached the populous city of Torjek. The despairing inhabitants for fifteen days beat off the assailants. The city then fell; its ruin was entire. The dwellings became but the funeral pyres for the bodies of the slain. The army of Bati then continued its march to lake Seliger, the source of the Volga, within one hundred miles of the great city of Novgorod.

"Villages disappeared," write the ancient annalists, "and the heads of the Russians fell under the swords of the Tartars as the grass falls before the scythe."

Instead of pressing on to Novgorod, for some unknown reason

Bati turned south, and, marching two hundred miles, laid siege to the strong fortress of Kozelsk, in the principality of Kalouga. The garrison, warned of the advance of the foe, made the most heroic resistance. For four weeks they held their assailants at bay, banking every effort of the vast numbers who encompassed them. A more determined and heroic defense was never made. At last the fortress fell, and not one soul escaped the exterminating sword. Bati, now satiated with carnage, retired, with his army, to the banks of the Don. Yaroslaf, prince of Kief, and brother of Georges II., hoping that the dreadful storm had passed away, hastened to the smouldering ruins of Vladimir to take the title and the shadowy authority of Grand Prince. Never before were more conspicuously seen the energies of a noble soul. At first it seemed that his reign could be extended only over gory corpses and smouldering ruins. Undismayed by the magnitude of the disaster, he consecrated all the activity of his genius and the loftiness of his spirit to the regeneration of the desolated land.

In the spacious valleys of the Don and its tributaries lived the powerful nation of the Polovtsi, who had often bid defiance to the whole strength of Russia. Kothian, their prince, for a short time made vigorous opposition to the march of the conquerors. But, overwhelmed by numbers, he was at length compelled to retreat, and, with his army of forty thousand men, to seek a refuge in Hungary. The country of the Polovtsi was then abandoned to the Tartars. Having ravaged the central valleys of the Don and the Volga, these demoniac warriors turned their steps again

into southern Russia. The inhabitants, frantic with terror, fled from their line of march as lambs fly from wolves. The blasts of their trumpets and the clatter of their horses' hoofs were speedily resounding in the valley of the Dnieper. Soon from the steeples of Kief the banners of the terrible army were seen approaching from the east. They crossed the Dnieper and surrounded the imperial city, which, for some time anticipating the storm, had been making preparation for the most desperate resistance. The ancient annalists say that the noise of their innumerable chariots, the lowing of camels and of the vast herds of cattle which accompanied their march, the neighing of horses and the ferocious cries of the barbarians, created such a clamor that no ordinary voice could be heard in the heart of the city.

The attack was speedily commenced, and the walls were assailed with all the then-known instruments of war. Day and night, without a moment's intermission, the besiegers, like incarnate fiends, plied their works. The Tartars, as ever, were victorious, and Kief, with all its thronging population and all its treasures of wealth, architecture and art, sank in an abyss of flame and blood. It sank to rise no more. Though it has since been partially rebuilt, this ancient capital of the grand princes of Russia, even now presents but the shadow of its pristine splendor.

Onward, still onward, was the cry of the barbarians.

Leaving smoking brands and half-burnt corpses where the imperial city once stood, the insatiable Bati pressed on hundreds of miles further west, assailing, storming, destroying the

provinces of Galicia as far as southern Vladimir within a few leagues of the frontiers of Poland. Russia being thus entirely devastated and at the feet of the conquerors, Bati wheeled his army around toward the south and descended into Hungary. Novgorod was almost the only important city in Russia which escaped the ravages of this terrible foe.

