

THE COURT OF RUSSIA
IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY



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THE COURT OF RUSSIA IN THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A RUSSIAN WILD FLOWER

ROUND ABOUT ARMENIA

IN THE TRACK OF THE RUSSIAN FAMINE



THE EMPRESS DOWAGER MARIE FEODOROVNA, WIDOW OF THE
EMPEROR PAUL

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY KLAUBER OF A PAINTING BY KÜGEICHEN

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THE COURT OF RUSSIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

E. A. BRAYLEY HODGETTS

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

ONE of the objects of the present work is to make the English reader a little more tolerant of that vast Empire of Russia which it was once the fashion to abuse.

The Russian character is far from perfect, and the fiendish ingenuity with which certain miscalled statesmen have aroused the dormant passions and cruelty of the populace and directed them towards a peaceable and industrious section of the population, has naturally aroused the justifiable indignation of the English-speaking world.

To assume, however, that the Russian people delight in pogroms and carnage, and to confuse the disreputable hooligans of certain cities with the bulk of the nation, is to do that nation a grievous wrong.

If these pages will help to make the reader understand and appreciate the difficulties of Russia, the honest attempts of the Emperors to introduce reforms and promote the welfare of the people, and the various forces which have acted and reacted upon the progress of the country during the last century, the author will have achieved another of his objects.

His main object, however, has been to produce a readable book, which may help to while away a few idle hours, and perhaps occasionally afford entertainment.

To have attempted in two modest volumes an exhaustive history of the Court life of Russia during the last century would have been futile.

Historical events have been referred to, but not dwelt on. Bald descriptions of pageants and Court ceremonies have been avoided. An honest endeavour has, however, been made to present to the reader the Emperors of Russia with all their faults, but without ignoring their great qualities, in their habit as they lived. The attitude adopted has been one of rigid and dispassionate impartiality. Here and there impressionist sketches of the background, and of the men and women who played secondary parts, have been added. Every author quoted has been allowed to speak for himself. A great number of works have been consulted, but it has not been thought necessary to append a portentous list of authorities.

E. A. B. H.

LONDON, 1908

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INTRODUCTION

UNLESS there is formed in the mind's eye a clear and definite picture of the conditions of Russian society and the life of the Russian Court in the eighteenth century a just idea of that Court during the succeeding century is impossible. No drawing or painting, however careful and artistically excellent in detail, can convey a truthful and accurate impression without perspective. It is the want of perspective which makes the beautiful works of art of Japan often so incomprehensible to us ; and, unless drawn in perspective, the great Russian Emperors will appear either as monsters of wickedness or paragons of virtue, according to the colouring of our spectacles. In truth, however, these Emperors, to whom Russia owes so much, were really neither the one nor the other, but simply human beings with human imperfections and human passions, noble aspirations and qualities, and great abilities. If they were not all gold, they had at least no bad alloy in their composition. Little more than two hundred years ago Russia was to all intents and purposes—although no self-respecting Russian would allow us to say so—nothing more nor less than an Oriental Despotism. Peter the Great was perhaps not so great a magician as historians have made him out to be, nevertheless it was he who “ westernised ” Russia,

and first made Europe to feel very plainly that his country was a force to be reckoned with, and a new factor in politics. Two hundred years have elapsed, and to-day we are only just beginning to get reconciled to the existence of this new factor, and learning to treat it as an ordinary political phenomenon, neither abnormal nor cataclysmal.

Peter the Great having pulled up Russian society by the roots, having dug out all her time-honoured institutions as though they were so many weeds, and having so shaken up his subjects that they were actually unable to say whether they were standing on their heads or their heels—whether they were facing East or West—incontinently died, leaving his vast and much-enlarged empire in some considerable confusion. Whatever may be said of Peter I., nobody can pretend that he was a latitudinarian or a time-server. His watchword was Thorough, and he had no such word as “compromise” in his dictionary. Those who were not with him were against him. He was no fanatic, he did not consider himself a tyrant, but he was in a desperate hurry, and had no time to await the slow process of historical evolution. He crashed through opposition like a motor-car through a hencoop, and instead of arguing with his opponents he cut off their heads. He thus anticipated by a hundred years the methods of the French Revolution.

But although he was a revolutionary, an Imperial Nihilist, destroying the traditions of the past so effectually that they could never be restored, he was also a carpenter and builder, a constructor of something new to take the place of the old. No jerry-builder, indeed, to run up an

imposing edifice of lath and plaster which the first violent storm might blow down ; but then, on the other hand, no architect either, just a plain carpenter and builder, with little or no artistic feeling for the fitness of things, the possible requirements of the future, but a very strong, practical sense of his own wants. Like the Duke of Wellington, he felt that " the government of the country must be carried on," and, as he found ready to his hand in France and Prussia an excellent system of government, he imported it bodily into Russia. He did not trouble his brains to find means of adaptation, he did not even, in the majority of cases, trouble to translate into Russian the titles of his new officials. He simply dumped the bureaucratic system of Prussia, which was really copied by Frederick I. from France, upon his own country, and adapted his countrymen to it, very much as the famous Procrustes adapted his captives to his bed ; and then he died.

Thus when we said that he left his country in considerable confusion, we did not mean to say that he left it without a system of government. No, he created and handed down to posterity the tchinovnik and the bureaucratic system. On paper Peter I. had, according to the manner of reformers, drawn up a perfect scheme of government which was logical, practical, infallible, like all paper schemes, but which would not work satisfactorily in practice, because it was always getting out of order. No system of government can possibly work satisfactorily for long unless it possesses within itself the necessary self-adjustive, compensating gear which will enable it to right itself when its parts go wrong or break down. How

this is to be applied without free institutions has not yet, we fear, been discovered.

And so Peter I., having taken care to make anything like a reaction impossible, left behind him an alien system which was foreign to the genius of his people, and was but ill-adapted to their circumstances. The religion of his country, the marriage customs and the morality of his people, he undermined if he did not destroy. The native aristocracy, who, it must be conceded, had never been very powerful, he reduced to a state of impotence, and he intrusted all power to the officials he had himself appointed, who were for the most part foreigners.

Impatient of forms and restrictions of all kinds, whether religious, moral, or social, Peter lived a thoroughly unconventional life, and although he made several successful attempts to introduce the etiquette of European Courts into his capital, his own residence, planted on a misty swamp and alien soil, resembled more a gipsy encampment, or the cave of a bandit chief, than the residence of a mighty potentate.

For more than a generation after the death of Russia's first Emperor the country was governed by foreign adventurers, who pandered to the passions and vices of their rulers, and enriched themselves at the expense of the unfortunate people.

The history of Russia in the first half of the eighteenth century is melancholy reading. All classes of the people groaned under the misgovernment of the favourites of the various Empresses who succeeded each other. Whether they were called Catherine I., Anne, or Elizabeth mattered little—the reigns of Peter II. and Ivan VI. were too short

to be worth taking into account. The manners and customs of the Court were so grossly licentious that they make the times of the English Restoration and the French Regency appear respectable by comparison. The foreigners, who were the real rulers of the country, still further perfected the bureaucratic system which Peter the Great had introduced, and forged it into a chain with which to keep the people in bondage. Whilst a few wealthy nobles and high officials were living lives of Gargantuan self-indulgence in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and squandering money right and left, the bulk of the population were in a state of abject poverty, the serfs of so-called country gentlemen, whose condition was scarcely more enviable than that of the peasants; moreover, pestilence and famine stalked in the land. The country gentleman's life was indeed unenviable. His position was anomalous. Unless he formed part of the bureaucratic system, and had his place at some link in the official chain, he had neither position, nor influence, nor duties, nor rights. Even his person was not sacred; his only safeguard against extortion and persecution was his distance from the supreme government. His life was empty in the extreme, all interests were denied him. No feudal traditions assigned him his proper duties and privileges, no local assemblies were tolerated. Nor was his economic position brilliant, although his power over his serfs was practically unlimited and his estates formed in the majority of cases a self-contained kingdom from which he derived nearly all his requirements without the aid of the extraneous world; those requirements were, on the average, however, extremely limited and primitive. Von Wiesen gives an

interesting picture of the life of the Russian country gentleman in the eighteenth century in his amusing comedy, *The Minor*.

It was among such surroundings that the Empress Catherine II., justly surnamed the Great, burst like a radiant sun upon the Russian Court, and illumined the social and political firmament. In order to understand the character and difficulties of the Emperors of Russia of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to obtain a precise impression of the significance of Catherine II., and the influences by which she was affected and which she transmitted. Perhaps no historical personage has been more unjustly treated, for she has suffered equally at the hands of her admirers and her detractors. She has been depicted as a monster of sensuality, as a vain and foolish tyrant who ascended the throne through a crime, and maintained herself on it by a succession of further crimes, whose reign was one catalogue of perfidy, aggression, cruelty, and immorality so gross that it could only be described in secret memoirs printed in the French language. If it be a crime to murder an individual, how much more criminal must it not be to destroy the life of a nation and efface its identity? Of this crime also Catherine has been accused, although her accomplices, Joseph II. (the Good) of Austria and Frederick II. (the Great) of Prussia have not suffered in reputation in consequence. Moreover, while Austria and Prussia have very nearly succeeded in absorbing their Polish subjects, in Russia the national spirit of the Polish people has so far successfully resisted destruction.

Of course, no impartial student would venture to array

the figure of Catherine the Great in the robes of her patron saint; no one could honestly hold her up as an example for wives and mothers to follow. But to single her out from amongst all the historical personages of her time as the most abandoned, to make her the type of feminine profligacy and moral degradation, is not merely an injustice, it is far more, it implies a distorted vision, an unbalanced mind, and even a perversion of the truth. As Sir Horace Rumbold truly says, "her extraordinary page in history has yet to be fairly and worthily written, and above all rescued from the compilers of more or less spurious memoirs, who have made it their own and defaced it."

In the February of 1744 there arrived in St. Petersburg a poor German Princess, the Princess of Zerbst, accompanied by her fourteen-year-old daughter. Even the object of their visit was disguised, and it was given out that the Princess had undertaken this long and arduous journey for the sole purpose of thanking the Empress Elizabeth for her kindness to the House of Holstein. At that early period already the poor little child, who was described as extraordinarily precocious, was the subject of intrigues and plots. The future Semiramis of the North was woefully snubbed by her mother, and nearly lost her life in her anxiety to master quickly the difficult Russian language. She used to get up in the middle of the night to study, and walked about barefooted whilst learning her lessons by heart. She caught a violent cold, and hovered between life and death for three weeks. During her illness she was nursed by the tender-hearted Elizabeth, with whom she had speedily ingratiated herself; she was

bled sixteen times, according to the barbarous fashion of the day, and made her appearance at Court on her fifteenth birthday, "long and lean," as she is alleged to have described herself, "as thin as a skeleton, deadly pale and minus a good deal of my hair." Three months later she was betrothed to Elizabeth's nephew and heir, the grandson of Peter the Great, Carl Peter Ulric, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, who was to become Peter III. This puny descendant of a giant race now fell ill with smallpox, the ravages of which made his face still less attractive than before. In Catherine's reputed diary she is made to say that "he had become frightful." During the following year, and for reasons of state, his life being considered precarious, he was married to this girl of fifteen, himself her senior by but one year. Had this little boy with the pock-marked face been intelligent or affectionate he might have succeeded in winning the love of his child-wife. Unfortunately he was neither the one nor the other, moreover he was vicious in the extreme, a hopeless drunkard at that early age already, the inconstant admirer of ugly and ill-mannered women, with an intellect so clouded as to be on the verge of madness, and manners and ways incredibly disgusting. He was in the habit of going to bed booted and spurred, and there is reason to believe that during the entire period of his married life he never had a bath. He seems to have preferred the company of his dogs to that of his wife, and is said to have made them share his room and his bed. The only characteristic which he would appear to have inherited from his grandfather was a violent temper, which manifested itself in a proneness to inflict corporal chastisement on his surround-

ings, his unfortunate wife included. This peculiarity he transmitted to his son Paul, who so strongly resembled his father in intelligence and disposition that there can be little doubt about his parentage. At first, indeed, his wife and partner seems to have nobly striven to be a dutiful and affectionate helpmate; but everything was against her. The tone of the Court she lived in was the reverse of edifying. The Empress Elizabeth, a woman of much natural kindness of heart, was frankly a voluptuary. She was self-indulgent without illusions, extravagant without refinement, more like a dragoon than a woman. The Empress Anne had been worse. The social atmosphere in which the Russian Court lived was one of licentious grossness.

Married to a repulsive youth who neglected and ill-treated her, surrounded by profligacy and vice, and exposed to every temptation, what wonder that the young and inexperienced Princess, whose beauty was as striking as her mind was brilliant, should, after years of wretchedness, succumb to the importunities of the accomplished and fascinating Polish nobleman who was her first lover? It has been even hinted that, from dynastic considerations, the old Empress Elizabeth actually encouraged her nephew's wife to form a *liaison* by the aid of which it was hoped the succession would be still further assured. The subsequent history of Catherine's affections is full of excitement and variety, but in her case, at least, the aberrations of her heart were inspired by a poetic imagination and a tender sentimentality. She clothed her heroes in the garb of romance, and invested them with every noble, intellectual and moral attribute. Her lovers were statesmen and

soldiers, poets and men of culture. Moreover, they were Russians, nor should we omit to take into consideration the fact that she was more faithful to them than they were to her, and that in the majority of cases her reluctant separation from them was forced upon her by their own inconstancy. Her predecessors on the Russian throne had shown but little taste for loftier pursuits, but Catherine early displayed all the talents and tastes of a truly refined and feminine, as well as an imperial, nature. She became a patroness of the arts, and surrounded herself with men of light and leading, cultivating relations with the intellectual giants of Western Europe. Moreover, she manifested in all her relations a tenderness of disposition which, in those days especially, reflected the greatest credit on her heart. A Russian writer says: "Catherine did not revenge herself on her enemies and their adherents, she turned away from them with dignity and forgot their existence." Her reign abounds in instances of womanly forgiveness and gentle kindness. Under her rule Russia received the rudimentary forms of institutions; she created municipalities and fostered trade, she gave a solidarity to the nobility by forming local assemblies of nobles under elected Marshals of Nobility, and she promoted education. To her Russia owes an institution of which she may well be proud, and which speaks volumes for the humanity of the great Empress. We refer to the Foundling Hospitals which are maintained out of the revenues accruing from the tax on playing-cards, and where no invidious distinctions are made; nor do the faults of the parents debar the children from admission, as is the case in less charitable if more civilised countries.

This woman, whose frailties owed their origin to a deeply affectionate nature to which all legitimate outlets had been denied, rather than to any innate depravity, and whose kindness of heart and freedom from hatred and malice are the best proofs of the sweetness of her disposition, has been grossly slandered and maligned by a sort of literary hired assassin in the person of Masson, who, after eating the bread of Catherine as a tutor in her family, allowed himself to be employed by Napoleon to write secret Memoirs about the Court of Russia, and who seems to have retailed every extravagant scurrility as gospel truth. To read the pages of this remarkable work one would think that Napoleon must have been an epitome of all the virtues, his Court the purest conceivable, and the state of morality in France at that time one of Paradisaic innocence. It is perhaps a sufficient answer to say that a collection of the scandals of the Court of the First Empire would contain far more extraordinary revelations, and that a detailed history of the morals of French society in the eighteenth century would probably be even more staggering than anything to be found in Masson. After all, those were strange times, and even our own literature will show that England itself was not as virtuous in those days as good and wise people could have wished. But many of the stories told of Catherine are repugnant to common sense, they are in contradiction to the known traits of her character, and deserve as little serious attention, to say nothing of credence, as the slanders repeated in every country about every exalted personage without regard to truth or probability by the brood of sycophants, tale-bearers, and mischief-makers from which

no system of government and no state of society has hitherto been exempt.

That the Empress Catherine was no paragon of virtue it would be futile to deny, but that she was the monster of depravity she is made out to be in these Memoirs is not borne out by credible contemporary writers. Let us refer, for instance, to Mr. Childe-Pemberton's delightful memoir of the *Baroness de Bode*, wherein he rather resents the tone of praise and admiration in which that eminently respectable and virtuous English matron refers to the Empress; for he has also read his Masson, and strives to correct the favourable impression received by the baroness, by extracts from that gossipmonger introduced as footnotes.

If the Empress Catherine was really so depraved as she has been represented, it is somewhat curious that her grandchildren, whose education she had herself undertaken, with a view to counteracting any vicious tendencies of their grandfather which might have been transmitted to them by their father, should have turned out as well as they did. The standard of morality among Emperors cannot be said to have ever been very high in former centuries, but the brothers Alexander and Nicholas, although not free from human failings, were neither profligates nor debauchees.

The wisdom of Catherine in keeping the education of her grandchildren in her own hands was speedily justified on the accession of Paul, the snub-nosed tyrant who founded a regiment of snub-nosed grenadiers, whose noses and peaked mitre-shaped shakoes pointed to Heaven at the same angle. This act alone would justify a verdict of

insanity. We will not relate in detail the numerous tales recorded of this monarch's eccentricities, his official political actions will suffice to demonstrate the weakness of his judgment.

We have endeavoured in the preceding pages to give the reader a hasty sketch of the kind of inheritance Alexander I. came into when the violent death of his father was announced to him. It is not too much to say that the Empress Catherine had been the only bright spot on the firmament of Russian history for something like a hundred years. It was she who placed the crown on the edifice which Peter the Great had so hurriedly commenced. She had improved the condition of the country, enlarged its frontiers, increased its wealth, and consolidated its institutions. She had stimulated learning, encouraged the arts and sciences, and she had gathered round her men of light and leading who were able to transmit her traditions to her successors. But she can hardly be credited with improving the morals or softening the manners of her time. These were coarse and rude, especially in the provinces, where the civilising light of her reign had not yet penetrated; although even in this direction she laboured earnestly. She invited French and German emigrants,—the ones to refine the manners of her people, the others to cultivate the soil of her country,—and she encouraged them to settle in various parts of her dominions.

Nevertheless the government of the country continued to be corrupt, the people were oppressed by venal officials, and although crimes of violence were few, morality was rather an abstract counsel of perfection than a practical rule of conduct. Commercial honesty was as rare as

virtue, and law and justice were expressions which were subject to the most various and arbitrary interpretation.

The moment Paul came to the throne he set himself the task of undoing whatever his mother had accomplished. Fortunately his feeble mind, half insane and half idiotic, was little capable of grasping general ideas and carrying out in detail theoretical conceptions. He contented himself with eccentricities, and if he neglected the best interests of his country abstained at least from doing it serious injury. In those days the rulers of Russia had few problems to face, if they were mercifully devoid of imagination. The bulk of the population were serfs, the property of country gentlemen. There were no public works, communication was provided by a bountiful Providence in the shape of frozen snow tracks in winter and rivers in summer. A few roads were in existence, but beyond these there was very little to trouble about. The country was administered by officials whose pay was small, but whose opportunities were great. With the exception of St. Petersburg and Moscow, Kieff and Kazan, there were few towns. There were no interests and no questions. People lived dull, unintellectual lives, with the fear of the extortioner always before them, often with narrow means and no interests outside the indulgence of those appetites with which nature has provided the human animal. People ate and drank and slept, got married and died. The Empress Catherine made reading fashionable, but this fashion did not bear fruit until many years later.

In contradistinction to this monotonous existence, life at Court was a round of gaiety. Masked balls succeeded each other; there were fêtes, processions, in which wild

beasts from every quarter of the globe figured. There were banquets and suppers, private theatricals, public theatres, balls and gala receptions, sledge-parties and skating parties, illuminations and fireworks. And in all this the greatest magnificence was observed. The extravagance of men like Potemkin, for instance, passed into a proverb. The Court showed the way, there were services of gold plate, and unbridled luxury. Although everything had to be brought by sledge from Europe, in exchange, as the poet Pushkin said, for wood and tallow, there was no detail of European epicureanism, whether in food, drink, clothing, or appurtenances, which did not find its way to the capital of the Northern Semiramis. Amidst all this splendour and luxury manners were still somewhat primitive. It was possible to chastise a lady in the presence of her husband. Personal cleanliness was scarcely understood. Social amenities were insecure, and nobody was safe from the wrath of those in power. Biren, the favourite of the Empress Anne, used to flog his enemies in his stables, and Anne herself celebrated the mock nuptials of a male and female dwarf in an ice palace on the Neva, in which the unfortunate pair had to spend the night; and even the Empress Catherine kept a Court jester to the last.

In those days the great nobles learned Russian as a modern Highland gentleman might learn Gaelic or a foreign language. French was spoken at Court, and all the posts requiring brains were filled by foreigners. There were Scottish doctors and admirals, French and German adventurers, and favourites from every part of the world. Peter the Great even had a negro whom he promoted to high office, and who was the ancestor of a Russian poet. In

those days there were sumptuary laws, and the rank of a nobleman was proclaimed by the number of horses to his equipage.

