Stories of Russian Folk-Life

Donald A. Mackenzie


DODO
PRESS

PETRUSHKA HOLDS THE WOLVES AT BAY

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by Donald A. Mackenzie

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INTRODUCTION

Russia is not only the largest but is also one of the flattest countries in Europe. An impression of its flatness is obtained from the statement that the projected canal to connect the Baltic and Black Seas would require only two locks, and yet be deep enough for the greatest vessels afloat. In this vast and monotonous land, where even a small hill seems imposing, the surface features are all on a big scale. There are great stretches of forest; the northern port of Archangel, for instance, draws supplies of timber from a forest as large as Ireland. There are immense marshes, wide barren areas, great stretches of fine pasture land, and of most fertile soil well cultivated.

Mighty rivers intersect the vast Russian plain. Europe's longest river is the Volga, which has a course of about 2400 miles, and pours its waters into the Caspian Sea through some seventy mouths. It is connected by canals with the Black, Baltic, and Polar Seas. Steamers ply up and down it for hundreds of miles, and it can be navigated by barges to its source, a small lake situated to the east of the low Valdai hills. The construction of canals in connection with the rivers has done much to promote the agricultural and other industries. Russia has within its borders over 100,000 miles of navigable water-ways.

There are sharp changes of climate in the various areas and during the different seasons. Over the greater part of the country the winter is severe, and, of course, lasts longest in the north. When the snow melts in the Valdai hills, which form the chief watershed in Russia, the rivers are flooded and overflow their banks, just as the Nile overflows in Egypt, and large tracts of country lie under water for several weeks. The summer is hot and dry. At the northern port of Archangel, for instance, where the sea is frozen over for six months, the summer heat is much greater than in Great Britain, and the fish-curers of Archangel have to use refrigerators to store the fish. In the southern agricultural districts the crops often suffer from summer drought. This drawback, however, is being gradually overcome by

the construction of irrigating canals, and it is calculated that, eventually, when the Russian rivers are con-trolled like the Nile, the annual yield of wheat will be doubled, if not trebled.

Southern Russia is rich in agricultural land. Northern Russia, a land of great forests, has poor thin soil, except along the rivers. A line drawn across the country from the city of Kiev, on the river Dnieper, to that of Kazan on the Volga, will form roughly the border between the forest area and the agricultural area. To the south-east lie the sandy deserts and steppes round the Caspian Sea, where the climate is too dry for agriculture.

The Russians belong for the most part to that branch of the human race which is known as *Slavonic*. There are three main groups of Russian Slavs, the people of *Great Russia*, the people of *White Russia*, and the people of *Little Russia*. These differ from one another in dialect, and to a certain degree in appearance, just as the areas they occupy have different characteristics.

Little Russia, about twice the size of France, embraces chiefly the agricultural district of the south. Kiev is its principal town. Its climate is, on the whole, less extreme than in most other parts of Russia, the winter being more genial than in the central area. The inhabitants, sometimes called the "Black Russians", are taller and darker than those in the northern areas. They include the Cossacks.

White Russia extends from the boundaries of Poland in a north-eastern direction. It is a thinly-populated land of marshes and forests.

Great Russia, which embraces the larger part of central and eastern Russia, is entirely in the forest zone. About two-thirds of the Slav population inhabit it. The people are, fairer than those of Little Russia, and they speak a distinct dialect of the Russian language, which resembles that of White Russia, but differs greatly from the speech of Little Russia. The chief city of Great Russia is Moscow, which was the capital of the empire before Petrograd was built. The

people are the descendants of the old Muscovites, who laid the foundation of Russia's greatness.

In addition to the Slavs, the population of Russia also includes people of several other races. The most important are: (1) the Lithuanians, along the Baltic coast; (2) the Finns, in the north; and (3) the Mongol Tartars, on the east. There are also large communities of Jews, and within the Arctic circle there are tribes of Lapps owing allegiance to the Tsar.

The history of Russia is practically the story of how the Slavs have adapted themselves to the local conditions of life, and have resisted and overcome the invasions of aliens who have from time to time attempted to conquer their country.

There are old legends which tell that the ancestors of the Slavs were three brothers, named *Rus*, *Lech*, and *Cech*. Each became a king and founded the nations of the Russians, the Lechites (the Poles), and the Czechs (the Slavs of Bohemia). Scholars are not agreed as to the meaning of these names. Some consider, for instance, that "Rus" means "Red", and is, in origin, the same name as Rufus. The northern Russians are of a reddish fairness. Another theory is that "Rus" is a Scandinavian tribal name, identical with the Swedish "Hros". However this may be, from the earliest times of which we have knowledge the Slavs on the north of the Black Sea—that is, in Little Russia—were known as the "Rus", and, as has been stated, the inhabitants of this area are darker than those of the north.

Russia was divided in ancient times into various kingdoms. The first historic invaders came from the north. These were the Norsemen, who were called the Varagians or Varangians. Among these conquerors was the famous Rurik (Roderick), who was, according to later tradition, the founder of the first Russian dynasty. The capital of the northern kingdom was Novgorod, which means New-burgh, a name that suggests the previous existence of an *old* borough as an even more ancient centre of government and trade.

The Varangians invaded the southern lands of Little Russia, and overcame the petty kings of Kiev in the ninth century. Thereafter Kiev became the capital of all the states. United under one ruler, the Russians then became very powerful, and began to develop their commerce and extend their boundaries.

The great trading centre in the south at the time was Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Against this city Oleg, the successor of Rurik, led a strong force. His army was transported down the river Dnieper to the Black Sea in 2000 boats, in each of which were 40 men. The narrow strait of the Bosphorus had been closed by floating booms and could not be entered. Oleg, however; hit upon a plan to reach the Sea of Marmora so as to strike direct at Constantinople. He is said to have had his ships mounted on wheels and drawn over the narrow neck of land separating the Black Sea from the Sea of Marmora. Constantinople was unable to resist the attack which followed, and the Byzantine Greeks paid a large indemnity to the invaders to induce them to withdraw. They also signed a treaty which gave the Russians liberty to conduct trade with Constantinople. Before leaving this city, Oleg fixed his shield on the outer wall to signify that he had conquered it.

One of the results of Russia's subsequent relations with Byzantium, which the Turks ultimately conquered, was the spread of Christianity towards the north. The old Slavs were pagans, and the chief god they worshipped was called Perun, the god of lightning. His statue was of wood, with a silver face and a golden moustache.

In the reign of Vladimir the idols were destroyed and the Russian people embraced Christianity. This was the dawn of a new era of prosperity, and a beginning was made in building great Christian churches, like the church of St. Sophia at Kiev, which was erected in 1037 and is still an imposing edifice.

The Northerners, or Varangians, were ultimately driven out of Russia and the power of the Slavs became supreme. But the empire was again broken up into petty kingdoms which waged war against

one another. Weakened by these feuds, the capacity of the Russians to resist invaders grew less and less.

Early in the thirteenth century great hordes of Mongol Tartars began to pour out of Asia, resolved to conquer not only Russia but the whole of Europe. Russia then became the protector of Western civilization, for so great was the resistance it set up that the Mongolian Tartars found it impossible to establish permanent sway in the centre of Europe.

For between two and three centuries (1238-1462) Russia herself remained under the Tartar yoke. Her princes had to pay tribute to their over-lords, who had imposed their will upon the various states. During this period Moscow grew in extent and importance. In this city the aspirations of the oppressed people were fostered and strengthened, and it became in song and story a veritable Slav Fairyland. Many legends arose regarding its origin. Among these one of the most beautiful is the story of Princess Peerless, the fair maiden who was imprisoned in her own castle by the terrible demon who sought her for his bride. It is related in "The Lady of Moscow". This demon seems to symbolize the Tartar overlord whose dragon, or army, kept watch so as to prevent the Golden Knight from coming to the rescue of the sorrowing princess. But ultimately the dragon was overcome by the knight who wielded the invisible club, which one is tempted to regard as the symbol of the invisible bond of patriotism that unites and strengthens a people, and the demon's spell was then broken. After the chivalrous and fearless knight married the princess, Moscow became the seat of government.

It was in Moscow that there arose a new dynasty of native rulers, which included the famous Tsars named Ivan (John). The Muscovites strove to achieve complete independence, and it was by them that the Tartar power was gradually shattered. Ivan III, known as Ivan the Great, ultimately found himself strong enough openly to defy the Tartars, and he refused to pay further tribute. Thereafter the Mongols might occasionally raid Russia, and even attack and burn the capital, but they never succeeded in conquering it again.

Among the folk legends surviving from this period is the one related in "How Little Ivan became a Tsar". The first Ivan was reputed to have been a poor lad, who set out on his travels like Dick Whittington. On reaching Moscow he was welcomed by the people, who were waiting to hail the first corner as their Tsar.

The next story deals with Ivan IV, known as, "Ivan the Terrible", who was a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth. This monarch, who did much to consolidate the strength of Russia, governed with great severity. He curbed the power of those nobles, the Boyarin, who under the Tartar regime had been invested with special privileges. As they continually plotted against Tsar Ivan, he lived in constant dread of revolution, and many were charged with treason and put to death, not infrequently after enduring great torture.

Ivan the Terrible was the first Tsar who established friendly relations with England. He corresponded with Queen Elizabeth, and, it is even said, made her an offer of marriage. During his reign English merchants settled in Russia, and prospered greatly. Sir Jerome Horsey, the great English traveller, relates in his writings that Ivan employed as soldiers a number of Scottish adventurers, who had been taken prisoners in the wars with Poland and Sweden. He rewarded them generously for their services in the campaigns against the Tartars of the Crimea, as is indicated in the story, "Tsar Ivan and the Scots Soldiers", in which use is made of Sir Jerome's interesting narrative. It is due to this Englishman's intervention that the Tsar availed himself of the assistance of the fighting Scots.

When Ivan IV ascended the throne, the northern province of Novgorod was an independent state. Its inhabitants were governed by a prince, and the leading citizens, who held an open-air Parliament which was summoned by ringing a bell. If the prince displeased the people, they promptly deposed him and elected a successor. Often free fights took place at meetings of the citizens. Ivan went north with an army, and, taking possession of Novgorod, included it in his empire.

The period which followed Ivan's death was a disturbed one. Weak rulers sat on the throne, and then the King of Poland endeavoured to have himself declared Tsar. But the Russian people rose in revolt, and the throne passed to a grandson of the wife of Ivan the Terrible, a boy prince named Michael. Thus, in 1610, began the new dynasty of Romanoff. When Michael grew up, he promoted learning and commerce, and he attracted to Russia traders and scholars and artisans from the other countries.

The most outstanding maker of modern Russia, however, was Peter the Great, who flourished in the eighteenth century. In the story related under the title, "The Man who Fought the Wolves ", glimpses are afforded of the life and manners of his time. Tsar Peter perceived that the future prosperity of his kingdom depended on the development of sea trade and the founding of a navy. Russia was until his time entirely an inland power, and its commerce was ever at the mercy of other states. Tsar Peter resolved to raise his country to first rank among the nations of Europe by developing its resources and organizing its trade on land and sea.

To obtain knowledge of shipbuilding and naval subjects he not only travelled a great deal, but also secured employment as an artisan in certain shipbuilding yards in Holland and England. On his return home he began to carry out the plans he had made for the good of his country.

At the time Russia's chief rival on the Baltic coast was Sweden, and its king resolved to do his utmost to frustrate the designs of Tsar Peter. A great war ensued, from which Peter, after en-during severe reverses, emerged ultimately in triumph, securing possession of part of Finland, Livonia, and other lands on the Baltic. The way was now clear for the development of Russia's new policy. The Tsar caused the great city of St. Petersburg (now called Petrograd) to be built, and established shipbuilding yards and many other industries. Everything he touched he changed. He even reformed the Russian alphabet, when he set up printing presses to produce newspapers and books, including translations of foreign works of learning. Under his wise and energetic rule Russia made great and rapid

progress; ere he died, it had taken its place among the foremost Powers of Europe. Probably no other country in the world owes so much to the efforts of a single man.

Among the notable successors of Tsar Peter was Queen Catherine the Great, a lady of great intellectual gifts, who did much to promote learning and art, and carried out many reforms in the interests of progress. She founded a number of new towns, constructed roads and canals, and helped to develop trade and industries. During her reign large tracts of the country were cleared of trees and divided into farming colonies.

It is of interest to note at the present time that during Queen Catherine's reign a third of Poland was divided up between Austria, Germany, and Russia. This kingdom had fallen into a helpless condition, chiefly on account of internal dissensions. Other divisions subsequently took place, until in the end Poland ceased to exist as an independent state.

Since the days of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, Russia has steadily increased in extent and in prosperity. At the middle of the eighteenth century its population was about 14,000,000, but before the nineteenth century came to a close the empire included about 130,000,000 subjects. Its chief extension has been to the east. The present Tsar reigns over an empire which is about eight times larger than that of Ivan the Terrible.

When we compare Russia with other countries in Europe, we find many points of difference. It must be recognized in the first place that it is very large, and that large countries are more difficult to organize than small countries. Progress in certain directions has consequently been slower. Besides, the country as a whole is less capable of intensive development than our own. Towns and cities are not so numerous as in England, for instance, and they are separated by wide distances.

Withal, the people have a different outlook upon life from ours. Russians prefer their own manners and customs to those of other peoples; they love their own country with the same fervour as we do ours; and as the great war has shown, they are as brave as they are loyal.

In private life the Russian Slavs are a people of simple habits and unaffected manners. They are very religious, and among the greatest buildings in their country are the churches and cathedrals. From the earliest times their outstanding characteristics have been their piety, their hospitality, and their respect for the authority of parents and rulers.

The Russian Slavs have always struggled for liberty to live their own lives according to their own ideals. An ancient writer has said of them: "They are a dogged, laborious race, inured to the scantiest food, and they regard as a pleasure what is often a heavy burden to men of our time. They face any privations for their beloved liberty, and in spite of many reverses they are always ready to fight again."

The organization of Russian national life has grown from the family life. In the domestic circle the father in ancient times was the supreme authority, the judge and lawgiver. When families lived together and formed a grad or gorod (borough), a leader was chosen who was the "father" of the social group. Similarly the Tsar is recognized, as was his predecessors, as "the father" of all the Russians, and is loved and honoured and obeyed by his subjects, not only as head of the State, but also as head of the Church. When a new law is proclaimed in Russia, the people may be heard repeating the old saying, "It is the will of God and the Tsar's decree".

This great nation has always had its supreme dictator, and it owes its growth and prosperity largely to those Tsars who, like Peter the Great, devoted their lives to furthering its welfare. In no other country in Europe, for instance, has a large and important city been created by the order of an individual ruler as was Petrograd by the order of Tsar Peter. At the outbreak of the great war the present Tsar gave a further example of the supreme power that is wielded by the

head of the Russian state when he forbade the sale of vodka throughout the empire. The people submitted at once to "the will of God and the Tsar's decree".

In attempting to understand the social problems of Russia, one must always bear in mind the character of the country, and the mode of life of the great masses of the people. Land being abundant, the Slavs in ancient times spread gradually over wide areas with their herds and flocks. They tilled their fields in a primitive manner, and when these became exhausted, they migrated into new territory to break in further virgin soil. The general direction of such migrations has been towards the east, and in the process of time the Russians have spread themselves in colonies into and over the plains of Siberia in Asia.

The expansion of the vigorous Russian race across Siberia began in the reign of Ivan the Terrible, when the western portion was conquered by Yermak the Cossack. A constant drift of settlers across the Ural mountains followed, but the greater part of this region, which is four times larger than European Russia, has been peopled by refugees and political exiles. In the old days when the proprietors held the power of life and death over the serfs, they were wont to banish offenders to a Siberian province. There the serfs were allowed to possess themselves of land, but had to remain in the district to which they were assigned. The Government similarly banished political prisoners, with their wives and families, to the Siberian prairies, and many of the inhabitants of to-day are descendants of these. Hardened convicts, however, have ever been kept under control in the great prisons of this vast penal colony.

The conditions of life in Siberia vary greatly. In many parts there is a rich soil which yields excellent crops, and large tracts are suitable for grazing, but towards the north the country is cold and desolate, able to sustain only a meagre population who live as hunters, fur traders, and fishermen. Over the greater part of Siberia the summer is warm and genial, but the winter is long and severe. Since the opening of the great railway which terminates at Vladivostock, a port on the Sea of Japan, the development of Siberian trade has made great progress.

Large quantities of agricultural produce are exported annually. Of late years Siberian dairy produce has reached even these islands.

During the period of Tartar supremacy, the country had been divided up into principalities, and the peasants moved from one principality to another as they desired when opportunity offered. After the Tsars had freed Russia from the foreigners, and all the principalities were united, the nomadic habits of the people had to be held in check. It was decreed that each estate should maintain a certain proportion of peasants, so that their owners might supply soldiers for the army. The peasants were then prevented from moving from place to place at their own free will, though they still retained all their other ancient rights and liberties.

In time, however, the proprietors increased their hold over the peasants, who gradually became serfs. The wealth of a proprietor came to be reckoned by the number of these serfs on his estate, and the custom arose of proprietors selling serfs to one another.

The system of serfage was not confined to Russia. It was, in fact, general throughout Western Europe, but it lingered longer in Russia than elsewhere.

Under good proprietors the rural serfs could lead happy and useful lives. A family had a house and a portion of land, a horse and cow and some sheep. Instead of paying rent, the serf performed a certain amount of work for the proprietor. When his sons grew up, they took his place, and he could then devote his whole time to his own affairs. If he required timber he received it from the proprietor, and if he met with misfortune by losing a cow or horse on account of illness or accident, he usually received assistance from the "father" of the estate, who, as judge, also settled all disputes between serfs, and made laws to suit local conditions. The old and frail and the weakly were supported by the estate if their relatives were unable to assist them. When, as it sometimes happened, proprietors were cruel and greedy, and became oppressors of the people, the government of the Tsar stepped in and caused reforms to be introduced. Occasionally proprietors were deposed altogether for abusing their powers.

The development of commerce and the industries which resulted from the reforms introduced by Peter the Great exercised a great influence on the serf condition. As the demand for free labour increased, it became necessary to draw more and more from the masses of the population in rural areas. The emancipation of the serfs consequently became a pressing necessity. Tsar Alexander I, who reigned from 1801 till 1825, and Tsar Nicholas I, who succeeded him and reigned till 1855, introduced reforms which improved their condition and extended their privileges. Then Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom entirely in 1861. The masses were thus set free at the command of the "Little Father" of all the Russians, and there was great rejoicing in consequence throughout the length and breadth of the land. With personal liberty, however, came new responsibilities, and these were not welcomed everywhere. The land-holding serfs were established as tenants of small farms, who paid rent for the land they occupied, instead of, as formerly, paying for it with labour; or, they purchased their holdings with the assistance of the State, which lent the money required on easy terms. In bringing about these changes, the great bulk of the proprietors did their utmost to smooth over difficulties, and the freed serfs, when they came to realize their new responsibilities, displayed a spirit of patience and resolution which is characteristically Russian. Over the country as a whole a widespread desire was evinced by all classes to solve the problems raised by the changed conditions of life which were brought about by the Tsar's great reform.

The story entitled "The Old Order and the New" deals with the liberation of the serfs on a typical Russian estate. Some of the workers dreaded the change brought about by the Tsar's edict as much as did the old-fashioned proprietor, while others had an exaggerated notion of what freedom signified.

It will be seen from the examples given that great and sweeping social and political changes in Russia have been brought about chiefly by its rulers. The nation is, as has been said, like a great family; and the Tsar, who is the "Little Father", calls the people "his children". All classes reverence and obey the supreme ruler, who is the law-giver and the judge. If they have grievances, they expect the

“Little Father“ to remove them; if social reforms become necessary owing to the changed conditions of life, they expect him to bring them about.

In Russia reforms have never been introduced as a result of what is known in the west as “class warfare“. The classes who owe allegiance to the Tsar have never struggled against each other for political rights or privileges. Class enmities are almost entirely unknown, and the relations between the various classes are more intimate than in any other nation in Europe, except Great Britain. The aristocratic exclusiveness of the German and Austrian nobility does not prevail in the Tsar‘s domains, which enjoy a marked degree of social freedom. The proprietor does not hold himself aloof from the peasant; in fact, some rural proprietors live quite as simple lives as their tenants. Many peasants who have shown marked ability have risen to high official rank, and grown richer and more influential than the representatives of old families. In no country in Europe are the grievances of the past more readily forgotten. The feeling that union is strength prevails everywhere.

That great level country could never withstand the attacks of its enemies if the people were not united by their love for their country, and their allegiance to the “Little Father “, who loves and leads them all.

THE TEST OF WAR

Leo Lermontov was scarcely twenty, but looked older. He stood over six feet in height, and had broad shoulders and great muscles. His face was tinged with the sadness that sometimes survives from early hardships. Two deep lines crossed his forehead, and his eyebrows sloped sideways over his deep grey eyes, which one of his friends compared to "watch-dogs peering from their kennels". He was a ship carpenter by trade, and not only skilled and conscientious, but of exceedingly regular habits. His employer regarded him as an exemplary workman. He never took strong liquors, remembering with bitterness that his father, who had been a schoolmaster, became a beggar through vodka drinking, and had gone to an early grave. At the end of each week he deposited a sum of money in a savings bank with unfailing regularity. Because he always shaved clean he was nicknamed "the Englishman" by his fellow-workmen.

"Why don't you allow your beard to grow?" he was asked one day. "Are you ashamed of being a man?"

"A clean face is honourable; even a goat has a beard," Leo answered, quoting an old saying.

Since his mother's death the young man had lodged with Simon Glinka, the hardware merchant, in a three-storied house on the outskirts of Petrograd. This Glinka was a widower, and had two sons, who presented a sharp contrast one to another. Maksim, the eldest, was a lawyer's clerk. He had a crafty face, with shifty grey eyes speckled with white, a tilted nose with wide nostrils, and a mouth that wore a sneer even when he smiled; he kept his dark-brown moustache closely cropped, and inclined to dress showily. His younger brother, Nikolay, had been a student until his health broke down. He was a slim, consumptive lad of eighteen, with yellow curly hair, soft blue eyes, a thin long nose, and a sensitive mouth like a girl's. His father adored him, because he was the image of his dead mother, and loved to satisfy his every whim. Nikolay's

ambition was to be a great poet like the immortal Pushkin, the Byron of Russian literature. He was an impulsive lad of many moods. Some-times he was fretful and depressed for days on end and spoke little, and sometimes he was boisterous and cheerful, and darted about the house, insisting on helping old Ulinka, the house-keeper, who was very stout, asthmatic, and half-deaf. When Nikolay's shrill laugh rang from the kitchen, his father's face always brightened and his step seemed lighter as he entered the little living-room of an evening. Leo, who admired the lad because he had great learning, was also affected by his moods.

It was otherwise with Maksim. He jeered at his brother, whether he was sad or merry. "You are a bookworm," he declared one evening. "You feed on idle fancies, and live in a world of imps and ghosts. One day you sulk like a child over a broken toy because some heroine of romance is in trouble; another day you trip about like a dancing girl because she has been rescued by a gallant knight. No wonder you make yourself ill. You should live like me in a real world, and meet real people and see real things happening. Poets and novelists write chiefly for women. Busy men of the world have little need for them. No man ever made money by following the teachings of these miserable bookmakers."

"What about our ideals?" Nikolay protested. "Is the purpose of life merely to make money?"

"Partly that," sneered Maksim, "and partly to spend it."

"Men who write books often make great fortunes," Leo remarked. "Some day Nikolay may write so well that he will grow rich."

Maksim laughed dryly. "He's not like you, Leo; he despises money-making. He would rather be famous than wealthy."

"Yes, much rather," Nikolay agreed promptly. "Why not be both?" smiled Leo. "You deserve to be well paid for your work. Every day you write a great deal, and I think your poetry is quite as good as Pushkin's."

"Good or bad, it's not worth a kopeck in the market," Maksim sneered. "He wastes his time all to no purpose."

Nikolay's face quivered. Tears stood in his eyes, and without attempting to answer his brother he left the room abruptly.

"How unsympathetic you are!" exclaimed Leo, turning a hard face on the law clerk. "What pleasure does it give you to hurt your brother's feelings so?"

"Don't get angry, Leo," Maksim said mockingly. "This is not a matter to fight about."

"I am not thinking about fighting."

"You always look as if you were. . . . Let us have something to eat. Good food puts one in a good temper."