Bati continued his career of conquest, and, in 1245, was almost undisputed master of Russia, of many of the Polish provinces, of Hungary, Croatia, Servia, Bulgaria on the Danube, Moldavia and Wallachia. He then returned to the Volga and established himself there as permanent monarch over all these subjugated realms. No one dared to resist him. Bati sent a haughty message to the Grand Prince Yaroslaf at northern Vladimir, ordering him to come to his camp on the distant Volga. Yaroslaf, in the position in which he found himself—Russia being exhausted, depopulated, covered with ruins and with graves—did not dare disobey. Accompanied by several of his nobles, he took the weary journey, and humbly presented himself in the tent of the conqueror. Bati compelled the humiliated prince to send his young son, Constantin, to Tartary, to the palace of the grand khan Octai, who was about to celebrate, with his chiefs, the brilliant conquests his army had made in China and Europe. If the statements of the annalists of those days may be credited, so sumptuous a fête the world had never seen before. The guests, assembled in the metropolis of the khan, were innumerable. Yaroslaf was compelled to promise allegiance

to the Tartar chieftain, and all the other Russian princes, who had survived the general slaughter, were also forced to pay homage and tribute to Bati.

After two years, the young prince, Constantin, returned from Tartary, and then Yaroslaf himself was ordered, with all his relatives, to go to the capital of this barbaric empire on the banks of the Amour, where the Tartar chiefs were to meet to choose a successor to Octai, who had recently died. With tears the unhappy prince bade adieu to his country, and, traversing vast deserts and immense regions of hills and valleys, he at length reached the metropolis of his cruel masters. Here he successfully defended himself against some accusations which had been brought against him, and, after a detention of several months, he was permitted to set out on his return. He had proceeded but a few hundred miles on the weary journey when he was taken sick, and died the 20th of September, 1246. The faithful nobles who accompanied him bore his remains to Vladimir, where they were interred.

There was no longer a Russian kingdom. The country had lost its independence; and the Tartar sway, rude, vacillating and awfully cruel, extended from remote China to the shores of the Baltic. The Roman, Grecian and Russian empires thus crumbling, the world was threatened with an universal inundation of barbarism. Russian princes, with more or less power ruled over the serfs who tilled their lands, but there was no recognized head of the once powerful kingdom, and no Russian prince



ventured to disobey the commands even of the humblest captain of the Tartar hordes.

While affairs were in this deplorable state, a Russian prince, Daniel, of Gallicia, engaged secretly, but with great vigor, in the attempt to secure the coöperation of the rest of Europe to emancipate Russia from the Tartar yoke. Greece, overawed by the barbarians, did not dare to make any hostile movement against them. Daniel turned to Rome, and promised the pope, Innocent IV., that Russia should return to the Roman church, and would march under the papal flag if the pope would rouse Christian Europe against the Tartars.

The pope eagerly embraced these offers, pronounced Daniel to be King of Russia, and sent the papal legate to appoint Roman bishops over the Greek church. At the same time he wished to crown Daniel with regal splendor.

"I have need," exclaimed the prince, "of an army, not of a crown. A crown is but a childish ornament when the yoke of the barbarian is galling our necks."

Daniel at length consented, for the sake of its moral influence, to be crowned king, and the pope issued his letters calling upon the faithful to unite under the banners of the cross, to drive the barbarians from Europe. This union, however, accomplished but little, as the pope was only anxious to bring the Greek church under the sway of Rome, and Daniel sought only military aid to expel the Tartars; each endeavoring to surrender as little and to gain as much as possible.

One of the Christian nobles endeavored to persuade Mangou, a Tartar chieftain, of the superiority of the Christian religion. The pagan replied;

"We are not ignorant that there is a God; and we love him with all our heart. There are more ways of salvation than there are fingers on your hands. If God has given you the Bible, he has given us our *wise men* (Magi). But *you* do not obey the precepts of your Bible, while *we* are perfectly obedient to the instructions of our Magi, and never think of disputing their authority."

The pride of these Tartar conquerors may be inferred from the following letter, sent by the great khan to Louis, King of France:

"In the name of God, the all powerful, I command you, King Louis, to be obedient to me. When the will of Heaven shall be accomplished—when the universe shall have recognized me as its sovereign, tranquillity will then be seen restored to earth. But if you dare to despise the decrees of God, and to say that your country is remote, your mountains inaccessible, and your seas deep and wide, and that you fear not my displeasure, then the Almighty will speedily show you how terrible is my power."