Owing no doubt to the fact that Russia was ruled principally by Empresses during the eighteenth century, women played a great part at the Russian Court, and during the reign of the Empress Catherine II. they acquired a dignity and importance which left its mark on the country, and their influence has continued down to the close of the reign of Alexander II. That influence, although here and there abused, was on the whole benign, and made for culture and liberal ideas. Women had salons, at which the utmost freedom of opinion was tolerated; they had coteries, and they were the leaders of society, and directed and stimulated the thoughts and activities of the men. Unfortunately they often had little self-restraint, and in aping the manners of France, they did not eschew the vices, whilst emulating the accomplishments, of the great ladies of the old régime.

THE COURT OF RUSSIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

PART I

ALEXANDER I

CHAPTER I

CONTEMPORARY SKETCHES

ALEXANDER I., the eldest son of the Emperor Paul, was born in 1777.¹ The Empress Catherine, who personally took the most active interest in his upbringing, intrusted his education to Nicholas Soltykoff

¹ It is commonly believed in Russia to this day that Paul was the son of Soltykoff. This very improbable legend is based on suggestions contained in the famous *Memoirs of the Empress Catherine*, supposed to have been written by herself and edited by Alexander Herzen. The history of these *Memoirs* is, however, little calculated to inspire confidence in their authenticity. The story goes that they were contained in a sealed packet which was handed to Paul a few hours after his mother's death. He is supposed to have lent them later to Prince Kurakin, who, with the characteristic astuteness of a Russian diplomatist, made a copy of them, so it is said, before returning the MS. to his Imperial master. Kurakin's copy was believed to have been frequently recopied, and so the *Memoirs* enjoyed a sort of secret circulation until Nicholas I. ordered all copies to be confiscated by the police, whilst the original, sealed with the State seal, was deposited in the Imperial archives. One of these confiscated copies fell into Herzen's hands and was published by him, he having obtained it, according to his own account, from Arsenieff, the tutor of the heir-apparent. Comment seems needless. Granting the existence of the *Memoirs*, the chances that Herzen's copy was an unadulterated version are remote.

and La Harpe. It must be assumed that the blood of the Romanoffs coursed in his veins, but it was present in infinitesimal proportions, as the reader may judge from the following genealogical retrospect. Peter the Great's second wife, Catherine I., was a German; her daughter by Peter, Anna, married Charles Frederick, Duke of Holstein-Gottorp, also a German; the offspring of that union, Peter III., married a Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, who became Catherine the Great; Paul, Peter's only son by that marriage, had two wives, both German, and Alexander I. was the son of the second of these, Maria of Würtemberg. The poet Pushkin used to say that the amount of Russian blood possessed by the Emperors of Russia was a negligible quantity, and he would illustrate his statement by a parable. He would fill a wine-glass with claret and water in equal proportions, then he would pour out half its contents and refill it with water, repeating the process as many times as there had been generations in the Russian Imperial family, until the colour of the liquid in the glass resembled that of pure water.

At the early age of fifteen Alexander was married by the Empress Catherine, who, though frail herself, watched over the morals of her grandson, to Princess Louisa of Baden, a child of but fourteen years old at the time, who took the name of Elizabeth on being baptized into the Greek Church. She was brought to Russia with her sister, under escort of Countess Shouvaloff, who was specially deputed by Catherine to bring them over for the Grand Duke Alexander to select from; their mother, the Hereditary Princess of Baden, having unpleasant recollections of her visit to the Russian Court for a similar purpose. This visit of their mother, a Princess of Hesse and daughter of Caroline, is humorously recorded in a work by Frances Gerard entitled, *A Grand Duchess, the Life of*

Anna Amalia, Duchess of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, where the journey of the great Landgräfin Caroline of Hesse-Darmstadt to Russia is thus described : “ One of the last acts of the great Landgräfin was her journey to Russia, accompanied by her three daughters, one of whom was to be the chosen bride of the heir to the empire. . . . The Landgräfin travelled with great pomp, having a large suite. A curious incident happened on the journey. One night she was roused out of her sleep by the sudden opening of the door of the *berline* in which she was travelling, and saw a number of faces regarding her curiously by the light of several lanterns. Their disappointment when they saw her wrinkled face amused her, as did their turning their lanterns on the Princesses, and their exclamation : ‘ Ah ! that one in the left-hand corner, she is the one for us ! ’ ”

A fleet of three frigates was sent to convoy the royal ladies to St. Petersburg, and General Rehbinder handed them an autograph letter from Catherine couched in affectionate language. The Princesses were lodged, curiously enough, in the palace of Count Orloff, who told them on their arrival that a lady was waiting anxiously to see them. This proved to be the Empress herself. The words of the mob who had examined them on their journey turned out to be prophetic, and the Princess who had occupied the left-hand corner of the *berline* became the chosen bride of Paul. One of these Princesses subsequently married Duke Karl August of Weimar, and the same writer, in describing her, pays indirectly a high compliment to the Court of St. Petersburg, of which Masson has spread so many scandals. We are told :

“ She had spent two or three years in Russia with her sister, the wife of the Grand Duke Paul, and there she had been trained in the observance of the strictest etiquette,

and had been taught to keep all those beneath a certain rank at a distance, as not worthy of her friendship and notice. Any breach of decorum, any want of respect, she resented as [an offence; and likewise any lack of dignity in those who were in high position. This stiff, quiet, regular, and cold-blooded formality was totally opposed to Karl August's free and easy mode of life; and as a natural consequence their marriage, especially in the early years, was unhappy."

To return to the grand-ducal couple. When the Baroness de Bode visited the northern capital in 1794, Alexander being about sixteen, she was able to say that his wife, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, a beautiful and amiable Princess, virtuous amid surroundings of universal corruption, was the only German Princess out of many ill-fated ones who was happily married into the Imperial family. It seems that the Empress Catherine had the profoundest admiration for her granddaughter, and treated her with genuine affection.

Already at that early age Alexander displayed the kindness and amiability of disposition which endeared him to all who came in contact with him. He took the greatest interest in the Baroness de Bode, who says feelingly: "Perhaps if I had not had the great protection I had, and the condescension of the young Grand Duke, my petition had not pierced through the very thick wall that separates us." In 1797 she writes: "The Grand Duke Alexander and the Grande Duchesse Elizabeth have been so kind as to send me wherewith to pay Clem's (her son's) journey down, and to bring all my family back here. They are charming, generous souls." The accession of Alexander to the throne draws from her the following rhapsody: "The great event which has happened here lately of Alexander the First mounting the throne has

filled every heart with joy. He and his angelic Empress are perfectly adored (they were respectively twenty-four and twenty-three). 'Tis an enthusiasm difficult to describe—I suppose the most beautiful couple in the world,—hearts made to reign and render a great empire happy. Their first days were employed to comfort and to soften the misfortunes of the afflicted rendered miserable in the last unhappy reign. Every class soon felt the effects of this serenity, and the happy days of the great Catherine appear again."

This tribute of the Baroness de Bode, whose judgment may have been obscured by gratitude, is confirmed by a French writer, who in speaking of Alexander I. says: "His words and manners reflect the goodness of his heart, his desire to be loved by others, and a true love of humanity. Without fuss or pretension he accustomed his nobles by example to simple tastes, and was a model of elegance and amiability."

The following graphic pen-picture is by the Countess de Choiseul-Gouffier :

"The Emperor Alexander was thirty-five at that time (1812), but looked much younger. The beauty of his face, in spite of his regular and finely chiselled features and the freshness of his complexion, was less striking, at the first glance, than the kindly expression which won all hearts and instantly inspired confidence. His figure, noble, tall, majestic, which was apt to assume an elegant and slightly drooping attitude, reminding one of a Greek statue, was inclined to be stout, but he was remarkably well made. His eyes, the colour of the cloudless sky, were animated and intelligent; he was rather short-sighted, but had a smile in his eyes, if such an expression may be used, full of benevolence and goodness. His nose was straight and beautifully outlined, his mouth small and

pleasant, his contour and profile strongly resembled his august and handsome mother. His bald forehead gave his face an air of frankness and brightness. His golden hair seemed destined for the triple wreath of laurel, myrtle, and olive, and suggested a cameo or a medal. In his voice and manner there were infinite variations. When he addressed persons of distinction he spoke with great dignity, but affably; with members of his own suite he spoke good-naturedly and almost bluntly; towards elderly ladies he was respectful, towards young ones his grace and charm of manner were boundless, he was gentle and his eyes full of expression. In his youth his hearing had suffered from the roar of artillery fire, for which reason he was all through life rather hard of hearing on his left, and bent his right side forward when listening to anybody. What was curious was that the Emperor could hear better when there was a loud noise going on round him." She added that no single painter had done him justice, and that he hated to have his portrait painted.

Armfeldt says that when Alexander went to Poland he turned the heads of all the Polish ladies.

The Countess von Voss, Mistress of the Household of the Queen of Prussia, thus describes him: "The Emperor spoke to me in a most engaging and amiable way. He is a handsome man, fair, with a very striking countenance; but his figure is not good, or rather he does not hold himself well. His character seems to be gentle and humane; at any rate, he is particularly courteous and pleasant."

Another writer describes him as "of majestic figure and noble countenance, though his features were not perfectly regular." He seems to have made a conquest of Countess von Voss. Here are some extracts from her



THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER I

FROM AN ENGRAVING BY HUDLET AND MORRISON OF A PAINTING BY KRÜGER

diary : " At supper I sat next to the Emperor ; he makes himself particularly pleasant to me, and I must say that he is really very agreeable and has a most winning manner." On another occasion " the Emperor was most gracious and amiable, and drank my health in a particularly kind manner. He is the most charming man one can imagine, and besides he is thoroughly and entirely honourable in his views and opinions. The poor man is quite dazzled and enchanted with the Queen (Queen Louisa)! After dinner he gave me a pair of very fine diamond earrings, and Countess Moltke a pearl necklace. I thanked him for his great kindness and favour."

About a year later she says : " The Emperor is really exactly the same as formerly, unchanged in manner, in expression, and in cordiality, only perhaps a little more artificial, and rather more occupied with the young ladies. But he is very gentle and agreeable."

And here is the old lady's comment on the Emperor's attitude towards Prussia in those dark and difficult days : " He has really performed impossibilities for us, and proved himself most faithful."

Another picture of him is presented by Napoleon, who seems to have failed to appreciate the refinement and culture of the quixotic autocrat. He admitted that Alexander had abilities, grace, information, and fascination, but declared that he was not to be trusted. " He is a true Greek," he says, " of the Lower Empire ; he is, or pretends to be, a metaphysician ; his faults are those of his education, or of his preceptor. What discussions have I not had with him ! He maintained that hereditary right was an abuse, and I had to expend all my eloquence and logic during a full hour to prove that hereditary right maintains the tranquillity and happiness of nations. Perhaps he wished to mystify me ; for he is cunning, false,

and skilful." For sheer impudence and vulgarity this would take a lot of beating.

Thiers is perhaps more judicial when he says of Alexander: "There might be discerned in him traces of hereditary infirmity. His mind, lively, changeable, and susceptible, was continually impressed with the most contrary ideas. But this remarkable Prince was not always led away by momentary impulses; he united with his extensive and versatile comprehension a profound secretiveness which baffled the closest observation. He was well-meaning and a dissembler at the same time." This would make him out a sort of benevolent Machiavelli!

The most cruel description of his character, because the most polished and courteous satire, is that of the French Ambassador, Vicomte de la Ferronaye, who writes in 1823, towards the latter years of Alexander's reign: "It becomes every day more and more difficult to comprehend the character of the Emperor. I do not believe it possible that any man can talk the language of honesty and sincerity better than himself; a conversation with him always leaves a favourable impression; you quit him persuaded that here is a Prince who unites to the finest qualities of the gentleman all those of a great sovereign, of a man of profound experience, gifted with the greatest energy. He reasons wonderfully well; he urges his argument home; he explains himself with eloquence, and with the warmth of one who is earnest and sincere. Well! after all this, experience, the events of his life, what I see every day, warn you not to rely too much upon him. Multiplied instances of acts of weakness prove to you that the energy he throws into his words does not exist in his character. . . . The Emperor is excessively suspicious—a proof of weakness; and this is a misfortune so much the greater as this Prince is, to the full extent

of the word (at least I believe so), the most honest man I know. He will perhaps often do wrong, but it is ever his desire to do right."

It would perhaps be difficult to confer higher praise than is conveyed in the last sentence, but the object of the writer is obviously anything but complimentary.

We must conclude these appreciations of Alexander's character with the following story. Alexander is reported to have told a Protestant clergyman that when he found that his Ministers were divided in opinion at a Council meeting, and saw no chance of reconciling them, he would pray, and he noticed that the more fervently he prayed the greater was the resultant concord. This was absolutely characteristic of the man, and throws a flood of light on the psychological problem which he presented to those who did not understand him.

The real secret of the character of Alexander I. lies, as we shall presently be able to prove, in his profound distrust of himself, not merely as to his meritoriousness but as to his mental and moral fitness. It is no exaggeration to say that Alexander I., in spite of occasional pardonable but transient attacks of vanity and self-esteem, was really and fundamentally the humblest man in his dominions, and the most pious.

In the first place, the Emperor was his own severest *censor mores* , and thoroughly dissatisfied with his own conduct and domestic relations. For beautiful and amiable as his consort was generally stated to be, he does not appear to have been a faithful husband. In Korff's official *Accession of Nicholas I.* , which was compiled by special command of Alexander II., Baron Korff being H.M. Secretary of State, we are told that Alexander I., in the summer of 1819, after a parade at Krasnoye Selo, dined with his brother, the Grand Duke Nicholas, and that

brother's wife, no other person being present. The Emperor expressed his delight with "the conjugal and parental happiness of the young couple,—*a happiness which he had never tasted himself, in consequence of a connection of a different kind* which he had formed in early youth; he added, at the same time, that the education which had been given both to himself and to his brother Constantine was far from being directed in such a manner as to render them capable of appreciating this kind of happiness, and that neither of them had any children which could with propriety be legally recognised."

In the same publication there is printed a letter, dated 10th May 1796, which we are assured was written by Alexander, then Grand Duke, and in his eighteenth year, to Kotchubey, Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, and one of his intimates. This letter is described by Baron Korff as being in all probability the first expressed indication of Alexander's intention to abdicate, and a "testimony of that elevated tone of thought and that tenderness of feeling which make the character of Alexander so poetical." In this letter the young Prince of barely eighteen years tells his correspondent that he is in no way contented with his lot. His position, he says, is much too brilliant for his character. He assures his friend that he would prefer a life of peace and tranquillity, and that the Court was no dwelling-place for him. Every time he had to attend a Court function he says he suffered, and he was disgusted at the meannesses to which people descended in order to obtain a distinction for which he would not have given three farthings. He pities himself for being compelled to associate with persons whom he would not tolerate as flunkeys, and who enjoyed the first positions. He feels that he is not made for the place he occupies, and still less for the one for which he is

destined, and which he has pledged himself to renounce in some manner or other. He then gives his reasons for his disinclination to ascend the throne. These are so logical and so remarkable (and, moreover, quite as applicable to present circumstances as to any other period) that we feel constrained to reproduce them word for word. It is impossible to conceive of a severer indictment of an autocratic form of government, and the statement gains in piquancy from the source from whence it emanates and the circumstances under which it was published. Alexander II. must have privately approved of the sentiments of his uncle, or he could never have caused them to be printed and circulated.

“Our affairs,” writes the Imperial philosopher to his intimate friend, who, be it remembered, was a man of sufficient importance to be intrusted with the Russian embassy in Turkey, “are in a state of incredible disorder; everybody robs right and left (*on pille de tous côtés*); all the departments suffer from maladministration; everywhere order would appear to have been banished, *and the Empire does nothing but increase its dominions*. How then can one man alone suffice to govern this country, and still less to correct its abuses? *This is absolutely impossible, not merely for a man of mediocre capacity, like myself*, but even for a genius, and my maxim has always been that it is better not to undertake a duty at all than to discharge it badly; it is in accordance with this maxim that I have formed the resolve to which I have referred above.” The Grand Duke concludes by saying that his wife, who had scarcely attained the mature age of seventeen, shared his views. Nor was this letter lightly written in a thoughtless moment. There is every reason to believe that it reproduced the serious and carefully considered opinions of its writer; for strict injunctions were given to the bearer

to destroy rather than not deliver it into the right hands. Moreover, the young Emperor, after he had ascended the blood-stained throne of his father, wrote in a similar strain to La Harpe, his tutor. "When Providence," he said, "shall have by its blessing enabled me to raise Russia to the degree of welfare which I desire, the first thing I shall do will be to cast aside the burthen of administration, and to retire into some quiet corner of Europe, where I may peacefully enjoy the happiness secured for my country." The absence of pose, or conceit and vain-gloriousness, from these letters leaves no room for doubting their sincerity. Saturated with the writings of Rousseau, whose false friends, Grimm and Diderot, were correspondents and agents of his grandmother, the young Alexander, when he succeeded his father, was animated with the sentiments of the *Contrat Social*, and, what is more extraordinary still, actually desired to carry them into practice. But his was not a robust character, as we have seen, and this amiable Prince mistrusted his own ability, and was consequently deficient in the courage of his opinions. He was misunderstood by his contemporaries, and it is to be feared that he too often succumbed to his surroundings. His moral fibre was insufficiently tough to resist the temptations with which he was assailed, or to rise superior to the mephitic moral atmosphere which was virtually the only heritage the eighteenth century had left to Russian society. Alexander I., although he stands self-confessed as wanting in faith in himself and his instruments, a veritable Hamlet on the throne, nevertheless honestly strove to benefit his country, and certainly left it in a better condition, from every point of view, than it was when he took over the rulership. It has been said that a benevolent despotism is the most ideal form of government. The failures and shortcomings of Alexander I., who was absolutely single-

hearted in his good intentions, constitute perhaps the best refutation of this theory. No perfect system of government is possible, because there are no perfect people either to govern or to be governed. The safest system would therefore appear to be one in which the various forces of society would be free to act and react upon each other, and thus mutually neutralise their various imperfections.

A German sentimentalist imbued with the ideas of French philosophy and culture, Alexander was misunderstood by his countrymen, and distrusted by foreign rulers and statesmen. Napoleon regarded him as a barbarian, whose European training and veneer of culture covered, though it did not conceal, his true nature. The other contemporary potentates and politicians were puzzled by the apparent contradictions of his character, and ascribed to astuteness and dissimulation the outpourings of a generous heart. Even his own subjects failed to understand him; the people almost deified him, made him their legendary hero, and accorded him a niche in their traditions, bestowing upon him a sort of popular canonisation. The leaders of Russian society, however, the great nobles and high functionaries, with a few exceptions, despised him. They had no sympathy with his ideals, and they would find no excuses for his slips and shortcomings. In intimate coteries people shrugged their shoulders, and touched their foreheads with their fingers when discussing him. But in his family circle he was always spoken of as "the angel."

CHAPTER II

RELATIONS WITH NAPOLEON

TO the industry of a distinguished Russian diplomatist, the late Serge Tatistcheff, who but recently filled the responsible post of Imperial Russian Financial Agent in London, we owe the complete and authentic history of the relations between Alexander I. and Napoleon which he was able to compile from the unpublished letters of these two remarkable personages. This work, which was written in French, appeared most opportunely in 1891, some months before the famous visit of the French fleet to Cronstadt, and is appropriately dedicated to Baron Mohrenheim, then Russian Ambassador to the French Republic. In view of the circumstances in which it was published, and the diplomatic situation of the day, it is not surprising that the animus of this extremely interesting work should betray, to say the least, a distinctly Anglophobe bias. This, however, does not in any way detract from its value, nor has the author's obvious desire to be agreeable to his French readers blinded him to the faults of their idol and hero. Indeed, in his preface he says: "An union between two States, however great their solidarity of interests and sentiments, can be truly lasting or beneficent on the one condition only of a perfect reciprocity of straightforwardness, loyalty, and good faith." We shall see how in this case the reciprocity, as the Irish plaintiff

in a breach of promise action pleaded, was all on one side.

In the previous chapter it was stated that one of the instructors of Alexander was La Harpe, a Swiss philosopher, who became a French subject, purchased some land in the neighbourhood of Paris, and spent his declining years in France. From this tutor Alexander imbibed, together with those liberal ideas and sentiments of humanity which did him so much honour, his ardent admiration for the French. No wonder, then, that on his ascending the throne he despatched a letter to General Bonaparte, in terms which made it possible for the latter to reply that if the Emperor shared the views of his father on the maritime balance of power and the freedom of the seas, he would desire to conclude, in the first instance, a treaty which would establish a peace between the two countries on a firm basis, and he would be prepared to draw even more closely the bonds of union between them for the tranquillity and happiness of their generation.