Maksim had a great contempt for Leo, because he was poorly educated and possessed money which he refused to spend.

"Why do you hoard up your savings like a miser?" he once asked the ship carpenter. "Money was made to be spent."

"Yes," Leo answered slowly; "but it can be spent wisely."

"What do you know about spending?" jeered the clerk. "You have no experience in that art. If you could only realize the pleasure that is got out of life by tossing coins about, you would wonder at yourself. I could spend more than I manage to earn."

"That's nothing to boast about. Any fool can spend. It takes a wise man to save."

"Some day I shall have luck. I almost made a fortune at betting last week."

"But you didn't; you lost everything."

"Well, one must take risks. Some day my chance will come. When I meet with good luck I shall become rich at a bound."

Leo rubbed his chin with the palm of his right hand. "I never forget the old proverb," he remarked quietly, "which says, 'Good luck vanishes like our curls; bad luck lasts like our finger-nails'."

"You certainly never forget these old wives' proverbs," exclaimed the clerk impatiently. "What's the good of them? They were invented by ignorant people of another age. No wonder you lead such a miserable existence, always toiling away and never enjoying life."

"Black may be toil, but white is its price," answered Leo, with a faint smile, quoting another favourite saying.

While they were arguing in this manner Simon Glinka, the hardware merchant, opened the door softly. He stood for a few seconds, framed in the doorway, gazing pensively at the young men over his spectacles, a newspaper dangling from his right hand. Although of medium height, he looked smaller because he inclined to stoutness, and his shoulders had grown so round that his head seemed to be thrust too far forward; his brown beard was turning white at the sides, and his face was covered with numerous small wrinkles that ran this way and that like creases in crushed clothing; his bushy eyebrows cast a shadow over his pondering grey eyes.

"Here's an end to all argument meantime," he said at length in a low, tremulous voice, as he walked into the centre of the room, raising the newspaper before his face. "We are on the very brink of war. Only a miracle can avert it now."

"If the Tsar shows a stern front," Maksim declared, "Germany will sheathe the sword."

"Germany seems rather to be only too eager to fight," sighed his father. "What a terrible war it will be, too! Almost every nation will be forced to take one side or another. Thousands and thousands will be killed and thousands will be ruined."

"Give me the paper," Maksim said impatiently. "You always look on the dark side of things. Let me see. . . ."

He glanced down a column, and suddenly his face grew very pale.

"So," he muttered, "the prospect is black indeed. I'll be called up with the second-class reserves, of course. Just my luck. You, Leo, will be called up also."

Leo nodded his head gravely. "War is a brutal thing," he said softly; "but we must obey the will of God and the Tsar's decree."

"The poor will suffer terribly," moaned Glinka, "and those who sell to the poor, as I do, must suffer also."

"He who sweats in the field and prays to God at home will never starve," Leo said, repeating an old saying.

Maksim threw down the paper. "I must get out-of-doors," he declared, "and hear what people are saying of this."

"Do not be late to-night," urged his father; "we shall be anxious to learn any fresh news."

Maksim hurried through the streets towards the centre of the city, his mind greatly agitated. Knots of people were gathered at every corner discussing the prospects of war. Wild rumours were already on foot. "The Germans have crossed the frontier and are marching on Warsaw," some declared.

"The holy Russian land is large," Maksim overheard one man exclaim; "God has chosen a portion of it to be the graveyard of our enemies."

Many seemed eager to fight, and expressed fears lest the Tsar should yield to blustering Germany at the last moment. But Maksim dreaded war. He thought of the pleasures he would have to give up and the hardships that confronted him. Indeed, all his thoughts were

concentrated in himself. What cared he for Russia or the public good? If he had money at his disposal, he told himself, he would leave Petrograd that evening and escape to a foreign country. And he thought it his misfortune to be possessed of hardly a rouble. If he found no comfort in the crowded streets, he found less at the clubs he was in the habit of frequenting. Everyone seemed convinced that war was inevitable. Before he returned homeward he heard that mobilization had already begun.

At a street corner he met Michael Poroshin, a sharp-faced little man who was employed in a savings bank.

"You are going home early to-night, Michael," he said.

"And so are you, Maksim," retorted his friend. "And no wonder. Everything is upset with this clamour about war. I have just come from the office and feel tired. We have been very busy this evening."

"You surprise me, Michael. I should have thought people would forget about hoarding money at such a time."

"They are not hoarding it, but drawing it. Such a crowd we had in front of the counters. Some wanted to withdraw every kopeck they possessed."

"Ah," exclaimed Maksim, "would I had a few roubles to my credit! But I am poorer than usual."

Michael laughed dryly. "You should take a lesson from Leo," he said, "he's an example to all of us."

Maksim halted, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Have you seen Leo this evening?" he whispered.

Michael nodded with a sly smile. "I am not supposed to answer such questions, of course."

"Did he draw much—a hundred roubles, say?" "Much more," muttered the other with a shrug. "Two hundred—three hundred?"

Michael glanced round about apprehensively. Then he whispered slowly, "Five hundred roubles—not a kopeck less. What he wants to do with all that money I can't even guess."

"Five hundred roubles—five hundred roubles!" Maksim repeated hoarsely, staring blankly in his friend's face.

They resumed their walk in silence, conversing in low tones.

"I wonder what he intends doing," Michael remarked.

"Perhaps he's going abroad to escape mobilization."

"If that were his intention he would have drawn more," the bank clerk said.

"Has he really so much saved?" Maksim asked abruptly.

"I'm not sure of the exact sum," answered Michael cautiously, "but I know he has not drawn everything—not nearly all he possesses. So he can't be going away."

The conversation then turned to the prospects of war, and after a time the friends separated. Maksim did not go home at once. He walked down a side street towards an open space to think matters over. He wanted money, and was tempted by Leo's hoard. So he resolved, if the opportunity offered, to steal it and depart speedily to a foreign country. Little did he care what would be thought about him once he got clear of Russia. Like all cowards he was extremely selfish and thought of himself alone. What cared he what became of others?

Now when Leo returned from the bank he went straight to his little attic and placed his money in his clothes-box, turning the key in the lock. Then he hastened downstairs to chat with Nikolay, who had

been out walking by the river-side, all alone, as was his wont. He found the lad crouched up in the window-place, reading his favourite Pushkin—the master poet of his native land.

"How can you sit reading poetry at such a time, Nikolay?" Leo asked with a smile.

The dreamy lad looked up with bright eyes. "Ah!" he exclaimed with rapture, "Aleksandr Sergyeevich Pushkin voices every mood of the people whether in time of war or peace. Listen to this:

> Rise, one and all, O rise!
> Russia's heroes with fearless eyes,
> In countless numbers like the ocean's waves,
> In battle frenzy 'gainst the foemen sweep;
> Room will be found on Russia's plains to sleep,
> And none will e'er forget their brethren's graves.

"Yes, many must fall asleep ere victory will be won," Leo said softly.

"It troubles me," Nikolay sighed, "that I cannot go to battle. It is glorious to be a victor: it is glorious to die a hero's death, fighting for one's native land. If war breaks out, I must sit here and dream while others lay down their lives. What a poor creature I am, Leo!"

"You will play your part too, Nikolay. You shall sing songs about Russia's heroes so that generations unborn may be moved to imitate them as we try to imitate our forefathers."

"Ah! I know what you are thinking about now, Leo. You remember Zhukovski's 'Minstrel in the Russian Camp' which I read to you the other evening?"

"Read it again, Nikolay. I'll understand it better now," urged the carpenter.

The lad leapt to his feet and began to pace the room with a book in his left hand, which he glanced at only occasionally, and half-recited, half-chanted, the stirring poem:

Now to the warriors of old time,
The strong in fight and glory!
These warriors and their deeds sublime
Are lost in distant story!
The grave hath gathered up their dust,
Their homes—the storm hath razed them;
Their helmets are devoured by rust,
And silent those that praised them:
But in their children live their fires,
We tread the land that bore them,
And see the shadows of their sires
With all their triumphs o'er them.

Verse after verse rolled off his tongue with relish. Leo sat fascinated, looking and listening. He never could understand poetry except when it came from Nikolay's lips. Then it stirred him strangely.

"Read on," he urged the lad when he had finished the poem and sank into a corner. "But do not read more about war. Let us forget all about war to-night. I would rather hear a tale from Pushkin. I like to hear you read the 'Fountain' poem."

Nikolay lit the lamp. He was in the mood that evening to recite great verse. The war excitement had roused his imagination. So he opened a thick volume and began to roll off the full-throated measures of the master poet in a voice that rose and fell like the night wind in a forest. Sometimes he sprawled in a chair; sometimes he paced the room, declaiming like an actor on the stage.

Maksim entered the house noiselessly as his brother thus engaged himself, after peering through a rent in the window-blind. He knew Nikolay would continue reading for some time longer, and was certain that Leo, who liked to humour the young poet, must sooner

or later fall asleep. He had often found the carpenter snoozing peacefully while the young poet read to him.

"Now is my opportunity," Maksim told himself in the depths of his wicked heart, thinking of Leo's roubles. He glanced towards the kitchen to ascertain if Ulinka was still at work. It pleased him mightily that the old woman dozed in a chair, breathing heavily. He knew his father would not return for another hour.

Removing his boots, he crept upstairs towards Leo's attic, as noiselessly as a cat stalking a mouse. He knew the exact place where the clothes-box lay and went towards it. Grasping the lid, he found it locked. Then he ran his fingers towards the keyhole until he touched a bunch of keys, which jingled slightly; in another second he had opened the box and begun to search it, without seeing aught, like a blind man. His hand closed on a bag of gold; he thrust it into his pocket; then he found another and another. His heart was beating loud and fast with excitement.

Closing down the lid of the box, he turned the key in the lock; the sharp, metallic click seemed to resound through the house. He tiptoed to the stairhead and there stood trembling and listening in the growing dusk. None of the inmates had been disturbed. Nikolay's voice continued its droning sound in the little sitting-room below, like a monk at his prayers. A clock ticked loudly in the kitchen where old Ulinka snored wheezily in her sleep. . . . Maksim began to descend slowly, step by step, fearing to be discovered every moment. Once a board creaked beneath him and he shuddered convulsively, a cold sweat breaking out on his forehead; his heart knocked loudly against his ribs as if his conscience sought to give the alarm. He paused on the first landing. . . . Nikolay's voice had struck a higher note and he declaimed more rapidly.

"Curse him! he will wake Leo," Maksim muttered inwardly. In desperation the clerk forced himself onward and downward until at length he reached the front door. He let himself out softly and ran down the street, nor did he pause to put on his boots until he had turned a corner. Not a living soul was in sight. He had entered and

left the house unobserved, and now possessed a goodly sum of money.

Choosing a roundabout way to avoid meeting his father he sped towards the centre of the city. “I shall never return home again,“ he told himself. But the thought gave him no pleasure. Instead, it filled his heart with despair. An icy blankness seemed to have suddenly enveloped his life.

“You will be caught and sent to prison,“ his conscience whispered. “You have robbed a friend and dishonoured your father‘s house. Your crime will break the old man‘s heart. You are now a criminal and an outcast.“

Tortured by his thoughts, he entered a low vodka shop and thrust himself through a noisy crowd towards the counter. He thought vodka would give him the courage of which he was in sore need.

In less than an hour later his father reached home. Nikolay had ceased reading and sat conversing with his friend about the war once again.

“I shall miss you very much, Leo, if you are called up to serve,“ the young poet declared.

“I shall certainly be called up,“ answered the other slowly and deliberately. “Perhaps I may never return, who knows? Many must die. The destined sheep cannot escape the wolf.“

Glinka entered as he was speaking and sat down with a sigh.

“Have you heard any further news?“ Leo asked him.

“There are many rumours,“ said Glinka. “One hardly knows what to believe and what not to believe. But it seems certain that war is not far off. . . . Where is Maksim?“

“He has not yet returned,“ Nikolay answered.

"Let us have supper," said the merchant wearily. "Go and rouse up Ulinka, my son."

Nikolay sprang to his feet. "I shall make the coffee myself. It is time poor old Ulinka was in bed." He left the room, closing the door behind him.

Leo drew his chair towards Glinka, and raising his face began to speak. "We may not have many more evenings together. Wide is the gate leading to the battlefield, but narrow is the way out of it. Who knows whether one will return again after bidding farewell. Listen to me. I have something to tell you, Simon Glinka. To-night I drew the bulk of my savings from the bank, and they are in my box upstairs. I wish to do something for Nikolay. He is not so robust as the rest of us, and if war brings suffering he may be in sore straits. Last winter he seemed almost unable to endure the cold weather. With this money—there are five hundred roubles in all—he can be sent to the south, or to some foreign country where the winter is mild and open."

Glinka was struck dumb with heartfelt gratitude. Tears welled to his eyes. He hung his head.

If five hundred roubles are not enough I can give another hundred—all I possess." He rose up and crossed the room. "To-morrow we can make arrangements. The doctor will give us good advice. . . . You will allow me to do this for Nikolay, won't you, Simon Glinka? For his sake you dare not refuse."

"God will bless you, Leo. He will reward you. Your heart has ears," the old man said at length, his voice trembling with emotion. The thought of the coming winter had kept him in constant dread. He feared Nikolay would never survive another illness.

"Do not say a word to the lad about this," Leo went on. "Wait until I have gone. Just say I helped a little. He is so proud: he might refuse my money."

"I will pay you back some day, Leo Lermontov," muttered Glinka faintly. "I would fain decline your offer, but cannot for Nikolay's sake. May God reward you with his protection on the battlefield!"

"Hush! Nikolay is coming," Leo whispered. "Say no more about this matter meantime."

The young lad entered carrying the coffee-pot, which he laid on the table. "I thought I would never wake up Ulinka," he exclaimed laughingly. "When at length she opened her eyes she thought it was morning, and asked: 'Why have you risen so early? The sun is not yet up. Has the war begun so suddenly?"

After supper Leo and Nikolay rose to go to bed, but the merchant lit his pipe and said he would wait for Maksim. "I have something to say to him," he told the others.

A friend had told the merchant that. his eldest son had been overheard declaring in a vodka shop he would rather flee from Russia than fight for the Tsar. This troubled Simon Glinka greatly. He dreaded such wild words might bring disgrace and perhaps ruin to him at a time when all good Russians had need to stand shoulder to shoulder like true brothers. Besides, he regarded with apprehension his son's growing habit of frequenting vodka shops, and intended to admonish him severely on that account.

His heart was heavy as he sat there pondering over his sons. The one was wayward, and growing dissolute; the other, so dear to his heart, seemed to be slipping away from him.

Suddenly he heard a noise on the stairs. In another minute Leo entered the room. His face was pale and hard. He closed the door, and advancing towards the old man said, in a low hoarse voice:

"Maksim has been here and is gone."

Glinka rose to his feet. "What do you mean, Leo?" he gasped.

"The five hundred roubles I drew for Nikolay have been taken from my box," Leo answered. "I found Maksim's handkerchief lying on the attic floor."

As he spoke he threw a scented handkerchief on the table.

Glinka swayed like a man suddenly wounded in battle, and would have fallen had not Leo grasped him in his strong arms.

Maksim found it impossible to leave Petrograd by train. The ordinary railway traffic had been suspended to permit the free and rapid movement of troops. For three days and nights he concealed himself in a gambling den and there lost three hundred roubles at cards. Then he bribed the skipper of a trading schooner to be allowed to travel as a stowaway to Stockholm, with two of his evil companions. But ere the vessel had left the Gulf of Finland it was held up by one of the Tsar's cruisers. An officer with half a dozen men came on board, and the skipper was informed that war had been declared. A search was made for stowaways of military age, and Maksim and his companions were discovered and arrested. The schooner was then allowed to proceed.

In due course Maksim appeared before a court martial, which inflicted a punishment. He was afterwards sent southward with a draft to join his regiment.

Several months went past, and Maksim took part in much hard fighting. The discipline of service and the perils and sufferings of warfare wrought a wondrous change in him. Indeed, he became a new man, and fought so bravely and well that he was twice promoted. The thought of his crime, however, ever remained a constant source of pain to him. He prayed fervently for forgiveness, and vowed that when war was over he would do his utmost to repay to Leo the money he had stolen.

Winter came on, and still the fighting waxed fiercely as ever. Would it never come to an end so that he might begin a new life at home and secure his father's forgiveness and blessing?

He was wounded while fighting in Poland, and after recovering in hospital, received orders to join a new regiment which had been sent to operate in Galicia.

Thus it came about that he took part in the campaign against the Austrian forces on the eastern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains.

Russia was once again knocking at the "doors" of Hungary.

In the Dukla Pass the Tsar's brave soldiers made fearless and persistent attacks through the snow against the enemy, who occupied trenches on steep inclines, which were protected by confused and snow-concealed mazes of barbed wire.

Desperate deeds of valour were performed in that desolate region. Many Austrian positions, deemed impregnable by the defenders, were assaulted and won. And although the sacrifice of human lives was heavy, the Russian soldiers were not a whit dismayed. Companies followed companies of brave men up the snowy slopes and were mowed down by machine-gun and rifle fire. But they were followed by others until the defence was overwhelmed step by step and from height to height. Never before had such battles been fought in the world as were waged on those wintry hill-sides. The white wastes of snow were broken and torn by unwearied feet and stained with human blood.

One evening Maksim advanced with a force up a slippery gully towards a strongly-held Austrian trench. Bullets swept downwards like great hail-stones, and brave men fell constantly and silently in the snow. At length only a remnant remained, and all the officers had been killed or wounded. The wearied survivors crept and huddled under the shelter of an overhanging rock like sheep seeking shelter from a snowstorm. They seemed resolved to wait until darkness came so as to effect a safe retreat.

MAKSIM FELT HIMSELF BEING LIFTED AND CARRIED AWAY

Then Maksim assumed command. He rallied the men with brave words and urged them to follow him and press onwards, so that they might complete the task they had begun. They were glad to follow him. It was better to die fighting than to die in retreat. So with high hearts and renewed vigour they attacked and pressed home until the position was won. The thin line of desperate men had broken through the entanglements and carried the last trench that lay before them. Maksim fell wounded in his hour of triumph, and

rolling down a steep incline, lay half-buried in the snow behind a great boulder. Consciousness immediately deserted him.

Reinforcements had been rushed forward, and ere long they were resisting a fierce counter-attack higher up the hill-side. The wounded lay moaning and bleeding on the snowy slopes.

How long Maksim remained unconscious he could never tell. When he awoke he felt himself being lifted and carried away, while he endured terrible agony from a wound in his right thigh. Darkness came on as he was borne down the hill-side, and he again lapsed into unconsciousness.

When he next opened his eyes he was lying on a stretcher in a dimly-lighted wooden house, surrounded by many other wounded soldiers. His thigh had been placed in splinters and tightly bandaged. Someone was bending over him and holding a flask to his lips. He drank and felt refreshed. Then he looked in the face of the man and whispered, "Leo."

It was indeed Leo Lermontov, who had found him lying in the snow and had carried him on his shoulders to a place of safety.

"Leo, Leo," he muttered huskily, "I have need of your forgiveness. I stole your roubles and ran away, and now you have saved my life."

"They were not my roubles," answered Leo slowly; "I gave them to Nikolay, and you cannot ask his forgiveness now, because he is dead."

Maksim wept, and Leo went out into the darkness.

THE LADY OF MOSCOW

On the balcony of a Moscow hospital sat a group of convalescent soldiers, who had been wounded during the investment of Przemysl, 1 chatting and smoking in the warm sunshine. Their dialects varied as much as their physical characteristics for they hailed from various parts of the Tsar's domains. Some were typical Slav peasants, whose native villages lay scattered among the marshes and forests of White Russia—broad-shouldered men with dark flaxen hair and auburn beards, deeply lined foreheads, and meditative eyes set in cobwebs of wrinkles; others were of the fairer and larger-limbed northern type from the Baltic provinces—Lithuanians and Livonians and Finns, while not a few were dark-haired, brown-eyed, swarthy men from the fertile river valleys of Little Russia. All except one, a student who had volunteered for active service on the outbreak of war, were strangers to Moscow, and regarded with deep interest its busy streets, roaring factories, and great buildings.

"In ancient days, before Petrograd was built by Peter the Great," the student said, "this city was the capital of all Russia. Yonder are the royal palaces." He pointed towards the Kremlin, the ancient citadel which juts out like a spear-head in the centre of the city between the Moskwa river and its tributary the Neglin, and is protected by thick stone walls.

"Before the days of big cannon," he added, "the Kremlin was impregnable." The soldiers gazed in silence on the picturesque eminence, with its congested mass of ponderous cathedrals and palaces, its sublime domes and tapering spires.

"At which building," one of them asked, "is the Tsar Kolokol (the 'King of bells')?"

The student pointed towards the lofty tower of Ivan Veliki, tipped with a bright gilded dome. “At that one yonder,“ he smiled. “We must visit it ere we return to the front.“

“Often have I heard of it,“ a Livonian remarked. “They say its equal is not to be found in the wide world.“

“That is true enough,“ agreed the student. “I myself have once seen it. Round the rim it measures sixty feet, and its height is that of four men perched one above another.“

“Had our fathers been heretics like the Prussians,“ a Little Russian chimed in, “they would have manufactured the ‘King of guns‘ instead of the ‘King of bells‘. But they were men of peace and prayer.“ He crossed himself reverently.

“One shell from Tsar Kolokol, were it a gun, would shatter the whole Austrian army,“ stammered a fair Livonian.

“And what a distance it would travel!“ laughed another. “Perhaps it would reach Przemysl, while the sound of it might be heard in Vienna.“

“The sound of Tsar Kolokol reaches farther than Vienna,“ commented the Little Russian, “for it ascends to high Heaven.“

“That is true indeed,“ sighed a deep-eyed peasant beside him. “Heaven is far off, but God is near.“

“It took long centuries,“ the student went on, “to erect all these buildings on the Kremlin. Parts of the wall are nearly five hundred years old.“

“Your knowledge is wonderful,“ remarked a red-bearded peasant. “But it makes my head ache. I would much prefer to hear your stories, those you heard from your grandsire on winter nights. Have you no more to tell?“

The student laughed. “There is a story attached to every building on the Kremlin,“ he answered, “but the most wonderful one I know relates how Moscow became a city.“

“That must be a very old tale, my friend,“ declared a wrinkled peasant, drawing his chair closer to the student.

“What does it matter how old it is, if it is a good story?“ another urged with a smile.

“It is both old and good,“ the student said. “I heard it in my boyhood from the lips of the wise old woman who nursed me after my mother died.“

“God rest her soul!“ exclaimed the Little Russian. “Let her voice speak from your lips once again.“

The student laid down his pipe, and then proceeded to relate the story as follows

Once upon a time the only building which stood on the Kremlin was a stately castle, in which dwelt the Princess Peerless with twelve fair maidens who were her attendants. There were no streets and no houses where there are now so many, because Moscow had not come into being. The Kremlin was surrounded by a great and pathless forest.

This Princess Peerless was as beautiful as the stately moon of summer, and her voice had the sweetness of a bird‘s song on a dewy evening. A strange power dwelt in her tender eyes. Those she looked upon with favour were stirred by feelings of deep joy, but those she glanced at in wrath were immediately transformed into blocks of ice.

When the Princess grew into young womanhood, and hunters who visited the forest beheld her, the fame of her beauty was spread far and wide. Then large numbers of people came from all parts of Russia to gaze upon her. Even princes and noblemen came, and they

vied one with another to win the heart of that fair lady, but she refused them all.

Then one bold prince plotted to seize Princess Peerless by force. He came through the forest with a strong army. In bright array his soldiers marched towards the Kremlin, their banners flying and their trumpets blowing, but the Princess looked out from a castle window and gazed upon them with anger. Suddenly a deep silence fell upon the forest, for the whole army was transformed into blocks of ice.

After this it came about that the Demon King of the Underworld awoke from sleep and went forth to look upon all the princes and princesses and all the kings and queens that held sway over mankind. One night, when the calm moon rode high and fair, he looked down upon Princess Peerless, who lay fast asleep surrounded by her twelve maidens. A smile lingered on her lips; rosy were her cheeks, and her forehead gleamed like ivory. She was dreaming a beautiful dream, and saw coming nigh to her a noble young knight, clad in golden armour and horsed on a prancing steed. In her heart she loved him dearly. His eyes were clear and grey like placid sea waters sparkling in sunshine.