After the death of Yaroslaf, his uncle Alexander assumed the sovereignty of the grand principality. He was a prince of much military renown. Bati, who was still encamped upon the banks of the Volga, sent to him a message as follows:

"Prince of Novgorod: it is well known by you that God has subjected to our sway innumerable peoples. If you wish to live in tranquillity, immediately come to me, in my tent, that you may

witness the glory and the grandeur of the Mogols."

Alexander obeyed with the promptness of a slave. Bati received the prince with great condescension, but commanded him to continue his journey some hundreds of leagues further to the east, that he might pay homage to the grand khan in Tartary. It was a terrible journey, beneath a blazing sun, over burning plains, whitened by the bones of those who had perished by the way. Those dreary solitudes had for ages been traversed by caravans, and instead of cities and villages, and the hum of busy life, the eye met only the tombs in which the dead mouldered; and the silence of the grave oppressed the soul.

In the year 1249, Alexander returned from his humiliating journey to Tartary. The khan was so well satisfied with his conduct, that he appointed him king of all the realms of southern Russia. The pope, now thoroughly alienated from Daniel, corresponded with Alexander, entreating him to bring the Greek church under the supremacy of Rome, and thus secure for himself the protection and the blessing of the father of all the faithful. Alexander returned the peremptory reply,

"We wish to follow the true doctrines of the church. As for your doctrines, we have no desire either to adopt them or to know them."

Alexander administered the government so much in accordance with the will of his haughty masters, that the khan gradually increased his dominion. Bati, the Tartar chieftain, who was encamped with his army on the banks of the Volga and

the Don, died in the year 1257, and his bloody sword, the only scepter of his power, passed into the hands of his brother Berki. Alexander felt compelled to hasten to the Tartar camp, with expressions of homage to the new captain, and with rich presents to conciliate his favor. Many of the Tartars had by this time embraced Christianity, and there were frequent intermarriages between the Russian nobles and princesses of the Tartar race. It is a curious fact, that even then the Tartars were so conscious of the power of the clergy over the popular mind, that they employed all the arts of courtesy and bribes to secure their influence to hold the Russians in subjection.

The Tartars exacted enormous tribute from the subjugated country. An insurrection, headed by a son of Alexander, broke out at Novgorod. The grand prince, terrified in view of the Mogol wrath which might be expected to overwhelm him, arrested and imprisoned his son, who had countenanced the enterprise, and punished the nobles implicated in the movement with terrible severity. Some were hung; others had their eyes plucked out and their noses cut off. But, unappeased by this fearful retribution, the Tartars were immediately on the march to avenge, with their own hands, the crime of rebellion. Their footsteps were marked with such desolation and cruelty that the Russians, goaded to despair, again ventured, like the crushed worm, an impotent resistance. Alexander himself was compelled to join the Tartars, and aid in cutting down his wretched countrymen.

The Tartars haughtily entered Novgorod. Silence and

desolation reigned through its streets. They went from house to house, extorting, as they well knew how, treasure which beggared families and ruined the city. Throughout all Russia the princes were compelled to break down the walls of their cities and to demolish their fortifications. In the year 1262, Alexander was alarmed by some indications of displeasure on the part of the grand khan, and he decided to take an immediate journey to the Mogol capital with rich presents, there to attempt to explain away any suspicions which might be entertained. His health was feeble, and suffered much from the exposures of the journey. He was detained in the Mogol court in captivity, though treated with much consideration, for a year. He then returned home, so crushed in health and spirits, that he died on the 14th of November, 1263. The prince was buried at Vladimir, and was borne to the grave surrounded by the tears and lamentations of his subjects. He seems to have died the death of the righteous, breathing most fervent prayers of penitence and of love. In the distressing situation in which his country was placed, he could do nothing but seek to alleviate its woe; and to this object he devoted all the energies of his life. The name of Alexander Nevsky is still pronounced in Russia with love and admiration. His remains, after reposing in the church of Notre Dame, at Vladimir, until the eighteenth century, were transported, by Peter the Great, to the banks of the Neva, to give renown to the capital which that illustrious monarch was rearing there.