This language betrays at this early date already the spirit in which Napoleon approached the young Emperor. There can be no doubt that he had been well informed of the character and disposition of the philosophic Prince, and that he determined to make him his dupe. As we proceed to study the relations of the two men we are strengthened in our conviction.

The ardent and generous autocrat threw himself precipitately into the pit which his crafty contemporary had dug for him. We are told that Bonaparte sent his aide-de-camp Duroc on a mission of inquiry and exploration to St. Petersburg, and that, while the Russian statesmen received him with coolness, their master spoke to him *avec un abandon surprenant*. Meeting him one day during his constitutional, Alexander dismissed his suite and

drew Duroc into the secluded alleys of the summer garden, where he made him a confession of faith so romantic and so charming that the whole episode reads like a love incident in a novel. Russia and France should be united, all the difficulties in the way of a perfect community of interests existed but to be removed. He disposed of them one by one, as the impatient lover disposes of the prudential objections which are raised against the fulfilment of his wishes.

But while Alexander could thus throw off all reserve in his eagerness to secure the friendship of the French, he could write to his Minister in Paris in a strain which shows that this young man of twenty-four, sentimental and chivalrous though he might be, was neither weak nor timid. It is to be hoped that the following words were duly communicated to Bonaparte. Alexander says to Count Morkoff :

“ As I believe that true greatness, which should be the appanage of the throne, must be founded on justice and good faith, I am equally convinced that these should be accompanied by firmness, and all attempts on the rights of my people and of my crown, any failure to carry out the engagements entered into with the Empire which Providence has confided to my care, will place a limit to my moderation.”

This is not the language of a dissembler or a dreamer. Count Morkoff, however, appears to have but indifferently acquitted himself of the delicate mission with which he was charged. Indeed, it was Alexander's constant complaint that he had to work with inefficient instruments. Savary, writing several years later to Napoleon, reports a conversation with the Emperor of Russia in which he makes the latter say :

“ I have not even enough of what you in your country

call men to form a ministry ; moreover, I have found a thousand abuses to reform, and people in office who are unworthy of their positions. The reign of Catherine produced the germ of discontent which preoccupies me. The late Emperor did worse. Under these two reigns the crown domains were given up for spoliation to all those sordid people whom the events of those times have made celebrated. Under Paul three thousand peasants were given away as one bestows a diamond ring. I have declared myself forcibly against such methods of government. I give nothing to that kind of people ; besides, I wish to extricate the nation from the state of barbarism to which this traffic in human beings has reduced it. I will say more. If civilisation had made sufficient progress I would have abolished this slavery, though it should have cost me my head. This is the cause of the discontent. But they may do their worst, they will not succeed in changing me, and you shall hear talk of the dressing that I mean to give these gentlemen.”

In this category are included, we regret to say, the advocates of good relations with England. The clumsy methods of an English agent of the name of Wilson, who distributed a scurrilous pamphlet, in which Alexander was spared as little as Napoleon, naturally called down the indignation of the generous autocrat, who characterised as traitors all those who received copies of this unfortunate publication.

But we are advancing matters. Morkoff seems to have conceived a poor opinion of Bonaparte, whose boundless ambition he quickly discerned, whose immorality disgusted him, and whose designs towards Russia he more than suspected. It would appear that he made common cause with England, Austria, the Bourbons, the *émigrés*, in fact with all the First Consul's enemies, whilst he treated

Bonaparte himself alternately with hauteur and insolence. His conduct finally roused the First Consul's ire, the last straw being the behaviour of a man called Christine, who was an *émigré* in the pay of Morkoff, concerned in the publication of subversive pamphlets and accused of complicity in certain royalist plots. Bonaparte, whilst clapping him into prison, made Morkoff one of his famous public scenes. Alexander was justly indignant at the public insult, and hinted that in future governments would hesitate to send representatives to Paris, and he took a characteristic revenge. Noticing at a Sunday parade that the French Minister kept aloof, he said to him in a voice that all would hear: "Why do you not draw near, M. Hédoreville? You need not fear that I shall make you a scene like that which the First Consul made my Minister in Paris."

Morkoff begged to be relieved from his post at the same time that Bonaparte complained of his conduct, and Alexander recalled him after decorating him with the Order of St. Anne. Morkoff wore the insignia of this Order when taking leave of the First Consul. Reluctant to expose himself to fresh insults, Alexander appointed no successor to his Minister, but left M. d'Oubril, the councillor of the legation, chargé d'affaires. Relations grew more and more strained, until the murder of the Duc d'Enghien brought matters to a climax. D'Oubril was instructed to inform Talleyrand that the Emperor regarded this act as a manifest and gratuitous violation of the rights of man. This drew from Talleyrand the famous and insulting reply: "*La plainte que la Russie élève aujourd'hui conduit à demander si, lorsque l'Angleterre médita l'assassinat de Paul I^{er}, ou eut en connaissance que les auteurs du complot se trouvaient à une lieue des frontières, ou n'eut pas été empressé de les faire saisir . . . ?*" This innuendo

and veiled suggestion, if not of actual parricide, at least of connivance in his father's assassination, was too much for Alexander, all official relations were suspended, and the inevitable rupture took place; the next day Bonaparte was proclaimed Emperor of the French by the Senate.

At this juncture Count Vorontzoff, the aged Chancellor, retired to the country, and Prince Czartoryski, the Polish favourite of Alexander, and one of the four members of his unofficial Committee of Public Safety, became the Foreign Minister of Russia. This able statesman conceived the idea of taking from France her principal weapon and using it against her. France posed as the champion of the liberties of all nations. To deliver the countries she had conquered and subjected, and to restore to them their freedom and rights, would therefore be the best method of discrediting her, and would pave the way to rescuing France herself from the yoke of her tyrant and parvenu usurper. For this purpose an agreement between England and Russia would have to be previously arrived at; after the resultant successes achieved abroad, and the confidence inspired by the lofty and liberal sentiments of justice and benevolence which had been manifested, France would be informed that the war was not being waged against the people or the nation, but against her malignant ruler only. The French were to be invited, not compelled, to restore the Bourbons, if they so desired, subject, however, to the introduction of constitutional government. Moreover, the same policy was to be adopted towards every country in Europe. The Emperor Alexander was to appear as the political saviour of the civilised world, to give effect to the sacred rights of humanity, to establish law and order as a necessary consequence, and to watch over the institutions thus acquired in a spirit of wisdom and loving-kindness. But this was not all. After

thus placing on a basis of mutual confidence the allegiance of the nations to their governments, and making it impossible for the latter to seek anything but the greatest good of their subjects, it would be necessary to place their international relations on a secure basis, and form a league of peace, supported by courts of arbitration, and to prevent pretexts for conflicts by bestowing on all countries natural boundaries and establishing an equilibrium or balance of power.

Thus it will be seen how the Imperial visionary, for he was the life and soul of this new policy, foreshadowed the lines on which modern Europe is moving to-day. Nobody who impartially studies the details of Alexander's system can deny his right to claim the gratitude of mankind. But it is the misfortune of genius to be in advance of its times, and hence to be misunderstood by its contemporaries. The practical spirit of Pitt denuded the beautiful conceptions of Alexander, who was the mainspring and prime mover of this third coalition against Napoleon, of all their idealism, and even the great genius, against whom this coalition was directed, failed to appreciate the unselfishness of the youthful autocrat and philosopher, who was still under thirty. In his gross materialism the adventurous usurper ascribed to the power of English gold the noble sentiments of Alexander's Ministers. If he pretended an affection and admiration for the sympathetic character of their master, there is every reason to believe that these were inspired by fear rather than sympathy. The vastness of Russia and the absolute power of her ruler to dispose of millions of lives no doubt fired the imagination of Napoleon, but the courage of the Russian troops and the dangerous possibilities of Alexander's enmity appealed directly to his common sense. Besides, the principal object of his hatred was England, and he strained every

nerve to dissociate Russia from a coalition which he felt sure would collapse without her. To isolate England and direct against her all the resources at his disposal was his main desire. We shall see presently how easily he might have succeeded, and how it was his own insincerity, not to say dishonesty, which frustrated his designs, certainly not the superior ability of British statesmanship.

Unremitting in his efforts to win the friendship of the one imposing personage in the European political constellation of the time, Napoleon, although intoxicated with victory, did not lose his head, the defeat of Austria did not alter his attitude towards Russia. Notwithstanding the lukewarmness of his general, von Bennigsen, and the counsels of his brother, Constantine, Alexander, who had now espoused the cause of Prussia, refused to listen to Napoleon's overtures. The latter, who had "mopped up" the veteran and fossilised army of Frederick William III. in a single day, continued to manifest a desire for an alliance with Russia. In a letter to Talleyrand from the castle of Finkenstein he writes that there would be no peace in Europe until either France and Austria or France and Russia marched side by side; he omitted the other alternative which was successfully brought about in 1815.

It was while Alexander was at Tilsit with the King of Prussia that the news of the battle of Friedland convinced him of the necessity of suing for peace; which was further emphasised by the occupation of Koenigsberg. At last Alexander empowered Lieutenant-General Prince Lobanoff to open negotiations for the conclusion of a treaty. The famous interview at Tilsit was the result. At this meeting the unfortunate King of Prussia can hardly be said to have played a dignified part. While Alexander and Napoleon met on the historic raft in midstream, to which

they had been conveyed in boats from opposite banks, Frederick William III. awaited on horseback the return of his ally and friend. So exercised was he in his mind that he actually rode his horse into the river, and seemed to lean forward in his saddle as though trying to overhear the conversation on the raft, upon which so much depended ; but, of course, the distance made this quite impossible.

Napoleon says that Alexander's first words were : " I will be your second against England," whereupon he reports that he replied : " In that case all can be arranged, and peace is assured." We know how little the veracity of Napoleon can be trusted, especially in regard to statements of fact concerning which independent evidence is unobtainable, but we must bear in mind that Alexander had been told by Lord Gower, but a few days before, that England could not afford to pay Russia, Prussia, and Austria together a subsidy of more than £2,200,000 a year, which Tatistcheff describes as an insignificant sum. Perfidious Albion having left the allies in the lurch by this paltry offer, what more natural than that they should go over to the enemy and tender him their aid against so parsimonious a friend ? However this may be, there can be little doubt that both Russia and Prussia had been badly beaten, and that Austria was quite " knocked out of time." There was nothing for it but to do the best that could be done ; squeamishness was out of the question. However hard and unrelenting Napoleon showed himself to Prussia, his attitude towards Alexander was wisely generous.

The veteran Prince Kurakin, writing to the Empress-mother, thus describes the situation : " Abandoned or insufficiently supported by our allies, we had to bear the entire burden of a war which we could not possibly wage

without the efficient aid of England and Austria ; we were in need of money, provisions, and munitions of war ; our troops, after the losses they had sustained, could not be reinforced without denuding the population, nor could the raw recruits thus obtained replace the veterans we had offered up ; we were facing a victorious enemy three times as strong as ourselves, who had but to move one step forward to enter our Polish provinces, where the fire of revolt was smouldering and where the people were quite ready to receive him and rise against us." He assures his august correspondent that this was no exaggerated picture, and exclaims : " God has watched over Russia ! " His country would have to mourn the gallant lives sacrificed, but would not lose an inch of territory.

Alexander has been accused of deserting his friend and ally, the King of Prussia, but this allegation is not borne out by the facts. If it had not been for Russia the existence of Prussia as a separate State would have been wiped out. As it was, Alexander had the greatest difficulty in obtaining the terms he did for Frederick William III., for whom Napoleon seems to have conceived a lively contempt from the first. Moreover, the gratitude of the Prussian Court is the best proof of Alexander's fidelity.

The meeting between Napoleon and Alexander was made the most of by the former, who seized his opportunity to use all his magic and enchantments in order to captivate the latter. He seems to have been completely successful, and got Alexander to believe in him thoroughly. It passes the comprehension of the modern unsophisticated reader at this distance of time how it was possible for this short, fat, sallow-complexioned and bilious-eyed adventurer, who had not even ordinary good manners, to fascinate and captivate, when he chose, everybody with whom he came

in contact. He must have been possessed of a phenomenal personal magnetism, although, no doubt, his romantic career and brilliant achievements appealed even to the least impressionable imagination. Whatever the explanation, Napoleon, after defeating his armies, made a conquest of Alexander's heart. The Emperor of Russia thoroughly believed in the Emperor of the French, and trusted him. As time went on a process of gradual disillusionment commenced, which culminated in the fatal 1812. Napoleon would not keep his promises, his action in Poland could not but cause Alexander the gravest anxiety, and his general attitude on the Russian frontier was disquieting, to say the least. Alexander could never obtain a satisfactory explanation of his friend and ally's colossal armaments within easy distance of Russian territory. Surely, he thought, these troops would have been better employed in the invasion of England than in menacing his own borders.

The truth seems to be that Napoleon, never sincere himself, could not understand the exalted unselfishness of the autocratic altruist; and could not be brought to trust his noble professions. To a man of Napoleon's cast of mind, an Imperial Colonel Newcome, an absolute monarch animated by the sentiments of Rousseau, a subtle diplomatist and statesman who was yet a devout Christian, was an enigma that he could not solve. With the impatience characteristic of his southern blood, Napoleon did not try to solve it, but evaded the problem by jumping to the conclusion that Alexander was a more unprincipled humbug than he was himself. He seems to have thoroughly distrusted him, more, perhaps, for his loyalty to Prussia, which he must have thought cloaked some duplicity too subtle for him to penetrate, than for any other reason.

There can be no doubt that no common ground existed on which these two so widely different men could meet, and that from the first Napoleon must have both despised and suspected Alexander. To the Corsican intriguing spirit it therefore seemed sound policy to keep the Emperor of Russia in a state of constant wholesome fear, to weaken him at home by stirring up the Poles, for whom Napoleon could not have cherished very genuine sympathies, and to make him impotent in Europe by suggesting schemes of world conquest in the East, the partitioning of Turkey, the invasion of India *viâ* Persia, and similar chimerical projects, on which Alexander might even have been betrayed into embarking had Napoleon taken the trouble to endeavour to make him believe in his honesty, to say nothing of his sincerity. But Napoleon was incapable of acting straightforwardly and consistently for any consecutive period, however short; he could not even keep his pledged word, behaviour incomprehensible to a nature like that of Alexander, who, in spite of his analytical and introspective mind, was at heart singularly simple and unsophisticated.

Thus we see how Napoleon, by endeavouring to dupe and hoodwink the youthful enthusiast who was ready to make a friend of him, unwittingly prepared for himself his own downfall, and illustrated the truth of the adage that honesty is the best policy.

We are inclined to think that Tatistcheff takes a little too seriously the chagrin expressed by Napoleon at his failure to obtain the hand of one of Alexander's sisters, beautiful as they were. The Imperial parvenu would be much more flattered by an union with a descendant of the ancient House of Hapsburg, the last representatives of the Roman Emperors, than by a marriage with a sister of the ruler of what he regarded as a semi-Asiatic and

more than semi-barbarian Power. Nor is it conceivable that Alexander, who had been kept well informed of the tone of Napoleon's circle, should have been anxious to place a female member of his family, far less a sister, among such surroundings. With that tactful diplomacy of Courts, which is nearer akin to politeness than to duplicity, Alexander pleaded his father's will in limitation of his authority over his sisters, whose destinies were confided to the care of their mother. Catherine was quickly married off to the Duke of Oldenburg, and Anne was declared to be too young. Napoleon may perhaps be congratulated on his escape. The Grand Duchess, who later became the famous, or rather infamous, Queen of the Netherlands, and who was possessed of wit as well as extraordinary beauty, would have been a handful even for the masterful Napoleon, and, after all, the pink-and-white Dresden-china prettiness of Marie Louise, that relative of Marie Antoinette, was more calculated to inspire the affections and sentiments of a rude soldier, who was not disinclined to mistake stupidity for virtue, and had a profound contempt for feminine intelligence.

CHAPTER III

QUEEN LOUISA OF PRUSSIA

IN view of the scandals spread by Napoleon regarding the relations of Alexander and Queen Louisa, and the very important part this heroic and beautiful woman played in history, it may not be inappropriate to devote a few pages to this ornament of the nineteenth century, whose loss her husband never ceased to mourn. Even the hard and cynical Caroline Bauer, whom unkind treatment and bitter experience had made sceptical of the virtue of Princes, has testified to the devotion of Frederick William III. to the memory of his consort, about whom Napoleon was capable of writing in the following strains to Josephine :

“ The Queen of Prussia is really charming. She is full of coquetry for me, but don't be jealous of her. She would be too expensive to make love to ” (*Il m'en coûterait trop cher pour faire le galant*).

Tatistcheff describes her arrival at Tilsit at four in the afternoon at the headquarters of the King of Prussia, who had been weak enough to send for her. A quarter of an hour later Napoleon paid her his respects, and at eight o'clock she dined with him, and conversed with him during the entire evening. She returned to Pictupoenen at midnight. On the following day she returned to Tilsit, and again dined with Napoleon. Amiable as he had been the day before, he now appeared reserved, silent, and morose.

The Queen put forth all her fascinations in vain ; it was too late, the treaty with Russia had been signed, the fate of Prussia was sealed, and Queen Louisa left Tilsit in despair, without concealing from her host that she considered he had acted deceitfully, and had outraged her feelings.

Countess von Voss gives a graphic account of the meeting. She first describes Napoleon's visit of ceremony :

“ A quarter of an hour later came Napoleon. I received him with Countess Tauenzien at the foot of the staircase. He is excessively ugly, with a flat, swollen, sallow face ; he is very corpulent besides, short and entirely without figure ; his great round eyes roll gloomily about, the expression of his features is severe, he looks like the incarnation of fate. Only his mouth is well shaped, and his teeth are good also. He was extremely polite, talked to the Queen a long time alone, and then went away. Towards eight o'clock we went to him, as out of consideration for the Queen he had had dinner earlier than usual. At table he was in a very good humour, and talked a good deal to me. After dinner he had a long conversation with the Queen, who seemed also pretty well satisfied with the result. May God grant that it may do some good ! ”

The next day she writes :

“ At four we drove through the camp of the Cossacks, Kalmucks, and Bashibazouks (!), who look like Chinese, and the Cossacks sang very nicely to us. . . . When we alighted at the King's quarters we heard from him that Napoleon had already recalled everything that he had promised the Queen yesterday, and had even gone further in the rigour of his demands than he had done before his meeting with her. M. de Talleyrand is said to be the cause of this. Napoleon did not come to the Queen, although he twice drove past her house, and we went downstairs each time in vain, expecting that he would

come in. General Barbier came late to invite the Queen to dinner. We drove there immediately, and Barbier accompanied the Queen. Napoleon appeared confused, and at the same time looked malicious and spiteful. After dinner the Queen again conversed apart with Napoleon ; on taking leave, she said to him that she went away feeling deeply that he should have deceived her. My poor Queen is quite in despair ! Duroc was very sad ; she repeated to him what she had said to Napoleon at parting."

During this period old Tante Voss, as she was disrespectfully called in later years, speaks rather contemptuously of Alexander, of whom she writes that he " behaves with more than weakness ; it is painful to say so."

Yet Queen Louisa, who had gone through these bitter experiences, and felt that she had been deserted by her ally and cousin, Alexander, was brutally described by Napoleon as going to St. Petersburg to repay in kind the Emperor Alexander for his friendly aid. Apart from the extreme improbability of such an allegation, the fact that Alexander openly danced at a ball given by Count Strogonoff with a lady whom the Countess von Voss describes as his mistress would scarcely seem to bear it out. Moreover, Queen Louisa on the occasion of this visit seems to have been much more friendly with the ladies of the Court than with the Emperor, and to have besides been indisposed during the greater part of her stay. Indeed, the dear old Countess says on leaving St. Petersburg : " Never, never shall I forget St. Petersburg : how happy we were there, and how all truly overloaded us with kindness and love ! Oh ! it was a delightful charming time, had only my beloved Queen not been almost always suffering. This long journey, and the great fatigue of the continual festivities, were almost too much for her in her condition,

and I am afraid she tries herself beyond her strength. I am rather afraid of the return journey for her, as they say it is thawing everywhere."