The Demon gazed long at the sleeping Princess and fell deeply in love with her. Thereafter he transformed himself into comely human shape, and appeared on the Kremlin among her wooers. It was well that he had no knowledge of her dream, else he would have worn golden armour. He knelt before the Princess; he vowed he loved her, and besought her to be his bride. But, like the others, he was sent away. The Princess had taken a silent vow that she would wed no other than the unknown golden knight, whom she had beheld in her dream.

The Demon was angry. He vowed that he would carry off Princess Peerless by force, but she was given knowledge that he was possessed of great power, and prepared to thwart his design. She assembled together all the warriors on the Kremlin, and they entered into her service with glad hearts. They surrounded the castle to protect the fair lady; but when the Demon came nigh, he blew his

poisonous breath towards them, and they all fell down in a magic swoon. The twelve fair handmaidens were overcome also. Indeed, none within the castle, or on the Kremlin and near it, escaped the warriors' fate save the Princess alone. She went to a high window and looked forth, and when the Demon came in sight, she gazed at him angrily, and he was immediately transformed into a block of ice. Then she sat down and wept.

The Demon, however, was not easily thwarted. He wrought a counter spell and resumed his wonted form. Then he began to make preparations to protect himself against the terrible glances of the Princess, and, at the same time, prevent her from escaping. He erected a wall of iron round the castle, and at the gate he chained a fierce dragon with twelve heads, so that none could enter or depart without his knowledge and consent. The dragon kept watch constantly. One by one its heads fell asleep during the night, and one by one they awoke during the day; but when the last head closed its eyes, those of the first opened wide. It could not, therefore, be attacked unawares. The life of the monster was in its heads. These must needs be all cut off ere it could be killed.

The Demon smiled, well content. He knew that the glance of the Princess could not penetrate iron, and that no human being was able to overcome the dragon in combat. In his evil heart he decided to keep the Princess confined in solitude, within the castle, until she consented to be his bride. Every day he called to her, saying: "Promise you will be mine, and I will set you free. Marry me and become Queen of the Underworld." But the Princess Peerless refused to answer. She sat at the high window and wept while he spoke, and then turned away to wander through the lone and silent castle in which all her maidens lay in dreamless magic sleep.

The days went past and the weeks, until three months were fulfilled. No joy ever entered her heart, except when she thought of the fair hero who had appeared before her in her dream, clad in golden armour and horsed on a prancing steed.

One day, as she sat gazing at the sky, a white cloud went flitting past. She took up her harp and, playing a sweet melody, sang out of her lonely heart:

O flying cloud in the blue above,
As white and bright as the woodland dove—
Now tarry and hear, now tarry and hear;
O hast thou seen the knight I love?
O where is he,
My love most dear?
Doth he think of me?
Will he e'er come near?
O flying cloud in the blue above,
As white and bright as the woodland dove.

The cloud heard and made answer, singing:

O voice I hear,
So sweet and clear,
Mine eyes are blind—
O ask the wind
That searcheth ever far and near,
Beautiful voice I hear.

The Princess was disconsolate. But while she sat musing alone, a gentle wind fluttered round a fair company of white snowdrops that had sprung into life. Then she sang to wind:

O wind so happy, wind so free,
Alone am I; O pity me,
I sorrow in captivity.
Now tarry and hear, now tarry and hear.
O hast thou seen my love most dear?
Doth he think of me? Will he e'er come near?
O wind so happy, wind so free,
Alone am I; O pity me.

Softly the wind made answer in song:

High and low
Through the world I go,
All viewless, and no face I know.
O ask the stars
  That from the skies
Look on the world
  Like a million eyes.

The Princess waited until night came on. Then she sang to the stars:

O stars that shine all bright and clear,
Mine eyes are dimmed with tear on tear.
O wilt thou pity me and hear?
O hast thou seen my love most dear?
Doth he think of me? Will he e'er come near?

Sweetly the stars made answer:

O ask the moon that roves all night,
And o'er the dim world sheds her light.
  She knoweth more than do the stars
  Of men and women and love and wars.

When the Moon arose, the Princess sang:

O Moon, thy face is calm and fair,
And mine is furrowed in despair—
Now tarry and hear, now tarry and hear.
O hast thou seen my knight most dear,
The golden knight I love so well?—
Doth he think of me? Will he e'er come near?
Beautiful Moon, oh! hear and tell.

The Moon heard and made answer, singing softly:

Alas! O Princess fair,
Who weepest in despair,
By me thy knight hath ne'er beholden been.
Tarry till night is done,
Then ask the rising Sun—
To whom all things are known, by whom all men are seen.

All night long the Princess sat waiting until dawn broke and the Sun arose. Then she sang:

O Sun, behold my grief,
And give my heart relief—
Now tarry and hear; now tarry and hear.
O hast thou seen my knight
In armour golden bright?
Doth he think of me? Will he e'er come near?
I moan, I sigh,
Alone am I.

When the Sun heard this song of sorrow, he sang with bird-like voice, quivering with hope and joy:

O sigh no more
"Alone am I" . . .
For he, thine own,
Thy love, comes nigh.
With gladness sound
Thy harp and sing,
For he hath found
The golden ring.

For ages long,
In deeps profound,
Hath lain the ring
That he hath found.
He seeks thee now

Afar and wide;
He vows that thou
Wilt be his bride.

An army strong
He leadeth here—
The Demon laughs
And knows no fear.
For with his breath
He can lay low
In deadly swoon
The strongest foe.

But tremble not,
Nor be dismayed,
For to thy Prince
I'll give mine aid.
And sigh no more
"Alone am I" . . .
Be of good cheer,
Thy knight comes nigh,
Who loves thee well—
Good-bye, good-bye.

That morning the Golden Knight, horsed on a prancing steed, was leading his strong army through a river valley towards the Kremlin. He thought of Princess Peerless now with joy and now with sorrow. Thrice he had beheld her in his dreams. In the first dream she sat among her maidens, and seemed as beautiful as the moon surrounded by pale white stars; in the second dream he saw the Demon, who built round her castle a wall of iron, while she sat at her high window weeping tears of woe; in the third dream he gazed in her deep eyes that were dreaming of him alone. The Knight rode on, musing over his dreams.

The Sun rose high, and when he beheld the Golden Knight, spoke to him and said: "It is useless for you to lead an army against the Demon. Send all your soldiers home again, and your fiery steed also,

and go forth yourself alone to rescue the Princess. She cannot be set free until the Demon is slain, and he cannot be slain in battle. You alone among all men can accomplish his fall. Listen to me, and do as I counsel you, so that all may be well."

"As you advise me, so shall I do, and that right gladly," the Golden Knight made answer.

When he had spoken thus he flung his golden ring into the river, and commanded his soldiers to march homeward, leaving him alone without steed, or companion, or any weapon. The army marched up the valley and vanished from sight.

Said the Sun: "You must slay the Demon, so that the Princess may be set free. He cannot be struck down until you have obtained secret knowledge regarding him. You must, therefore, visit that wise old woman, the Yaga. She will instruct you as to what should be done. But first of all you must find the magic horse that will carry you to her distant dwelling. Turn eastward now, and walk on foot until you reach the great plain. In the middle of that plain there grow three stately oak-trees, and close to the oak-trees you will find an iron door which opens to an underground mansion. Inside the mansion the horse waits for you, and beside the horse hangs the invisible club that will carry out your commands."

The Sun bade the Golden Knight farewell, and he then rose up to set out on his lonely journey. At first there were doubts in his heart. He knew not what mysterious perils awaited him, and sometimes, as he walked on, he wished that his brave soldiers were at hand and within call. Over mountains he went and across broad valleys, and sometimes he was delayed while searching for the ford of a broad stream. He kept pressing eastward day after day until seven days had gone past. Then on the eighth day he reached the great plain, and saw before him three giant oaks whose branches rose almost to the clouds.

Towards these giant oaks he walked with hasty steps, and soon found the iron door which leads to the underground mansion. He

opened the door and beheld a flight of steps twisting downward in deepening shadow. Fearlessly he descended until he came to another door, which he opened also. Thick darkness then confronted him, and he faltered. But suddenly his heart was uplifted to hear from afar off the neighing of a horse. He pressed onward through a narrow passage, groping his way with hands outstretched until he reached another iron door. This door he opened likewise, and resumed his journey through night-black corridors which were silent as the tomb. In all he met with twelve doors, each of which he flung wide. When he had passed through the last door of all, he found himself in the chamber in which the horse was bound fast. A dim light burned there, and as soon as he entered, the horse sprang up and broke free from the twelve chains with which a magician had bound him long ages before. Then it spoke to the Golden Knight and said: "For many uncounted years 1 have waited for you, my deliverer. Now know that I am at your service. Leap upon my back, and stretch forth your hand and seize the invisible club which hangs beside me. This club will carry out whatever command you give in combat, and return again to your hand when you call upon it. Let us hasten forth from this dismal place. My heart is panting for the sunlight. Whither shall I carry you? I will hasten speedily to whatever place you name."

Seated on the horse's back, the Prince returned to the surface of the great plain. Then he said to the wise animal: "Carry me towards the dwelling of the Yaga."

The horse immediately sprang forward and rose high in the air. Treading the clouds and speeding like the wind, it went on all day long without pausing until the sun began to sink low in the west. Then it descended to the earth, and entered a thick forest of great oak-trees, in the middle of which the Yaga has her dwelling. It hastened fearlessly through the shadows. Deep silence brooded all around. No wind whispered there, nor stream raised its voice; no bird sang, and no insect caused a sound. There was, indeed, no sign of life anywhere, and day was fast fading into night.

PEOPLE CAME FROM ALL PARTS OF RUSSIA TO GAZE UPON THE PRINCESS

In the middle of this strange and awesome forest the Golden Knight beheld the dwelling of the Yaga. It was a feather-thatched hut perched on birds' legs, and it turned round and round continually, now this way and now that, so as to prevent anyone who approached it from entering by the door.

The Golden Knight muttered a secret spell and spoke, saying: "O hut, hear and obey. Turn round with the door towards me and your back to the shadows and stand still."

The hut turned round as he commanded it and stood still. Then he walked through the door, and beheld the old Yaga sitting alone in the middle of the one chamber within. She looked up and exclaimed: "No mortal has ever entered my dwelling before. Why have you come hither, O Golden knight?"

"Foolish Yaga," answered the Knight, "it is not seemly that you should ask questions before you make offer to me of hospitality."

The old woman at once rose up and prepared a meal for him. Then he sat down and ate and drank and took his rest. Thereafter he informed her why he had taken the perilous journey towards her dwelling, and she said: "The task which lies before you is dangerous and difficult. But I will inform you how the Demon can be overcome. You must visit the Isle of Immortality, which is situated in the midst of the ocean. On that island there is an oak, and beneath the oak is an iron chest. Inside the chest is a hare, and under the hare a duck, and under the duck an egg. The life of the Demon is in this egg; when it is broken before him he will fall down dead."

Next morning the Golden Knight set forth to find the egg. He rode on the back of the magic horse until he reached the seashore. Then he dismounted and wondered what next he should do.

While he stood musing on the point of a rocky headland, he saw a great fish which had been caught in a net. "Set me free, O Golden Knight," the fish exclaimed, "and I will remember you in time of need."

The Knight shook the net, and thus assisted the fish to escape, and it disappeared through the depths. He stood there gazing across the waters, wondering how he could contrive to reach the Isle of Immortality. His heart was filled with sadness and despair, but the magic horse spoke to him and said: "Why do you linger here, and why is your face wrinkled with grief?"

"Alas!" the Knight made answer, "how can I be otherwise than sorrowful? I cannot cross the ocean to reach the Isle of Immortality."

Said the horse: “Leap upon my back, and I will carry you to that distant isle. But be careful and grasp the reins tightly, lest you should fall off.“

The Knight mounted the magic steed, which immediately plunged into the sea. It swam very swiftly, raising great billows, and tossing the spray to right and to left. The brave Knight held the reins tightly, and in time was borne safely to the shore of the far-distant isle.

As soon as he climbed the strand he looked round about him with eyes of wonder. Then he beheld a great oak which grew in the middle of the island and walked towards it. Suddenly he felt himself endowed with great strength, and, grasping the oak, pulled it up by the roots and flung it aside. As he did so, the tree moaned like a beast in pain.

In the hole left by the tree the Knight found an iron box. As soon as he raised the lid a hare leapt forth, and he turned to look at it. Then a duck came out and flew through the air, grasping the egg between its webbed toes. The Knight desired above all things to obtain this egg, which contained the life of the giant. So he drew his bow and shot a swift arrow which went through the duck. The egg fell into the sea and was lost.

Perceiving this the Prince began to utter cries of sorrow, for well he knew that if he could not recover the egg, Princess Peerless must remain a prisoner in that lonely castle which the Demon had surrounded with a wall of iron. His heart sank within him, and he ran down to the point of a headland and gazed across the waves. Then suddenly the fish which he had rescued from the net rose up and spoke, saying: “Why do you sorrow thus, O Golden Knight? I have not for-gotten the service you rendered me. What can I do for your sake?“

“Find me the egg which fell into the sea when I shot the duck,“ the Knight cried. out eagerly.

The fish at once dived, and ere long appeared again with the egg in its mouth. Then glad of heart was the Golden Knight. He seized the egg, but ere he could thank the fish it vanished again in the midst of the waters.

Having thus obtained power over the Demon, the Knight leapt on his horse's back, and bade it carry him to the lonely castle in which dwelt Princess Peerless whom he loved.

The horse crossed the sea, and when it reached dry land it rose high in the air like a bird and flew swiftly. Then it made its way towards the place where Moscow now stands, and in time the Knight found himself close to the castle on the Kremlin. He gazed on the iron wall which enclosed the palace and walked round it until he came to the gate. Beside the gate crouched the fierce dragon. Six of its heads were asleep and six remained awake, keeping watch lest anyone should venture nigh.

The Golden Knight stood gazing at the monster with wonder but unafraid. Then he bade his invisible club to attack it. The club at once flew from his hand and began to smite the dragon so furiously that its six sleeping heads awoke. Suffering great pain the monster leapt from side to side, and shrank back, and darted forward, attempting to avoid the blows. Its four-and-twenty eyes meanwhile glanced in all directions looking for the assailant, while from the twelve mouths darted forth twelve fiery tongues. But still the blows rained down upon it, and each blow was like a thunderbolt. At length the dragon became so angry that its heads commenced to quarrel one with another. In the end it was seized with madness and tore itself to pieces, so that it expired.

The Knight called back his invisible club, and walked through the iron gate towards the castle. He was met by the Princess, who came forth to greet him, her eyes sparkling with love and joy.

"You have slain the dragon," she said softly, "but a greater task still awaits you. The cruel Demon is coming nigh even now. He will endeavour to poison you with his breath, so be careful how you

approach him. Alas! if you are slain, my heart will be broken, and I will fling myself over yonder steep into the Moskwa river."

Said the Golden Knight. "Beautiful Princess Peerless, have no fear. The Demon is in my power. This egg, which I hold in my hand, contains his life. I could have slain him ere now, but I desire first to punish him for the wrong he has done against you."

As he spoke the heavy footsteps of the Demon were heard approaching through the forest. Trees fell down before him and snapped like twigs as he stepped upon them.

The Golden Knight spoke to his invisible club, and said, "Go and smite the Demon."

As he commanded, so did the club do. It flew through the air and smote the Demon heavily and long. None but he could have sustained such an attack, for he had great strength. He looked to right and to left, behind him and before, and he gazed upward and towards the ground, wondering whence came the blows that he staggered beneath. Nothing could he see. Soon he began to howl with terror and pain. He ran forward towards the palace as if to find shelter there. But the Golden Knight went out to meet him.

The Demon paused and exclaimed, "Ah! you are the enemy who is causing me all this pain, are you?"

"I have come to slay you," answered the Prince, "because of the evil you have done, and chiefly because you have caused Princess Peerless to sorrow greatly."

The Demon heard in silence, and prepared to blow his poisonous breath towards the rescuer of the Princess. But ere he could do so, the Golden Knight crushed the egg which he held in his hand. The yolk dropped upon the ground, and immediately the Demon fell dead.

Then everything underwent a sudden change. The sun came out from behind dark clouds and shone brightly. Birds that had long been silent broke into song throughout the forest. The iron wall vanished like morning mist, and human voices were heard on every side, for all those who had been cast down in a swoon, awoke and resumed their various duties again. Towards the Princess came her twelve maidens, and she wept to hear their voices once again.

There were great rejoicings in the castle when the Golden Knight and Princess Peerless were married. They lived happily together for long years. There was less sorrow than there had been in the world after the Demon of the Underworld had been slain.

All the people who were liberated from the spells cast upon them by the Demon elected to remain near to the castle on the Kremlin. They acknowledged the Golden Knight as their Tsar, and the Princess Peerless as Tsarina, and they made a clearance in the forest where they built the first houses of the city of Moscow, which was named after the Moskwa river. In time Moscow became the capital of the great Kingdom of Muskovy, from which modern Russia has grown.

Footnotes

1 Pronounced Pzhěm´is'l.

MIKHAIL THE KRINGEL SELLER

One sunny forenoon in early summer Little Mikhail stood at a street corner in a riverside suburb of Petrograd with a basket tray full of fancy cakes of white bread, called Kringels, suspended from his neck. He was a tall slim boy, not more than twelve years old, with pale pinched cheeks, large grey eyes, and clustering chestnut hair. "Kringels, fresh kringels," he kept shouting; "who'll buy, who'll buy?"

Vendors old and young made the narrow streets resound with their cries. Some darted hither and thither jostling passers-by, pausing now and again as they scanned high windows, expecting signals from customers. Others ranged themselves along the footpaths, sitting or standing beside their little stocks of merchandise. "Pots and pans—dishes of all sorts," a woman called from the doorway of an empty house on the steps of which she had arranged her wares. "Green onions and cucumber," shouted a little old man with a harsh voice. "Matches and pipes," droned another, while a ragged girl cried, "Needles and pins, buttons and thread," in a sing-song manner that the barefooted children amused themselves by imitating.

Housewives paused to bargain with the vendors, sometimes arguing with them and sometimes gossiping. The clamour of human voices was occasionally drowned by the rattling of wagons passing to and from the dockyards.

"Kringels, fresh kringels; who'll buy?" shouted Little Mikhail, his shrill voice rising above the confused clamour of the street.

When I was young," remarked a vendor who sold cheap jewellery and brightly-coloured cotton handkerchiefs, "I could shout as lustily as the kringel boy. Now I croak like a black crow by the wayside."

The woman who sold earthenware pots shook her head. “Poor Mikhail!“ she sighed, he must keep on shouting like that because Red Koko is watching him.“

“Is Red Koko his father?“

“No; the boy is an orphan. Koko‘s daughter tells me she has cared for him since he was three years old, and he calls her ‘Little Mother‘.“

“He must be some relative, surely,“ suggested the vendor of jewellery and handkerchiefs.

“No one here knows,“ the woman said. “He does not resemble either Koko or his daughter. When he came to Petrograd about ten years ago he spoke the White Russian dialect, and knew some foreign words, like the children of rich people. There is some mystery about that boy,“ the woman added. “Although he is so gentle and attentive to his work, Red Koko is very harsh to him.“

While the vendors were thus discussing Mikhail, he was approached by a little dark woman, carrying a fresh supply of kringels, which she herself had baked.

“That is Red Koko‘s daughter,“ explained the seller of earthenware pots and plates.

“Kringels, fresh kringels; who‘ll buy?“ the boy kept shouting.

“You look tired, Mikhail,“ Koko‘s daughter whispered; “does your head pain you still?“

“Not so much now, little mother,“ answered the boy. “But I wish it were night-time, so that I might return home. The hours pass very slowly.“

"Have you seen my father?" she whispered anxiously. "If I thought he were not near, I would take your place for a time, so that you might lie down and rest yourself."

"He is in Pavlov's vodka shop," the lad answered wearily; "he will return here again before long."

The woman sighed heavily. "He'll take all the money from you, of course, as he always does. Give me a few kopecks, Mikhail, so that I may buy liver for you, else you will get nothing to eat for supper except black bread."

The boy thrust a few coins into her hand, and then, glancing over his shoulder, whispered: "Hasten away, little mother. I see him coming."

The woman drew her shawl over her head and went down a narrow twisting lane, walking quickly. She was soon lost to sight.

In another moment a heavy hand suddenly clutched Mikhail's right arm.

"Why are you not shouting, son of a frog?" asked a gruff voice. Mikhail looked up and beheld the angry face of the man who was known as "Red Koko". He had thick red hair and a red beard, a squat nose, and bleary blue eyes.

"Kringels, fresh kringels; who'll buy?" the lad called nervously.

"Can't you shout louder?" growled Koko, tightening his grip on the boy's arm until he squirmed with pain.

"Kringels, fresh kringels—oh! o———h!" the little fellow wailed.

"Why do you torture the boy so?" exclaimed the woman who sold earthenware. "You are a cruel man, Koko; and some day the police will get you."

Koko took no notice of her remark. “Give me all the money you have made,“ he said to Mikhail.

The lad counted twenty-three kopecks into Koko‘s outstretched hand.

“Haven‘t you more?“ growled the man. “You are spending your time here to little purpose. I must keep a closer eye on you. Shout loud and press people to buy. If you don‘t, I shall thrash you to-night again.“

He turned away, swaying unsteadily, while the boy resumed shouting, Kringels, fresh kringels!“

“Does Koko beat you often?“ asked the woman who sold earthenware.

“I hide from him when he comes home,“ answered the boy. “Besides, he is often so drunk that he can‘t strike one.“

“Still, he does manage to beat you sometimes.“

“Yes, and heavily, too; he is so strong.“

“God will punish him one day for his wickedness,“ sighed the woman.

“Kringels, fresh kringels; who‘ll buy?“ Mikhail called. Koko was watching him from a distance, smiling grimly and stroking his beard. He was prompted by feelings of revenge to ill-use the boy. “Mikhail‘s father,“ he muttered to himself, “used to treat me badly. Several times he had me punished by the justices. At length he compelled me to leave my native village. Little does he think now that I have his son in my power and am able to make him suffer even more than I have suffered.“

Koko had been a tenant of a small holding on the estate of Mikhail‘s father in White Russia. He was an indolent man of evil habits, much

addicted to stealing, who had himself to blame for the misfortunes of which he complained. His fellow-villagers disliked him, and had many times pleaded with the land steward to have him put away.

For a few months after having been forced to leave his native place, Koko lived in Moscow. Then he resolved to go northward to Petrograd, where he hoped to obtain remunerative work at the docks. Before leaving, however, he conceived a wicked plot to avenge himself on Mikhail's father by setting fire to his corn-stacks when the harvest had been gathered in. Accordingly he walked one day towards the village, which lay twenty miles distant from Moscow, and concealed himself in a wood on the bank of a stream which flows into Moskwa river, there to wait until darkness came on.

That evening, as it chanced, Little Mikhail was taken for a walk through the trees by his faithful old nurse, Masha. He had slept heavily during the sultry afternoon, and, the air having grown fresh and cool, he raced about in high glee, making the wood resound with his shouts and laughter. Masha hobbled about and scolded him frequently for running away from her. Suddenly he darted towards the stream, and while trying to find a new hiding-place, so as to tease the old nurse, fell over the bank into a swirling pool. He was at once carried away by the current round a mass of jutting rock which caused the stream to twist abruptly and increase its speed.

Koko was lying on the other side of the rock under a clump of bushes, brooding over his wrongs. He heard the splash of the falling child, and crept out on a ledge to ascertain what had happened. Seeing Little Mikhail floating past, he stretched out his right hand and lifted him, dripping like a wet sponge, out of the water, thus saving his life. The little fellow had been stunned by the fall and sudden immersion, and was quite unconscious. Koko turned him over to empty his mouth of water, and observing that he began to breathe freely again, laid him down on the soft turf.

Meanwhile Masha had run towards the river bank, and, sliding down the bank, waded towards the pool on which the child's cap

still floated, having been caught by the branch of a fallen tree. She advanced boldly until almost beyond her depth, only to discover to her horror that Little Mikhail had vanished. Half-crazed with grief, she left the water, and scrambling up the bank, ran towards her master's house for assistance, uttering cries of distress. On her way she met the child's mother, and falling on her knees, cried out brokenly: "Little Mikhail is in the black pool." Then she swooned and fell prostrate.