Yaroslaf, of Tiver, succeeded almost immediately his father

in the nominal sway of Russia. The new sovereign promised fealty to the Tartars, and feared no rival while sustained by their swords. His oppression becoming intolerable, the tocsin was sounded in the streets of Novgorod, and the whole populace rose in insurrection. The movement was successful. The favorites and advisers of Yaroslaf were put to death, and the prince himself was exiled. There is something quite refreshing in the energetic spirit with which the populace transmitted their sentence of repudiation to the discomfited prince, blockaded in his palace. The citizens met in a vast gathering in the church of St. Nicholas, and sent to him the following act of accusation:

"Why have you seized the mansion of one of our nobles? Why have you robbed others of their money? Why have you driven from Novgorod strangers who were living peaceably in the midst of us? Why do your game-keepers exclude us from the chase, and drive us from our own fields? It is time to put an end to such violence. Leave us. Go where you please, but leave us, for we shall choose another prince."

Yaroslaf, terrified and humiliated, sent his son to the public assembly with the assurance that he was ready to conform to all their wishes, if they would return to their allegiance.

"It is too late," was the reply. "Leave us immediately, or we shall be exposed to the inconvenience of driving you away."

Yaroslaf immediately left the city and sought safety in exile. The Novgorodians then offered the soiled and battered crown to Dmitry, a nephew of the deposed prince. But Dmitry, fearing the

vengeance of the Tartars, replied, "I am not willing to ascend a throne from which you have expelled my uncle."

Yaroslaf immediately sent an ambassador to the encampment of the Tartars, where they were, ever eagerly waiting for any enterprise which promised carnage and plunder. The ambassador, imploring their aid, said,

"The Novgorodians are your enemies. They have shamefully expelled Yaroslaf, and thus treated your authority with insolence. They have deposed Yaroslaf, merely because he was faithful in collecting tribute for you."

By such a crisis, republicanism was necessarily introduced in Novgorod. The people, destitute of a prince, and threatened by an approaching army, made vigorous efforts for resistance. The two armies soon met face to face, and they were on the eve of a terrible battle, when the worthy metropolitan bishop, Cyrille, interposed and succeeded in effecting a treaty which arrested the flow of torrents of blood. The Novgorodians again accepted Yaroslaf, he making the most solemn promises of amendment. The ambassadors of the Tartar khan conducted Yaroslaf again to the throne.

The Tartars now embraced, almost simultaneously and universally, the Mohammedan religion, and were inspired with the most fanatic zeal for its extension. Yaroslaf retained his throne only by employing all possible means to conciliate the Tartars. He died in the year 1272, as he was also on his return journey from a visit to the Tartar court.

Vassali, a younger brother of Yaroslaf, now ascended the throne, establishing himself at Vladimir. The grand duchy of Lithuania, extending over a region of sixty thousand square miles, was situated just north of Poland. The Tartars, dissatisfied with the Lithuanians, prepared an expedition against them, and marching with a great army, compelled many of the Russian princes to follow their banners. The Tartars spread desolation over the whole tract of country they traversed, and on their return took a careful census of the population of all the principalities of Russia, that they might decide upon the tribute to be imposed. The Russians were so broken in spirit that they submitted to all these indignities without a murmur. Still there were to be seen here and there indications of discontent. An ecclesiastical council was held at Vladimir, in the year 1274. All the bishops of the north of Russia were assembled to rectify certain abuses which had crept into the church. A copy of the canons then adopted, written upon parchment, is still preserved in the Russian archives.

"What a chastisement," exclaim the bishops, "have we received for our neglect of the true principles of Christianity! God has scattered us over the whole surface of the globe. Our cities have fallen into the hands of the enemy. Our princes have perished on the field of battle. Our families have been dragged into slavery. Our temples have become the prey of destruction; and every day we groan more and more heavily beneath the yoke which is imposed upon us."