This visit of the King and Queen of Prussia to the Court of St. Petersburg affords the Countess von Voss an opportunity of giving us peeps into the life of the Russian capital in those days which are certainly interesting. Here, for instance, is a description of St. Petersburg at the time :

"It is difficult to describe the beauty of this spot, the whole road and the charming country houses round about, and yet we could, of course, only guess at it all, on account of the deep snow which covered the country. Outside the gate we stopped for a moment at the house of a wealthy merchant to continue our road in the Imperial State carriages which were waiting for us here. In the first of these the Queen went with us two ladies. We drove between lines of forty-five thousand infantry soldiers, all tall and very handsome men. Before the palace only were stationed the Guards. The Emperor Alexander, with our King and the Grand Duke, rode step by step by the Queen's carriage, notwithstanding the really frightful cold. The Isaac Square with the statue of Peter the Great is superb, and the whole city as far as we could see wonderfully fine. The palaces are far more handsome and imposing than those in Berlin, but the streets are not. . . . I saw the beautiful Narishkin Palace, the Marble Palace, where the Grand Duke Constantine lives, and from a distance, rising above the Neva, the Michael-offski Palace, where the Emperor Paul was murdered, and also the fortress and church of Alexander Nevski, where the Emperors are buried. The houses all look like palaces, they are so handsome and stately, and so evenly built, and they are as clean as if they were only just finished.

The quays, the walks, everything is covered with deep, deep snow, and shines dazzlingly white in the sun."

The wonders of the Michaeloffski Palace are fully described by the Baroness de Bode, who visited it shortly after Paul's assassination. She says: "It is small, or perhaps appeared so to us, in comparison with the Winter Palace. It is indeed filled up with so much luxury that it strikes with the idea of a castle belonging to some fairy or giant. They say that without the furniture and fitting up it cost seven millions of roubles. Many of the rooms are hung with velvet and gold, and stuffs richly embroidered with gold. The chimney-pieces of lapis-lazuli, agaths, cornelians, and Siberian pebbles—magnificent."

The Countess von Voss goes on to say:

"We are lodged in the Winter Palace, where we were received by all the Court. The Empresses were waiting for their Majesties in the first room; the young Empress has something charmingly gentle about her, but unfortunately her complexion and colouring are very bad. The old Empress is very well preserved; the Emperor presented to the Queen the two Grand Duchesses, who are really charming. In the evening we had theatricals at the Hermitage Palace. The dinner was at five o'clock and the royalties dined by themselves, and I at the second table. . . ." The next day she writes: "The Empress's apartments are furnished with incredible magnificence, and yet in perfect good taste; one does not know what to admire most. The whole Imperial family is amiable beyond expression. The Russian ladies, though very proud in reality, are very obliging in manner, and their cordiality to me is especially charming. After dinner we visited the Grand Duchess; the Grand Duchess Catherine is very attractive; she is to marry the Duke of Oldenburg, who is not handsome, but seems to be an estimable

man" (as indeed he was). "The younger Grand Duchess is handsome and graceful; she is destined to the Duke of Coburg, but is not to be married for two years." (This Princess became Queen of the Netherlands.) "The young Empress has something charmingly gentle and soft about her manner, and it is both touching and melancholy to see her unfortunate passion for the Emperor, her husband, who is not worthy of it." Of the Empress-mother the Countess says that she has "really great merit in every respect, but she is very fond of talking, and always wants to be first everywhere and in everything. The young Empress is too unfortunate; one can but pity her with one's whole heart."

The visit to St. Petersburg seems to have been one round of gaiety, but the poor old Countess von Voss complains that there were so many people to visit and so many duties to perform that she had to trot about like an unfortunate post-horse. Indeed, the fatigue must have been great. Here, for instance, is an account of a day: "Countess Lieven came to me early with the Empress-mother's tailor, who was to measure me for the Russian dress which she is going to give me. At one o'clock I went to the Queen; all the officers were presented to her, then all those who had received decorations in the campaign, and many ladies, by Princess Volkonski, while the Emperor himself presented all the gentlemen. It was really an immense presentation, and lasted more than two hours. At two o'clock a great dinner at the Queen's. She already had on her Russian dress of blue velvet. In the evening a State concert, which was pretty good, and afterwards a supper with the Queen again."

In the entry for the following day we are informed that the Countess Lieven was a woman of very good principles, and that the education of the Grand Duchess

did her "all honour," but that she was not made for society. "To-day the Empress-mother had a family dinner-party, to which only I was invited besides themselves. Everything was very good and handsome; afterwards two comic operettas at the theatre in the Hermitage." (This theatre, which adjoins the Winter Palace, is still in existence; in the days of Alexander III. the members of the Imperial family, stage-managed by the Grand Duke Constantine Constantinovitch, used to give private theatricals here.)

The Queen gave a dinner-party the next day at seven o'clock, having previously received the entire *corps diplomatique*. The dinner was followed by a ball "which was splendid, but a great crowd. I danced my two polonaises, one with the Emperor and one with the Grand Duke (Constantine), and then I made acquaintance with the ladies. The supper was at innumerable little tables; the whole thing was most magnificent." In the entry for the next day we read: "To-day was the Russian New Year's Eve, and also the eve of the young Grand Duchess's wedding. The Emperor with great kindness of manner gave me two Turkish shawls. In the evening the Empress had a small supper-party." The wedding of the Grand Duchess Catherine, which was the occasion for the visit, seems to have been a very magnificent affair. It took place in the palace chapel. "The bride and bridegroom stood on a platform covered with red velvet, with lighted tapers in their hands; the Grand Almoner in his episcopal robes performed the ceremony. . . . It was a beautiful and solemn service, and every one in the church remained standing during the whole performance. Then came the mass; and the Imperial family appear to me really pious and devout. We all wore the Russian full dress which the Emperor had given us. A great dinner

followed, with the household in waiting, and salutes from the guns. In the evening a great ball, which was magnificent and extremely elegant, but I was quite dead with fatigue."

On the morrow, at ten o'clock, an inhuman "Court of congratulations at the Grand Duchess Catherine's in trains; she received us, that is, Countess Moltke and me, before it began, in her bedroom, which was a great distinction and civility from her. A family dinner again at the Empress-mother's, and I was invited to it as usual. The Emperor appeared at dinner for a moment only, because Prince Gagarin's beautiful house was on fire, and he wanted to assist in extinguishing it; but unfortunately it could not be saved. In the evening there was a great performance at the opera, but I excused myself from it and remained at home." This refers to the 14th January; on the 15th she says: "I am always summoned to the Empress-mother in the mornings; if there is time when I come home I have visits to receive. . . . A family dinner with the Empress. In the evening the Empress-mother gave a grand ball in the white room. It was really wonderful. I again danced a polonaise with the Emperor, who always continues the same kindness and goodness to me." Here is another entry: "The Emperor and King are reviewing troops without end every day, though the cold is so great that it is hardly endurable. Dinner at the Hermitage. All the dinners and entertainments here are incredibly large and crowded; there were four hundred people at dinner to-day from the households of the different Courts alone. In the evening the tragedy of *Semiramis* was performed, and Mme Georges acted admirably."

Countess von Voss then describes the presents given by the Emperor on the 17th January,—the diamonds, snuff-

boxes, rings, and black fox furs, etc. This is followed by a description of the ceremony of the blessing of the waters on the Neva ; she says that the Emperor nearly died of the cold, but held out notwithstanding. There was a great concourse of people ; the priests were in their gorgeous vestments, and celebrated mass on the Neva. Then there is a déjeuner, followed by the inevitable " family dinner " and a performance at the theatre, when the *corps de ballet* danced Russian national dances between the acts. The fireworks at the Tauris Palace (where the Duma sits) seemed to have been very fine. The Countess says : " The fireworks went off with the rapidity of magic. A pigeon flew up suddenly from amongst their Majesties' suite and lighted there as if by enchantment. I never in my life saw anything so wonderful. The fusillade at the end was really magnificent from the innumerable quantity of Roman candles, crackers, and rockets sent up ; the whole lasted above an hour. There was a ball afterwards in an enormously large room, two versts long, in which 22,000 candles and 6000 lamps were burning to light the immense space, and it may be imagined what an imposing sight this brilliantly lighted room offered. Many polonaises were danced, and the entertainment lasted till past three o'clock. The Empress-mother (sensible woman) always plays her quiet rubber at these balls."

In another entry we read the pathetic lines : " The only drawback for us here is the cold, which is terrible, and is felt equally everywhere." And on a later date she says : " Everything is beautiful here, one must allow ; only, the late hours are very fatiguing and the cold is too dreadful."

On the occasion of the birthday of the Empress Elizabeth there was a fancy-dress ball without masks at the Winter

Palace, 16,000 people being present. "I think this was the prettiest thing of the kind I ever saw, and in spite of the immense crowd of people there was remarkable order kept. The Queen and the two Empresses appeared in the Russian national dress; every room in the whole palace was used for dancing; their Majesties' supper was served in the theatre of the Hermitage wing; everything was extraordinarily splendid and brilliant."

These were grand doings, and when the royal party finally had to go we find that the good old Countess was reluctant to depart. She exclaims: "To-day, alas! was the day of departure from this beautiful place, and I have enough to do in bidding good-bye to everybody and taking leave of the Empresses and all the household."

She describes how the Queen drove off in a State carriage in which sat, besides herself and the Countess, the Empress Elizabeth and the Princess of Baden, and how they were met at Strelno by the Emperor and the King. It all gives one a graphic picture of the Court life of St. Petersburg, and the relations between the reigning families of Russia and Prussia; these were the relations of kinship and not of gallantry, and the ties of family relationship were drawn closer by the marriage of the Grand Duke Nicholas with Princess Charlotte of Prussia, who took the name of Alexandra on entering the Russian Church.

Countess von Voss, who is perhaps a partial witness, but who never hesitated to express her disapproval of "goings-on," as we have seen, tells us that Louisa as Crown Princess had a beautiful figure, that her appearance was both dignified and charming, and that everybody who saw her felt irresistibly drawn and attached to her. The young couple arranged their Court very simply, and led a happy home-life. It seems that Prince Louis Ferdinand, who was rather a reprobate, made very fierce

love to her, but without success, for "the Crown Prince was a true friend to his wife, and that from the first; strict and blameless himself in all his conduct, and with serious religious feelings, he was a firm support to her young mind, and never treated her otherwise than with the deepest respect and love. . . . To the Crown Prince alone is due the merit of having, in the moment of danger when foreign influences threatened to come between him and her, preserved her from them by his fidelity, his truth, and steadfastness. . . . The Princess with loving caution followed closely her husband's guidance, . . . and now there began for her, by the side of the best of husbands, as contented and happy a life of home affections and love as can possibly be imagined. The better one learnt to know the Princess, the more was one struck with the perfect nobility and purity of her nature and the angelic goodness of her heart. Above all, the deepest and most heartfelt sense of religion pervaded her whole being. . . ."

That her married life was a happy one there is abundant evidence to show. She was the most domesticated of women, who, in Prussia's darkest hour, showed her countrywomen an example of heroic frugality and self-abnegation which is still the subject of tales and legends. She was a devoted mother, and an inspiring moral force in the country over which she was Queen, but Napoleon could neither have understood nor appreciated her. It is repugnant to one's better nature to assume that the chivalrous Alexander should have been incapable of a pure and respectful friendship, especially when we remember the terms on which he was with the King of Prussia, for whom he seems to have conceived a deep and genuine friendship. The semi-mystic oath of fidelity which these two monarchs swore to each other over the tomb of Frederick the Great at midnight, in Queen Louisa's presence, was sacredly

kept to the end by Alexander, and even adhered to by Nicholas and his son Alexander II., in their attitude towards Prussia. Prince Czartoryski, the intimate friend of Alexander I., records in his *Memoirs* the scrupulous care with which the Emperor adopted precautions at Memel to prevent his being led into dangerous temptations which he wished to avoid. This Prince, about whose Polish patriotism there can be no doubt, and who had therefore little reason to love Prussia, is more concerned to emphasise the coldness of Alexander than the virtue of Louisa. He talks of "the Platonic coquetry between the Emperor of Russia and the Queen of Prussia—a sort of connection which was especially pleasing to Alexander, and to which he was always ready to sacrifice much time," and adds, "it very seldom happened that the virtue of the ladies to whom Alexander paid his attentions was really in danger." He tells us that the Queen was always accompanied by her favourite sister, who eventually became Queen of Hanover, "who was thoroughly informed of her sister's secret thoughts, and would have been of her secret actions if there had been any"; leaving us to infer that this sister, "about whom there was much scandalous gossip," had no secrets from the Prince.

CHAPTER IV

HOME AND FEMININE INFLUENCES

DOROTHEA SOPHIA AUGUSTA LOUISA OF WÜRTEMBERG, the second wife of Paul, and the mother of his children, who took the name of Maria Feodorovna on being christened into the Orthodox Church, was an extremely handsome, able, and ambitious woman, who succeeded in retaining, as long as his mind bore some semblance of sanity, the questionable affections of her irascible spouse. The care of her children was, however, denied her, and these were invariably dragged away by the directions of Catherine, and much to their mother's indignation, to be trained and educated according to the extraordinary notions of that eccentric but enlightened ruler. Alexander's education, of which Schilder gives a minute account, seems to have been the reverse of strict. La Harpe had not sole charge, but was merely engaged to teach the future Emperor of Russia literature and liberal ideas. His tuition seems to have consisted largely in the inculcation of platitudes, and while he gave his pupil the most exalted views and imbued him with noble sentiments, he seems to have left their practical application in a vague and inchoate state, so that while the young Grand Duke was animated by the best intentions, he was entirely unprepared to carry them out, had no idea of the method to be adopted for governing his country by the light of these views, nor how to meet and overcome the opposition

that his policy of justice and mercy would be sure to awaken. This is indeed sufficiently obvious from Alexander's letter to Kotchubey which we have already quoted, and is particularly plainly indicated by Prince Czartoryski. General Soltykoff had charge of the future Emperor, while his religious training was intrusted to Samborski, a Russian priest who was married to an English lady, a Miss Fielding, and had lived in London. He was exceptionally enlightened, and even accused of latitudinarianism, especially in view of his dressing in secular garments ; there were also many other instructors. Of these, Protassoff was the most difficult to please and the most outspoken. The crusty Conservative seems to have conceived a wholesome dislike for the new-fangled foreign notions of La Harpe, whose ideas of equality were, in the opinion of this honest man, but little suited to the circumstances of a Russian autocrat. Whilst the Empress Catherine revelled in her darling grandson, and could find nothing but praise for his remarkable cleverness and diligence, his linguistic and mathematical skill—it is noteworthy that Alexander spoke English before he knew French—Protassoff's remarks are anything but flattering. He describes the young Grand Duke as lazy and inattentive, fond of play and amusement, with an aversion to work. Considering that Alexander was about thirteen at the time, it would have been inhuman if he had exhibited the studious qualities which the pedantic Protassoff evidently expected of him. Moreover, the good man was very much exercised by the pronounced "physical desire," as he puts it, which his charge soon manifested for the society of pretty women. A terrible fate awaited Alexander ; at an age when English boys are playing football and cricket, and expanding their budding energies in athletic sports, he was married to a very charming Princess, it is true, but one who was still

too much of a child to take over the duties and responsibilities of domesticity. It now became increasingly difficult to complete young Alexander's education. The Grand Duke appears to have been genuinely attached to the Princess whom he espoused, who took the name of Elizabeth, and he spoke of her as being especially destined by Providence to be his helpmate and his intellectual counterpart. Unfortunately the young couple were not left to their own happiness. A serpent was introduced into this Garden of Eden in the person of the Countess Shouvaloff, who did all she could to put the beautiful young Grand Duchess against her Imperial lord and master of sixteen. It is significant that Count Zuboff, the youthful favourite of the Empress Catherine, had conceived a passion for the young Princess. No scandal, however, attaches to her name. The severest reproach that can be levelled at her is that her coldness and austerity repelled the Grand Duke, who, while enjoying her intellectual society and admiring her noble and cultured mind, was, it must be assumed, we fear, prone to seek relaxation and amusement in quarters where his advances were less frigidly received. He also paid lengthy visits to his father, and was infected by the latter's fondness for the minutiae of military drill; thus devoting to the parade ground much time which should have been given to study. This tendency had, however, the advantage of making the future Emperor strong and sound.

When Alexander came to the throne he maintained his aggrieved mother—who never ceased to suspect him of complicity, to a certain extent, in the murder of his father—in the state to which she had been accustomed; but he did not increase the allowance and establishment of his consort, who had by this time come to regard him as hopeless, and though she continued secretly to cherish for

her husband an affection which he could neither understand nor value, she treated him outwardly with a coldness which she believed his faithlessness merited. The family life of the Autocrat of all the Russias was consequently as solitary as his position was exalted. Joyneville gives a most melancholy picture of the Court life of St. Petersburg at the time. St. Michael's Palace was abandoned, and the Empress-Dowager retired to the country château of Pavloffski with her younger children, and for some years afterwards refused to pass a night in St. Petersburg except on the anniversary of her husband's death. She was even suspected of stirring up a party against her son with the object of placing herself on the throne. Instead of arousing his indignation, her conduct called forth from the gentle Alexander nothing but the utmost kindness and consideration. In order to minister to her love of power he placed a number of public institutions under her charge and management ; and she jealously asserted her right to the sole guardianship of her younger children, in accordance with the will of Paul. He also left her all external tokens of Imperial power, and intruded his own before her as little as possible. His attendants were no more numerous than when he was Grand Duke, and the traditional state and etiquette was reserved for her Court, where he appeared like a submissive and respectful son, not as the sovereign ; in short, he neglected nothing that was calculated to contribute to her happiness. This devotion and thoughtfulness at last achieved its object, and Alexander was finally rewarded by regaining his mother's love. Nevertheless, even as late as 1816 she still cherished the hope that if anything happened to her son she might enforce her own pretensions to the succession, and she regarded Elizabeth as her chief rival.

Grimm says : " She showed herself daily in the city in

a carriage drawn by six horses, escorted by hussars and pages, and so punctually did she appear in the principal streets at the appointed hour, that the passers-by could set their watches according to her drives." The Empress-mother, according to this account, "rose betimes, and the early morning saw her seated in full dress at her writing-desk, occupied in reading all the reports of the numerous female institutions under her guidance, writing down remarks, and learning the wishes of the parents and the views of the teachers; nor did she disdain to read the letters of the pupils themselves. With the exception of her daily visits to these schools, there was little contact between the Empress and the city; members of the reigning family rarely attended the theatre, but when they did the public greeted their appearance as a festival, and received them standing, and with music. The evening Court receptions were genial and devoid of form, but small and select, and could exercise no influence on the social life of the city."

Schnitzler, in his *Histoire intime de la Russie*, paints a most pathetic picture of the Empress Elizabeth, who, according to him, was not only beautiful, but had a noble and well-proportioned figure. With pure and elegant manners she combined wit and talents, with tastes suited to her rank, and moreover a gentle disposition, full of sweetness and devotion. He cites Lagarde, who met her at the Congress of Vienna, and reported that her eyes reflected the purity of her mind. She had hair of the delicate tint which the French call *céndré*. She was elegant, her figure supple and flexible, and her gait characteristic and majestic. To a love of the fine arts she joined a boundless generosity, but took the greatest pains to conceal her good deeds. She was simple in her tastes, and hated ostentation. "What," asks Schnitzler, "did she lack in order to make happy so distinguished a Prince as her husband?"

He suggests that she was deficient in the light and lambent wit of which Alexander possessed so great a share, and had not the superficial brilliancy which was prized above all things in Russian society, where appearances too often usurped the place of merit. Besides, he ascribes to the early death of the two daughters, the only fruits of the marriage, the rupture of that community of interests which is engendered by paternity, and is more lasting than "the first effervescence of the affections." Schnitzler hints darkly at the interference of Catherine even in the most sacred mysteries of the marital relations, and Schilder rather suggests that the worldly grandmother separated the turtle-doves, and sent Alexander to join his father, and study under his surveillance the profession of arms as an antidote against a sickliness and delicacy of health which her grandson began to exhibit. In the coarse life of the camp Alexander regained strength and vigour, but these enforced separations are not conducive to constancy, and Schnitzler tells us that *le besoin d'aimer* led Alexander, who was born with strong passions, towards other women. As Chateaubriand said, "from his variable weaknesses there issued an attachment which lasted for eleven years." Secrecy lent a special charm to these relations, to which three children owed their feeble and transitory existence. Supplanted by a rival who equalled her in nothing but beauty, Elizabeth listened perhaps too exclusively to the dictates of her wounded pride, took no pains to regain Alexander's affections, but shut herself up with her grief. We are told that it was not unusual for her attendants to surprise her bathed in tears contemplating the portrait of "that Alexander who was so charming and so faithless." For whatever else may be said of her august consort at this time, he never treated her otherwise than with the greatest courtesy and consideration. It is to be feared



THE EMPRESS ELIZABETH, WIFE OF ALEXANDER I
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY TURNER OF A PAINTING BY MONIER

that the climate of St. Petersburg did not agree with this poor neglected, sensitive plant, her looks forsook her, she lost her complexion, her nose grew red, and she was even for months so chilled with the damp cold of St. Petersburg that her voice failed her, and she was practically speechless. Finally, she was seized with the strange idea that her love and favour, on whomsoever they were bestowed, invariably brought misfortune in their train. The small circle of her quiet and secluded life was composed principally of the venerable historian Karamsin—whose history, published at anything but a popular price, had such a success that 3000 copies were sold in a month, no bad result when the limited number of cultivated readers is taken into account ;—Miss Pitt, an English companion ; and Mlle Valouieff, a maid-of-honour and the member of a distinguished Russian family.