Koko's first impulse was to restore the boy to his parents. For a moment he stood with folded arms, gazing at the little inert form stretched out on the turf. But his thoughts returned again to his wrongs, and he remembered with bitterness the empty cottage which his father had built, and the hostility shown him by the landlord, the land steward, and people of the village. "No one has observed what I have done," he muttered. "No one suspects that I am here. I shall carry this child away. His father will mourn the loss of his only son more deeply than he would the loss of a few stacks of corn."

Smiling a cunning smile, the peasant then stripped off the child's blouse and cast it into the stream, so as to mislead those who would come to search for the body. Then he took Little Mikhail in his arms and hastened towards a deep and unfrequented part of the wood. There he undressed the child, and wrapping him in his own warm sheepskin coat, gathered a few handfuls of twigs and lit a fire, so as to dry the wet clothing.

In time the boy revived and opened his eyes. He stared with mute wonder in the face of the rough peasant, who was nursing him tenderly, and then lisped faintly, "Masha—I want my Masha."

Koko laid the child down near the fire and answered: "I shall carry you to Masha when I have dried your clothes. Do not cry out or the wild beasts will catch you. Just listen to them."

Little Mikhail heard the distant cries of the men and women who were running up and down the banks of the stream searching for his

body in the gathering darkness. He began to shake with fear, and lay watching Koko drying his little garments by holding them over the crackling twigs. Ere long he fell asleep. When he awoke morning had dawned. He found himself in a strange room, in which sat Koko and his daughter, drinking tea. Koko had carried him all the way to Moscow under cover of night.

"They think Mikhail is drowned," the peasant told his daughter. "To-morrow we shall set out for Petrograd and take him with us."

"If the police discover what you have done," the young woman said, "you will be sent to Siberia."

"What does it matter where I go now?" growled Koko. "Outside my native village one place is the same as another to me."

"The police would arrest me also," wailed the daughter.

"No one saw me with the child. Besides, have I not saved his life?"

Next day Koko and his daughter set out for Petrograd, taking Little Mikhail with them. The boy's parents believed that he was dead.

Years went past and still Koko kept his secret. "As long as I live," he vowed, "Mikhail must work for me. I don't care what happens to him afterwards."

"Kringels, fresh kringels!" shouted the poor lost lad on that early summer day, while Koko watched him from across the street.

At noon the workers streamed from the docks and made purchases from the vendors. Mikhail sold many kringels during the meal hour, which passed quickly. Then the street emptied itself, and vendors settled down to gossip and snooze along the footpaths. It had grown very warm. Dogs crouched in the shadows of high buildings and snapped lazily at passing flies.

KOKO AND LITTLE MIKHAIL

Just as a puff of wind sometimes stirs a warm and silent wood and makes the leaves rustle merrily, so was the sleepy street suddenly awakened to animation by the appearance of strangers. The curiosity of the vendors was aroused, and their tongues began to chatter.

"Who are these? Look, do you see them?" said one to another along the footway. "They are coming this way. What can have taken them here?"

Men yawned and rubbed their eyes; women rose up and gathered in little groups, whispering and nodding their heads.

An elderly lady, accompanied by a uniformed nurse, came walking slowly down the street. It was an unusual thing to see such a visitor in that poor quarter; all the grand folks drove in their carriages when they chanced to visit the docks.

The vendors wondered who this lady could be and why she had come near. Although her hair was white as new-fallen snow, she did not seem old. There was a softness and tenderness in her beautiful face which attracted everyone; her eyes were grey and dreamy, and her lips moved constantly as if she were whispering something to herself.

Women curtsied to her as she drew near, and now and again she smiled sweetly in acknowledgment. A stout woman lifted up her little son in her arms, whispering: "See the beautiful lady, Ivanovitch." The child sucked his thumb and looked wonderingly. Pausing for a moment, the lady spoke to the mother in a sad, sweet voice. "May your boy be a blessing to you," she said. "Never let him go near the river. I had once a little boy of mine own, but alas! he was drowned." Tears streamed down her cheeks and she turned away.

"Poor dear lady," whispered a Jewess, "her mind is crazed with her loss."

"The rich have their sorrows as well as the poor," remarked a frail old man.

"Her face is saintly and fair," the stout woman said. "She spoke out of her heart when she prayed that little Ivanovitch would be a blessing to me."

Mikhail saw Koko peering from the doorway of a vodka shop, and resumed shouting: "Kringels, sweet kringels—who'll buy?"

The lady turned towards him with a smile. “I like your face,“ she said softly. “What beautiful eyes you have! What is your name, little fellow?“

“Mikhail,“ answered the boy.

“How strange!“ the lady exclaimed. “That was the name of my own little boy. Had he lived he would be nearly as old as you are, Mikhail. What is your age?“

“Twelve years.“

“My Mikhail would be twelve too were he alive. You look much older, son of my heart. Why do you have to sell these kringels in the street? Are your parents very poor?“

“My parents are dead,“ the boy answered.

“How sad!“ sighed the lady. “If you should ever happen to be near Moscow, come to see me at my country house. I will show you where my Little Mikhail was drowned. I cannot yet realize he is dead. Sometimes I see him in my dreams, wandering about the streets of a strange town, weeping while he searches for me. His eyes were large and grey like yours, but he had fairer hair and his cheeks were plump and red. Will you promise to come and see me some day? I‘ll love you because your name is Mikhail.“

“God be merciful to her!“ whispered the woman who sold hardware. “Her heart is broken with grief for her son.“

“Let us move on, madam,“ the nurse said softly. “It is time we returned to the carriage.“

The lady stroked Mikhail‘s head, gazing at him through her tears. “Will you sell me some kringels?“ she asked. “How much must I pay you for all those on the tray?“

"Fifteen kopecks, madam," answered the boy, who blushed deeply, because the other vendors were watching and listening.

The lady drew a silver rouble from her purse. "Take this, Mikhail," she said, "and eat all the kringels yourself. . . . Now your cheeks are rosy and beautiful. You are more like my lost Mikhail than before. My dear boy was taken away from me by God, and I have not been happy since. But ah! we shall meet again some day in His good time."

She began to weep bitterly, and allowed the nurse to lead her away from the kringel seller, who was really her own lost son. It was a strange meeting after long years of separation. Nor was it to be wondered at that neither recognized the other.

Koko, who stared with wide eyes through the window of a vodka shop, realized what had taken place. He knew that the strange lady was Mikhail's mother, and feared to venture forth lest she would remember his face, and perhaps ask him uncomfortable questions. Not until she had disappeared did he leave his hiding-place and cross the street.

"What did the lady say to you?" he asked Mikhail in a low, unsteady voice.

The boy drew the silver rouble from his pocket and answered, "She gave me that."

Koko took the coin, and stared at it stupidly as he turned it over in the palm of his right hand.

"But what did she say?" he blurted out, turning his eyes upon the boy, who answered: "She told me I resembled her son who was drowned, and that his name was Mikhail also."

"What has brought her here?" Koko growled. "She dreams"

"What?" exclaimed Koko in a horrified voice.

"She dreams her dead child is wandering about the streets of a strange town," said Mikhail.

The woman who sold hardware had crept near, and heard every word that was spoken. Koko's strange manner aroused her curiosity.

"She dreams, does she?" Koko muttered, tugging his beard.

"Visions come in dreams, and visions are from God," remarked the woman, repeating the saying of a holy man.

Koko glanced at her with startled eyes, and then asked Mikhail: "Did the lady say she would return again?"

Before the boy could answer, the hardware woman spoke, saying: "She thinks Mikhail is like her lost son, and has asked him to go and visit her at her country house, which is near Moscow. Anyone could see that the boy has attracted her. She will certainly return again. Perhaps she wants to adopt him. . . . What makes you afraid, Red Koko?"

The man had turned suddenly very pale, and shook like an aspen leaf. Observing this, the woman grew more bold.

"Whose son is Mikhail?" she asked sharply. "God knows what secret you are hiding in your heart, Red Koko, and He will punish you if you have done wrong. You speak the dialect of White Russia, as does the dear lady who has just gone away. Why are you troubled so much about her? Why———"

Koko made no answer. He turned away abruptly, and went towards the docks with hastening steps.

"When next the lady comes I shall speak to her," said the vendor of hardware to herself as she returned to the door-steps on which she had arranged her wares. "I shall tell her that Koko ill-uses the boy, and that he is afraid of her for some reason or other. Perhaps she knows something about him."

When Mikhail returned home that evening he told Koko's daughter about the lady with the pale, sad face, who had spoken to him regarding her lost child, and presented him with a silver rouble. "Perhaps she will come again, little mother," he sighed as he crouched in a corner, his elbows on his knees and his hands pressed against his aching brow. "Her voice was like sweet music. I felt I had seen her somewhere a long time ago—perhaps I saw her in a dream."

Koko's daughter trembled. She felt certain the strange lady was Mikhail's mother. "Does your head pain you still, Mikhail?" she asked in a low voice.

"Yes, very much," answered the boy. "I feel I cannot eat anything. I will lie down and try to sleep."

"My poor boy, you have wearied yourself to-day. Lie down and sleep a little," Koko's daughter urged him tenderly, with tears in her eyes.

"Do not let your father strike me to-night," Mikhail pleaded, as he stretched himself on a heap of straw which was covered by a ragged blanket.

"Have I not always been kind to you, Mikhail?" Koko's daughter asked in a trembling voice as she drew a rug over him.

"Yes, yes, little mother; always kind."

She kissed his forehead. "You won't forget that. If the great lady comes to take you away, she will make you rich. Promise me you will tell her I have cared for you lovingly ever since you were a little child."

"Had my mother—my real mother—soft eyes like the great lady's?" asked the boy.

"Your mother had indeed beautiful eyes."

"Ah! why did she die?" Mikhail sighed deeply.

"Are you weeping for me, little mother?"

"For you and for myself," answered Koko's daughter. "It will break my heart if you are taken away from me."

"Perhaps the lady will take you also. Who knows?"

His voice had grown faint, and he soon fell asleep. The woman sat beside him weeping, and waiting for her father. But Koko did not return home that night. He had found a hiding-place somewhere near the docks, and waited an opportunity to escape from Petrograd to some distant place where no one would know him.

Next morning Mikhail went to sell kringels as usual at his accustomed place. He looked paler than usual, and his voice had grown thin and tremulous.

"The kringel boy is unwell," one vendor remarked to another.

"If the lady comes to-day," said the woman who sold hardware, "I shall speak to her about Koko. But where is Koko to-day?"

Mikhail's eyes searched the street for him in vain. "Kringels, fresh kringels," he shouted; "who'll buy, who'll buy?"

"It will be very hot to-day again," growled a heavy man who carried a bale of goods on his shoulders, and stood resting himself against the wall beside a group of vendors.

"To-morrow I'll seek the country highways," a pedlar said with a yawn. "I am weary of the city life, and long to see green woods again. The air is thick here; one could cleave it with a hatchet."

"Ah! she is coming again," exclaimed a stout woman excitedly.

"Who is coming?" another asked.

"The lady who blessed my little Ivanovitch yesterday and spoke to Mikhail, the kringel seller."

Vendors rose up to watch her drawing near, walking slowly beside her nurse. What was going to happen? Would she take Mikhail away with her? Everyone grew excited and curious.

"Where can Red Koko be?" asked one of the men.

"If the lady gives Mikhail another silver rouble," a woman remarked, "Koko will soon make appearance. Rest assured he is not far away."

"What is wrong with Mikhail?" exclaimed a Jewess in a startled voice. "He is ill," the stout woman said, and turned at once to hasten towards the boy, who had suddenly fainted on the foot-path. His face was ashen pale and his chin sank on his breast: the tray tilted sideways and all the kringels were scattered on the ground. A crowd had gathered round him when the lady drew near.

"Alas! madam, Little Mikhail has fainted," the Jewess informed her.

"Stand apart! let him have fresh air," said the nurse as she pressed forward.

"Poor boy! poor boy!" exclaimed the lady in a broken voice. "He has neither mother nor father to care for him."

The woman who sold hardware had taken the fainting boy in her arms, kneeling on the footpath, while the nurse unloosed his shirt. Another woman was sprinkling water from an earthenware pot on his white, pinched face.

"Stand apart!" the nurse repeated. Reluctantly the crowd of vendors drew back.

Mikhail began to revive, and, opening his eyes, saw the face of the sad lady, who was bending over him. He smiled faintly.

"Poor boy! poor boy!" she kept repeating.

Dipping her handkerchief in the pot of water, she damped his forehead and cheeks. Then suddenly she uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Look, look!" she cried, addressing the nurse. "There is a little brown mole above his collar-bone. My Little Mikhail had a mole there also."

She clutched the boy convulsively in her arms. "My Little Mikhail has come to life again," she exclaimed.

"Hush! madam," urged the nurse. "Do not excite yourself. This is but a poor woman's child."

"He is none other than your own child," exclaimed a woman excitedly.

Everyone looked round. It was Koko's daughter who had spoken.

"How do you know?" asked the nurse.

"My father rescued Mikhail from drowning and carried him away. Oh! I am not to blame. I have been kind to the boy, and I love him dearly."

"This is Red Koko's daughter," explained the woman who sold hardware. "She has cared for the boy since he was three years old."

"I remember Red Koko," the lady said. "He was a wicked man."

"Mother—are you indeed my own mother?" asked Mikhail, raising himself up.

"My child, my long-lost child!" sobbed the lady, clasping him in her arms and kissing him again and again.

The nurse, who remained cool and collected in that excited group, whispered to one of the male vendors, requesting him to fetch their carriage, which was waiting in an adjoining street. Then she spoke to Koko's daughter, asking, "Do you know this lady's name?"

"She is Madam Dolgoruk, and her husband is General Vasíli Petróvich Kantemír," that poor young woman answered with agitation. "May God forgive my father for the sin he has committed in stealing Little Mikhail from his parents!"

"The boy must indeed be Madam's lost son. How wonderful!" someone exclaimed.

"Wonders are worked by God every day of our lives," remarked an old man.

"Madam's prayers have been heard and answered," the stout woman said softly as she crossed herself.

In a few minutes the carriage drove up.

"You will come with me, my son, my son," the lady whispered, embracing Mikhail tenderly. She seemed to be in dread lest he might be taken away from her again.

"Let Koko's daughter come also," pleaded the boy.

"Yes, yes," his mother assented. "Whatever you wish shall be done, my own boy, my sweet Mikhail."

Koko's daughter hesitated to enter the carriage. "You had better accompany us," whispered the nurse. "The General will wish to hear what you have to say. Do not wait until the police come for you."

Pale and trembling, the young woman obeyed, and in another minute the carriage rolled out of the street.

The vendors broke up into little groups, talking with animation over what had taken place.

"What think you?" exclaimed the woman who sold hardware. "The kringel boy is the son of rich parents. He was stolen by Red Koko."

"Where is Red Koko?" asked another vendor.

"He has run away," a little old man asserted.

"The police will find him and he will be sent to Siberia," declared another.

"We shall miss Little Mikhail," said the Jewess. "He had a sweet voice and gentle manners."

"Although Koko used him ill," the stout woman sighed, "God watched over him. He is merciful to all, rich and poor, and in His good time He guided the mother to her lost child."

"Did the lady not say she had seen Mikhail in her dreams?" exclaimed the woman who sold hardware. "And did I not say yesterday that visions come in dreams and visions are from God? So I heard a holy man once declare, and now his words have come true."

Red Koko was never again seen in the riverside suburb. His daughter, however, returned one day to bid farewell to the vendors, and to distribute gifts of money among them from Mikhail's mother. "Mikhail has been very ill," she told them, "and is going south to Moscow to-morrow. His mother has taken me into her service, and I will accompany her and Mikhail to her country house, which is near to my native village."

"She has forgiven you, then," said the woman who sold hardware.

"God has restored her to her right mind again," Koko's daughter made answer, "and her heart is full of forgiveness. She will not even have my father punished."

"And is Mikhail very happy?" asked the stout woman.

"Happy indeed," Koko's daughter sighed. "Had his mother not found him, he would assuredly have died. She has nursed him back to life again."

"When my son Ivanovitch is old enough," declared the stout woman, "he will sell kringels, like Little Mikhail. Never shall I forget the sweet lady who blessed my boy, and her dear son who lived amongst us all these years."

HOW LITTLE IVAN BECAME A TSAR

A cobbler's son in Vladimir had been sent to a school by a rich lady who desired him to become a priest. His father took great pride in the boy, and cleared a corner of his shop where he might sit in quietness to pursue his studies undisturbed by the rest of the children, Like all other shoe-makers he knew many old stories, and, believing these would increase his son's knowledge, he was wont to relate them to him as he patched and stitched the boots that his customers left to be repaired.

"What are you reading about to-day?" he asked his son, who was poring over a book in his corner.

"The history of Ivan the Terrible, Father. He was a great Tsar, who did much to make Russia rich and powerful."

"Does your book tell you how many Tsars called Ivan sat on the imperial throne?"

"No, Father; were there more than one?"

"I have heard it told, my son, that five Ivans in all ruled over the country. This information I had from a wise and learned priest. Of three of them I know little or nothing, but I know something of two. One was Ivan called the Terrible, of whom you are reading, and the other was the first Ivan of all. This first Ivan reigned in the days when the Tartars oppressed the people of our country, and plundered them without mercy. He delivered the whole land from the Tartar yoke."

"He must have been a mighty Tsar, indeed."

"And yet, when he was a boy, he lived the life of a beggar. The Tartars sought to slay him soon after he was born, but his nurse exchanged him for the child of a poor woman who lived in this

ancient city, while her own child was reared as a Prince in Moscow. Would you like to hear the story of how little Ivan became a Tsar?“

“Indeed I would, Father,“ exclaimed the boy.

“Then come here and sit beside me,“ said the shoemaker, “so that your knowledge may be increased.“

The cobbler then related the legend which the peasants of many generations had interwoven with the memory of the fourteenth-century Tsar, Ivan I, who founded a new dynasty which endured for nearly a century and a half. Here I set it down as it was afterwards retold by the cobbler‘s son, when he grew up to be a village priest in his native province,

. . . . . .

Little Ivan was a comely boy, who lived in a hut on the outskirts of Vladimir with his father and mother, who were very poor. He had bright eyes and a noble brow, and the rich people smiled to him, being attracted by his countenance, although he went about in rags. In summer-time he fared well, for he was given alms by many, but in winter when food became scarce the boy felt glad if he was able to procure one meal a day. He learned how to be contented with little. Once his father came home from the town, on a cold and bitter evening, with a small loaf of black bread. It was all the food he could purchase that day. He cut it into three portions, one for his wife, one for little Ivan, and one for himself. Then he sat down before the fire to enjoy the warmth, for he had wandered about through the cold streets since early morning.

Now there crouched behind the stove in that poor hut a grim spirit, named Krutschina, which signifies “the Sorrowful One“. She watched the man munching slowly, and suddenly stretched out her grisly black hand and snatched away his portion of black bread. Then she shrank back again into her hiding-place.

"Alas!" cried the hungry man, making obeisance to the spirit, "restore to me my black bread, else I will die of hunger."

Said the spirit, "Having devoured it, I cannot grant your request. But I will give you instead a duck, which will lay a golden egg every morning."

''ONE GOLDEN EGG EACH MORNING,'' SAID LITTLE IVAN'S MOTHER

"So be it, Krutschina," the poor man answered. "Thinking of the duck and its golden egg, I will go to bed forgetting my hunger. But tell me, first, where I will find this wonderful bird."

Said the spirit, "When you go towards the town to-morrow, you will see a pond. In the pond there will be a duck; seize the duck and hasten home with it."

"Very well, Krutschina," the man said; "I will do as you advise me." Then he went to bed, and having overcome the pangs of hunger with a strong will, fell fast asleep.

At dawn next morning he rose and left his hut to hasten towards the town. To his great joy he soon found that the spirit had spoken truly. He beheld a pond, and in the pond a duck. So he seized the bird at once and returned home with it.

Little Ivan clapped his hands with joy when he beheld the duck, which the man handed to his wife, saying, "May it lay an egg soon! We have need of gold."

"May it be our salvation!" the poor woman exclaimed. As she spoke, she placed the bird in a basket and covered it over carefully with a sieve.

When an hour had elapsed, she lifted up the duck and found that it had laid a golden egg.

Great was her joy. She called her husband and little Ivan, who had gone outside to chop wood, and they hastened to her side. The boy clapped his hands with joy, his eyes meanwhile sparkling like moonlit water.

"One golden egg each morning," his mother said. "Such is our good fortune now."

The poor man was feeling hungry. He said nothing but "Give it to me." He thrust the egg into his bosom and hastened towards the

town. A merchant, to whom he showed it, paid him down, without hesitation, a hundred roubles, which he lifted up without excitement, as if he was accustomed to handling large sums of money. Then he made his way to the market-place and purchased a goodly quantity of provisions. Little Ivan danced with joy to see his father returning from the town, carrying food in abundance for the starving household.

Next morning the duck laid another golden egg. The man did not hasten to the town with it. He thought he would wait for a week so that the worth of this wonderful bird might be tested. It did not fail or disappoint him. With each new day came a new egg, and the owner of the duck soon found himself wealthy. He kept his secret, and his wife and son never revealed the source of the family fortune either. After disposing of several eggs the man built a large house, which he furnished exceedingly well. Then he purchased a shop and began to trade with profit.

As time went on, little Ivan's father grew very rich; but he seemed never to be satisfied. The more gold he made the more he desired to make. He rubbed his hands gleefully every time he thought of the duck which laid a golden egg each morning.

One day when he was away from home, an inquisitive clerk employed at the shop called at his house. The duck had just laid a golden egg, and he saw his employer's wife lifting it out of the basket. Ere she realized fully what she had done, she revealed to this young man the secret of her husband's wealth. The clerk was greatly astonished. He lifted up the bird and examined it with much interest. Under one of the wings he observed gold letters, which read—

The Man who Eats this Duck will become a Tsar.

He placed the bird down on the floor at once, and said nothing regarding his discovery. Well he knew that neither his employer nor his wife could read.

"You must not tell my husband that you have seen the duck," the woman pleaded.

The clerk shook his head. "I will promise nothing," said he.

"Keep the secret I have revealed," she urged softly, "and I will give you much gold."

Said the clerk: "Because you have told me all about the bird, you have broken a magic spell. It will never lay another golden egg."

The woman believed him. "Do not tell my husband," she repeated. "I will reward you for your silence. Fortunately we have enough wealth to last us all our days. Besides, my husband makes much money in trading. He will not miss the golden eggs now."

Said the clerk: "Very well. I promise not to confess against you. But he will discover the truth all the same, for when he returns home to-morrow the duck will inform him of what has happened."

The woman began to weep. "Alas!" she cried, "I fear to meet my husband. What can I do?"

Said the clerk: "The only thing you can do now is to kill the duck."

"But what explanation can I give to my husband for killing this wonderful bird?" she wailed.

Said the clerk: "Kill it and cook it, and I will eat it. The magic of the bird will thus pass to me, and I will be able to bewitch your husband and cause him to forget that he ever possessed a duck which laid golden eggs."

Like a child, the woman did as this cunning fellow advised her. She slew the duck, plucked and cleaned it, and thrust it into the oven. Then the clerk said: "I will return to the shop now. Come with me and pay over the money you promised. Then I will eat this duck and proceed at once to bewitch your husband."

The woman said: "Very well. Let us get done with the business as quickly as possible."

As she spoke she threw a cloak over her shoulders and hurried out of the house with the clerk.

Little Ivan had risen early that morning to go skating on the frozen river. He returned home sooner than usual, feeling very hungry, and began to search through the house for food. Opening the oven, he saw the duck roasting and smacked his lips. "How lucky I am!" he exclaimed. "I will have a rare feast before mother returns."

When the duck was thoroughly cooked he pulled it out, placed it on a large plate, and sat down at a table to devour it. He never tasted sweeter food in his life. The more he ate the more he desired to eat, and he went on eating until nothing was left but the bones. Then he leapt up gladly, and seizing his skates returned to the frozen river again.

In time his mother returned home. She laid out a table and then went to the kitchen to obtain the duck. To her horror, she discovered that it had been eaten up.

The clerk arrived a few minutes later. When he learned what had occurred he became very angry, and exclaimed: "You have cheated me, false woman! You have eaten the duck yourself. Now nothing can save you from your husband's wrath."

He left the house at once. "Although I cannot be a Tsar," he said to himself, "I am now a wealthy man, for that foolish woman has allowed me to become possessed of the greater portion of her husband's ready money. I shall leave this town at once and go and live in a foreign country."