It was decreed in this council of truly Christian men, that, as a public expression of the importance of a holy life, none should be introduced into the ranks of the clergy but those whose morals had been irreproachable from their earliest infancy. "A single pastor," said the decree of this council, "faithfully devoted to his Master's service, is more precious than a thousand worldly priests."

Vassali died in the year 1276, and was succeeded by a prince of Vladimir, named Dmitri. He immediately left his native principality and took up his residence in Novgorod, which city at this time seems to have been regarded as the capital of the subjugated and dishonored kingdom. The indomitable tribes inhabiting the fastnesses of the Caucasian mountains had, thus far, maintained their independence. The Tartars called upon Russia for troops to aid in their subjugation; and four of the princes, one of whom, André of Gorodetz, was a brother of Dmitri the king, submissively led the required army into the Mogol encampment.

André, by his flattery, his presents and his servile devotion to the interests of the khan, secured a decree of dethronement against his brother and his own appointment as grand prince. Then, with a combined army of Tartars and Russians, he marched upon Novgorod to take possession of the crown. Resistance was not to be thought of, and Dmitri precipitately fled. Karamsin thus describes the sweep of this Tartar wave of woe:

"The Mogols pillaged and burned the houses, the monasteries, the churches, from which they took the images, the precious vases and the books richly bound. Large troops of the inhabitants were dragged into slavery, or fell beneath the sabers of the ferocious soldiers of the khan. The young sisters in the convents were exposed to the brutality of these monsters. The unhappy laborers, who, to escape death or captivity, had fled into the deserts, perished of exposure and starvation. Not an inhabitant was left who did not weep over the death of a father, a son, a brother or a friend."

Thus André ascended the throne, and then returned the soldiers of the khan laden with the booty which they had so cruelly and iniquitously obtained. The barbarians, always greedy of rapine and blood, were ever delighted to find occasion to ravage the principalities of Russia. The Tartars, having withdrawn, Dmitri secured the coöperation of some powerful princes, drove his brother from Novgorod, and again grasped the scepter which his brother had wrested from him. The two brothers continued bitterly hostile to each other, and years passed of petty intrigues and with occasional scenes of violence and blood as Dmitri struggled to hold the crown which André as perseveringly strove to seize. Again André obtained another Mogol army, which swept Russia with fearful destruction, and, taking possession of Vladimir and Moscow, and every city and village on their way, plundering, burning and destroying, marched resistlessly to Novgorod, and placed again

the traitorous, blood-stained monster on the throne.

Dmitri, abandoning his palaces and his treasures, fled to a remote principality, where he soon died, in the year 1294, an old man battered and wrecked by the storms of a life of woe. He is celebrated in the Russian annals only by the disasters which accompanied his reign. According to the Russian historians, the infamous André, his elder brother being now dead, found himself *legitimately* the sovereign of Russia. As no one dared to dispute his authority, the ill-fated kingdom passed a few years in tranquillity.

At length Daniel, prince of Moscow, claimed independence of the nominal king, or grand prince, as he was called. In fact, most of the principalities were, at this time, entirely independent of the grand prince of Novgorod, whose supremacy was, in general, but an empty and powerless title. As Daniel was one of the nearest neighbors of André, and reigned over a desolate and impoverished realm, the grand prince was disposed to bring him into subjection. But neither of the princes dared to march their armies without first appealing to their Mogol masters. Daniel sent an ambassador to the Mogol camp, but André went in person with his young and beautiful wife. The khan sent his ambassador to Vladimir, there to summon before him the two princes and their friends and to adjudge their cause.

In the heat and bitterness of the debate, the two princes drew their swords and fell upon each other. Their followers joined in the melee, and a scene of tumult and blood ensued characteristic

of those barbaric times. The Tartar guard rushed in and separated the combatants. The Tartar judge extorted rich presents from both of the appellants and *settled* the question by leaving it *entirely unsettled*, ordering them both to go home. They separated like two boys who have been found quarreling, and who have both been soundly whipped for their pugnacity. In the autumn of the year 1303 an assembly of the Russian princes was convened at Pereiaslavle, to which congress the imperious khan sent his commands.