While the Empress thus pined away, Alexander was the acknowledged lover of the beautiful Mme Narishkin, a Pole by birth, whose husband was many years her senior. By her he had three children, of whom only one survived, Sophia, as beautiful as her mother. Unfortunately this girl, the idol of her father, was too delicate to stand the Russian climate, and Alexander had to yield to the urgent representations of the doctors, and suffer himself to be separated from her. The poor child, after getting engaged to be married, with her father's sanction, to a Russian officer, died of consumption before the ceremony, at the age of seventeen. The Emperor received the sad intelligence whilst he was reviewing his troops. He did not allow the sorrow and shock occasioned by the news to interfere with his military duties, but could not suppress the exclamation : " I am indeed punished for the error of my ways."

The relations with Mme Narishkin had long since been

broken off. This frail but talented and beautiful creature seems to have possessed every good quality except constancy; a truant wife, she was an equally faithless mistress, and Alexander now retained nothing but the memories of the ephemeral pleasures he had enjoyed in her society. Later he tried to warm the smouldering embers of his affections at the fires of the domestic hearths of private families, hoping to get some reflection of their happiness. At first he found some consolation for his sorrow in these innocent relations; too soon, however, he discovered that he exposed himself to subserviency and flattery from self-seekers and parasites, whilst honourable people, who scorned the sycophantic arts of the courtier, shunned the houses he frequented. Impelled by religion and a deep sense of contrition and gratitude—for Elizabeth in the kindness of her heart had sorrowed for him in his bereavement and shared his grief—he obtained a reconciliation with his wife, recognising at last her goodness and resignation. He now did all in his power to help her to forget the past and to atone for his faults. He found pleasure in her society, and it seemed as though peace and happiness were once more to lighten upon him. Unfortunately this second honeymoon was of short duration. The constitution of his consort had been already undermined. He thought she would regain her health and vigour on the shores of the Sea of Azov, and it was in a vain hope of effecting her thorough recovery that he went south, where he died. His wife did not survive him long.

We must now devote some space to the other members of Alexander's family. His eldest sister died at Pesth six days before her father. His second sister Helena, who revisited St. Petersburg in 1800, died of consumption at Ludwigslust in 1803. She is described as "a dazzling beauty." The Grand Duchess Mary was married against

her will to Charles Frederick of Saxe-Weimar, who, we are told by de Maistre, the Sardinian Ambassador, was "a little German corporal, as round as his boots, and with fewer subjects than his brother-in-law has grenadiers." Schiller wrote for her his famous *Die Huldigung der Künste*, and Goethe speaks of her in terms of frank admiration. An Englishman resident in Weimar describes her appearance at the theatre, and says: "I saw the wonder of the North and the object of every one's idolatry here. . . . All tongues are lavish of her praise; and indeed she seems to be really an extraordinary person." Like her brother, the Emperor, she was deaf.

Catherine and Anna were now the only two Grand Duchesses left in Russia. Catherine, on whose shoulders rests the serious responsibility of having introduced the poke-bonnet, was twelve years old when her brother ascended the throne. She was extremely lively, had literary tastes and a sparkling wit, but suffered from a nervous temperament. She had her father's brilliant black eyes, but otherwise strongly resembled her brother Alexander. She was her mother's constant companion, and when in 1809 she married the Duke of Oldenburg she stipulated that they should take up their residence in St. Petersburg. Anna, who became Queen of the Netherlands, was only six when her father died, and was still in the nursery with her brothers Nicholas and Michael, and under the care of Frau von Adlerberg, whose descendants have ever been attached to the Imperial family, Mme Lieven, and Count Lamsdorff, the founder of the family of which the late Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs was a scion.

The Grand Duchess Catherine preceded her brother on the occasion of his visit to London, and was introduced into English society by the Lievens, whose pronounced Whig sympathies and friendship with Earl Grey were not

without influence on the ardent and impressionable nature of the Grand Duchess; and it is recorded in the Russian State archives that she made greater friends with the Opposition than with the Tories, who were then in power, and succeeded in inducing her brother to share these sympathies, which displeased the Prince Regent. Lord Grey was received in audience by the Emperor at her instigation, and appears to have been considerably staggered by the Emperor's asking him for advice as to the best means of creating an opposition. The astonished Whig nobleman is reported by Metternich to have said to that reactionary statesman: "Does the Emperor think of introducing parliamentary government in Russia? Should he be determined to do so—and I shall be careful not to urge him on to it—he need not trouble about forming an opposition; he may rest assured that it will not fail him."

The Grand Duchess Catherine, who, after the death of her first husband, married the Hereditary Prince of Würtemberg and became Queen of that German State, appears to have been genuinely liked and most popular in English society, in spite of her Liberal predilections. In Russia she was a universal favourite, so much so that her name was even mentioned as the most suitable successor to her brother. There were rumours of plots to dethrone Alexander, set aside his brothers, and make the youthful Catherine Empress; but although these are referred to vaguely by Schilder, there seems to be little evidence of the existence of a serious conspiracy to that effect.

As we shall have occasion to deal at some length with the brothers of Alexander, we now propose to give some picture of the home life of the solitary Emperor, whose private morals, as we have seen, were not always in harmony with his noble aspirations.

Perhaps the best account of Alexander's private life is to be found in de Maistre, who states in his *Memoirs* that the Emperor's two ideas were peace and economy. "His expenses are fixed at so much for a term of four months. I know that virtues pushed to excess become faults, but—I cannot help admiring this wisdom in a young sovereign surrounded by all imaginary seductions. He has no suite. If he meets any one on the quay (the fashionable promenade at that time) they need not dismount; it is enough to salute. He wears neither ring nor a watch nor any ornament." Describing the Imperial fêtes, de Maistre, writing in 1816, says: "The Emperor invariably lays aside the sovereign at this sort of fêtes, and has the tone, the ease, and the manners of good society. He has 'the honour of being presented' to a lady; he begs to be 'excused,' etc.; he says 'Will you permit?' just like an ordinary man of the world. He is right, for he is a true gentleman, which is not so easy as some believe." In another place de Maistre speaks of the Emperor's "gracious bashfulness." On the other hand, it would seem, according to Schilder,—whose ponderous quarto tomes, replete with valuable data, but severely self-restrained as to any expression of personal opinion, have not yet been translated from the Russian,—that Alexander's deafness made him suspicious, and that his sensitive nature scented a sneer or an insult in the laughter of others whose conversation his infirmity had disabled him from hearing. This explains his love of solitude.

Joyneville quotes an anonymous Englishman writing from St. Petersburg in 1801 as to Alexander's daily life: "Every morning he works with his secretaries from six till ten, then he attends the daily parade, and holds a military levée till twelve. From that hour till two he walks about with the Empress; dinner is then served, and he generally

rises from table at three, and despatches business till five. From five till eight in the evening concerts are given, in which he sometimes takes a part himself. Supper is served a little after eight, and as soon as the clock strikes ten the officers in waiting withdraw, and Alexander retires."

Before his reign the sovereign of Russia dined at a table alone or with his family, but Alexander disliked to assume a place above the courtiers and ambassadors, and when he entertained the diplomatic corps at dinner he sat among them.

Prince Czartoryski's account of the meetings of the Secret Council of Public Safety, to which we shall have to refer in due course, confirms the above. "We were privileged," he tells us, "to dine with the Emperor without a previous invitation, and we used to meet two or three times a week. After coffee and a little conversation the Emperor used to retire, and while the other guests left the palace the four members of the Secret Council entered through a corridor into a little dressing-room, which was in direct communication with the private rooms of their Majesties, and there met the Emperor. Various plans of reform were debated; each member brought his ideas, and sometimes his work, and information which he had obtained as to what was passing in the existing administration, and the abuses which he had observed. The Emperor freely expressed his thoughts and sentiments, and although the discussions at these meetings for a long time had no practical result, no useful reform was tried or carried out during Alexander's reign which did not originate in them."

Alexander encouraged theatres in St. Petersburg, and even admitted the principal actors to his palace, thus showing his recognition of their art and vainly attempting to check, if it was impossible to suppress entirely, that curse of Russian society, the love of gambling, by sub-

stituting a more intellectual amusement. In this he failed, as in so many other of his endeavours; nor was he supported by the other members of his family, his mother especially being devoted to cards. To his taste for drawing and architecture Russia owes a number of its public buildings, and especially that spacious semi-classical style which is so characteristic. He neither hunted nor smoked nor took snuff, and owing to his increasing deafness he was unable in his later years to take pleasure in any musical instruments less potent in the production of sound than a full military band. One of his most favourite relaxations was to take long walks. Attired in plain clothes and without any attendant, he would often start for a vigorous tramp at noon, returning by two o'clock. A story is told of how on one occasion, being late, he hired a hackney sledge and had himself driven to the Imperial palace. On his arrival he found that he was without money. The driver failing to recognise him, refused to trust him, exclaiming: "Oh no! my officer, I have driven many young sparks like you. With them it is out of sight out of mind. I have been left in the lurch too often." The Emperor left his fur coat as a pledge with this cautious cabby, and then sent out his footman to redeem it with a ten-pound note as a compensation for the bad debts of the ingenuous sledge-driver. When the latter heard whom he had had the honour of driving he is said to have bolted as fast as he could, but tradition adds that the ten-pound note was carefully preserved and is handed down as an heirloom from generation to generation. The next morning at the levée the Emperor told the commanding officers who attended, that although their regiments were in a splendidly efficient state, "your subalterns have subjected me to the humiliation of being obliged to leave my cloak as a pledge with

a sledge-driver, who would not trust me, because he said my comrades often forgot to pay him."

During his latter years, M. Dupré de Saint-Maure says that Alexander lived the life of an anchorite on the throne. Among other things he gives a most interesting account of the Emperor's remarkable tidiness. "All the tables," he says, "and desks at which he writes are admirably neat; he could not tolerate the least untidiness, nor a particle of dust, nor the smallest piece of paper out of place. He dusted and replaced with his own hands any article he used. On every one of his desks were to be found a folded cambric handkerchief and ten clean quill pens."

The scheme of this work compels us to be somewhat desultory in our methods, but we propose to conclude this chapter by another extract. Baron Korff, in his *Accession of Nicholas I.*, a work published by special command of Alexander II., and compiled from official documents and data which were supplied by the Emperor Nicholas I. and his consort, unconsciously reveals the exceptional reverence with which, all historians agree in saying, the members of the Imperial family regarded Alexander I.

Describing the historical visit of the Emperor to Nicholas in the summer of 1819, when Alexander told him that he felt his vigour failing him, and that he must prepare to retire from duties which he was not strong enough adequately to fulfil, but that he had fixed on Nicholas as his successor, the narrative, which is taken from "an auto-graph contemporary memoir," by the consent of Nicholas, proceeds to describe how Alexander endeavoured "to encourage and tranquillise" his brother and sister-in-law, "with that angelic kindness and delicacy which distinguished him."

The following paragraph has the true ring of sincere

homage, and does not read as though it emanated from the pen of a diplomatic official: "The Prince, who in early youth had dreamed of a private life on the banks of the Rhine, had twice crossed that river with the laurel of victory and the olive-branch of peace, and had avenged the destruction of Moscow by the preservation of Paris. Russia was blazing with the glory of her monarch; kneeling Europe was proclaiming him her saviour, her earthly providence. But amidst the splendour of all this greatness, the loftiest that was ever attained by man, Alexander—however his vocation had been fulfilled—found no happiness upon his throne."

This adulation does not appear to have turned Alexander's head, for even when at the zenith of his glory, after the defeat of Napoleon, he recognised the mistakes made by his generals and himself, and ascribed his success entirely to Providence.

Schnitzler was able to say of him, that all his words and deeds were instinct with kindness and a love of humanity.

The Emperor Nicholas, his brother, stated that all the Imperial family in speaking of Alexander referred to him as "the angel," and Constantine told him that if he should carry out his idea of abdicating he (Constantine) would renounce the succession (which he subsequently did) and follow his brother into retirement in the capacity of valet, so that he might black his boots for him, which he said he could then do without incurring the risk of being called a sycophant (which indeed he was not).

After Alexander's demise the members of the Imperial family and of the inner circle of the Court received from his widow a small plaster cast of his bust bearing in gold letters the following inscription: "*Notre ange est au ciel.*"⁵¹

CHAPTER V

THE CÆSAREVITCH

ONE of the most remarkable figures in the entourage of Alexander I. was his brother Constantine, who retained the title of Cæsarevitch down to his death, although he had privately renounced the succession as early as 1819. Two years the Emperor's junior, he was born in the April of 1779, and appears, from a letter of the Empress Catherine to Grimm, to have been a somewhat frail and delicate child. He was christened Constantine in the hope that he would live to be King of Greece. Two years later Catherine said of him: "Let the Turks go where they list—the Greeks can be regenerated. Constantine is a good boy; thirty years hence he will go from Sebastopol to Constantinople." She thought that in partitioning Turkey, "bits" might be given to England, France, Germany, and Spain, and "the remnants," she added, would have to suffice for Constantine, who was only "*un cadet de la maison*," after all. Catherine's plan was to drive the Turks out of Europe, thus sanctioning by anticipation the "bag and baggage" policy of Mr. Gladstone, and to revive the Byzantine Empire for Constantine, who was to be brought up in the knowledge of his destiny, and with the distinct understanding that he should never succeed his brother on the Russian throne. We shall presently see how little this honest Prince was suited for the Machiavelian rôle thus cast for him.

True to her love of early marriages, Catherine united her second grandson, when he was yet little more than sixteen years of age, to Julia, a Princess of Saxe-Coburg, the Empress inviting to St. Petersburg the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg with her three daughters, one of whom Constantine was to select. So true is it that the Russian Imperial family at that time regarded, as it was said, the Courts of the various German sovereign Princes as stud farms for the raising of brood mares for Russian Emperors and Grand Dukes. The young Princess upon whom fell the questionable favour of Constantine's choice was fifteen; she took the name of Anne on being received into the Orthodox faith. The marriage was not blessed with children, and cannot be truthfully described as happy. Although the two boys had been educated together by their grandmother, who herself wrote the books from which they learned their early lessons, they developed quite differently; Constantine early manifesting a ruggedness, not to say uncouthness of character, which was in strange contrast to the sweetness of disposition and elegance of manner of his versatile brother. Even the letters of the two Princes to their grandmother exhibit this diversity at an early date. While Alexander is profusely demonstrative and affectionate, kissing his grandmother's feet even, Constantine's letters are terse and to the point, and are generally signed "Yours affectionately," *sans phrase*. Grown to an age which in those days was evidently regarded as one of manhood, the Grand Dukes were initiated in the mysteries of the military profession, and allowed to visit their father at Gatchina, where the days were spent in tormenting unfortunate Russian soldiers by teaching them the absurdities of the Prussian drill. Both Alexander and Constantine, who from their earliest youth, and notwithstanding their great

dissimilarity of temper, were, and remained to the last, the closest friends, at once displayed a great aptitude and fondness for what was then called the "paradomania" of Paul. Constantine developed into a stern martinet, but retained a kindness of heart and generosity of disposition which compensated, if it did not atone, for the fierce outbreaks of passion and wild gusts of temper to which he was subject. There are many stories of this kindness, and how he used to get his father to remit the terrible punishments to which the latter was in the habit of condemning his officers for the merest trifles. For instance, on one occasion, as his regiment of cuirassiers was riding into the riding-school, Paul gave the order for sections to wheel to the left instead of to the right, as usual. The leader of the last troop was outside the riding-school when the order was given, and did not hear it. Being unaware of any alteration in the usual routine, he wheeled his troop to the right. Paul was seized with one of his paroxysms of rage. He had the unfortunate officer pulled off his horse, his uniform was torn off his back, he was then and there degraded and turned out of the army, and further condemned to one hundred (some accounts say five hundred) blows with a stick. Constantine suppressed the corporal punishment and succeeded in getting the officer reinstated.

Of all Paul's children, Constantine resembled his father most. Physically he was certainly better developed, thanks to his grandmother's careful training, but mentally he was deplorably backward; and his face, although it bore a strange likeness to his handsome brother, was even more ugly than his father's. His turned-up nose looked like a pimple in the middle of his face, and had practically no connection with his forehead. His blue eyes were overshadowed by thick and heavy eyebrows, and fringed



THE GRAND-DUKE CONSTANTINE PAVLOVITCH
AFTER A WATER-COLOUR IN THE DASHKOFF COLLECTION

by long white lashes which showed up against his red and flushed complexion. As a boy he had refused to learn, and though he was compelled to acquire the Greek language, he made a point of forgetting it as soon as possible. He was a born drill-sergeant, and his one passion was to drill his troops, but he was also a good soldier and no poltroon. In the Italian and Prussian campaigns he early won distinction for himself; and for his conduct during the former, when he shared all the hardships of the private soldier, he received from Paul the title of Cæsarevitch, which he jealously retained even after he had privately renounced his right to the succession. His conduct in this campaign is thus described by Suvoroff: "His Imperial Highness Constantine, notwithstanding his youth, acts in the service like a veteran. Always accompanying the soldiers, he lives in the camp and in the tent, and with wonderful endurance he supports the excessive heat of the climate. Such an example excites the admiration both of the Russian and the Austrian armies."

In 1802 his wife, unable to put up any longer with his wild pranks and fierce temper, left him, and he thus found himself at the age of twenty-one the centre of the dissipation of St. Petersburg. A foreign contemporary asserts that he was the liveliest and best dancer he ever saw. Joyneville says: "He invigorated his constitution with active exercises, often riding unbroken horses, and, like his brothers, showed extraordinary endurance in bearing exertion and privation, heat or cold, hunger or thirst. He rose at four in the morning, dined at twelve, and was abstemious in his food and moderate in drinking. Indeed, several travellers at that period bear witness to the abstinence of the higher classes in Russia,—a striking contrast to the English and other northern nations of

that date. He had great powers of imitation and mimicry, and a very retentive memory, but though really possessed of much information, affected to despise and ridicule all learned persons. His aides-de-camp knew his temper and turned its alternate phases to their own advantage; but his wild humours and inconsiderate acts kept Alexander in constant uneasiness, and he was several times called up before his Imperial brother and severely reproached. This occurred more than once in the presence of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, and on one occasion Alexander seemed extremely angry with him, addressed him in the strongest language, and threatened him with a sharp visitation of his displeasure should he ever again be guilty of a similar offence." He had, we are told, fired a quantity of rats out of a cannon to celebrate Alexander's birthday, and he is said to have delighted in tormenting cats.

Caulaincourt, the French Ambassador in 1807-11, in describing Constantine says: "He is very ugly, but admirably well made. He has charming, unaffected manners; he talks of everything, and, above all, agreeably and without any pretence. He joins to much finesse the naïveté of a child. I remember one day in the Emperor's drawing-room we joked about his dandyism, the elegance of his figure, and a thousand other follies. 'What would you have?' said he, laughing. 'I redeem myself a little from the neck to the feet, and if Nicholas would give me his head I would give him my right of seniority!' 'Would you really do so, Constantine?' asked the Empress in her gentle voice. 'I would lay down the contract at your Majesty's feet.' 'What a fool you would be,' said Alexander, who was standing by; 'Who would give a crown for a handsome face?' 'As handsome as mine?' Constantine retorted; at which the French diplomatist could not help laughing."

A page of the French Court who saw him in Paris in 1814 assures us : “ His face was hardly human. He wore spectacles, and when he looked at anything contracted his eyes very disagreeably : his voice is rude, his manner brusque and military.”

Prince Czartoryski, who had no reason to like him, said of him : “ His heart is sound, but the rectitude of his judgment is a matter of chance. He is amiable in society, intractable in business, and a passionate lover of justice, but his enthusiasm frequently prevents him from distinguishing the truth. Woe to his friends and to his enemies, and woe to his subjects should he ever have any. He is extremely changeable, seeming to be fixed in nothing but the worship of his brother. Whether he loves or hates, it is always with violence.”

Another account describes him as generous to a degree to private soldiers, and spending a large income on his regiment. He would embrace a private who excited his approbation, but he was most unpopular with the Russians of good society, and was particularly disliked by ladies.