When Little Ivan's father came home next day he looked round the house, saying, "Where is the duck?"

His wife followed him. “I do not know,“ she kept repeating. Little Ivan amused himself that morning building a snow house in the back yard. His father called to him: “Have you seen the duck? I cannot find it anywhere.“

The boy ran towards his parents and said: “Yesterday I returned from skating, feeling very hungry. I could have eaten an ox. I opened the oven and found a roasted duck, which I pulled out and devoured, leaving nothing but the bones. But whether or not it was the duck you are searching for I cannot tell.“

His father flew into a sudden passion, and not only whipped the boy, but turned him out of the house. Then he scolded his wife, who wept bitter tears. Afterwards he went to his shop, and discovered that the clerk had ruined him and fled away. He caused a search to be made for the scoundrel, and after several days had gone past was informed that his dishonest servant had been robbed and slain by a band of fierce thieves, who infested a forest about two hundred versts from the town.

So it came about that this man who had owned the magic duck, which brought him good fortune, became very poor again. He returned to the little hut in which he had been wont to dwell, and there he mourned the loss of his foster-son, whom he had sent away in his wrath.

Little Ivan had gone on a long journey. After he left his home he walked onward until he reached a village five versts south of Vladimir. There he met an old woman, who spoke to him, saying: “Why are you weeping so bitterly? You are young and strong, and should be happy indeed.“

“Alas!“ answered the lad, “I have been sent away from home for eating a duck which laid every day a golden egg.“

“You have done a great wrong,“ the old woman told him, “and it is now your duty to repay the loss which you have caused. My advice to you is to travel southward until you reach Moscow, the capital of

the next kingdom. Enter through the gate and accept the first offer which is made to you."

"Very well," answered the lad, "I shall do as you advise me."

The old woman turned towards the east, and Little Ivan took the road leading southward. For nine days the lad wandered on and on, and each day he grew more weary. By night he slept in the houses of peasants, and more than one kindly woman begged of him to take rest beneath her roof for a few days, fearing he would grow faint and die by the roadside. On the tenth day, however, his wanderings came to an end. At eventide he drew near to Moscow and entered through the northern gate. A great crowd of people lined the main thoroughfare, and when they beheld Little Ivan they raised shouts of joy and cried:

"HERE COMES OUR TSAR! LONG LIVE OUR NOBLE TSAR!"

The lad was greatly astonished. Soldiers gathered round him, and then the chief citizens came forward, and, having knelt before him and kissed his hands, they led him towards the royal palace on the Kremlin. Crowds thronged all the streets that Little Ivan passed through, and they shouted words of loyal welcome. The lad gazed about him with wonder, but he could not help smiling and bowing to see so many kindly and happy faces. The more he smiled the more delighted the people became.

When he reached the palace, Little Ivan was informed by a high official that the old Tsar had died some days previously. He left no heir, and the people quarrelled among themselves as to who should be selected to reign over them. At length they decided to proclaim as their Tsar the first stranger who entered the northern gate of the city. Everyone was delighted to find that a comely lad with bright eyes and a noble brow chanced to visit their capital. In their hearts they were all firmly convinced that he would grow up to be a wise and just ruler, who would devote his life for the good of the people.

Little Ivan was taken to a private chamber, where servants washed him and attired him in royal robes. Afterwards he followed the officers of state to the throne-room, where the crown was placed on his head. When this ceremony was completed, he walked out on the balcony of the palace before the eyes of the citizens who had assembled in the square beneath. Little Ivan looked every inch a king, and many voices shouted together:

"LONG LIVE OUR NOBLE TSAR! LONG LIVE OUR NOBLE TSAR!"

It seemed for a time to the lad that he must be dreaming. But he realized at length his good fortune, and when he did so, he thought of his father and mother. He felt that he could not live happily unless they were beside him, so he called before him a gallant knight whose name was Luga, and spoke to him, saying: "Go to my native country, which is Vladimir, and salute the Tsar. Say I greet him, and desire above all things that peace should prevail between my kingdom and his. Ask him to favour me by permitting my father and mother to come here and dwell in my palace, because my heart yearns for them."

The knight bowed before the new Tsar, and hastened to obey his command. Before a month had gone past he returned to the palace with Ivan's father and mother, who wondered greatly why they were ordered to appear before the mighty ruler of Muskovy. They were conducted to the throne-room, and to their great astonishment beheld their Ivan sitting on the throne, clad in rich robes, and wearing a dazzling crown upon his head.

Said Ivan: "Father, you turned me away from your home. Now I have brought you to mine. Promise me that you and my mother will dwell here with me for the rest of your days."

The old man was overcome with joy, and wept glad tears, as did his wife also. Ivan descended from the throne and kissed them both. Then he bade his servants to bring them royal garments, so that they might be fittingly attired to sit at his royal table.

Ivan grew up to be a wise and powerful ruler. He acquired such great wealth that he was surnamed “Kalita“ (“the Purse“). Not only did he reign over Muskovy, but also in time over Novgorod, which had been long years without a Tsar, and over Vladimir, the Tsar of which had been driven from his throne by the Tartars because of his folly and greed, and became an outcast among men.

When Ivan had established order and peace throughout the united principalities of his great kingdom, he did his utmost to promote trade by founding many fairs and marts, which yielded imperial duties and enriched the state. Many merchants came from foreign countries in Europe and Asia, and Russia became a vast market-place. A great and good Tsar was the first Ivan. His name will live for ever.

TSAR IVAN AND THE SCOTS SOLDIERS

I. A Friend in Need

It was a cold and silent November night in the year of grace 1581, or, as the Russians then reckoned it, 1 the year 7089, "from the creation of the world". The moon began to rise over Moscow through a purple haze, swollen and dulled, and of the colour of molten copper. Superstitious men and women watched it with solemn eyes, fearing it foretold the approach of some new calamity, so prone were they to look for omens of evil. Nor did their hearts grow lighter when at length it climbed the naked heaven and shone forth as clear as burnished silver.

The capital of Muskovy then seemed fairer than by day. Much of the squalor was concealed in shadow, and the thin coating of snow which had whitened roofs and battlements and frozen streets, lay sparkling and pure in the soft moon-light. High above the ridge of the Kremlin the gilded Cathedral domes flashed in radiant splendour, but made no appeal to the hearts of the oppressed citizens, for nigh to the stately Church of the Assumption and the great Cathedral of Michael the Archangel frowned the grim and massive palace of Ivan the Terrible, the tyrannical Tsar who had declared to his subjects: "I am your god as God is mine. My throne is surrounded by archangels as is the throne of God."

That gloomy royal abode was still kept astir like an uneasy conscience. The courtyard flared with torches, and lights twinkled from a hundred windows, while monks and courtiers and warriors jostled each other in its long corridors, continually passing to and fro. In a bleak chamber, guarded by lynx-eyed sentinels, Ivan Gronze sat apart, a wild-eyed old man, fretting with suppressed rage and suspicion as he received the secret reports of his dreaded spies and informers, who slandered the innocent if they could not discover the guilty. Although a fierce tyrant, the Tsar was at heart a coward. He trusted no one, and dreaded hourly that some fawning official

would become his assassin. So he kept spies, to follow spies and informers to watch informers. In the black dungeons beneath the palace his manacled victims starved and shivered miserably, awaiting torture and slow death.

Wraiths of cold mist, that had risen from the Moscow and Neglin rivers, crawled over stone battlements and across the maze of shouldering roofs around the royal palace, assuming strange, distorted shapes in the moonlight. It seemed that night as if the ghosts of murdered princes and boyarins 1 were returning to haunt lonely chambers, in which they had aforetime feasted and whispered treason, surrounded by the spies of the Tsar.

Adjoining the Kremlin, with its quaint and bold array of spires and domes of Eastern and Western design, the walled-in Katai Gorod (china city) drowsed in shadow, its bazaars and markets deserted and silent, its river gate shut and strongly guarded. These two fortified enclosures were buffered on all sides, save the Moscow river front, by the bulging and misnamed Byelo Gorod (white city), in shape resembling a chinless human skull, which was surrounded by thick and high earthen ramparts; sentinels were posted at its five iron-bound oaken gates, which had been closed at sunset. In this, the main part of the capital, were broad squares and long streets, in which commodious mansions shouldered wretched hovels that were cramped, overcrowded, and evil-smelling. This way and that ran narrow, twisting lanes, through which no stranger dared to venture even in daylight. Few houses had stone walls, most were built of timber; the homes of the poorest people were but shapeless heaps of dried mud and clay. Here and there throughout the city appeared wide, open spaces covered over with the charred remains of numerous dwellings that had been burned down when Moscow was attacked by a Tartar army ten years previously.

Beyond the outer ramparts of the capital lay the unprotected slobadas (suburbs). In these dwelt all foreigners and heretics, many of whom seemed to enjoy more comfort and prosperity than the masses in the White City, for among such “out-dwellers“ were prosperous merchants and traders, who hailed from countries as far

apart as Persia and England, Sweden and Italy. In the north-western quarter, known as Nemetskaya Slobada ("the dumb suburb"), because its occupants were unable to speak the Russian language, were hundreds of disconsolate Scots and a few Englishmen, who had been taken prisoners in the wars with Poland and Sweden. They had built for themselves a number of stone houses, as if they expected their sojourn to be prolonged. These were of characteristic Scots design, with stone stairways outside the walls; some fronted the street, others shouldered it with their gables, while not a few had their doors at the back, which were reached through narrow arched courts.

Sandy Wood surveyed one of the little streets in the moonlight and wagged his head, chuckling to himself. "One might think he was in Crail," he muttered. "We must call this 'Fife Street', if the Tsar has no objections."

He was a small wiry man with a scrubby grey beard, a thick short nose, and shrewd eyes, one of which kept opening and shutting when he began to speak; his blue bonnet was worn tilted sideways on his head. During his lifetime he had followed various occupations. He had been a stone-mason, a sailor, a trader, and a soldier of fortune; now he acted as chief architect of the Scots quarter of the "dumb suburb" of Moscow.

A tall, red-bearded man approached with soft footsteps from behind and laid a hand on his shoulder. "Sandy Wood," he muttered in a grave, deep voice, "you're the very man I've been looking for."

"That's yourself, Jeamy Lingett, is it?" said Sandy. "See here—have you ever noticed this?" He nudged his friend gleefully, and pointed down the street. "Does yon corner house no' remind you o' Bob Keith's at the west end o' the town o' Crail?"

"It does that," drawled the other. "Man, I thought it looked familiar."

"That house on your left there is as like as can be to the one I was born in," the little man went on. "All that's wanted now to complete it is a brier hedge, and honeysuckle at the gable. Ah! if ye came from Crail, like me, Jeamy, man, ye'd ken every house in this bonnie wee street."

SIR JEROME PAYS A VISIT TO THE SCOTS QUARTER IN MOSCOW

"Doubtless, Sandy, doubtless. But I ken few folk in Crail other than Bob Keith and your own relatives, often as I've been in the town. But we'll have a chat about Crail some other night. What I want to see ye about now is o' most serious importance. This morning who should come to pay me his respects but a braw English gentleman, to name Sir Jerome Horsey. He's a great traveller in foreign lands, and is held in good favour by the Tsar himself. 'You will not always be kept in this place under durance,' says he, 'if I can help it. I'll plead for you if such be your will,' says he, 'before his Majesty, so that he may be pleased to employ you all in his service, and spare such maintenance as you sorely need.' What think ye o' that now, Sandy, my good man?"

"He would just waste his breath to speak on our account up yonder," the little man answered, nudging his head in the direction of the Kremlin.

We need expect but small mercy at the hands o' Ivan the Terrible."

"Ye never can tell, Sandy; ye never can tell. Sir Jerome is a fair-spoken gentleman, and has no motive to serve other than becomes any good Christian."

"O' his motives I'll say naught. I wish him well, for I'm no' a man who despises the English, having lived among them a few years like one o' their own race. But this I will say. He must needs be cautious in approaching the terrible Tsar, else he'll get a share o' what was once given to a messenger from Poland who brought him a letter from some noble exile or other."

"I've never heard o' that, man. Tell me about it."

"When ye pick up some Russian speech, as I've done, yell hear more of Ivan Gronzie than maybe yell care about. I've heard it said that when this messenger stood up before him, the Tsar stuck his iron-tipped staff, which he keeps as sharp as a spear-point, through the poor fellow's right foot, and says he, leering wickedly, 'Read oot

what's written there,' says he; and he left the staff sticking in the foot until the long letter was read to the very end."

"Monstrous, monstrous!" groaned Jeamy Lingett.

"On another occasion," resumed Sandy, "he had a messenger from the King o' Sweden thrown naked into his wild bears' den. No later than yesterday, man, he turned these very bears loose in the White City, and sat jeering, at a palace window, to see the people scampering away like sheep from foxes. Ah, Jeamy, don't speak about favours from Ivan Gronzie to me!"

"Still," protested the other, "Sir Jerome told me he knows how to get at the right side o' him."

"The right side o' a man who murdered his own son in a fit of passion?" exclaimed Sandy incredulously. "Man, man, I'm wondering to hear you."

"Come up-by to my house," Lingett said, "and speak to Sir Jerome yourself. He's promised to return to-night to talk matters o'er with two or three o' us. A friend who comes to offer a helping hand in a country like this is a friend worth having. Man, he's even promised to get the Tsar to let us build a kirk for our use."

"Weel, that was wise-like," Sandy answered musingly, as he walked round the square with his friend. "I'm keen to try my hand at building a kirk. I've been thinking that o'er in my mind more than once o' late."

"I'm sure, I'm sure; a kirk's much needed here."

"I'd like to build one like St. Giles of Edinburgh, in which I've sat in my day under John Knox, who's dead and gone these nine years back—God rest his soul! But that would be a big job. I'll just have to give ye a second Reformed Kirk o' Crail. It will be the best I can do for the lads."

"Ah! here comes none other than Sir Jerome himself," Lingett exclaimed, as he was about to open his house door.

Sandy Wood turned round and saw riding towards him in the moonlight a dignified English gentleman, followed by two mounted soldiers of the Tsar, who acted as an escort.

"Ha! Well met, Jeamy Lingett," Sir Jerome exclaimed with genial voice, dismounting nimbly. "Who is your friend?—a fellow-countryman, or I misjudge him."

"Sandy Wood is the name he's kent by, Sir Jerome," Lingett answered, "and a good man and true ye'll find him."

"And Scots to the marrow o' his bones," Sandy added, doffing his bonnet. "I'm a Scot who is ever well pleased to meet an Englishman face to face."

"A fellow of good wit, I'll warrant you," laughed Sir Jerome. "But I've not come hither this night to fight old battles. Let us enter your house, good Master Lingett, if such be your will."

"I bid you kindly welcome, sir," Lingett said, with a bow, as he thrust open the door.

Sir Jerome bowed in return, and having instructed the soldiers to await his pleasure, walked through the low doorway, followed by the two Scots exiles.

"Be seated, sir," Lingett said courteously, drawing a rough wooden chair in front of a log fire. "I will go round and gather a few more lads to meet with your Honour."

"Let only one of my own countrymen come hither," Sir Jerome remarked. "The presence of Englishmen among you troubles you greatly."

"They might be in worse company," said Sandy Wood somewhat dryly.

"That I grant, my friend," Sir Jerome answered with a smile. "I make no reflection on any good Scotsman among you." Then his face grew grave again as he resumed: "What troubles me greatly is that the Tsar may be enraged to discover Englishmen among his enemies, and revenge himself by seizing the goods and treasure of certain of our merchants here who owe allegiance to Queen Elizabeth. For a smaller offence, His Majesty, some eight years ago, did confiscate many thousand pounds' worth of cloth, silk, wax, fur, and other merchandise from an English agent, one Thomas Glover, and then did banish him and his dear wife empty out of this land."

"Well, well; worry no more about the matter, Sir Jerome," said Sandy Wood. "Your countrymen are believed to be Scots, and Scots they may remain until they can return safely again to their native land."

"And may they feel highly honoured thereat!" smiled Jerome with twinkling eyes.

"Having myself been called an Englishman in foreign parts, where I've done gallant service with sword and hand gun," Sandy declared with a characteristic chuckle, "and having thus honoured the country o' good Queen Bess, we can call quits, Sir Jerome, if a few subjects o' Her Majesty must be let to pass themselves off here as Scots to save certain o' their countrymen from misfortune."

Sir Jerome bowed, and Lingett turned away to summon other prisoners to the conference. The genial knight chatted meanwhile with Sandy.

"You have travelled much, Master Wood. No doubt, like many of your countrymen, you know more of the Continent than of England."

"I've traversed England from Carlisle to London in my day, and met with many a kindness, sir, at the hands of your countrymen. I've found them better than they're called north o' the Border."

"It pleases me to hear you say so. What, I pray you, was the occasion of your visit to London?"

"It was my misfortune, sir, to show my native land a pair o' clean heels. You'll understand I belong to the Reformed Kirk, and I've sat under John Knox in my day. I have that. Every time I heard him preach I said to myself: 'With every word you say, reverend sir, I agree and will hold by.' . . . But I'm a man o' contrary thoughts, and have aye kept a soft place in my heart for our own Queen Mary, poor dear lady! Chancing to be in Glasgow when she was trying to hold her own against her son's friends, I fought on her side at the battle o' Langside. . . . We were scattered like chaff before the wind, and I fled to England with others that followed her; and no' being a man of any account, was let go scot-free there, as the saying is. From London I crossed to Holland, and then made my way to Sweden, where I took arms to fight against the Russians, finding nothing better to do. In a skirmish I was taken prisoner with the rest o' the lads. So that's how I've wandered all the way from Glasgow to Moskwa, where ye find me now."

"Lingett tells me that you are making yourself at home."

"That's so; as far as it's possible here. I've shown the lads how to build a few stone houses to keep them from dying o' weariness and cold."

"And you wander about freely, too. When I called this forenoon Lingett could not find you anywhere. Have you ventured to enter the White City without leave of the Tsar? To do so is a perilous undertaking, I warn you."

"I've been out and in now and then, but it's no' a place with much attraction to a man who has seen better. Most o' the time I'm away from here I spend on the Moskwa river."

"Fishing, I suppose?"

"What else?" Sandy cocked his head side-ways and folded his arms. "Fishing, as you say," he chuckled, "but no' for fish, for I can't endure these Russian fish at all."

"And what fish you? I pray you to tell me," asked Sir Jerome with a smile.

"Silver and gold—rings, brooches, ear-rings, crucifixes, and such-like," Sandy explained. "There's a fortune in that river for a man who can work a drag-net, I tell ye. As you'll maybe ken, thousands and thousands o' the Moskwa folk were drowned in the river when the Tartars came and set the city on fire. They fled from their houses with all their valuables, and pressed through the streets in crowds like sheep without a shepherd, the Tsar Ivan having taken flight, and those that did not drown themselves of their own free will were forced o'er the river bank."

"It was a lamentable spectacle," Sir Jerome said; "and has been fully described to me by eye-witnesses. Men and women were wedged fast in the streets trying to reach the gates, and some began to walk over the heads of others until dire confusion reigned and large numbers were trodden to death. How many thousands perished by fire, in the press, and by drowning has never been rightly computed. I've heard it said the victims numbered 800,000."

"God pity us all!" murmured Sandy. "No wonder the river bed is strewn with human bones and valuables. You should come with me some day when I'm working my drag-net and see what's to be seen for yourself."

"I have already dragged there as you have done, and was somewhat the better for the fishing," Sir Jerome said laughingly. "But here come our friends."

Lingett entered the house, followed by seven men, each of whom he introduced to the knight, beginning with his countryman, "Roger Wyatt, late of London city."

"Wyatt won't do for a prisoner who is supposed to be a Scot," Sandy Wood chuckled, "we must call him MacWatt."

"This," Lingett said, as the next man advanced, "is Master Alastair Grigor, a Highland gentleman, sir."

"As we know well," Sandy said, "because he talks the Gaelic language in his sleep and sings doleful songs in it when he's longing for bonnie Scotland."

Lingett gave the names of the others as "Andrew Lermont, Gilbert Keith, and Willie Leslie".

"They're very poor masons," was Sandy's comment, "but good fighters one and all."

Sir Jerome bade all the prisoners. be seated, and spoke, saying: "I have come here, as my friend and yours, good Master Lingett will have stated, with great concern regarding your welfare. Being conversant and familiar in the Tsar's Court, I would fain plead for favours on your behalf. If that you are so willing, I will endeavour to procure for you abundance of food and clothing and other favours, and also permission to build a church, so that you may meet for divine service each Sabbath day, and to procure a learned and preaching minister after your Lutheran profession. But first I must ask you to allow me to inform the Tsar that you are willing to serve him on the battlefield, as you are well fitted to do, being soldiers of fortune. I am fully confident that you would display great valour against His Majesty's enemies."

"Are you willing, lads, to serve the Tsar, so that we may be relieved of our misfortunes in this sad place?" asked Lingett in a solemn voice.

"You can count on me for one," declared Sandy Wood. "Although I'm getting old, I'd like to strike a blow against those Krim Tartars, 1 who burned old Moskwa and massacred thousands o' men, women, and bairns."

"We are all ready and willing," declared the other Scots, "and speak also for our fellows."

"And you, my friend, Mr. MacWyatt?" Sir Jerome asked with a pleasing bow.

"For myself and my countrymen, I offer ready assent," answered Wyatt.

"We're all of one mind when there's fighting to be done," declared Sandy Wood.

"His. Majesty, Tsar Ivan, will find us all at his service," Lingett assured Sir Jerome, "if so be it he needs our help against his enemies, but we'd rather be sent against the Krim Tartars than against Poles or Swedes, in whose armies are many of our own countrymen."

Sir Jerome bowed again. "Meanwhile," he said, taking farewell, "I counsel you to behave well and show courtesy and friendship to all Russians, so that no bad feeling may be raised up against you. May you soon have less cause to be doleful, and to mourn, as you now do, the loss of goods, friends, and country! I pray God to bless you, and bid you all good night."

II. The "New Demons"

After leaving the Scots, Sir Jerome, mightily pleased with himself, rode towards a spacious mansion in the north-eastern slobada, where he met with Mr. John Logan, the agent of an English trading company which had obtained special privileges from the Tsar.

"Ah! Sir Jerome, and have you found these adventurers willing to follow your advice?" Logan asked with unconcealed anxiety.

"Fear you not on their account," Sir Jerome assured him. "By my troth! they are valiant fellows, anxious indeed to serve the Tsar if so he desires, being aweary of their sad condition."

Then he related all that had passed, praising Jeamy Lingett whom they had chosen as their leader and dwelling with amusement on Sandy Wood's sayings and doings. "If that knave had the power, and sufficient length of days withal," Sir Jerome laughed, "he would transform Muskovy into a second Scotland."

"I greatly fear," sighed Logan, "that the Tsar will suspect our motive in this matter, and, refusing the services of these men, wreak his vengeance upon us, because a few Englishmen are among the Scots prisoners, by confiscating goods and money. We have observed signs of his growing displeasure of late."

Sir Jerome shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "Be not surfeited with doubts, good Master Logan," he urged. "Methinks I guess what runs in your mind. You have heard that our noble lady Queen Elizabeth, whom God protect and prosper, has refused with due courtesy to become the eighth wife of Ivan Gronzie. You expect him on that account to be ready to persecute you on slight provocation. I grant it is possible. But he is not likely to know now that any of these prisoners are our countrymen. Besides, I have good cause for believing that His Majesty inclines well to favour England in these days."

"Glad indeed would I be to think so. But I do not share your optimism, Sir Jerome."

"What I tell you must be kept secret," the Knight whispered. "Were you to repeat my words to the merchants here, you might receive the close and unwelcome attention of the Tsar's spies, and perhaps suffer loss of liberty. As you know well, the Tsar lives in constant dread of revolution. Like a good general, who ever pre-pares for

retreat even when advancing victoriously, he has solicited from Queen Elizabeth a promise to grant him an asylum in England should his ungrateful subjects render it necessary for him to abdicate. His wish has been granted in a solemn and binding treaty by Her Majesty, whereat he is. well pleased."

Logan uttered an exclamation of surprise. "Revolution," he declared, "would bring ruin to my company. Alas! I pray that it is not now imminent."