"It is my will," said the Tartar chief, "that the principalities of Russia should henceforth enjoy tranquillity. I therefore command all the princes to put an end to their dissensions and each one to content himself with the possessions and the power he now has."

Russia thus ceased to be even nominally a monarchy, unless we regard the Khan of Tartary as its sovereign. It was a conglomeration of principalities, ruled by princes, with irresponsible power, but all paying tribute to a foreign despot, and obliged to obey his will whenever he saw fit to make that will known. Still there continued incessant tempests of civil war, violent but of brief duration, to which the khan paid no attention, he deeming it beneath his dignity to inter meddle with such petty conflicts.

André died on the 27th July, 1304, execrated by his contemporaries, and he has been consigned to infamy by posterity. As he approached the spirit land he was tortured with the dread of the scenes which he might encounter there. His

crimes had condemned thousands to death and other thousands to live-long woe. He sought by priestcraft, and penances, and monastic vows, and garments of sackcloth, to efface the stains of a soul crimsoned with crime. He died, and his guilty spirit passed away to meet God in judgment.

# CHAPTER VIII

## RESURRECTION OF THE RUSSIAN MONARCHY

**From 1304 to 1380**

Defeat of Georges and the Tartars—Indignation of the Khan.—Michel Summoned to the Horde.—His Trial and Execution.—Assassination of Georges.—Execution of Dmitri.—Repulse and Death of the Ambassador of the Khan.—Vengeance of the Khan.—Increasing Prosperity of Russia.—The Great Plague.—Supremacy of Simon.—Anarchy in the Horde.—Plague and Conflagration.—The Tartars Repulsed.—Reconquest of Bulgaria.—The Great Battle of Koulikof.—Utter Rout of the Tartars.

The Tartars, now fierce Mohammedans, began to oppress severely, particularly in Kief, the Christians. The metropolitan bishop of this ancient city, with the whole body of the clergy, pursued by persecution, fled to Vladimir; and others of the Christians of Kief were scattered over the kingdom.

The death of André was as fatal to Russia as had been his reign. Two rival princes, Michel of Tver, and Georges of Moscow, grasped at the shadow of a scepter which had

fallen from his hands. In consequence, war and anarchy for a long time prevailed. At length, Michel, having appealed to the Tartars and gained their support, ascended the frail throne. But a fierce war now raged between Novgorod and Moscow. In the prosecution of this war, Georges obtained some advantage which led Michel to appeal to the khan. The prince of Moscow was immediately summoned to appear in the presence of the Tartar chieftain. By the most ignoble fawning and promises of plunder, Georges obtained the support of the khan, and returning with a Tartar horde, cruelly devastated the principality of his foe. Michel and all his subjects, roused to the highest pitch of indignation, marched to meet the enemy. The two armies encountered each other a few leagues from Moscow. The followers of Michel, fighting with the energies of despair, were unexpectedly successful, and Georges, with his Russian and Tartar troops, was thoroughly defeated.

Kavgadi, the leader of the Tartar allies of Georges, was taken prisoner. Michel, appalled by the thought of the vengeance he might anticipate from the great khan, whose power he had thus ventured to defy, treated his captive, Kavgadi, with the highest consideration, and immediately set him at liberty loaded with presents. Georges, accompanied by Kavgadi, repaired promptly to the court of the khan, Usbeck, who was then encamped, with a numerous army, upon the shores of the Caspian Sea. Soon an ambassador of the khan arrived at Vladimir, and informed Michel that Usbeck was exasperated against him to the highest

degree.

"Hasten," said he, "to the court of the great khan, or within a month you will see your provinces inundated by his troops. Think of your peril, when Kavgadi has informed Usbeck that you have dared to resist his authority."



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