Schnitzler says of him : “ Fantastic, impetuous, excitable, even brutal, Constantine hid a noble heart under a rough exterior ; rude manners and coarse language are not invariably indicative of callousness ; temperament and affectation are more frequently the superficial sources from which they spring. Nobody retained such respect for the memory of his unfortunate father as he. Towards his mother he showed himself deferential and submissive. He adored Alexander, whose devoted brother he was, whose schemes he took delight in seconding, and from whom he never desired to be separated. He accompanied him at the Niemen interview, in the long march from Moscow to Paris, to the Congress of Vienna and to that of

Aix-la-Chapelle, and in the journey to France which Alexander made in 1818 with Frederick William III., in order to be present at the reviews of troops held when the evacuation of France was decided on." Schnitzler shows how self-oblivious he was on this occasion. When Alexander was received with demonstrations by the French, and entirely effaced his brother, Constantine showed no signs of jealousy, and was only delighted at the success of the Emperor. At the Congress of Vienna he was pointed out by Baron d'Ompèda to Count de Lagarde: "There, behind the arm-chair of the Emperor Alexander, behold his brother the Grand Duke Constantine, the third person in order of importance in the Empire, and probably the heir-presumptive to the throne. Observe his servile attitude towards the Tzar. See how anxious he seems to be to proclaim himself his first subject!"

Schnitzler further cites as a proof of Constantine's magnanimity the kindness with which he treated the French sick and wounded who were captured by the Russians in 1812. The officers and men were the objects of his lively solicitude. He visited them in hospital, gave them words of sympathy and consolation, and, more acceptable still, material assistance, and put many of the convalescents on his Strelna estate on the Gulf of Finland.

Alexander returned his brother's affection, but could not approve his conduct on all occasions. His intimate relations with people, like those with General Bauer, for instance, caused him considerable annoyance, and his manners on the parade ground, when he did not hesitate to address the coarsest invectives even to distinguished generals, merited and received his displeasure.

Schilder gives an illustration of the Grand Duke's thoughtless severity and its consequences, which reflects

much credit on Constantine's heart, whatever it may do on his understanding.

It seems that at a review in Warsaw, in 1816, Constantine pounced upon two officers, had muskets given them, and drilled them round the Saxon Square like recruits. This was regarded as an indignity by their brother officers, who represented to their various commanders that steps must be taken to wipe out the insult. As no notice was taken of this, three officers committed suicide. Constantine inquired into the matter, and deputed one of his generals to apologise to the two officers in question before the whole regiment, and in his name. On being asked whether this satisfied their honour, one of them replied, that although his brother officers might regard this as sufficient, he could not consider that the insult had been wiped out unless he was given personally the satisfaction of a gentleman. "Do you mean to say that you want to fight a duel with the Grand Duke?" the enraged general exclaimed. "Certainly," was the laconic reply of the plucky subaltern. He was immediately put under arrest, and his ultimate fate was considered to be sealed. He himself took it for granted that he would have to pay with his life for his temerity, and he even attempted to commit suicide in the guardroom. As soon as these circumstances came to the ears of the Grand Duke he immediately repaired to the guardroom, summoned the officers of the regiment, and in their presence addressed the prisoner as follows: "You have announced that you desire to call me out. For this you have been arrested against my instructions. I have come here to give you the satisfaction you ask. Do not regard me as the brother of your sovereign, or as a general officer. I am only your comrade, who deeply regrets that he has insulted so fine a soldier. My affairs are in order, and I have made

all necessary arrangements for the event of my death." The prisoner, affected by so great a condescension, assured His Imperial Highness that he now considered his honour fully satisfied. But the Grand Duke insisted on fighting him. When the prisoner still protested, and the assembled officers also intervened, Constantine exclaimed grudgingly : " Well, if you are satisfied, embrace me, but Russian fashion, on the lips, and let us make friends." This was done, but did not satisfy Constantine, who made the officer a public apology in front of the whole regiment at a review held the next day, and again embraced him in the eyes of all the troops and the spectators.

Schilder adds : " This chivalrous conduct of Constantine restored tranquillity, and gained him the favour of the Poles, at least until his next imprudent act."

On another occasion, when he was consulted as head of the military cadet school as to what was to be done in the case of a boy who was constantly seeing visions, and was exhorted by ghosts or spirits to become a monk, he recommended that the spirits should be exorcised by means of an application of the simple and homely remedy of a birch-rod. It is perhaps needless to say that this method of counteracting the influence of supernatural visitors proved entirely successful, and that the boy ceased to see visions after one vigorous application of the prescribed remedy.

Generally speaking, Constantine had little sympathy with the religious experiences and exaltations of his brother, and expressed himself with a contempt bred of ignorance with reference to the Russian Bible Society, and all religious tendencies, which he relegated without ceremony or discrimination to the " Middle Ages." He had no room in his breast for any form of culture, and his brother related of him with amusement that when he

arrived in Paris his first visit was—not to the Louvre, but to the stables. This was indeed characteristic.

During the 1812 campaign, when the pursuit of Napoleon's defeated troops was the principal object of the army, Constantine used to inspect his recruits personally, and teach them how to hold their bodies and their heads, how to keep their arms by their side, how the fingers should be extended, and similar details. Seeing a spectator regarding him with astonishment, he turned on him and said: "I dare say you think all this is tomfoolery!" But then, Constantine never had his heart in the war against Napoleon, for whom he had conceived the greatest admiration at a very early date.

That this man should have been selected by Alexander to be the virtual ruler of Poland has puzzled the Emperor's admirers, and was a sad disappointment to Prince Czartoryski, who, according to Danileffski, had every right to fill the leading position in his country and to become the Viceroy of Poland. The Prince himself evidently expected this, and so did everybody else in 1815 when he virtually ruled Poland, appointed all the officials, and drew up the constitution. Danileffski says that he is at a loss to understand why the Prince was passed over, and Prince Czartoryski's own *Memoirs* throw little light on this business. That Alexander should have been glad of an opportunity of placing his inconvenient brother in some position where he would be sufficiently distant from St. Petersburg need cause no surprise, in view of the irresponsibility of his conduct. Moreover, it is possible that the Emperor thought that serious duties might help to steady his brother, of whom he is reported to have said about this time that he was improving very much, and that his character was sobering down. Be

this how it may, the experiment was not successful. Prince Czartoryski, writing to the Emperor, says: " His Highness the Grand Duke is not to be moved by any zeal or submission. He seems to have taken a dislike to the country, which is increasing in alarming progression, and is the subject of his daily conversation. Neither the army, the nation, nor individuals find any favour in his eyes. The constitution especially is made by him a subject of incessant sarcasm ; everything that is matter of law or regulation he scorns and covers with ridicule, and, unhappily, his words have already been followed by deeds. He does not even adhere to the military laws which he has himself confirmed. He insists upon introducing flogging in the army, and he ordered some men to be flogged yesterday without paying any attention to the unanimous representations of the committee. Desertion is increasing, and will become general, and more of the officers are about to resign. It looks as if a plan had been formed for rendering your Majesty's benefits illusory and making your scheme fail from the beginning. In that case the Grand Duke is, without knowing it, the blind tool of certain persons in his confidence, who encourage his sombre and passionate temper. I fear the most lamentable results if he should remain here."

No doubt Prince Czartoryski was perfectly justified in all he said, but it is at least questionable whether he was judicious in writing as he did to Alexander just at the time when all Europe seemed to be in a conspiracy to turn his head. In another letter Czartoryski tells how " the Grand Duke has several times intimated to the Government that civil officers, magistrates, mayors, etc., should be brought before him, and the other day he placed the president of the town of Warsaw under arrest. Some days ago, too, his Highness issued a decree by means of

which he will have the power of trying any citizen by court-martial."

The appointment of the Grand Duke Constantine as virtual dictator of Poland was a grave error of statesmanship to which may be directly traced all the disturbances which ensued; indeed, it is not too much to say that the effects of that mistake are still making themselves felt in the Poland of to-day. Nevertheless, and in spite of the arbitrariness of his disposition and his many inconsistencies, Constantine, if a despot, strove hard to be a benevolent one, and conferred many benefits on the country he was called upon to rule over. Russians, we are told by Joyneville, murmured loudly at the sums of money which passed from the Emperor's private purse and the public funds, besides Constantine's entire fortune, to the restoration of Poland, while not a farthing of her revenue came to Russia. The revival of every branch of industry, the creation of manufactures, the construction of good macadamised roads crossing the country on all sides, rich crops ripening on a fertile soil where unhealthy marshes had previously existed, well-built villages in the place of hovels, improved and embellished towns, paved streets, a bank for the development of trade, financed by the Emperor, flourishing finances in place of an empty treasury without credit, a splendid army, vast arsenals, rivers made navigable, a native university, excellent schools for both sexes, charitable institutions, theatres, and an extensive foreign trade—these were some of the benefits conferred on Poland under Constantine. In 1826 Marmont was able to say: "The kingdom of Poland already bears the fruits of an enlightened administration." But this national prosperity only served to afford the Poles means to revolt against the tyrant who was scourging them into affluence.

We have seen how in the summer of 1819 the Emperor Alexander I. announced to his brother Nicholas the intention of Constantine to waive his right to the succession in favour of Nicholas. This decision has given rise to numerous conjectures, although it would have seemed, in view of the character of the heir-apparent, that no remote explanations were needed. That Alexander should have regarded his brother as an undesirable Emperor seems pretty obvious; moreover, as we shall presently see, Constantine had very strong private reasons for his renunciation. Schnitzler, however, quotes an additional explanation, the importance of which must not be overlooked. He says in a note: "A law in force does not recognise the right of succession of any Prince not born in the purple. Constantine, who is, moreover, detested, does not possess this advantage, like Nicholas, and it is asserted that the latter will know how to avail himself thereof." We shall see later how this law was interpreted by another Grand Duke of the house of Romanoff in more recent times.

To the plain man the private reasons of Constantine would appear to furnish sufficient motive for his quixotic act. Schnitzler tells us that Constantine consoled himself for the departure of his wife, the sister of that Prince of Coburg who was to become King of the Belgians, and the uncle of Queen Victoria, by contracting ties not sanctioned by law, and often unworthy of him. His fate overtook him at last, however, in the person of Jeanne Grudzinska, the daughter of a Polish Count. This Polish lady, gifted with great qualities of heart and mind, exercised an extraordinary, almost magical, influence over the singular man. She was slight and delicate, whilst Constantine was the incarnation of physical strength, and when he forgot himself was almost a savage. Schnitzler

gives the date of the meeting as 1820, but this is an obvious error, because it can be easily understood that many preliminaries must have been gone through before it was possible to pronounce the famous decree of divorce between the Grand Duke Constantine and his wife, which was proclaimed on the 20th March 1820 (Old Style). Moreover, on that day the Grand Duke was absolutely certain of what he was about to do, seeing that, according to Korff, a manifesto, or oukaz, was issued under the same date to the effect that a member of the Imperial family who married a person who was not of imperial or royal blood, or related to any reigning family, could not confer on that person the rights inherent in himself, nor could they be transmitted to the children of such a marriage. This manifesto was followed up in the month of May of the same year by the marriage of Constantine with Countess Grudzinska, upon whom the Emperor had meantime conferred the title of Princess Lovitzka. All this goes to prove that Constantine must have met this lady before 1820, and most probably even before 1819. She was a Roman Catholic, and did not change her religion, moreover, in view of the difficulties connected with the marriage of divorced persons both in the Greek and the Roman Churches. The marriage was morganatic.

Schnitzler says: "She must have been very lovable and very charming, and possessed of a high order of mind, that woman who was able to change so completely a character as indomitable and fierce as that of Constantine. There was nothing that he did not rejoice to do to be agreeable to his young wife. Her health was delicate; he accompanied her every year to Carlsbad or Ems, and found a constant charm in her society. Docile to her wishes, he learned self-control, and was so improved that even the old King of Saxony, Frederick Augustus,

that precise and reserved stickler for etiquette, took pleasure in receiving him at his Court. Constantine was a frequent visitor to Dresden, and the old King always entertained him cordially at his table." This sacrifice of Constantine's, the renunciation of a crown for the love of a woman, had its reward. He was repaid by the pleasures, which he had hardly anticipated, of family life. The most perfect and touching harmony presided continuously over this union, so honourable for both parties, and so flattering for Poland. The ascendancy which the Princess exercised over her husband had the most beneficent results. He showed himself in a new light as the tender, attentive, and devoted lover. And so Constantine grew to identify himself with Poland, which he even placed at last above Russia in his affections. In Russia he now found nothing to admire, and he could be induced with difficulty to pay flying visits to St. Petersburg.

The next reign saw the outbreak of the Polish revolt, the result of the disappointed ambitions of patriots who had hoped against hope for constitutional government. Constantine had to fly from Warsaw, and died of cholera in 1831; his wife did not long survive him. In their letters the Princess and Nicholas always address each other as brother and sister, and the correspondence published by Schilder is an eloquent testimony to the high estimation in which she was held by the then members of the Imperial family. Constantine, writing to La Harpe from Warsaw, under the date of the 5th January 1826, says of her: "To her I owe my happiness and my peace of mind, and this I have received at the hands of my late Emperor, who honoured her with his friendship and his confidence." As a contemporary neatly put it, the lion had been conquered by a dove.

The absurd slander circulated at the time, that the

couple, as well as General Diebitch, were successively poisoned by Count Orloff, at the instigation of Nicholas, is too ridiculous to require serious refutation. Surely the prevalent cholera epidemic which claimed so many victims is a sufficient explanation of their death. Schnitzler, who reports the cruel remark about Orloff, that his sudden arrival was always the precursor of death, satisfactorily disposes of this fantastic invention.

CHAPTER VI

FORCES BEHIND THE THRONE

A CHARACTER insusceptible to the influences of surroundings and associates must be phenomenally strong, but such a character could not possibly be sympathetic or sensitive, and no man can be truly great without sympathy to understand the needs and points of view of his fellow-beings, nor sensitiveness to receive impressions from and to respond to the magnetic discharges, if such a phrase may be used in this connection, of other minds. In view of the fact that the amiable disposition of Alexander made him particularly receptive of external influences, it may perhaps be interesting to pass in review some of the friends of this exceptionally well-intentioned autocrat.

The first and most potent of these was undoubtedly La Harpe, of whom it has been said that if there had been no La Harpe there would assuredly have been no Alexander. This Swiss free-thinker had original though sound ideas of education. He was of opinion that the "future ruler should be neither a physicist, nor a naturalist, nor a mathematician, nor a geographer, nor a philologist, nor a jurist, nor any kind of specialist. But he should be an honest man and an enlightened citizen, and should know enough of the subjects taught him to be able to appreciate their intrinsic value, and to obtain a clear conception of the duties incumbent on a monarch to whose

hands the happiness or misery of many millions is consigned. And what study can so effectually develop the sense of true citizenship than the study of history?" He explained how, according to his theory, history should be taught, how the example of Alexander of Macedon, for instance, should be avoided. "We glory," he said, in the fact that we exist only for the welfare of our people." La Harpe, notwithstanding his republican principles, was a profound admirer of Catherine, as is shown by the following sentence in his *Memoirs*: "Providence seems to have at last taken compassion on the millions of human beings inhabiting Russia, but it needed a Catherine II. to have her grandchildren brought up to be men." We may add that if Catherine desired to make a man of her grandson, La Harpe made a gentleman of him, and nobody recognised this more fully than his pupil. To the last Alexander retained a feeling of affection and gratitude towards this sufficiently remarkable man, who, notwithstanding his love for the Russian people, does not appear to have been loved by them in return, not at least by the envious courtiers who despised his opinions and methods. But if La Harpe's influence was beneficial, that of Alexander's nurse, Mrs. Hesler, was still more so. She appears to have been an Englishwoman, and his first instructress. Her husband was Alexander's valet. Of this couple La Harpe writes, that the man had a noble character, and that his wife was a woman possessed of rare qualities; "she was appointed as Alexander's nurse, and gave him his first good manners and tendencies." He seems to have felt a veneration for her, which, as La Harpe put it, did honour to both. If Alexander venerated his nurse, his feeling for his tutor seems to have been one of boundless affection. Indeed, it could not have been otherwise, for the latter was a remarkably honest and simple-minded man,

who possessed in a great degree the gift of winning the affections of his intimates, and it is to be feared that his general good-nature and kindness prevented La Harpe from being sufficiently on his guard against undesirable people, like Araktcheyeff, for instance, whose baneful influence on Alexander it will be our duty to refer to later ; nor did he apparently teach his pupil the requisite discrimination in choosing his friends. For the rest, La Harpe married the daughter of a wealthy St. Petersburg merchant, and retired to France, but he occasionally visited Russia, and, notably just after Alexander's accession, exercised considerable influence over him, and was even consulted by his former pupil regarding his manners and demeanour. Politically, however, his influence was of no account, especially as he ceased to espouse the liberal cause.

When Alexander emerged from the custody of his tutor and set up an establishment of his own there were not wanting critics to censure him and his entourage. Thus Count Rostoptchin, writing to Count Vorontzoff, says : " The Grand Duchess Elizabeth, Alexander's wife, is universally loved ; but I am annoyed to find that she has ever before her the example of the daughter of Countess Shouvaloff, who is married to Prince Golitzin. She is a cunning creature, a tale-bearer, a coquette, and without discretion in her conversation. Generally the persons of this Court have been most ill-chosen. You meet either fools, or windbags, or young people of no account. The Grand Duke Alexander, with the kindest of hearts, is in the highest degree ignorant of all matters concerning the knowledge of men and society. Surrounded by empty-headed people, he has acquired their foolishness. The Countess Shouvaloff, instead of endeavouring to correct and to reform, gently accentuates all his deficiencies, and

has succeeded in getting herself hated by both the young man and the young Grand Duchess. The heart of the Grand Duke is the best in the world, but he hears so much vulgarity and so much talk about matters that are unworthy of his attention that it will be a miracle if he does not succumb to the bad examples set him. Moreover, the people who surround him do not appreciate the importance of the positions they occupy, nor the respect that is due to the young Prince, but seem to consider that their principal duty is to make him laugh. So far he listens most willingly to what is right, and reforms himself. I took the liberty of speaking my mind to him in regard to the jokes and witticisms with which he loves to show off, and I think that he has corrected that failing in himself, for I do not hear such from him any more. He has an extraordinary affection for Kotchubey."

The pedantic Rostoptchin, famous for his bitter tongue, could find no excuse for the liveliness of Alexander's household, but it would have been difficult for the Grand Duke to have found a more suitable friend than Kotchubey, the nephew of Bezborodko, that Chancellor of the Empire who has been described as one of the very few statesmen produced by Russia in the eighteenth century who could lay any claim to genius. Count Kotchubey was already enjoying a sufficiently distinguished position at Court, and was later appointed Ambassador, as we have seen, to Constantinople. To have selected this promising young statesman for his friend does not, therefore, appear to be indicative of frivolity on the part of Alexander. Count Kotchubey has been described by one of his colleagues, Prince Adam Czartoryski, as having "acquired a certain European varnish and grand manners which made him a favourite in society." We are told that he was accustomed to business, but had not much knowledge; "his

intelligence was clear, but not deep, and he had more good-nature and sincerity than are usually found in Russians.¹ This did not save him from certain weaknesses characteristic of his nation—a great wish for place, for distinction, and especially for a fortune to cover his expenses and those of his family, which had become very numerous. He showed an extreme readiness to adopt any opinion that might be in fashion, and to follow any lead imposed upon him by a superior will, or by the conventions of society. When he was with us he professed liberalism, though with a certain reserve, as it was not to be reconciled with his real opinions. His vanity was such that it betrayed itself when he strove most to conceal it; he had estimable qualities, and showed me much friendly feeling, of which I had strong evidence some years later.”

This statesman, notwithstanding his imperfections, continued the friend of Alexander to the end, and was successively his Foreign Minister and his Minister of the Interior. He triumphed over his enemies and died covered with honours, and was president of the Council under Nicholas. He was buried in the cemetery of the Nevski Monastery, and his widow petitioned the Emperor to allow an iron railing to be erected to enclose the ground in which his remains had been placed. Pushkin records how, when old Mme Novosiltzoff heard this she exclaimed: “Why, on the day of the last judgment, while he is still climbing over his railings, the others will have got to heaven!”