"Who knows, good Master Pessimist," Sir Jerome answered somewhat testily, "but revolution might cause you to prosper greatly? But I do not apprehend such a development. The spirit of Muskovy is too severely crushed, and there does not remain alive in these melancholy times a serious opponent to His Majesty, who, although he liveth in constant fear, daily discovers treasons real and imaginary, and spends much time in torturing and execution. The first great change likely to occur is his death, for he grows exceedingly frail, and is much comforted to be attended by Dr. Robert Jacobs of London, who at his request has been sent to him by Queen Elizabeth, for which further favour he is disposed to harbour as much gratitude as is possible in such a man."

Logan seemed somewhat reassured. "I pray that success may attend your efforts, Sir Jerome," he said. "Still, my mind will not feel at ease until you have secured some definite promise from the Tsar regarding the prisoners. I dread the wrath of Ivan Gronzie. He is a difficult man to conciliate, living as he does in an atmosphere of treachery and suspicion, and cunning withal, as he has need to be. May he not suspect your motive in this matter and bring ruin to our hopes!"

III. How the Tartars were Confounded

On the following forenoon Sir Jerome Horsey was granted an audience with the Tsar in a small private apartment of the palace. There was no one else present save Dr. Jacobs, who was a sharp-

featured, black-bearded man, with immobile face and brown inscrutable eyes.

The English Knight found that His Majesty had changed greatly since last he had seen him. His body was shrunken and bent, and although his face seemed more ferocious than ever it was shrivelled prematurely and deathly pale; his ears and lips were tinged with blue and his breathing had become laboured; his eyes moved restlessly, casting furtive glances hither and thither as if he entertained fear of sudden attack; he had grown almost completely bald, and a few rugged grey patches were all that remained of his once luxuriant beard.

"I sleep badly," he complained querulously in answer to Sir Jerome's courteous enquiry regarding his health. "Evil dreams torment me; they are produced by my magic-working enemies. Yet I pray daily for the welfare of the souls of such as have been found guilty of treasonable plottings and transferred to the judgment place of the Eternal, there to answer for their sins. Withal, I concern myself greatly regarding the affairs of state, constant wars against hostile nations, and the welfare of my poor people. My health has consequently suffered greatly. I have grown old before my time."

Having thus delivered himself, the Tsar asked Sir Jerome many questions regarding his travels and also about England, in which country he took a keen and special interest. A passing reference to the Scots enabled the diplomatic Knight to say something regarding the prisoners in the "Dumb Suburb".

Tsar Ivan frowned darkly. "These Scots", he exclaimed with angry voice, "are among my deadliest and most persistent enemies. Of them I have complained to Queen Elizabeth, that eminent lady, who promises much but does little, so that in return for the favours I have conferred upon her rich merchants, she might undertake to hold them in check. But she has answered that those Scots who reach my empire enter it through Sweden and Poland, and are therefore beyond her control. She has, however, many war-ships, as sundry travellers have informed me. Can she not, therefore, prevent the

Scots from crossing the seas over which her sway is complete? But I have been told also that she cares not to offend them, as a union between the nations of England and Scotland is pending, if not already accomplished in secret."

Sir Jerome was startled by this sudden out-burst, but, preserving perfect self-control, made answer, saying: "Your Majesty, these Scots have proved even more troublesome to England than to Muskovy. For centuries they have waged warfare against my countrymen, raiding and pillaging prosperous districts and destroying what they could not carry away. They dwell in remote parts among barren hills and on storm-lashed coasts, and thus protected by nature have defied the might of our arms. Their poor circumstances and hardy manners of life have stirred in them a spirit of adventure, and since the strengthening of England's defences, many have crossed the seas to seek fortunes in distant lands as traders and mercenary soldiers. These Scots, your Majesty, are indeed a nation of adventurous and warlike peoples, and, as I know well from what I have observed in my travels, are ever ready to serve any Christian prince in return for good maintenance and pay. This your Majesty may prove," Sir Jerome added with a shrug of his shoulders, "if it pleases you to grant the dearest wish of those prisoners in the 'Dumb Suburb' by employing them and providing clothing and arms, so that they may display their valour against your mortal enemies, the Krim Tartars. Since entering Muskovy, they have learned to hate fiercely these barbarians, having obtained knowledge regarding their methods of warfare, their oppressions and their burnings, and their hatred of Christian peoples."

Ivan Gronzie grunted impatiently, tapping his bony fingers on a small table beside him.

"But what of this union between your nation and that of the Scots?" he asked in querulous voice.

"It has not yet been accomplished, your Majesty; nor is it imminent. When it comes, however, the result may prove pleasing to you, for

the Scots will then find it profitable, as do my countrymen, to win your good graces by exemplary conduct and faithful dealing."

The Tsar moved restlessly in his chair, his face betraying conflicting emotions. After a silence of many minutes' duration he remarked, as if speaking to himself, "I have need of valiant soldiers." He tugged his beard and cast furtive glances now and again at Sir Jerome, who preserved a placid and respectful demeanour, having spoken as one entirely disinterested and sincerely anxious to smooth the Tsar's difficulties in dealing with his enemies.

At length Ivan gave his decision, half-heartedly it might be, but yet not without evidence that he had been impressed by the courtly Knight's information and suggestions: "I will consider this matter ", he said, "more fully at a later time. That the Scots are valiant I know full well, and it may be wise to dispose of them in a manner which will prove profitable to my empire if that they can be trusted, for no punishment I may inflict, as experience has shown, seems sufficient to deter their nation from giving aid to my enemies west and north, who show me no gratitude for protecting them against Tartar inroads. Were I to ally myself with these barbarians, our joint armies could achieve the conquest of the whole world."

He paused, for a recurring fit of wrath caused him to breathe with difficulty.

"I thank you, Sir Jerome Horsey," he continued after an interval, "for what you have told me regarding these Scots prisoners. But how comes it that you are so well acquainted with their intentions and desires?"

A cunning smile overspread his face, as, grasping the arms of his chair, he bent forward, gazing keenly in the Knight's face.

"Your Majesty," Sir Jerome answered promptly and blandly, "I heard such good reports from English merchants who enjoy your favour and hospitality, regarding your treatment of these Scots, that I paid them a visit. It is my desire to convey to Queen Elizabeth a full

and accurate account of your leniency and compassion towards them, and by doing so to thwart in their ill intentions those who endeavour to poison her heart against your Majesty."

The Tsar smiled icily and seemed satisfied. "I have trusted you before, Sir Jerome," he said, "and proved your veracity. Why, then, should I not trust you again? When you return to England, convey my greetings to your exalted Queen, and say it would become her to convey my intention to the Scots King regarding these prisoners, so that he may show me some gratitude by preventing his subjects from giving aid to my most jealous and ungrateful enemies."

Sir Jerome bowed. "With your Majesty's permission," said he, "I would fain visit these Scots prisoners once again, so that I may counsel them to be faithful and obedient to your commands."

"So be it," Tsar Ivan grunted, as he rose abruptly to signify that the interview had come to an end.

Sir Jerome rode in high spirits towards the "Dumb Suburb" through a haze of falling snow, and intimated to Lingett that His Majesty was impressed favourably by the prisoners' offer of military service. He then hastened to meet with Mr. Logan, the English agent, who expressed great satisfaction because the Tsar had made no remark regarding the few Englishmen among the Scots prisoners.

Ere Sir Jerome departed towards the coast, so as to obtain a passage homeward in an English vessel, he learned with satisfaction that the Tsar had arranged to supply the prisoners in the "Dumb Suburb" with daily allowances of food and drink, and with clothing, horses, and fodder, swords, hand-guns, and pistols.

Jeamy Lingett came to bid him farewell. "We'll long remember your kindness, sir," he exclaimed, "and will consider it an honour to prove to you, in God's good time, that you have earned our gratitude, and, as we hope also will be the case, the gratitude also of Tsar Ivan Gronzie. Our lads, whom you found poor enough and sad enough, are now cheerful and well favoured. They long, one and all,

to strike a blow against the heathenish Krim Tartars, who have dealt sorely indeed with the Russian peasantry in their diabolic raids."

"I have written His Majesty," Sir Jerome said in parting, "advising him to grant you permission to build a church."

"God will reward you for that," Lingett exclaimed with fervour. "May He protect you on your journey, and bring you back safely to us in His good time!"

. . . . . .

Not until summer had smoothed the seas and made beautiful hill and plain once again did Sir Jerome Horsey return to Moscow. Being the bearer of a private letter from Queen Elizabeth to the Tsar, and sundry other documents of great import, he tarried nowhere on his way, but rode straight to the royal palace accompanied by armed men who had been sent to meet him.

He found Tsar Ivan in better health and good spirits. The royal letter seemed to please him mightily. Having read it twice over, he turned to Sir Jerome and said, "Doubtless you have heard of the doings of these Scots, my faithful allies."

"Rumours have reached me, your Majesty," Sir Jerome answered, "and these are of favourable character. I trust they are well founded."

My gratitude to you is unbounded, Sir Jerome," exclaimed His Majesty with some warmth. "But for your advice I should never have employed these valiant soldiers. They have stricken a sore and staggering blow against my worst enemies, the Krim Tartars. Twelve hundred Scots, armed with pistols and hand-guns, have done better than twelve thousand Russians with short bows and arrows. When, in battle, the Tartar hosts saw their horses falling before invisible bullets, and their ranks mowed down like barley by a sickle, they stared with terror at the Scots and cried out, 'Away, away with those

new demons and their thundering puffs!' and then broke and fled in dire confusion."

The Tsar gurgled a hollow laugh in his throat, and repeated over and over again what the affrighted Krim Tartars had exclaimed.

"By my soul," he declared, "these new demons of mine will receive fitting reward."

That evening Sir Jerome visited the "Dumb Suburb" and met with Lingett, who had been promoted to the rank of General, and Sandy Wood, who still bubbled over with pawky humour.

"What think ye o' Jeamy Lingett?" he chuckled. "He's now a Russian general, and is getting a braw estate to himself, although his father was just a plain sailorman in Aberdeen, and he himself never anything above the skipper o' a leaky sloop. There's Lermont, too, and Highland Grigor. They both hacked out long lanes through the Tartar army, so they're getting estates as well as Jeamy Lingett. In time they'll a' three have coughs and sneezes after their names, and be kent among the big folk as Lingettovitch, Grigorvitch, Lermontov, and———"

"And what of yourself, good Master Wood? Have you won a sneeze or a cough?" smiled Sir Jerome.

"No, and I want neither the one or the other,"

Sandy made answer. "I'm taking my payment in good red gold and white silver. Being old and near by wi' it, I've got permission to return home to bonnie Scotland, but I'm no' going to leave the lads until the new kirk is finished."

"So you have secured permission to build a church?"

"We have that, Sir Jerome, thanks to yourself, and we'll ne'er forget ye for all your kindness to us. If you've nothing better to do, come

down by and see our bonnie wee kirk. It's as like as can be the Reformed Kirk in my native town o' Crail."

Footnotes

1 The Julian Calendar was introduced by Peter the Great.

1 A class like the English feudal barons. Also rendered in English "boyars" and "boyards".

1 Tartars of the Crimea.

THE MAN WHO FOUGHT THE WOLVES

I. The Plot

Snow was falling thinly in the gathering darkness on a chilly evening of early winter in the year 1716, when a traveller, who rode a great black horse, drew up before a small village inn on the highway which leads from St. Petersburg (Petrograd) to Moscow. Dismounting with a sigh of relief, he shook himself like a dog when it leaps from a pool, to get rid of the sheets of snow that enveloped his shoulders and neck. He was a nimble man of medium stature and muscular build, with kindly brown eyes that relieved the stern lines of face; icicles clung to his pointed black beard, and his eyebrows were white with rime.

"Welcome home again, Petrushka Petrovitch!" exclaimed the stout and jovial innkeeper who greeted him pleasantly at the doorway. "What a stranger you are! It is good to see you once more in your native village, where the memory of your saintly father, the priest, is still held in reverence."

"I thank you, Aleksyey Nikolaevitch," the traveller answered quietly. A groom came forward to lead his panting horse to the stables, and the traveller entered the inn stamping his feet, which were benumbed with cold.

"Whence come you, Petrushka?" asked the innkeeper, whose small grey eyes twinkled with good humour.

"From St. Petersburg."

"The great new city with the half-foreign name! Travellers tell me that 'burg' is the German word for 'gorod'."

Petrushka threw off his fur coat. "I need food and drink," he said, "and would sleep here to-night."

"My daughter Sonya will feed you well. Sit down beside the stove. You are half-frozen. . . . Ah! you are a fortunate man, Petrushka. You have acquired much learning. You have also seen St. Petersburg. I hear the new capital is the most wonderful city in the world. Some day I must pay it a visit."

Petrushka smiled. "You have grown stouter, my friend," he said. "Hard travelling in this weather would reduce your weight."

"Tell me something of which I have no knowledge," laughed the innkeeper. "Tell me about St. Petersburg. They say it grows like a mushroom."

"The streets are now lit with lamps each night, just like Paris. What do you think of that, Aleksyey Nikolaevitch?"

"Wonderful! wonderful! It must be a sight indeed. But on stormy nights the lamps will all be blown out."

"Lanterns protect them, and they burn well in all weathers. You have no idea how cheerful they look. Withal, they are a great convenience. One can move about the streets now as safely by night as by day."

"Nor have any fear of thieves, eh?"

"None whatever. Besides, the new Imperial police officers are everywhere—hundreds of them."

"There is one here, Petrushka—in your own peaceable native village. Think of that! He stalks about as if he were the Tsar himself. When he enters my inn, you might think it belonged to him. But do not let us speak about him. The thought of the fellow makes my gorge rise. What about the Tsar himself? Have you seen him of late?"

"His face is as familiar to me as is your own. One meets him everywhere in St. Petersburg. . . . But what delays Sonya? Has she forgotten me? I am as hungry as a wolf, my friend."

"Sonya, Sonya," called the innkeeper, "have you fallen asleep?"

"I am coming, father," the girl made answer pleasantly as she bustled into the room, carrying a steaming bowl of soup and a loaf of bread which she set down on a table. Petrushka at once began to partake heartily of the first meal he had had since early morning.

"I have been told," the innkeeper said from beside the stove, "that the Tsar has been given new titles by the Senate. He is now called 'Peter the Great'. A Tsar who has built a great new city which bears his own name is worthy indeed of being called 'Great'."

"He has also been declared 'Emperor of all Russia' and 'Father of his country'," added Petrushka over his soup.

"There has never been such a Tsar," the inn-keeper went on. "Still, although he is called 'Father of his country', many think he inclines too much to favour foreigners and to imitate foreign manners and customs. Most of his great officials are foreigners. . . . Are you still in the service of the foreign general, Petrushka? I cannot remember his curious name."

"General Gordon," Petrushka reminded him.

"Yes, yes, Gordon—a name that trips on one's tongue! No doubt he has good cause to be loyal to Tsar Peter. He has grown wealthy in Russia. No doubt he loves Russia much better now than his native land."

Sonya entered with a plate of meat, which Petrushka proceeded to devour with relish.

"Where is General Gordon at present?" asked the innkeeper.

"Fighting in Poland," Petrushka answered. "But don't imagine, Aleksyey, that he remains in Russia because he desires to. . . . Shut the door," he added in a whisper, "I have something to tell you in

secret regarding him—the something which brings me here this evening."

The innkeeper closed the door. "Come and sit beside me," Petrushka said.

Aleksyey dearly loved a secret, and smiled expectantly as he drew in a chair, sat down, placed his elbows on the table, and propped his chin on his folded hands.

"General Gordon," Petrushka explained, "has long desired to return to his native land."

"Where is that land? What name does it bear?"

"It is a great island in the west. One part is called Scotland and the other part is called England."

"An island with two names. How strange!"

"The Tsar has forbidden my master to leave Russia, and he remains in the royal service much against his will."

"You astonish me! Ah! this is news indeed."

"The General would have returned home long since had he but himself to consider. It is not difficult for any man to escape from Russia. But he has a wife and a family. He cannot go away and leave them behind. The Tsar would thrust them in prison so as to compel him to return."

"Peter is a hard taskmaster. I have heard that said of him."

"Listen to me, Aleksyey Nikolaevitch. You are my kinsman and I need your aid. Promise to help me in the task I have undertaken. You will be well rewarded, I assure you."

The innkeeper's eyes sparkled with satisfaction. He loved a secret, as has been said, but what he loved most of all was money. He seemed to hear the clinking of gold in Petrushka's voice.

"If it is safe to help you, I shall help you, my friend," he said, rubbing his hands together glee-fully.

"The General, as I told you," Petrushka went on, "is at present in Poland. He has no desire to return to Russia. If his wife can leave Moscow with her three daughters and join him in Poland, my master will proceed to Dantzig and take ship to his native land."

"I cannot see how I can help you in this matter, Petrushka," exclaimed the innkeeper, with a ring of disappointment in his voice. "Moscow lies many versts distant from here, as you well know."

"Be patient and listen," Petrushka said. "You probably do not know that one of the General's daughters is at present residing in your neighbourhood. She is the guest of Colonel Maykov's wife. I wish you to send Sonya to bring her here to me to-morrow morning. For this service I will pay you two golden roubles."

The innkeeper pondered for a moment. Then he said: "What if I get into trouble with the police over the matter? How can I rid myself of blame if I am asked awkward questions?" His face wrinkled with anxiety.

"I will give Sonya a letter to deliver to the General's daughter, in which she will be asked to come here, so that I may hand her an important package," explained Petrushka.

"What do you intend to do after she comes here?"

"Ask no more questions, Aleksyey Nikolaevitch, for the less you know the less you will have to answer for. All you need ever say is that I came here as a traveller, and gave you a letter to deliver to General Gordon's daughter."

The innkeeper nodded his head, but made no response. His lips were pursed and hard.

“Must I go myself?“ Petrushka asked impatiently. “Are two golden roubles as naught to you?“

“Say four roubles, and perhaps I may take the risk“

“Well, I‘ll say three,“ Petrushka answered. He rose to his feet, having finished his meal. “If you ask for more, Aleksyey Nikolaevitch, I must go outside and find someone else who is willing to do this service for a few kopecks.“

“Don‘t be so impatient, Petrushka. Sit down. You must not leave my house to-night. It is now fully three years since we have met, and I have often longed for your company.“

“First of all, let this matter be settled,“ Petrushka insisted. “Will you send Sonya with the letter on payment of three golden roubles?“

You are a hard man, but I will not reproach you. Sonya will deliver the letter as you desire.“

Aleksyey spoke as if he felt he was making the worst of a bargain.

The two men shook hands to confirm the agreement. “Now make yourself comfortable, Petrushka,“ the innkeeper said softly. “Tell me all about your travels and all about the great new city of St. Petersburg. I can‘t understand why your master wants to live on an island instead of at Tsar Peter‘s great Court.“

“I said he was fighting in Poland at present,“ smiled Petrushka.

“But wars don‘t last for ever. When victories are won, great generals return to the capital to be honoured and made rich by the Tsar.“

Petrushka shrugged his shoulders. “My master would prefer to fight his own country‘s battles. There is trouble brewing for the island kingdom in these days.“

“How much you know, my friend! Living here in a village, I never hear aught of foreign countries. What has gone wrong in this island with two names?“

“It is a long story.“

“What of that? The night is young as yet. I am curious to hear why the General desires to leave Russia.“

“I will tell you as much as I know. . . . You have heard about Spain?“

“That is the country that lies beyond France. Oh yes! I have heard about it. Indeed, I once saw a Spaniard. He was a very dark man, with flashing black eyes, and he spoke Russian vilely.“

“Well, Cardinal Alberoni, prime minister of King Philip of Spain, has been plotting with Baron Goertz, of Sweden, to form a great alliance against the island kingdom. Baron Goertz is endeavouring to bring about a reconciliation between King Charles of Sweden and Tsar Peter, so as to form a great alliance with purpose to overthrow the English king, whose name is George, and bring France under the control of Spain.“

“Why should Tsar Peter trouble himself about the island ruler?“

“Well you may ask. It seems that another prince claims the right to reign over the island kingdom. He has many followers, who are called Jacobites. Some of them, indeed, are in Tsar Peter‘s service.“

“And is General Gordon one of these Jacobites?“

“No. He owns allegiance to King George. From what I have heard, he desires to return home, being a valiant and accomplished soldier, to take part in the great war if it ever breaks out.“

"Supposing Tsar Peter supports the rival prince of the island kingdom, your master will then fight against our country, eh?"

"It is unlikely the Tsar will interfere in this matter. The islanders have a strong navy. Indeed, they are supreme on the seas. No single Power would dare to oppose them. That is why the Swedes and the Spaniards desire to obtain help from the Tsar."

"Let them fight their own battles, say I. Why should Russia help Sweden? Are we not at war with the Swedes at present?"

"We are. Tsar Peter has no greater rival than King Charles of Sweden. Baron Goertz, however, is endeavouring to arrange a peace betwixt our country and his own. He proposes that the Tsar should then seize part of Prussia, and that King Charles should take possession of Norway."

"How did you come to know all this, Petrushka?"

I have heard my master speak of the great conspiracy. He desires to hasten to his native land, so as to warn King George of the peril which threatens him."

"It is but natural that he should think first of his own country. May he achieve his purpose, Petrushka! He is a most excellent man. Each time he came here he placed in my hand a golden rouble. Besides, he has been a good master to you, my friend."

"I am ready to lay down my life in his service," Petrushka answered. "If it is God's will, I shall accompany him to the island kingdom to strike a blow against the Jacobites, who are his enemies."

"Hush, Petrushka!" exclaimed the innkeeper. "Do not speak so loud. The police-officer may be listening at the door. Let us talk of other matters. What you have told me fills my head with confusion. I would rather hear about the great new city of St. Petersburg, the streets of which are lit with bright lamps every night."

PETRUSHKA AND MARYA START ON THE JOURNEY TO MOSCOW

Petrushka smiled, and called for kvass. Then he proceeded to satisfy the innkeeper's curiosity regarding Tsar Peter's great new capital, telling of its wonderful buildings and wide streets, its shops and factories and shipbuilding yards, and of the skilled foreign workmen who were instructing Russians how to build large ships for war and trade. He then related many anecdotes regarding Tsar Peter's visits to foreign countries.

"At Saardam, in Holland," Petrushka said, "he went about in disguise, and, assuming the name of Peter Timmerman, hired himself as a workman to a shipbuilder, and lived on the wages he earned in a most wretched hovel."

"What folly!" exclaimed the innkeeper. "It was not seemly that a Tsar should live like a peasant."

"Tsar Peter desired to learn the art on which he hoped to found Russia's future greatness. Afterwards he went to England, where King William presented him with a beautiful yacht, which I have myself seen. In the island kingdom he worked also in a dockyard until he became skilled in the craft of shipbuilding. Then he applied himself to the study of various trades and manufactures in which the island people have great skill. Ere he returned to Russia he visited Germany and Austria and Italy. No living man has travelled more than Tsar Peter."

It was long after midnight before Petrushka had ceased talking, and he and the innkeeper, yawning heavily, bade each other good night and went to bed.

II. How Marya was Carried Away

Early next forenoon Sonya, who had set out from the inn immediately after breakfast, returned from Colonel Maykov's house, bringing Marya, the General's daughter, with her. The girl was slim and fair-haired, with rosy cheeks and soft blue eyes.

"How you have grown, Marya!" Petrushka exclaimed. "It is pleasant to see you once again. I have brought you a birthday present from your father. How old are you now?"

"Fourteen years," answered Marya, whose eyes sparkled when Petrushka handed her a package containing an English doll.

"You must not open the package until you return to Colonel Maykov's house," Petrushka told her.

"How kind of you to bring it to me!" exclaimed the girl.

The man smiled and patted her cheeks. Then turning to a groom he said: "Bring my horse from the stable. I must depart at once."

"Oh! not at once, surely," protested Marya. "Madame Maykov has asked me to invite you to her house. She desires to speak with you on 'a matter of great importance'. These are the very words she used."

"I have to hasten back to St. Petersburg as quickly as possible," Petrushka said. "But I must tarry here a little if Madame Maykov bids. me to visit her. She may have some message which she desires me to carry to her husband. Will I take you back on horseback, Marya? You can sit up behind me on the saddle."

"That will be delightful," answered the girl, little suspecting Petrushka's intention, for he had planned to carry her away to the next post station where he could hire a sledge and convey her to Moscow.

Having paid his bill to the innkeeper, Petrushka leapt into the saddle, and then leaning over lifted up Marya, who sat behind him clasping her arms about his waist.

"I shall bid you farewell when you return," the innkeeper said.

"So be it," answered Petrushka with a smile, as, tossing a coin to the groom, he urged his horse onward and rode away.

When he had ridden a little over a verst, he reached the roadway leading to Colonel Maykov's house, but turned his horse towards the right.

"You are taking the wrong road," Marya said with a laugh.

"Hold on tightly," answered Petrushka. "We will ride on to the next post station. You must be in Moscow to-morrow morning, for your

mother and sisters are to leave at once for Poland to join your father."

"But I should first bid good-bye to Madame Maykov," Marya pleaded.

"She must not know you are leaving, little girl. I am carrying out your father's orders. We must escape from Russia at once, else your mother and your sisters and you yourself may be thrust into prison."

"Into prison? Why———"

"Hush! I will explain everything later. The post station is only five versts farther on."

It was a gloomy cheerless day. As the road opened out from a tree-clad valley lying between low hills, and turned to cross a wide barren plain with frozen marshes, the icy wind confronted them in full blast as if the tempest doors of the north had been suddenly flung open. Soon Marya's teeth began to chatter, and at length she complained, in a broken voice, that she was unable to endure the journey. Petrushka drew rein and slipped down from the saddle.

"Be brave, little girl," he said cheerfully.

Remember you are a soldier's daughter."

He lifted Marya from her uncomfortable seat, intending to make her. walk for a short distance. "Why, your hands are like ice," he exclaimed with concern. "You are not sufficiently clad for this rough journey. It was foolish of me not to think of that sooner. Never mind. I shall wrap you up and you will feel quite comfortable,"

Divesting himself of his fur coat he threw it over the girl's shoulders and knotted the long sleeves in front.

"Don't you feel warm now?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! You are very kind, Petrushka. But what about yourself?"

"I am accustomed to rough it," he laughed as he lifted her into the saddle again. "I think you had better sit in front now. What a big bundle you make just like a birthday doll wrapped up in a skin package!"

The girl laughed merrily, and Petrushka mounted his horse again and set it trotting along the highway at a goodly pace.

At the post station, which was reached early in the afternoon, Petrushka hired horses and a carriage, being unable to obtain a sledge. Then he took Marya to the inn, and there they both partook of a warm meal.

Having purchased a heavy rug, he returned to the post station with the girl, and lifted her into the carriage as soon as the horses had been yoked.

"How far distant is the next station?" he asked the driver.

"Not more than eight versts, master," was the answer. "But our progress will be slow, I fear. Much snow lies on the roads and the frost has made it hard and slippery in places."

"Drive as swiftly as possible," Petrushka urged him. "You will be well rewarded, my friend."

The journey was a slow and arduous one. The horses seemed afraid to run fast. They were constantly tripping on the frozen ruts where the snow lay thinnest, and at those parts which were made difficult by piled-up wreaths of soft snow they laboured heavily at a slow pace.

It was late in the afternoon when the next post station was reached.

Petrushka at once leapt from the carriage and hastened into the office of the Post Commissary.

"Have you a sledge for hire?" he asked abruptly.

"There is an excellent sledge here," was the answer. "You can have it to-morrow morning."

"I shall require it in another hour," Petrushka said, "and also fresh horses. I must hasten on and reach Moscow to-night."

"That is impossible," the Post Commissary grunted. "I have only two horses, a brown and a grey, and they were engaged this morning. Would you grudge the animals their natural rest?"

"And look at the sky," broke in the driver. "We'll have more snow before very long."

"I cannot tarry here," Petrushka declared impatiently. "Do you think I am travelling for pleasure? I will pay double rates for the horses. Let them be well fed before we start."

"The road is not only difficult but dangerous," protested the Commissary. "Last night a sledge was chased by wolves not many versts distant from here."

"Wolves?" exclaimed the driver, turning pale.

Petrushka laughed hoarsely. "I have heard such stories before. Travellers who spend much time at the inns always blame the wolves for their delays. We have no need to fear wolves even if we meet them. I have a hand-gun and two pistols. Wolves are easily scared away by fire-arms. Besides, I shoot well."

He drew a purse of gold from his pocket and made the coins jingle.

"That is sweet music," smiled the Commissary.

"I shall pay you the full value of the horses," Petrushka said in a low voice. "Surely you will hire them now."

"Take the child to the inn. Give her hot tea to drink," growled the Commissary. "The horses will be ready in an hour."

He turned away and hastened towards the; stables.

"Master, what about me?" asked the driver. "I have need of something to drink, too."

Petrushka thrust forty kopecks in the man's outstretched hand. "When we reach Moscow," he whispered, "you will receive a gold rouble for serving me so well."

The driver grinned. "Do not let the Commissary hear that," he whispered back. "He might talk about it. There are men in this village who are more to be feared than wolves."

III. The Race to Moscow

Petrushka lifted Marya from the carriage and carried her to the inn. The little girl was pale and dispirited, but when she was taken into a warm room and placed beside the stove a flush came to her cheeks and she began to smile. A woman brought her a dish of hot tea, and she sipped it greedily.

"Beyond this place the roads are smooth," Petrushka said, "and we shall travel swiftly."

"The sledge will fly like a bird, little lady," smiled the woman. "You are sure to fall asleep. I wish I could go to Moscow with you. It is a great and wonderful city."

"My mother is in Moscow," Marya said.

"How happy she will be when she sees you, little lady!"

"And I shall be happy, too."

Petrushka rose to leave the inn. “I shall return for you very soon,“ he told the girl. Then he nodded to the driver and the two men went out together.

They found the Commissary in the stables. “The horses have had warm food,“ he said, “and seem fresh again. But do not drive them too hard. I have placed a small axe in the sledge. You may require it if there are wolves about.“

“It is hardly necessary,“ answered Petrushka. “I can trust to my fire-arms.“

The driver crossed himself. “We are in God‘s hands,“ he said.

“Still, it would be safer if you waited until morning,“ remarked a groom.

Petrushka hastened towards the inn and returned carrying Marya in his arms.

“Stand aside!“ he exclaimed impatiently as he elbowed his way through the little crowd which had collected round the sledge. He propped up the little girl comfortably in the seat. She was so well wrapped round with coat and rugs that she could scarcely move. The Commissary observed that Petrushka was insufficiently clad for travelling by night in such cold weather.

“You will need your heavy coat,“ he urged. “It is foolishness on your part not to wear it. Have you no fear of frost-bite?“

“None whatever,“ answered the other with a smile. “I never feel the cold. Besides,“ he added in a whisper, “if there are really wolves on the road, I‘ll be all the more able to deal with them as I am.“

The Commissary shook his head doubtfully, but ere he could utter another word of warning the driver whipped up his horses. Petrushka shouted a cheery farewell as the sledge glided away.

"The man is mad," growled a groom. "If we ever look upon him in life again I shall be greatly surprised."

"May God protect the little girl!" muttered the Commissary, turning away.

The sledge went skimming smoothly along the narrow highway, the horses' hoofs pattering with little sound on the snow and the bells tinkling merrily in the frosty air. Soon the driver began to drone an old song, and the horses twitched back their ears constantly as if the sound of his voice gave them pleasure. A yellow streak of evening light appeared in the western sky, and overhead the crescent of the new moon seemed to be a silver sledge racing across wastes of snowy clouds.

"We are going to have a pleasant journey to Moscow, little Marya," Petrushka said.

The girl smiled faintly. "I am very tired," was her answer.

"But you are comfortable now, I am sure."

"Yes, very. . . . Why don't you put on your thick fur coat? I really don't require it. The rugs will keep me quite warm."

"And you are not a bit afraid either, eh?"

"Not when you are beside me, Petrushka. The woman in the inn said we might be attacked by wolves. You will shoot them if they come, won't you?"

"It was wrong of the woman to try and frighten you," Petrushka said with a frown. "Of course I shall shoot any wolves that dare to come near us. Have no fear of them. . . . Listen to the driver's song. The bells seem all to be ringing in tune."

Marya's eyes glowed with pleasure, and Petrushka began to tell her a fairy story about a princess who was once carried through the air

in a golden car drawn by wild geese. She listened with delight as the sledge sped onward along the level highway. The story was a long one, and when Petrushka had finished it had grown dark. They were passing through a forest, and the gaunt leafless trees, laden with snow, stretched out their branches on either side like giant hands which were trying to clutch at passers-by. An icy wind began to blow out of the north, and tossed into the sledge the flakes of snow which were loosened by the horses' hoofs. Marya grew more afraid, and when she spoke her voice trembled.

"Do you feel cold?" asked Petrushka softly.

"No, I am not cold," the girl made answer, "but I am just a little afraid."

"We shall soon leave the forest," the man assured her. "It comes to an end about two versts farther on."

Petrushka's voice sounded hollow and strange in the darkness. From the trees came curious snapping noises as the wind rushed past them through spaces which had been cleared by peasants. A sense of loneliness pervaded the night. The driver had ceased to sing. Now and again he spoke to the horses, urging them to speed faster.

At length the awesome forest was left behind. Then the crescent moon came out from behind a thick bank of cloud and lit up the wide solitary plain, across which the road ran like a long narrow ribbon. Suddenly Marya uttered a faint scream. "What is wrong with your left ear?" she asked Petrushka. "It is terribly swollen."

The man raised a hand and touched his ear. It seemed hard as a piece of wood.

"Frost-bite," he muttered.

"Put on your thick fur coat," urged Marya.

Petrushka laughed a forced laugh. “Oh! it is nothing,“ he said gaily. “One can cure a frost-bite very easily.“

As he spoke he gathered a handful of the snow which had collected in the sledge and rubbed it vigorously against his ear.

“Snow is a certain cure for frost-bite,“ he told the girl. “Draw your veil down over your face. The cold wind may nip you as well.“

Marya did as he suggested. “Can‘t you cover your own face, too?“ she asked. “Wrap this rug round your shoulders.“

Petrushka continued to rub the frost-bitten ear, until a shout from the driver caused him to leap to his feet. The horses were snorting excitedly, and the sledge rocked from side to side like a boat tossed by angry billows.

“Keep the horses running straight ahead!“ Petrushka called to the driver, who was scolding and taunting them as if they were rowdy children.

“What is wrong?“ asked Marya, leaning forward and clutching Petrushka‘s right arm.

Ere he could answer, a piercing howl rose through the keen night air.

“Wolves! wolves!“ screamed the affrighted girl.

“Hush! Do not be afraid,“ Petrushka said softly and firmly. “If you cry out like that, you is will only encourage them. I‘ll soon scare off the cowardly brutes. They are afraid of fire-arms.“

It was all the driver could do to keep control of his horses. The poor animals had been suddenly thrown into a state of alarm. On a little eminence at a bend of the road, about fifty yards in front of them, stood a great, long-legged wolf, sharply outlined against the snow, and howling fiercely. It was the scout of a hungry pack, which was scouring a forest near at hand in search of food. Petrushka and the

driver realized that their only hope was to drive past this animal before its fellows came up and attacked in force.

The horses reared and faltered, and despite the efforts of the driver ultimately came to a standstill, snorting and trembling with fear. Petrushka leapt from the sledge and ran forward towards the wolf. Then, kneeling in the snow, he took steady aim with his hand-gun and fired. The wolf was struck and fell over on the snow, yelping with pain.

In another minute the horses were racing forward again. Petrushka leapt into the sledge when it reached him, and sat down beside Marya, who was sobbing with terror.

"Do not weep, little girl," he said softly. "I have killed the wolf. The horses are now scampering along at a fine speed. We shall escape all danger."

"Won't the other wolves follow us?" she asked faintly.

"They will wait to devour the one I shot," answered Petrushka. "We shall thus gain time. The horses know now that the wolves are behind us. How splendidly they run!"

The driver was sitting bolt upright on his seat, shouting lustily to encourage the horses.

Marya, who had dried her eyes, was somewhat reassured by the coolness displayed by Petrushka.

"Do you think the wolves have gone away?" she asked him as, kneeling on the seat, he peered anxiously over the back of the sledge. He turned round to answer her, but before he could speak an affrighted scream escaped her lips.

"What is wrong with your nose?" she asked. Petrushka's nose was grotesquely swollen, and imparted to his face a fearsome aspect.

"Frost-bite," he groaned, seizing another handful of snow and rubbing his nose vigorously.

The driver glanced round. "God preserve us!" he shouted; "they are coming on now." Once again the horses had begun to show signs of alarm, and it was as much as he could do to keep them in control.

Petrushka stood up on the seat as if defying, by a great effort of will, the full force of the icy wind. Once again the howling of a wolf came through the night. The pack was following a new leader, in full chase after the sledge.

Marya moaned fitfully, while the horses broke into a gallop which was sure to exhaust them sooner or later. The yelping and howling of the wolves sounded fiercer and louder as they drew near.

Petrushka watched the dark forms growing larger and larger, and raised his gun to fire when they came within range. He took little thought for himself, although he realized that by neglecting the frost-bite he would probably be disfigured for life by loss of nose and ear. His sole concern was to protect Marya, who had been committed to his care.

The little girl had swooned with terror, and lay back on the seat. Petrushka bent over her for a second, and adjusted a rug so as to enable her to breathe more freely. Then he seized his gun again. In another minute he fired, and then grasped a pistol and fired a second time. Two wolves rolled over in the snow, and the pack faltered to tear them to pieces and devour their flesh. Petrushka at once reloaded his fire-arms.

Shout as he might, the driver was unable to control his horses.

"Can't you keep them in hand?" shouted Petrushka.

"The grey horse has gone quite mad," the driver answered, tugging the reins furiously. "He will upset the sledge at the first bridge."

"Will I shoot him?" asked Petrushka.

"Are you mad? The wolves

"It would delay them. Before they could devour the horse we might reach shelter. How far off is Moscow?"

"Ten versts. But there is a village half that distance from here."

Petrushka climbed over the sledge to the driver's seat.

"We'll sacrifice the grey horse," he said, shouldering his gun and discharging it. The animal at once reared madly, and then fell heavily forward, bringing the other horse to a standstill. For a minute it seemed as if the sledge would be upset. But the driver saved the situation by causing the brown horse to swerve sharply. Then he leapt out, grasping the axe in his hand, and with a few deft blows cut the harness which attached the fallen animal to the sledge. Meanwhile Petrushka had run forward and was holding the brown horse by the head.

Once again the howling of the wolves grew louder and nearer. There was no time to be lost. The driver sprang forward and backed the brown horse, until he was able to get the sledge slewed round and drawn past the grey, which was struggling convulsively in the snow.

"Jump in!" he shouted to Petrushka.

He clapped the brown horse on the neck, spoke to it softly, and then ran back to his seat.

"Fly like the wind!" he called to the panting animal, cracking his whip excitedly. "We'll reach the village yet."

''JUMP IN!'' SHOUTED THE DRIVER TO PETRUSHKA

The horse darted forward just as Petrushka fired at the wolves with gun and pistols at close range. Three animals fell sprawling in the snow.

"They won't trouble us now for a time," he shouted to the driver. "What a gorge we have left for them!"

The driver made no answer. He kept cracking his whip and shouting to the brown horse, which ran steadily, but was already showing signs of exhaustion.

Petrushka knelt beside Marya and rubbed snow on her white face. Soon she opened her eyes and sighed deeply. “Have the wolves gone away?“ were her first words.

“We have left them far behind,“ answered Petrushka. “Before long we shall reach a place of safety.“

The sledge went on smoothly for a time. Then the driver began to show signs of anxiety.

“Ah, would you?“ he shouted excitedly to the horse. “Get on! Lively there! If you tarry the wolves will get us.“

The brown horse was slowing up, panting heavily.

“What a feed of corn is waiting for you!“ the driver called to the horse. “Do you hear me?“ He cracked his whip impatiently.

“Let him walk a bit,“ Petrushka said, standing up behind the driver.

“There is a bridge not far off,“ answered the driver, “and a verst beyond it is the village. When we cross the bridge I shall feel safe.“

The horse began to walk, with head drooping listlessly, and the driver turned round to speak to Petrushka.

“You are badly frost-bitten,“ he said. “You will have good cause to remember this night‘s journey.“

The words had scarcely left his lips when the horse, scenting danger once again, broke into a sharp trot, with head erect and ears shifting uneasily.

“They are coming now!“ exclaimed the driver, tightening his hold on the reins. He knew full well the horse had scented the approaching pack.

"What does the driver say?" Marya asked, as Petrushka clutched his gun and stood up on the seat. "Are the wolves still chasing us?"

The man made no answer. But Marya was not long left in doubt as to what was happening. The shrill yelps of the bloodthirsty animals came up the wind, sounding fiercer and more awesome than before.

"Now for the bridge!" shouted the driver to Petrushka. "Hold on!"

He whipped up the brown horse, so as to take the bridge at a run. But the road was badly cut up as it descended to the river bank, and the sledge rocked violently. The horse, which was straining every muscle, seemed to realize instinctively that once the bridge was crossed the chances of escape would increase.

"Steady! Steady!" bawled the driver excitedly, as the animal reached the hollow that lay between the level highway and the bridge. In another minute the sledge was tilting over like a listing boat, and seemed in danger of being upset. But it was righted as abruptly with a rough jolt, and then ran smoothly over the bridge. On the other side it plunged and rocked again, and almost came to a standstill. Petrushka leapt out, and running forward grasped the reins behind the horse's mouth, and led the snorting animal up the steep bank in safety.

"Jump in!" exclaimed the driver impatiently. "You will need your fire-arms presently."

"Give me the axe," Petrushka said. "I will keep the wolves back until you reach the village."

"Are you mad?" shouted the other. "You will be torn to pieces in a few minutes if you wait there. Jump in!"

The howling of the wolves sounded nearer at hand.

"Give me the axe!" Petrushka repeated in a peremptory voice. "Then drive on as fast as possible and send help. I'll keep the brutes at bay. If I perish, convey Marya to Moscow. She has my purse, and will reward you generously."

The driver threw the axe from the sledge and cracked his whip.

"Farewell, Marya!" Petrushka shouted as the sledge skimmed past him. An affrighted scream was the only answer he received.

"Do not be afraid, little one," shouted the driver without turning his head. "You will soon be safe in a comfortable inn."

Petrushka climbed the parapet of the bridge to await the wolves. He had perceived that at this point the pack would be unable to cross the frozen river, because the banks were so steep and slippery, without making a wide detour. They must needs scamper over the bridge if they were to catch up the sledge before it reached the village. So he had made up his mind suddenly to hold them back until Marya's escape was assured, and to sacrifice his life for her sake if needs be.

His pistols were thrust in his pockets, and the axe was dangling from his belt as he stood up with his gun at his shoulder waiting for the wolves. Nor had he long to wait. The leading wolf scampered up noiselessly, and paused for a second, glancing to right and left. Then it bounded on to the bridge. Petrushka fired, and the animal dropped dead with a bullet through its brain. He reloaded his gun, and had just removed the ramrod after packing down the charge when the wolves came up. The yelping animals sprang at once on the body of the leader and fought over it. But one leapt forward towards Petrushka. He fired at once, and wounded it so severely that it turned and ran back, howling with pain. Other wolves which came up attacked it, maddened by the smell of blood, and ere long had stripped the flesh from its bones.

Petrushka began to tremble, partly with excitement and partly because he was suffering from the effects of frost-bite. He dreaded that he would collapse before the sledge reached the village, so he cast aside his gun and seized his pistols. In another minute he fired twice in succession into the midst of the scrambling wolves. For a short interval it seemed as if the animals would be scared away. But ere he could reload his pistols a great grey wolf, leaping towards him, made a frantic effort to drag him down. Petrushka seized the axe and struck a fierce blow, which caused the animal to drop dead beneath him. But its attack had encouraged the others, and several rushed forward to close with him, snarling with bared teeth. A brief and desperate struggle followed. Petrushka was bold as a lion, but his strength was fast ebbing away, and when one of the animals succeeded in scrambling up the parapet and came bounding towards him, he swung his axe round to strike a blow, but overbalanced himself and fell with a crash on the frozen river beneath.

But the brave Petrushka did not die in vain. The sledge reached the village before the terrible fight came to an end, and several men rushed out from the inn when they heard the harness bells jingling in the night air.

"Have you seen wolves on the road?" one called to the driver as he drew near.

"Yes, yes; and a man is keeping them back on the bridge," the driver answered, hoarse with excitement and horror, as he drew up his horse "Hasten to his aid! There is no time to be lost," he urged them.

"Wolves, wolves!" cried the men in chorus, running towards the inn to obtain fire-arms, and let loose the hounds that were kept to scare wolves away.

Ere many minutes had elapsed half a dozen brave fellows went scampering along the road towards the bridge, each armed with a brace of pistols. Several great hounds went barking loudly in front of them. Then two men mounted on horses galloped past the sledge.

"Petrushka's life may yet be saved," the driver said soothingly to Marya as he lifted her out of the sledge and carried her into the inn.

When the rescuers reached the bridge they found that the wolves had fled away, having scented danger. They at once made search for Petrushka, and at length discovered him lying dead on the surface of the frozen river.

"God rest his soul!" an old man exclaimed piously. "He died to save others."

"Look! look!" exclaimed another. "He has been badly frost-bitten. How dreadfully his face is swollen!"

"He must have known his end was near," the old man remarked. "But his last thoughts were not for himself. He sacrificed the little portion of life that remained for him so that the child might escape a dreadful death. Let us return, brother, taking the corpse of this good man with us."

The fate of Petrushka was hidden from Marya until the morning. She wept copiously when she was informed of his death. The women at the inn did their utmost to comfort her, and one of them accompanied her to Moscow, where she was delivered safely into the arms of her mother. The driver was rewarded liberally for his services.

Two days later Mrs. Gordon and her girls crossed the frontier into Poland, and were conveyed to a village where the General awaited their arrival.

The war-worn soldier embraced each one affectionately. Then he asked, "But where is Petrushka?"

Marya related all that had taken place.

"He was faithful unto death!" exclaimed General Gordon, with tears in his eyes. "A braver man never died on a battlefield. He sacrificed himself doing his duty, like a true Russian and a true Christian."

THE OLD ORDER AND THE NEW

I. The Shadow of Serfdom

"Has our master gone quite mad?" cried the peasant's wife. "He cannot mean what he says!"

"Yes, little mother, indeed he does," lamented Peter, her youngest son, "he has arranged to sell us with a portion of his estate because he is in sore need of money."

"In need of money?" repeated the woman. "Who ever heard of such foolishness? Why, Nicholas Ivanovitch Gogol is one of the richest noblemen in Russia."

"It is said," her son explained, "that his two sons, Pavel and Dimitri, have almost ruined him. These young army officers gamble continually. Some must lose that others may win."

"Do not speak about them; their names are hateful in my ears," moaned the peasant's wife. "They have brought sorrow to their parents, and now they bring sorrow to me."

Yes, indeed," Peter said, "they are to blame for all this. Well, what must be, must be."

"Oh! do not speak like that," his mother cried.

"Something must be done to prevent this calamity. It will kill me, and it will kill your poor old father. Oh! it cannot be true that my children are to be taken from me."

"Alas! it is only too true. I have brought a *Moscow Gazette* with me," her son told her, drawing a folded newspaper from his belt. "Listen to this, little mother."

Then he began to read the advertisement, missing the opening part which referred to the portion of the estate which was offered for sale:

"'To be sold with the said portion of this estate—An excellent clerk, who can play on a musical instrument———"

"That is yourself, Peter," his mother interrupted. "Alas! why were you ever taught to read and write?"

"'Also a well-trained coachman, strong and handsome."

"Ivan—your brother Ivan," the woman exclaimed; "will he sell my first-born also?"

"'And a girl of seventeen, accustomed to all kinds of housework and a good needlewoman———'"

"Little Sasha as well!" sobbed the broken-hearted mother. "Oh! cannot she be spared? What of Rurik—is his name not there?"

"No," her son answered sadly, "all that follows is:—

"'Also, fourteen strong labourers and several Dutch cows.' So, you see, Rurik is left to you, little mother."

"But you and Ivan and Sasha are to be sold with the labourers. No, no, it cannot be; it must not be," the woman protested. "I shall go and see the Master myself this very evening, and plead with him on my bended knees. Nicholas Ivanovitch is not a cruel man. He will listen to me with pity. I know he will."

Peter made a hopeless gesture. "You might as well appeal to a tree-stump as appeal to Nicholas Ivanovitch Gogol. His mind is made up. Besides, his sons' creditors are threatening to bring ruin and disgrace to the family if their debts are not settled without delay."

"Come and speak to your father, little Peter," his mother urged. "He will tell you, as I tell you, that this sale cannot possibly take place. I know it can't. I feel it in my heart, and my heart never deceives me."