Next in order of date the name of Prince Adam Czartoryski should be mentioned. As a young man he and his brother were sent to the Court of Catherine in order to

¹ This obviously should warn the reader against placing implicit confidence in the unbiassed impartiality of the Polish Prince.

endeavour to rehabilitate their father's fortunes. They were men of the highest breeding and culture, their sister married to the Prince of Württemberg, themselves brothers-in-law of Paul, regarded as members of the great world. The *Memoirs* of Prince Adam record how his mother had had the courage to beard in his den the despotic Frederick II. of Prussia. Prince Adam had travelled, he had made the acquaintance of Goethe, he had made his début in Paris, and when he presented himself in St. Petersburg, under the ægis of Prince Kurakin, but with the influence of the Emperor of Austria behind him, he and his brother must have created a sensation. Their success was almost unprecedented; the Empress took a fancy to the two young men, and appointed Prince Adam to the household of Alexander, and the other brother, Prince Constantine, to the household of the Grand Duke of the same name. Referring to his first visit to the Grand Duke Alexander, Prince Adam says: "I am sorry I did not take note of the exact date, for that day had a decisive influence on a great part of my life and on the destinies of my country. Thenceforward I became devoted to the Grand Duke, and I may say that our conversation then led to a mutual friendship, followed by a series of fortunate and unfortunate events, whose results still make themselves felt and will be perceived for many years to come." Prince Czartoryski subsequently became Alexander's Foreign Minister, and it is much to the credit of both persons that the Prince, even when he had most reason for disappointment, never seems to have lost faith in the good intentions and sincerity of the Emperor whom he served so well, so long as his patriotism permitted him to do so. He was able to record in his *Memoirs* that the opinions and sentiments which had seemed to him so admirable in Alexander when he was Grand Duke did

not change when he became Emperor ; they were somewhat modified by the possession of absolute power, but they remained the foundation of all his principles and thoughts. " They were," he adds, " for many years like a secret passion which one dares not acknowledge before a world incapable of comprehending it, but which constantly dominates us and colours our actions whenever its influence can make itself felt." Notwithstanding his friendship for the Emperor, Prince Czartoryski's loyalty to his country was stronger, and when he saw how hopeless it was to expect freedom or justice for Poland from Russia he did not hesitate to throw in his lot with his oppressed compatriots. The later history of this noble and lion-hearted statesman is pathetic, but scarcely comes within the purview of these pages.

Besides these two, Kotchubey and Czartoryski, Alexander had two other youthful confidants,—Count Paul Strogonoff and his cousin, M. de Novosiltzoff, who had spent some years in England. They were both ardent liberals. Strogonoff's father, a true grandee, fabulously rich, had passed the greater part of his life in Paris during the reign of Louis xv. He had been a friend of Grimm and d'Alembert, and had frequented the salons of the celebrated women of his time ; while his mind and language were French, his manners and customs were Russian. The son was sent at the early age of sixteen to Paris, accompanied by his French tutor, who made him a member of the Jacobin Club, allowed him to join the mob at Versailles in the disorders of that time, and to promenade the streets wearing a cap of liberty. Moreover, the young count became the lover of a notorious woman and got himself generally talked about. Stories of his wild pranks reached the ears of the Empress, and Novosiltzoff was charged with the delicate mission of bringing him back.

He was banished to a country seat and made to feel that he was in disgrace. His peccadilloes were, however, soon forgiven, and he was allowed to return to Court, where his high rank, culture, and intelligence soon caused him to be singled out by Alexander. And thus there was gathered round the young Prince a small band of earnest reformers. Alexander took himself so seriously that he even requested Prince Adam Czartoryski to draw up a manifesto which should be a sort of programme of his policy on ascending the throne. This Czartoryski had the courage to do. Unfortunately there were other influences at work. Alexander's frequent visits to Gatchina, where his father lived the life of a country gentleman, whose only relaxation from agricultural pursuits was the drilling of soldiers, gave him a taste for this amusement, or paradomania, as it was called, which grew so strong with him that it developed into a sort of obsession. He was capable in later years of spending entire weeks in reviewing troops, until this became his favourite occupation, a task which was fully shared by and proved a bond of union between him and Frederick William III. of Prussia. It was at Gatchina that Alexander was taught to hate his grandmother, and it was there that he met Araktcheyeff, the humble son of an officer of no distinction. Araktcheyeff's father was a poor country gentleman who lived on his small estate in the province of Novgorod, after having served in the army and retired with the rank of major. Here was born in 1769 his son Alexis, and when this boy was of a suitable age his father took him to St. Petersburg in the hope of getting him admitted to the Artillery Cadet School there. Influence he had none; he had no connections and scarcely any friends. His funds were so low that he was unable to pay the very small fees charged, and he was fain to ask a loan of the benevolent Metropolitan, Gabriel,

and about to return to his village with his purpose unfulfilled. But somehow he managed to interest General Melissino in his case, and through his intermediary young Alexis was eventually placed into the Cadet School free of charge. The boy was diligent, he developed a great aptitude for mathematics and every branch of military science, but showed an aversion for all literary pursuits, failed to master any foreign language, and did not even scrape up a bowing acquaintance with the "humanities." On the other hand, he showed a remarkable talent for the minutiae of military discipline. He was enrolled in Paul's Gatchina Corps, and received his commission in 1787. His zeal soon attracted favourable notice. Melissino did not forget him, and when the two young Grand Dukes were sent to Gatchina, Araktcheyeff was deputed to teach them their military duties. Poor Alexander was not, according to Schilder, quick at learning drill and detail, and Araktcheyeff saved him from many a disgrace. Moreover, the hard-headed soldier of fortune professed a devotion and affection which could only flatter the vanity of the Grand Duke, from whom, no doubt, the more brutal characteristics of this martinet were concealed. Araktcheyeff practised a severity which was considered excessive even in those hardy days. Many a poor soldier was flogged to death by his order, and very frequently he administered the punishment himself. It is said of him that in later life when he ordered his own peasants or servants to be flogged he would inspect the backs of the culprits after punishment to see whether they had been sufficiently lacerated, and woe betide the executioner who had, in his opinion, failed to do his duty. Inhuman to a degree, deficient absolutely in imagination, and devoid of culture or sympathy with any intellectual movement whatever, this man was, nevertheless, possessed of two



COUNT ARAKTCHYEYEFF
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY OUTKIN

sterling virtues,—he was loyal and faithful as a dog, and his integrity was beyond dispute; moreover, he had method and considerable organising ability. His love for Alexander was almost fierce, and characterised by a jealousy of any one to whom the Emperor showed the least favour which can only be described as ferocious.

When Alexander came to the throne he found in power two men whom he distrusted and hated, namely, Count Panin, Paul's Chancellor, and Count Pahlen, the military governor of St. Petersburg. These men had tried to make him their accomplice in the murder of his father, but had not succeeded. They at last got him to consent to having his father deposed on the ground of the latter's madness, and because he was reported to be planning the arrest of his sons and the appointment of the Prince of Würtemberg as heir-apparent. But Pahlen was not a man for half-measures, and recognised that as long as Paul remained alive there was danger. He therefore murdered the half-witted and craven autocrat, and reported that he had been compelled to do so in self-defence. Alexander never really recovered from the shock, and to the end of his days reproached himself for being an (unwilling) accessory to his father's death. Panin had little sympathy with this kind of remorse, and treated the young Emperor with scant courtesy. In conversation he referred to him as that drat of a boy, or that booby, who had no mind for anything but pretty girls.

While the government was ostensibly in the hands of these two noblemen, Alexander's youthful friends, who had been constituted an unofficial Committee of Public Safety, used to hold their meetings in secret. "This mysterious Council," says Prince Czartoryski in his *Memoirs*, "which was not long concealed from the suspicions, or ultimately from the knowledge, of the Court,

and was designated 'the young men's party,' grew impatient at not obtaining any result whatever from its deliberations; it pressed the Emperor to carry out the views he had expressed to us, and the proposals he considered desirable and necessary. Once or twice an attempt was made to induce him to adopt energetic resolutions, to give orders and make himself obeyed, to dismiss certain superannuated officials who were a constant obstacle to every reform, and to put young men in their place. But the Emperor's character inclined him to attain his end by compromises and concessions, and, moreover, he did not yet feel sufficiently master of the position to risk measures which he thought too violent. In our Council Strogonoff was the most ardent, Novosiltzoff the most prudent, Kotchubey the most time-serving, and I the most disinterested, always striving to curb undue impatience.' Gradually these young men got appointments. Alexander plucked up courage, and dismissed and even exiled both Panin and Pahlen. Originally the principles which animated the members of the committee were most altruistic. Prince Czartoryski tells us: "We had long been in near relations with each other, and these now became more serious. The necessity of rallying round the Emperor, and not leaving him alone in his desire to reform, drew us more closely together. We were regarded for some years as models of intimate and unshakable friendship. To be superior to every personal interest, and not to accept either presents or distinctions, was the principle of our alliance. Such a principle could not take root in Russia, but it was in accordance with the ideas of Alexander's youth, and inspired him with special esteem for his friends. I was the sole author of the principle, which, indeed, was specially suited to my peculiar position. It was not always liked by my companions, and the Emperor himself

afterwards grew tired of servants who wished to distinguish themselves by refusing to accept rewards which were so eagerly sought by everyone else." However, Kotchubey was made Foreign Minister, Strogonoff, Procurator of the First Department of the Senate, and Novosiltzoff, one of the Emperor's secretaries. M. de La Harpe, in the uniform of a member of the Swiss Directory, and disillusioned in his former revolutionary ideals, appears to have played a vague and undefined role. He seems to have drawn up an elaborate plan for the reform and "*Organisation réglementaire*," as he termed it, of Russia, but nobody appears to have had the courage to wade through his MS.,—the Emperor least of all.

Very soon it became apparent that the beautiful dreams cherished by Alexander were impracticable, and there is reason to believe that King Frederick William III.'s influence did not count for nothing in this conclusion. But something had to be done. The country was in a state bordering on anarchy; there were no regular departments, no division of responsibility, no order. The Emperor's first step was to restore the Senate, the old supreme Court of Justice and Administration. All the powers of this ancient body were revived in a manifesto of which Count Vorontzoff, just returned from London, was the author. The Senate was, moreover, accorded the right of making representations on the Emperor's *oukazes*, and further, it was laid down that all the Ministers should make detailed reports of their functions, which the Emperor would send to the Senate for its opinion. This, it was thought, would be the first step towards representative government, the Senate developing gradually, by the addition of deputies from the nobility, into an Upper Chamber. The next step was to organise departmental government, and so the Emperor created the first real Ministers, namely, of the

Interior and Police, of Finance, of Justice, of Public Instruction, of Commerce, of Foreign Affairs, of War, and of the Navy. The Emperor became his own War Minister, Count Vorontzoff was made Chancellor and Foreign Secretary. Kotchubey, receiving the Ministry of the Interior, had to reorganise an administration which had been long neglected, which was, in the distant provinces, without any direction or supervision, and therefore given up to all the abuses arising from the ignorance and cupidity of subordinate and badly paid officials. Count Vassilieff, a capable and honest official, experienced in such matters, was appointed Minister of Finance, and the poet Dyerjavin, the personal choice of the Emperor, was made Minister of Justice and Procurator-General of the Senate. The Ministry of Public Instruction was given to Count Zavadovski, who had been distinguished for a brief period by the favour of the Empress Catherine, and was, moreover, the perfect master of a pure Russian style, but of whom Alexander said to La Harpe, "*Il est nul.*"

These Ministers were given assistants or colleagues, and the latter were recruited from the ranks of the unofficial committee. Thus Count Paul Strogonoff was, at his own request, appointed assistant of the Minister of the Interior; and Novosiltzoff, while retaining his post of Secretary to the Emperor, was made assistant to the Minister of Justice. This gave him, in the opinion of Prince Czartoryski, the most important place in the administration; who also says of him that "no one in Russia was at that time his superior in that administrative knowledge which was then only to be obtained by reading French and English works. His practical mind rejected all vain theories; he possessed will and tact in dealing not only with individuals, but with the Russian public, which he knew thoroughly." The Prince adds oracularly

that he had bad qualities also, but that these had not yet developed themselves. Prince Czartoryski himself became the assistant of the Foreign Minister, and when the latter retired the Emperor pressed the assistant to become his successor in terms that would not brook refusal, and so the very strange spectacle was offered to the world of a Polish Prince, who was eligible for the throne, and still considered as half a rebel, conducting the foreign affairs of a country against whose rule his father had but lately revolted. Truth to tell, Prince Czartoryski accepted the post with reluctance, and resigned it as soon as he conveniently could, in order to devote all his attention to his beloved country, towards which, however, public opinion all over Europe does not seem to have been very favourably disposed. Prince Czartoryski, notwithstanding his personal loyalty to the Emperor, seems to have shared the hatred which all his countrymen feel for Russia, and to have been animated by a supreme contempt for all Russians in general. In those days, indeed, and for that matter at the present time also, Poles regarded themselves as the superiors in culture and civilisation of their kinsmen by race and neighbours by situation.

It is impossible within the space of this very slight and sketchy review of the men of the reign of Alexander I. to devote space to all the numerous persons who helped to make up the history of Russia during that period. Tatischeff complains that Alexander surrounded himself with too many foreigners, principally Germans, and such names as Osten-Sacken, Benckendorff, Bennigsen, Wittgenstein, to mention only a few, would seem to justify the accusation. At that time, however, the choice was limited, and the number of suitable Russians was comparatively small. The Emperor was therefore compelled to seek abroad for servants, and we find such names as Pozzo di Borgo

and Capo d'Istria among his diplomatists. The first, who was recommended to Alexander by Czartoryski, was characterised by a Russian statesman as "an adventurer coming from I not know where, and interested on behalf of I know not whom." This called down upon him the reply of the Emperor that his style was *parfaitement inconvenable*, and that, seeing that Alexander had himself appointed di Borgo, he must be assumed to know whence he came and on whose behalf he was interested, adding: "I regret that he does not please you, but that is no reason for me to deprive myself of his talents, of which he has already given so many proofs." This little incident affords eloquent testimony of the Emperor's difficulties. Capo d'Istria, on the other hand, who was more than a match for Metternich and Castlereagh, seems to have been honoured by the profound hatred of these Foreign Ministers. Perhaps of all the foreign influences to which Alexander was subject, that of Metternich was the most baneful. This statesman, of whom Professor Minto has recorded with epigrammatic terseness, that he was an affectionate if not a faithful husband, had little sympathy with the noble ideals of the Russian autocrat, worked his European reactionary policy with such subtle diplomatic skill that the Austrians got all the credit, while Alexander got all the blame, for the tyrannical system which was inspired by that redoubtable diplomatist, whose hatred of liberty was only equalled by his contempt for the foolishness of the Emperor of Russia.

One Russian statesman, who stands out head and shoulders above his contemporaries, we must, however, not omit to mention, and that is the famous Michael Speranski, the Solon of Russia, and the victim of countless intrigues. The son of a village priest, humble and obscure, he was born in 1771, deep in the interior of Russia, in that

province of Vladimir which is on the road to Siberia. Schnitzler even says that he was stated to be of Chinese descent. His name was a paraphrase, and adopted to conceal his origin, for in those days the members of the priestly caste bore patronymics that indicated some virtue or quality ; thus Speranski was derived from the French word *espérance*, and disguised the less elegant Nadejdoff. He was placed into a religious college, or seminary, and obtained a scholarship and exhibition for the Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg. Here he showed such remarkable aptitude, especially for mathematics, that he was appointed instructor of exact and physical sciences at that seat of learning at the early age of twenty-one. He was also recommended as the most suitable person to give lessons to the children of Prince Alexis Kurakin, the brother of the Vice-Chancellor. Through the influence of this great noble Speranski was allowed to cast off his cassock and forsake the priesthood, then a close profession in Russia, the children of priests being permitted to embrace no other career than that of their fathers. No doubt it was also Prince Kurakin who enabled him to change his name. His progress was now rapid. In 1797 we find him secretary of a committee appointed to report on the best means of keeping the capital supplied with provisions, of which the then Grand Duke Alexander was president, so that he was brought in contact with his future master at an early date. In 1802 Kotchubey secured Speranski's assistance in his department. At that time he already displayed that remarkable power of work which made it possible for him to spend eighteen hours a day at his desk, although we suspect that this could not have been his regular habit. It is interesting to record that his household was English. He had married an Englishwoman, who died but left him a daughter who was brought up as an English-

woman by his mother-in-law, who kept house for him, and even followed him into exile. In 1807, however, Speranski travelled with the Emperor, and was sufficiently a time-server to exchange his love of England for that of Napoleon. Alexander on his return was so disgusted with the poor figure his army had cut, and especially with the corrupt administration of the supplies, always the weak spot in Russia, that he begged his old friend and companion-in-arms, Araktcheyeff, who was skulking on his estate near Novgorod, to undertake the reformation of this branch. By degrees Araktcheyeff was made Minister of War, and the confidant of the Emperor. But while Alexander trusted implicitly in the administrative ability and rugged honesty of this glorified corporal, he did not invite him to share with him his dreams of liberalism. These he confided to Speranski, in whose society he loved to spend his evenings. Speranski now became Alexander's inseparable companion, and even accompanied the Emperor to Erfurt, where Napoleon is reported to have asked Alexander whether he would accept a kingdom of his in exchange for that remarkable man. This story, strongly indicative of the jealousy which Speranski was already exciting, is, however, contradicted by Napoleon, who maintains that in his dealings with Alexander, whom he credited with more than ordinary vanity, he never took any notice of the members of his suite, but addressed himself solely to him.

In 1809 the Emperor invited Speranski to draw up a scheme for a constitution, and the latter formulated his remarkable quadruple system of four dumas and four courts of law, namely, the rural, the district, the provincial, and the state дума, each accompanied by courts of law, and, presiding over all, the Imperial Council, with the Emperor as crown of the constitutional edifice. The

Emperor was in no hurry to force the pace, however, and contented himself with instructing Speranski to give shape to the Imperial Council. Speranski lost no time in giving effect to his master's will; meanwhile he had conceived his famous amendments to Peter the Great's bureaucratic system, and made it compulsory for nobles to pass an examination before receiving their first grade in the official hierarchy. Moreover, he reformed the finances of the country, and instituted the publication of official reports, and even caused an official gazette to be published. All these reforms created a storm of indignation. Nobody was more annoyed than Araktcheyeff, who had the excessive jealousy characteristic of low and cunning minds. He scented in Speranski a rival, and so when at last the Emperor communicated to him the scheme of the proposed Imperial Council, or Council of State, he replied in a letter, the insolence of which was scarcely veiled by its abject and servile humility, resigning his appointments, as being too uneducated to be able to discuss with the scholarly members of the new Council the military matters for which he was responsible. The correspondence between Araktcheyeff and his master, given verbatim by Schilder, is most interesting. Araktcheyeff's style is but one degree removed from the illiterate, and Alexander's dignified remonstrances read like the letters of a father to a favourite but recalcitrant child which has hardly attained the age of reason. Araktcheyeff, however, was not to be petted back into good-humour, but carried the day and resigned the post of Minister of War; as a great concession he consented to represent the War Department on the Council.

Another enemy of Speranski's was the worthy and conservative Karamsin, inspired, no doubt, by the Empress-mother. He was dead against a constitution; it was not measures but men that were wanted. Fifty wise and

virtuous governors of provinces would be more to the purpose than all this dangerous and revolutionary nonsense.

How difficult it was to find men may be gathered from the fact that when the post of Chief of Police of St. Petersburg fell vacant Alexander had no choice but to appoint a ruffian who, on entering on his duties, sent for his *chef de bureau*, or secretary, a poor-spirited, miserable little creature, flew into a violent rage with him over some trifle, and finally, losing all self-control, proceeded to blows, knocking the poor little secretary about most woefully, so that the clerks in the adjoining offices could hear his squeaking voice raised in shrill yells. Very badly damaged, his ribs all but broken, he was at last ejected, took to his bed and nearly died.

While Speranski made enemies, he does not appear to have made friends. The humble son of a priest, not much better than a peasant in those days, and far less respectable, he was looked upon askance by the aristocratic families. Professor Parrot seems to have been the only person who had a good word to say for him to the Emperor, and even he was careful to mention that he was no friend of his. Various writers say that Armfeldt accused him to the Emperor of conspiring against Russia and being in the pay of Napoleon, but Schilder satisfactorily disposes of that charge; on the other hand, he suggests that this son of the people had his head turned by the confidence Alexander reposed in him, and grew unbearably conceited. He did not hesitate to speak disparagingly of his sovereign to his familiars, belittled his intelligence, turned him to ridicule, and even allowed people to conclude that he was quite ready to found a Russian Republic. All this was brought to the ears of Alexander, and there can be little doubt that it helped to predispose him to listen to the calumnies that were carefully retailed to him. After all,

Emperors are human beings, and will resent ridicule and abuse as much as private individuals; and possibly, for the very reason that their exalted position compels them to employ instruments to carry out their will, they are more jealous of their reputation for ability than any of their subjects. At any rate, on one occasion when Speranski was consulted by Alexander in 1812 as to what course he should adopt towards Napoleon, the Emperor related afterwards that Speranski had had the audacity to advise him to call a diet of nobles and abide by their decision. This incensed Alexander inordinately, who, when relating the incident, exclaimed, "Fancy telling that to me, as though I were a nonentity!" Not only was Speranski indiscreet and wanting in what must, after all, be called good-breeding, he seems to have been inclined to interfere in matters in which he had no business to meddle. For instance, he carried on a correspondence in cipher with Nesselrode, the Russian Ambassador in Paris, which was so clumsily conducted that Talleyrand regularly intercepted the letters and unravelled their contents. In short, with all his great qualities, he was wanting in tact, and the Emperor, feeling that he was becoming dangerous just before the outbreak of the war, when it was necessary to have the entire nation on his side, offered him up for sacrifice. He was exiled to a distant part of the country, but some years later, after lowering himself to the extent of writing a letter of supplication to Araktcheyeff, then all-powerful, he was made Governor-General of Perm, and later Governor-General of Siberia, where he had scope for his great administrative ability. Nicholas reinstated him, but he was no longer the ardent liberal of years ago. Time and exile had cooled his ardour.