Paul, the old peasant, was very deaf. He was grinding corn in the barn when his son entered, with the Moscow Gazette crumpled up in his right hand.

"Little Peter tells me," his wife shouted, "that the sale is mentioned in the newspaper."

The peasant looked up with a pale, blank face, his eyes moving so quickly from one to another that he seemed to speak with them, so full were they of meaning.

"Peter and Ivan and Sasha are to be sold with fourteen labourers and some Dutch cows on the eastern portion of the estate," his wife bawled in his ear; "that is what the newspaper says." Paul rose to his feet and drew a hand across his perspiring brow.

"It is not true," he muttered in a low, deep voice. "Our good master would never think of selling my family. Such a thing never happened before. My ancestors have served his ancestors for many generations. Our people have grown up here like the trees in the forest."

"We must go together and talk with Nicholas Ivanovitch this very evening," his wife urged.

"As you will," the peasant drawled. "But it is hardly necessary. What has put this foolishness into your head?"

"Mother, Mother! Where are you, Mother?" cried a girl's voice outside the barn.

"Ah! it is little Sasha," the woman exclaimed with agitation, hastening from her husband's side.

The girl embraced her mother convulsively and sobbed in her arms.

"I have run out to speak with you, little mother," she said; "our master and mistress are asleep after dinner. But I could not sleep, thinking of the sale. Oh, alas, my heart will break!"

"Come into the house, little Sasha, my own," whispered her mother. "Do not let your father see you. He does not understand—he cannot believe it is true; nor do I."

"My mistress told me I would be sold next month," the girl sobbed. "She said also that a great lady in Jaroslav had already written to ask about me. What am I to do, Mother? I cannot leave you and father and the boys. If I am taken away, I may never see any of you again—never again. Oh, think of that!"

"This evening," her mother told her, "your father and I will go before our master and prevail upon him to spare us this great sorrow. So be comforted, my child, we'll arrange something better for you. See if we don't."

It was then that Rurik came upon them all of a sudden as he scampered round the house. His cheeks were flushed; his eyes danced in his head with excitement.

"Well, this is great news," he panted excitedly.

"I won't sleep to-night. I'm sure I won't."

"What has happened now, my son?" his mother asked in a low, nervous voice.

"Everyone is free. Do you understand? Everyone, I tell you. We can now go where we like, do what we like, and no one will dare interfere. The Tsar has said it. Long live the Tsar! He is the Little Father of all his people."

"Are you mad, boy?" his mother cried. "Has the misfortune which threatens us all turned your head?"

"Down in the village," Rurik went on, "the peasants are shouting and dancing with joy. A newspaper, in which the Tsar's decree has been printed, is in the hands of the priest. 1 I heard it read myself. What it all meant I cannot tell you, but one man asked the priest, 'Are all the serfs free, now?' and he answered quite plainly, 'Yes, my children, you are all free. Long live the Tsar!"

Peter had joined the group ere his brother ceased speaking, and his mother turned to him, saying, "What think you of this? Do you understand?"

"For days past there have been strange rumours abroad," Peter told her, "but I paid little heed to them. But if what Rurik says is true, then———"

"Of course, it is true. We are all free," Rurik urged. "Everyone says so."

A confused clamour of voices reached their ears, and looking round, they beheld, with surprise, a crowd of peasants, who had left their work, hurrying towards them.

"Long live the Tsar!" they were shouting. "He has released us from bondage as He released the captives in Babylon."

"Where are you going now?" Peter asked their leader, Ivan Ivanovitch, a stout, loud-voiced man with a large mouth which he seemed incapable of closing; when he ceased to speak it gaped wide and he breathed through it.

"We are all going to speak with Nicholas Ivanovitch Gogol," Ivan boasted.

"It is early yet. He will not receive you before sundown," said Peter.

"He will have to speak with us, and at once, too," Ivan persisted. "Does the Tsar not declare that we are free? Being free, we can select our own time to approach Nicholas Ivanovitch Gogol. He cannot inflict punishments upon us now. Come with us, Maria, and bring old Paul also."

"Yes, yes, I shall certainly go with you," Maria answered. "But all you say must be fully explained to my husband, else he will refuse to leave his work. He is grinding corn."

She turned towards the barn, and the others went with her. "Can my children be sold now?" she asked suddenly.

"Sold?" laughed Ivan Ivanovitch, rolling his eyes and twisting his face. "Don't you understand how matters stand now? Why, we are all free—free as the birds of the forest. We can go whither we will."

"But I wish to remain here," Maria persisted. "I want my children to remain also. What if our master should send us away? Can he do so? Answer me that."

She had paused, and stood facing Ivan Ivanovitch. Her lips trembled and her hands shook.

Silence fell upon the peasants. The idea of being sent away had never occurred to most of them, but Ivan laughed again. "Merry times are in store for us," he declared. "I intend going to the great fair at Nijni-Novgorod, where a man can earn sufficient money in a month to last him for the rest of the year. Ilia here was once in Moscow and wants to reside there, and Jacob speaks of going to Kiev. No doubt, your sons will wander hither and thither, like the rest, Maria," he added.

The woman began to smooth her hair. "I wish for nothing better than that my children should remain here always," she said. "But let us speak to my husband. He is the wisest man on the estate. He thinks all day long, and is fit to be a judge."

"Did you ever hear such a woman?" puffed Ivan. "She's always boasting about her husband's wisdom. But there are others quite as wise as he is."

Paul looked up with surprise when the little crowd entered his barn. "What has happened?" he asked. "Why have you left your work?"

Ivan Ivanovitch went towards him and bawled into his ear all he had told Maria. "Now," said he, "come with us to speak before Nicholas Ivanovitch."

"Not until sundown," Paul answered. "Would you have me neglect my work? Who ever heard of such a thing? Besides, our master would not receive us until the proper time. He has his duties to attend to just as we have."

"Very well. You are a stubborn man, Paul. Have your own way with it," bawled Ivan Ivanovitch. "But be warned in time. When you go to meet the master after sunset this evening he may not be able to see you. Ha! ha! think of that."

"What do you mean?" Paul asked.

"A fierce spirit has broken out among our friends," Ivan said darkly. "There are old scores to be wiped out. One never knows what may happen."

"Ah!" Paul ejaculated, looking very grave. "Perhaps, after all, I had better go with you."

"Now you are talking sense," said Ivan; "I thought I would move you."

Maria then spoke to her husband, saying, "Our master has done a wickedness in trying to sell our children."

"Say no more," Paul urged. "If wrong has been done, God will punish the guilty. A serf cannot be the judge of his master. He that judges is higher than those who are judged."

"That may have been true once," declared Ivan, "but everything has changed now that we are free. . . . Well, well, good people, let us hasten to speak with the master. You see even Paul is coming with us."

"What is going to happen?" asked Maria with apprehension.

"Leave everything to me," Ivan remarked somewhat vainly.

"Will you plead with Nicholas Ivanovitch on behalf of my children?"

"Oh! dear me, listen to the woman," Ivan laughed. "She cannot understand yet. Come along, all of you, and you will hear me speak. This day will not be readily forgotten. How I shall enjoy seeing our master trembling in his shoes when I tell him what I think! Follow me, my friends, follow me!"

He threw back his head and uttered a great shout. Paul heard it and looked up quickly with wide eyes. "I shall walk beside you, Ivan Ivanovitch," he said, taking the arm of the boastful peasant.

II. The Serfs Set Free

Nicholas Ivanovitch Gogol, the proprietor, was a heavy-featured man with sleepy grey eyes and a closely-cropped beard. He lived an easy, lazy life, as had done his fathers before him, year in and year out, attending languidly to the business of his estate, on which there were more serfs than it was capable of sustaining. Each day he received reports from his oversmen, who saw that the routine work on the farm and in the forest was carried out, and once or twice a week drove round the fields on horseback to keep his eye on the oversmen. At midday he dined and then slept for two hours, as did also his wife and the house servants. Then he drank a great quantity of hot tea and attended to his accounts. In the evening he sat in front

of his house to hear complaints regarding the serfs and order punishments, to settle disputes between families, or to scold wives who were careless regarding their husbands' comforts or the care of their children. He was at once an employer, judge, and father of all his people, and his word was law. Being at heart a kindly man, he was invariably just and reasonable, and his serfs regarded him as indeed a good master. They could not leave his estate without his permission, and he paid them no wages, but those who were industrious and honest were rewarded with holdings of land, which were extended if well worked, and they were allowed to keep stock, paying in lieu of rent portions of their crops and produce. The younger men engaged in farm-work and wood-cutting, while certain of the peasants practised trades. Sometimes Nicholas sent an intelligent youth to Novgorod to be educated, and to receive a training in business. Such a one was Peter, son of Paul the peasant, who was engaged chiefly in clerical work.

Life on the estate continued with little change until the proprietor's two sons became army officers. It was their mother's ambition that they should distinguish themselves by acquiring high titles, but ere many years had passed, Nicholas Ivanovitch discovered that the family name could not be thus honoured without the expenditure of large sums of money. Both the lads proved to be spendthrifts. In Petrograd they gambled so heavily that their father found himself running into debt. It was then he resolved to cut down his expenditure, and on the advice of his sons, he employed a steward from Moscow to manage his estate. It was the steward who proposed to sell a portion of the estate with those skilled and unskilled serfs attached to it.

As it chanced, this decision was come to at a time when great reforms were about to be introduced. The chief of these was the liberation of the serfs. Hints of the coming change appeared in the newspapers, but Nicholas Ivanovitch never read them. Such gossip as reached his ears he ignored or dismissed with scorn as false and foolish. One day his son wrote him saying that there could be no doubt of the Tsar's intention, and that soon all the serfs would be set free. Nicholas knitted his brows, and, tossing aside the letter,

remarked to his wife: “Dimitri will never learn sense. All the money I have spent upon him has been wasted.“

But reports of like character reached him day after day from other sources. Once his steward began to speak regarding them with a very grave face, but Nicholas scolded him, saying: “So you too have been listening to idle gossip. Get on with your work and see that the peasants do theirs. Have you sent the advertisement to the Moscow newspaper, setting forth that I have land with serfs and cattle for sale?“

“Yes, master,“ answered the steward. “As you ordered me, so have I done. I am here to obey your commands.“

Still Nicholas was troubled in mind, and one forenoon he mounted his horse and rode over to the house of a neighbouring proprietor to talk about these strange rumours which were flying about as thick as autumn leaves.

This man, Andrei Petrovitch, was a district judge, and told Nicholas that the Tsar was about to grant a Constitution.

“And what then?“ asked Nicholas.

“Who can foretell?“ the judge exclaimed. “The Imperial edict has not yet been issued. But it seems that the serfs will have to be paid wages for their labour and be given the right of living where they choose. I expect that most of them will at once hasten to the towns. Then we shall not be able to get our land worked.“

Nicholas frowned, was silent for a moment, and then laughed aloud. “Has all the world gone mad?“ he exclaimed. “I always thought you were a sensible man, Andrei Petrovitch. Now I see you are given over to foolishness like so many others.“

His friend shook his head gravely. “Very well,“ said he, “just wait until you are a little older and you shall see.“

Nicholas struck his boots once or twice with his riding-whip and moved about uneasily. "Won't you speak seriously, then," he asked, "and tell me the truth about this matter? I want to sell some land with serfs, being in need of money. Shall I be prevented from doing so?"

"You can't sell the serfs with your land, as has hitherto been the custom, once the Tsar's edict is issued. If you did so now you would only rouse up all your people against you. Then they would certainly desert you, and you would not have a workman left on your estate. Be careful, Nicholas Ivanovitch, what you do. I warn you as a friend."

"Then I shall sell my whole estate before it is too late," fumed Nicholas. The judge shrugged his shoulders. "Who would buy it just at present when everything is so uncertain, and there is no guarantee that labourers can be obtained?" he smiled grimly.

Nicholas Ivanovitch rode away in ill temper. It seemed to him that the whole world was being tumbled upside down, and he could not understand why. His mind was in confusion, and as he returned to his house he said, There is only one thing of which I am certain, and that is that I am hungry." He sat down gloomily to dinner, and ate a great quantity of fat pork with mushrooms and onions. Then feeling drowsy he went to his bedroom, and fell asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow. His wife sought a couch, and covering her face with a handkerchief to protect it from the flies, was soon asleep also. All the servants slumbered like the master and mistress, as was their wont after the midday meal, except little Sasha and her brother Peter, who had stolen homeward to sorrow with their parents over the proposal to sell them to strangers.

While Nicholas Ivanovitch slept, he dreamed a dream. He saw all his serfs, armed with weapons, surrounding his house with purpose to slay him, and he called to the house servants to close the doors, but they only jeered at him, saying: "We will no longer serve you, You have ceased to love us, and you have tried to sell us to enrich yourself. What care we although these men put you to death?"

He strove to cry out for help, but was unable to utter a sound. His tongue seemed to have frozen in his mouth. Then a dark form came towards him with a naked sword. He expected to be slain in another moment. But suddenly he escaped into a cellar, and closing the door, lay down trembling in every limb.

"Set the house on fire!" cried many voices. Thereupon he seemed to hear the roaring flames, and thrusting open the door, ran into the corridor to effect his escape. But he found himself confronted by a woman. It was Maria, wife of Paul, the deaf peasant. He quailed before her, and she spoke and said: "Do not fear, Nicholas Ivanovitch. Although you have sold my children I will save you, for I will drown the flames with my tears."

He awoke with a start and sat up rubbing his eyes. Cold beads of perspiration had broken out on his forehead, and a convulsive shudder went through his body. "Thank God," he muttered, "it is only a dream! This is the result of all the foolish talk people are indulging in."

He went towards the living room and found that the tea-urn had just been carried in. So he sat down and drank glass after glass of hot tea until he felt refreshed. Afterwards he left the house and stood musing a time in the farm-yard.

A workman was sitting on the ground, and Nicholas flew into a passion. "What do you mean, you son of a frog?" he exclaimed. "I'll have you flogged if you do not go to your work at once."

He expected to see the serf leaping to his feet and hurrying away. But the man remained sitting where he was.

"Are you deaf? Have your senses left you?" roared the infuriated proprietor.

"No, master," the man answered. "I am not deaf, and have heard what you said. Know you not what has happened? Everything is in confusion. The Tsar has set all the serfs at liberty, and now we can do

as it pleases us. I am content to sit here and ponder over my good luck."

Nicholas was struck dumb with astonishment. He turned on his heel to go back to the house, when he saw the steward hastening towards him.

"Well, what have you to tell me now?" the proprietor asked.

"The Tsar's decree has been published," answered the steward excitedly. "All the serfs are now free."

"So these reports I scoffed at are true after all?" Nicholas remarked gloomily.

"Yes, master, perfectly true. There is trouble everywhere. Agitators are advising the peasants not to do any more work."

"Then how are they to live?" asked Nicholas. "If they will not work there will be no food for them."

"That is true, master. Matters must be fully explained to them. I have here a copy of the *Moscow Gazette*, in which the Tsar's decree has been published. Shall I read it to you?"

"Yes, do," Nicholas assented. He went towards a chair which had been placed for him in a shady part of the veranda and sat down. Then the steward, leaning against the wall, opened the newspaper and began to read.

Half an hour later Nicholas Ivanovitch saw a score of his serfs drawing near. Ivan, the agitator, walked in front with deaf Paul and Maria.

Then Nicholas remembered with pain the arrangement to sell a portion of his land with serfs, including three children of the old couple.

"What is to be done now regarding Paul's family and the others?" he asked the steward.

"They cannot be sold," was the answer.

"Well, perhaps it is better so. I am not sorry. Some change had to come, and now the Tsar has done more than I ever sought to do. But where will money be found? Tell me that."

"Rents will have to be paid, master," the steward answered. "Think of that. You may have less trouble about money in the future."

"So you say. But don't tell me there will be less trouble. When the well is disturbed mud rises, and takes a long time to settle down. I do not like the look of these serfs. See how high Ivan Ivanovitch holds his head! The insolent dog! He has not forgotten the last flogging he received for stealing."

For the first time in his life Nicholas felt nervous in the sight of his people. Often and often had he sat there to receive them of an evening, addressing them as "my children ", and listening to their complaints and appeals. Now they were coming with hostile hearts, perhaps to assault him. He was no coward, and did not fear on his own account. So long as they did not attack his wife, or burn his house, he cared little what they might say, whether in folly or wrath. He eyed them in silence until they came to a stand about half a dozen yards in front of him. Then speaking very calmly he said: "You have come earlier than usual, children. Well, what do you want of me?"

Ivan Ivanovitch was taken by surprise, and his jaw dropped. He was expecting a scolding, and came ready to pour out abuse.

"What is it, Maria, that you wish to say?" the proprietor asked softly, observing that the old woman's face twitched with emotion.

Maria crouched on her knees, stretching out her hands appealingly: "Is it true, O master," she cried, "that you are to sell my children? Do not answer 'yes', or my heart will break."

A flush suffused the proprietor's face. "I shall speak regarding this matter to your husband," said he; "let him wait behind the others."

Ivan Ivanovitch then found his voice. "Well you know," he said passionately, "that Paul is as deaf as a door-post and cannot hear half you say. Why not answer Maria now in presence of her friends?"

"Yes, yes; answer here and now," broke in half a dozen voices.

Nicholas felt that his power over the peasants was slipping away. He clutched the arms of the chair and stared coldly until their eyes fell. Then he added, "Have you all come here to speak on behalf of Paul and Maria?"

A murmur of general assent reached his ears.

"You blockheads!" he exclaimed angrily. "What do you mean? It is no affair of yours."

"Besides," interjected the steward, "there is no need now"

"Silence!" the proprietor commanded, wheeling about. "Your turn to speak has not yet come."

Nicholas fixed his eyes next on Ivan Ivanovitch. "It is not because Maria has a sore heart that you have led a rabble to my house. Her lamentations are nothing to you. Why have you come here, you son of insolence, at this time of day? Are you not afraid?"

"The Tsar has set us free," Ivan answered boldly, with defiance in his eyes.

"So you have heard that?" Nicholas answered with a sneer. "Well, others have heard it before you. Young people who are able to read knew of this many days ago. Being free, they wish to leave the homes of their fathers and go elsewhere."

"But you cannot sell the children of Maria and Paul," persisted Ivan.

"I could have sold you all with my land long since," Nicholas fumed; "but I did not do so because you were faithful and industrious. Now you begin to rebel against me. What am I to do with you? If I cannot sell you, I can send you all away to find new masters. Is that your wish, Ivan Ivanovitch?"

The peasant hung his head. He had not expected such an answer, and knew not what to say.

Then the steward spoke: "Shall I explain to them how matters stand now?" he asked the proprietor.

"As you will," Nicholas answered. "Let them hear the worst."

"Listen to me, good people," the steward said, "and I will explain to you what the Tsar's decree signifies. Do not be deceived by ignorant men, who seek to stir up dispeace among you. These 'bawlers' (gorlopany) are self-seekers, who wish to profit themselves at your expense. There are changes coming. You will be left more to your own free will, but you will have greater obligations laid on your shoulders. If famine comes, you will have no claim for food on our master. If you gather firewood, you must pay for it with money. If you graze cattle, you must pay rent for the fields. If your cows die, you must suffer the loss yourselves and not come to our master to ask for calves from his own stock. You will be paid for the work you do, but out of your wages you must pay for all you eat, and for wool to make garments, and for timber to repair your houses. Those who are lazy will receive no work to do, they will have to wander through the country as beggars. Withal, you will have to pay taxes as well as rents. Do not imagine that the great Tsar, who is above us all, desires that you should rise up against your master. As Nicholas

Ivanovitch is your master, so is the Tsar the master of Nicholas Ivanovitch, and will protect him if needs be."

"But we are all free," Ivan exclaimed, endeavouring to rouse the spirits of the others, for the steward's speech had struck consternation into their hearts. "Long live the Tsar!"

"You are all free, indeed," the steward agreed. "You are now free to lay down the old burdens, but you must shoulder the new. Such is the will of the Tsar. Long live the Tsar!"

Silence fell upon them all. Then deaf Paul stood forward and spoke. "Nicholas Ivanovitch Gogol," he began, "I have heard nothing of what has been said. But seeing that all lips are now motionless, it would seem my turn has come. I have been your faithful servant. I served your father before you, and pray that my children may grow up to serve your children. Servants must be faithful to their masters. Such is the will of God and the Tsar's decree." He paused for a moment and wiped his brow. "What things are now being told to me?" he went on. "My wife says you desire to sell my children. I answer her saying, 'What foolishness is this? None of my kin was ever sold. We have all grown up here on our master's estate like the trees of the forest; we are part of it. Nicholas Ivanovitch Gogol will do as his ancestors did. I shall go to him and say, Tell us there is no truth in these rumours, O master, that the hearts of your servants may be comforted'."

Nicholas smiled and nodded, and Maria began to weep copiously, kneeling on the ground beside her husband.

Paul mopped his brow again. "Others have spoken in different manner," he resumed. "They have told me it is the Tsar's will that we should no longer work for our master. 'This is mere foolishness,' I have answered. 'If we do not work, how can we obtain food and clothing and houses to shelter us from the cold? God sent us naked into the world, and left our parents to cherish us and give to us according to our needs. We grow up to fight against cold and hunger and wickedness.' I have thought it all over in my own mind, talking

to myself constantly, for I hear but little of the words of others, To those who perform their work faithfully comes sure reward. They overcome all that is evil. How, then, could the Tsar say, 'My children, you need not work any more'? The Tsar is wise and just. God has placed him over the people and their masters. We are all members of his family. He would not say, 'Work not,' knowing that if we became idlers, we should die of hunger and cold."

Nicholas rose and went towards old Paul. "Your words are true wisdom," he called in his ear. "So long as you live, you shall neither hunger nor thirst, nor have need of clothing."

"Master, master!" exclaimed Maria, "what of my children? Must they be sold? Oh! rather would I suffer any hardship than lose my dear ones."

Nicholas raised her up. "Do not weep, Maria," he said softly. "The Tsar has spoken, and we must all obey. If it is your children's desire that they should remain with you, well, let them remain. Such is my will."

The woman flung her arms round her husband's neck and cried, "May God prosper Nicholas Ivanovitch! He will not sell our children."

"Said I not so?" Paul exclaimed. "Long live Nicholas Ivanovitch!"

"Long live the Tsar!" called Ivan in a hoarse voice.

"Long live the Tsar!" Nicholas repeated. "We shall all obey the will of the Tsar." Then the peasants crowded round the proprietor, saying: "Do not send us away, O master. Let us live as we have lived before. It pleases us to work for you. No matter what others may do, we shall serve you faithfully and well."

The heart of Nicholas was deeply moved. "You are all my children," he said. "So let us continue to live together as our fathers have done before us, doing God's will and honouring the Tsar. But let that be as

you wish. I cannot compel you to remain. Those who hate me in secret should now leave me. All are free. Let those who desire to go, speed their departure, so that there may be no dispeace amongst us."

He glanced round, and his eyes fell upon Ivan Ivanovitch and three others, who stood apart whispering one to another.

"As for you, Ivan," he exclaimed, "I bear you no ill-will. But I bid you begone. Take with you also all those who follow you. Be their master, and use them well."

Ivan shrank away. His influence as an agitator had come to an end, and he knew it. None followed him. All the peasants remained with Nicholas Ivanovitch Gogol, whom they loved and trusted.

It was well that Nicholas had won the confidence of the people, for several months went past before the new arrangements were carried out, and the Peace Arbiters began their work of settling the differences that had arisen between the proprietors and the peasants. Nicholas Ivanovitch experienced no trouble. The rural serfs who remained with him became his tenants, and among these none prospered more than the sons of deaf Paul and Maria, who received their shares of land, for which they paid annual rents. New Courts were set up, and the authority exercised by the proprietor as governor of the people passed to the village Assembly, which was elected every three years. The first chairman, or "village elder", who was chosen by the tenants of Nicholas was deaf Paul, who ever dealt justly with all men, and won the respect of proprietor and peasant alike. He never ceased to counsel the people to be industrious and upright, so that "they might be pleasing in the sight of God and man".

When the first three years went past, the Assembly wished to re-elect him, but he answered: "I have begun the good work, and served my term. Now let a younger man take my place."

So they elected Peter, who did his utmost to walk in the footsteps of his father.

Footnotes

1 Serfdom was abolished in Russia by a manifesto of Tsar Alexander II, in 1861. It had prevailed at one time all over Europe.