After the defeat of Napoleon, Araktcheyeff became practically dictator of Russia. He was the one man in

whom the Emperor had implicit confidence. He deprecated his extreme severities, no doubt, but he trusted his loyalty and integrity. Besides, Araktcheyeff, self-seeking and avaricious as he was, was too mean-spirited to be ambitious in the best sense of that word. He considered that the best way of perpetuating one's name was by leaving public buildings behind one, but beyond this he seems to have had no idea of fame. He refused all orders and decorations, in place of which he ostentatiously wore suspended round his neck a miniature portrait of his master. When the Emperor conceived the idea, suggested by the example of Austria, of founding military colonies, that is to say, assigning certain rural districts to certain troops for their residence and maintenance, in view of which the population were exempt from taxation, he thought he had hit upon a brilliant method of at once educating his peasantry and improving his finances. Had he intrusted the execution of his plan to a less reckless martinet than Araktcheyeff it is even possible, though hardly probable, that it might have succeeded. But Araktcheyeff's method of flogging the peasants into prosperity and smartness only caused disturbances wherever the plan was introduced and created widespread discontent ; for the peasants, besides having to support the soldiers, were taken from the fields and put to road-making and building. These disturbances were put down with an iron hand. In one case Araktcheyeff himself records how he made the insurgents run the gauntlet of a thousand men twelve times. He adds : " I regret to have to state that some of them have since died,"—the wonder is that any survived. His methods in his own villages were sufficiently barbaric. He had a mistress, the wife of a sailor before the mast, to whom he was devoted, and who ruled him " as he ruled others." One day this woman caused one

of her waiting women to be inhumanly flogged. The girl's brother thereupon murdered her. Araktcheyeff was absent at the time. On his return he had the entire adult male population knouted, those who survived being sent off to the town of Novgorod, where they were literally flogged to death.

It was a strange world which Alexander had been called upon to rule over, and if in later years, as we shall see, he grew stern and morose and less disposed to liberal measures, it must not be forgotten that his own subjects, who were to benefit by them, were their strongest opponents.

Before concluding this chapter we must say a word of that remarkable character who died in Alexander's reign, the famous Kriloff, whose very original and witty fables have been so ably translated by the late W. R. S. Ralston. Kriloff, one of the staunchest conservatives among Alexander's subjects, spent his days in his dressing-gown, and lazed through life a typical Russian, brilliant, clever, inert, and slothful.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

AS a boy Alexander was accused of being a free-thinker, for although he was carefully brought up in the Orthodox faith, there was a general belief that it was impossible to associate with La Harpe and be the friend of Czartoryski, without imbibing some of their religious principles, or want of them. However this may be, Alexander himself admits that it was not until after the Napoleonic War of 1812 that he found real religious peace for his soul. Many people have imagined that Alexander owed his religious renaissance or conversion to the influence of Mme Krudener, but this would not seem to be strictly in accordance with the truth. Nevertheless, Mme Krudener has loomed so largely in the public imagination as a most important factor in the life and religious experiences of Alexander that we propose to devote some space to her career. Mme Krudener,¹ although a Russian subject, was not of Russian race, but hailed from those Baltic provinces of the Empire which have given their conquerors so many rulers. Her father was a well-to-do Riga merchant of the name of Wietinghoff, and it was in her father's house in Riga that Barbe-Julie was born on the 21st November 1764. Mr. Wietinghoff must have been a man of considerable position in his native town, for he had married a daughter of the

¹ For this sketch of Mme Krüdener's career we have mainly consulted Mr. Clarence Ford's admirable *Life*.

famous Marshal Münnich ; moreover, he was possessed of large estates, and lived on a grand scale, even having a private theatre of his own, which was sufficiently commodious to be subsequently presented to and accepted by the town of Riga.

The early years of Miss Wietinghoff were spent between her father's country place of Kosse and the town of Riga. In those days the Protestant religion was the religion of those provinces, which, though they had been annexed by Russia, had hardly been assimilated. In 1777, when she had not yet attained the age of thirteen, she was taken on a visit to Germany and Paris, in which capital she received dancing lessons from the great Vestris, and even spent a few months in England. At sixteen, tradition says, she had her first religious experience. Her growing beauty and great wealth made her a desirable match, and we are told that " a marriage was arranged " by her parents with a neighbouring baron of suitable position. The prospect of these nuptials was anything but agreeable to the sensitive girl, not even whose tears, however, were of any avail to deter from their purpose her obdurate parents. She therefore had recourse to prayer, and was answered by a severe attack of measles, from which her health and beauty did not recover for a considerable time. This proved her salvation ; her intended, who was either in a hurry to get married, or had had time to hear how little his bride-elect desired his society, took himself off, leaving Julie in the belief that she owed her deliverance to the direct interposition of Providence. Two years later, when her hand was sought by Baron Burchardt Alexis Constantine Krudener, she did not show the same reluctance to marry. Baron Krudener, who was twenty years her senior, and close on forty at the time, was already a distinguished and experienced diplomatist ; indeed, experi-

enced he was in more senses than one, as he had already been twice married and twice divorced, and was the father of a little girl of nine. As a diplomatist he had won the favour of the Empress Catherine by the manner in which he had carried on the negotiations at the small Court of Mitau for the annexation of the Duchy of Courland. A great magnate, whose sister, Mme Mayendorff, was Julie's godmother, Baron Krudener doubtlessly presented himself to the imagination of the impressionable girl as an ideal *partie*, and it is questionable whether she could possibly have had a more indulgent, not to say tolerant husband. Those were the days of *mariages de convenance*, and it is highly improbable that it could ever have occurred to her parents to allow her to obey the dictates of her heart, assuming her affections to have been awakened. She was married in 1783, and took up her residence at her husband's seat, the Castle of Ramkau, near Mitau. Here she spent the first months of her married life, with Mme Mayendorff as a sort of *tertium gaudens*. The much-married Baron turned out less of a Bluebeard than might have been expected. He had lived in Paris, had known Jean Jacques Rousseau, and was a man of culture and refinement, who appears to have been a model conventional, neutral-tinted husband. They spent their time in music, dancing, private theatricals, in which husband and wife were always cast for the leading parts, and in reading "selected French fiction." To this eighteenth-century Paradise the Grand Duke Paul and his wife paid a visit on their way to make the tour of Europe, travelling as Comte and Comtesse de Nord. The visit had for its consequence the appointment of Baron Krudener as diplomatic representative at Venice, which involved a preliminary visit to St. Petersburg at a time when the Court of the Empress Catherine was in its greatest splendour. The life in Venice was described by

Mme Krudener some twenty years later in a novel entitled *Valérie*, in which she gives us a graphic portrait of herself : “ It would be easy to possess as much grace, and much more beauty, and yet to be far inferior to her. People do not perhaps admire her, but she possesses something ideal and fascinating, which forces one to be struck by her. She is so refined, so slight, she might almost be a fleeting thought. Nevertheless, the first time I saw her I did not think her pretty. She is very pale, and the contrast between her gaiety, I might even say her wild spirits, and her face, which is meant to be serious and sensible, had a curious effect upon me. I have since discovered that the moments in which she appears to be simply a happy child are very rare. Her habitual temperament is, on the contrary, somewhat sad, and she flings herself at times into an exaggerated gaiety, just as highly sensitive people, with very delicate nerves, may behave in a manner quite contrary to their habits.”

The above little sketch betrays the estimation in which the delineator held herself ; that her face had “ a curious effect ” upon people is borne out by the Stakieff incident. But before turning to that we must record the following episode, which in its tragi-comedy sufficiently characterises the excitable temperament of the future prophetess. One evening when her husband was out, and Mme Krudener was sitting in her charming Venetian villa, a storm burst over the country, of such an exceptional severity that she became anxious for his safety. She sat up for him till two in the morning, and then went out to try to find and rescue him. She met him on his way home, and he gently remonstrated with her for not going to bed. His affectionate words, we are told, pierced her heart. “ Alas,” she thought, “ in my place he would have gone to bed and to sleep ! ”

Alexander Stakieff was Baron Krudener’s private

secretary, and fell a victim to the charms of his chief's wife ; being a man of honour and principles, he went through all the sufferings of Werther, without breathing a word of his passion to the lady. When Baron Krudener was transferred to Copenhagen, Stakieff, feeling that he could stand it no longer, took the wisest course to be adopted, and fled from the danger which he was unable to brave. He was too romantic, however, not to afford himself the satisfaction of a parting letter to his chief, in which he confessed the true reason for his flight. Baron Krudener, who had complete confidence in his wife, acted as the ordinary prosaic man of the world would act who was sure of his wife's affections. He showed her the letter, and thus revealed to this *femme incomprise* the fact that, if her husband was prosaic and indifferent, she was at least capable of inspiring others with a *grande passion*, and herewith, we are told, ended the domestic happiness of this estimable and much-divorced diplomatist.

After her second child, a girl—the eldest, Paul, was a boy—Mme Krudener showed signs of failing health, and it became quite clear that the climate of Copenhagen was too severe for her. Accompanied by her daughter, her step-daughter, and their governess, she started for the south of France, taking Paris on her way. In Paris she plunged into literary dissipation, consorted with the Abbé Barthélemy and Bernardin de St. Pierre, the author of *Paul et Virginie*, and also incurred a bill for eight hundred pounds to Mlle Bertin, the dressmaker of Marie Antoinette. Time elapsed, and her governess left her to marry a M. Armand, while she herself at last succumbed to the attentions of a young officer of hussars, Comte de Frégeville, who, disguised as her footman, accompanied her on her travels. At last her husband's positive orders could no longer be disobeyed, and so, still escorted by her lover,

she arrived at Copenhagen, where the situation had to be faced, and confession was made to the Baron, who appears to have received her communication "with as much dignity as circumstances would permit." Although she continued to see her lover, notwithstanding her husband's prohibition, the latter refused to have yet another divorced wife on his conscience, but persuaded her to join her mother at Riga. M. de Frégeville accompanied her as far as Berlin, and then, the *grande passion* having apparently worn itself out on both sides, rejoined his regiment, to rise in time to the rank of general.

Arrived at her mother's house, in delicate health and with shattered nerves, she lived a life of seclusion in 1792, and, writing to her former governess and friend, Mme Armand, she was able to say, "a merciful God has enabled me to draw many a useful lesson from the past." About this time her father died, and an attempt was made to effect a reconciliation between the Baron and his flighty wife. But a short experience of his society in Berlin was as much as the Baroness could bear. She found the climate too severe, her social duties too exacting, and so she spent the next few years in wandering through Germany and Switzerland, seeing her husband but rarely and for brief periods. She met at Leipsic Jean Paul Richter, with whom she became friendly, and in 1796 she lived for a year at Lausanne at Les Grottes, which had been the residence of Gibbon. Here she met Mme Necker, and seems to have found congenial society and invented the famous *danse du schall*. When Baron Krudener was appointed Ambassador to the Court of Prussia she flew to his side and endeavoured to take her place as an Ambassador's wife; in this attempt she again failed, her unpunctuality getting her husband into many scrapes with the methodical Frederick William III.

It was during this embassy that Baron Krudener received the famous autograph letter from the Emperor regarding the occupation of Hanover by Prussian troops, for which Paul was pressing, and to the following effect :

“ Declare to the King, sir, that if he does not make up his mind to occupy Hanover you are to leave his Court in twenty-four hours. PAUL ..

“ Cha. Mich., 11th March 1801 ”

Bignon asserts that Count Pahlen added in his own handwriting the following postscript : “ The Emperor is not feeling well to-day.”

Agreeable with the sound French maxim, “ In doubt, abstain,” Krudener did not act at once upon his Imperial master’s instruction, to be informed some days later of Paul’s sudden death. He did not survive his sovereign much more than a year, and died of an apoplectic stroke on the 14th June 1802.

We cannot follow Mme Krudener through all her various vicissitudes and her literary successes,—her friendship with Mme de Staël, Chateaubriand, St. Beuve, Benjamin Constant, and her life in the little apartment in the Boulevard des Italiens, or her relations with Garat, the singer, but we will proceed at once to the history of her conversion.

One day as she was looking out of a window in her mother’s house in Riga one of her most ardent youthful admirers raised his hat to her as he passed, and immediately fell down dead from heart-disease. This tragic event appeared to her in the light of a warning. Some days later, while a shoemaker was measuring her for a pair of shoes, she was struck by the beatific expression of his face, and asked him whether he was happy ; he replied that he

was the happiest of men, and inquiry elicited that he was a member of a small community of Moravian Brethren. Regarding herself as "the most wretched of women," Mme Krudener sought consolation and happiness in this community. She quickly assimilated the simple evangelical doctrines of this sect, and promptly proceeded to hold what we must call, for want of a better word, revivalist meetings in her mother's drawing-room. She also devoted herself to the doing of good works, visited the poor, and, in short, led an exemplary life. In 1807 she was impelled to go to Königsberg to succour the sick and wounded soldiers, and here she renewed her acquaintance with Queen Louisa, who wrote to her later: "I owe to your kind heart a confession which I know you will receive with tears of joy. It is that you have made me better than I was."

She then visited Carlsruhe, and became an inmate of the Jung-Stilling household. Here she became imbued with the millennial ideas of that mystic teacher, and it would perhaps have been well for her if she had never met Frederick Fontaine, an Alsatian minister who, together with a woman called Maria Kummrin, would seem to have formed a conspiracy to secure for themselves her wealth and support. With her money they founded a settlement in Würtemberg, where the woman Kummrin set up as a sort of fortune-telling prophetess. The King of Würtemberg, however, soon broke up the community, and we find Mme Krudener once more on her travels, this time with an increased following of dependents, not least important or compromising of which was M. Fontaine. She seemed to have spent most of her time in delivering revivalist lectures, in which the approaching millennium was announced and the doctrine of pure love preached. Her position in society as an Ambassador's widow enabled

her to keep up relations with the great of the land, but it is to be feared that she was already considerably discredited in the eyes of the world when, in 1814, she began to plan and plot to have an interview with Alexander. She corresponded with Mlle Stourdza, a lady-in-waiting of the Empress Elizabeth, Alexander's consort, whose acquaintance she had made at Carlsruhe, together with that of the Empress herself. Indeed, she seems to have succeeded in establishing fairly intimate relations with that unhappy Princess, for we find her writing to Empaytaz : " The Lord has been pleased to unite the soul of the Empress to mine in ardent prayer. I have had more than one conversation with that angelic woman."

The Stourdza correspondence prepared the way for the future meetings with Alexander. The first of these occurred on the 4th of June 1815, when Mme Krudener forced her way into his presence at Heilbronn in Würtemberg, when he was hurrying from Vienna to join his army at Heidelberg. He had given orders that nobody was to be admitted to his presence, and was about to retire when Prince Volkonski informed him that there was a woman outside called Krudener who insisted on seeing him and would not go away. In a letter of his to Mlle Stourdza, where he relates the incident, Alexander tells that lady how he had been thinking of this remarkable woman and of the wish he had expressed of making her acquaintance. The Emperor goes on to say : " So immediate a response to my desire could not be a mere chance. I received her on the spot, and, as though she had been able to read my very soul, she addressed me in hopeful and consoling words, which calmed the agitation with which I had been overcome for so long."

M. Empaytaz gives the following account of the interview : " Mme de Krudener, on hearing the approach of

the Emperor, had left the village of Schlüchtern with the express intention of intercepting him at Heilbronn. From the first moment of entering his presence she addressed her sovereign in the same tone of fearless and outspoken reproof which she was accustomed to make use of towards all those who came to her for spiritual guidance. She pointed out to him the immorality of his past life, the state of sin in which he was still living, and the spiritual pride which had been at the bottom of all his plans of self-reform. And, carried away by religious emotion, she exclaimed: 'No, Sire, you have not yet approached the God-Man as a criminal begging for mercy. You have not yet received the grace of Him who alone hath power on earth to forgive sins. You are still living in the midst of your sins. You have not yet humbled yourself before Jesus. You have not yet cried like the publican from the bottom of your heart, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, and that is why you enjoy no peace of mind. Listen to the voice of a woman who also has been a great sinner, but who has found pardon for her sins at the foot of the Cross of Christ.' The interview lasted far into the night—for three whole hours, the sternness of Mme Krudener's words being tempered by the invariable sweetness and gentleness of her voice and manner. The Emperor was almost incapable of speech. Stirred to the very depths of his being by the eloquent words of his visitor, he sat, with his head resting on his hands, shedding silent tears."

At this time, it may perhaps be as well to add, Mme Krudener was over fifty years of age, thirteen years the Emperor's senior. She was thin to emaciation, pale, with drawn features, her once luxuriant hair hidden under a simple white kerchief. Except for her still beautiful and expressive eyes and her graceful carriage, she retained, we are assured, no trace of her earlier fascinations.

The influence she exercised over the Emperor, whatever may be thought of her motives, was undoubtedly beneficial, and, from the point of view of morality, his conduct was so greatly improved as to attract universal attention. When the allied armies entered Paris, Alexander, instead of joining the throng of frivolous and eager pleasure-seekers, spent his evenings with Mme Krudener and her circle in devout prayer. All readers of the history of those times know about the famous Camp of Virtue, of which Alexander was never tired of reciting the particulars in later years, when 150,000 Russian troops offered thanks, together with the Emperor and Mme Krudener, to God for the success of their arms.

So far the religious influence of Mme Krudener had been for nothing but good. Her unselfishness was beyond question; in the midst of the greatest wealth and extravagance which surrounded her she lived in circumstances that can only be described as penurious in the extreme. Nobody could possibly have lived a more simple or a more unostentatious life. But when she began to take credit to herself for having inspired Alexander with the idea of forming the Holy Alliance, one is forced to the conclusion that the Christian humility and pious unselfishness of this problematical woman are at least open to question. That to Alexander himself belongs the credit, such as it is, of conceiving the Holy Alliance, has been conclusively proved. But if proof were needed it would be sufficient to refer to the views of Alexander enunciated on his accession to the throne to trace the germ of the idea.

There can be no doubt that Alexander himself did not intend the Holy Alliance to be used, as it subsequently was through the ingenuity of Metternich, as an instrument of reaction. On the contrary, the proclamation announcing

it set forth that the three sovereigns, "having become profoundly convinced that it is necessary to base the principles of conduct to be adopted by the Powers in their mutual relations on the sublime truths contained in the eternal religion of Christ our Saviour; declare solemnly that the present act has for its sole object to manifest in the face of the world their unalterable determination to adopt as their rule of conduct, whether in the administration of their respective States or in their political relations with all other Governments, no other principles than those of their holy religion, precepts of justice, of charity and of peace, which, far from being exclusively applicable to private life, ought, on the contrary, directly to influence the resolutions of princes and guide all their decisions, as offering the only means of consolidating human institutions and remedying their imperfections."

It was left to the Machiavelism of Metternich, whose Christianity was, it would appear, not undiluted with worldliness, to turn an alliance formed on such principles into a reactionary measure.

The attitude of Alexander has been described by himself in his interview with Grelle de Mobilier, who with Allen and others visited Russia, her prisons and institutions, in 1818. He told him that while he was pouring out his soul in prayer the idea arose in him to invite all the Crowned Heads of Europe to form a Holy Alliance which should constitute a tribunal before which, in future times, all differences that might arise could be settled instead of having recourse to arms. This idea took so strong a possession of him that he rose, sat down at his desk, and worked at it all night.

Mlle Stourdza's brother, who subsequently made a clean copy of the draft, bears out this statement. Moreover, we must give Mme Krudener credit for considerable

practical shrewdness, and may assume that if she had drawn up the document in question it would probably have been couched in more definite and tangible terms.

Mme Krudener's subsequent career offers but few points of interest. Her extraordinary behaviour and her unfortunate choice of associates brought her into frequent contact with the police of various countries. Her pretension to the gift of prophecy, which was not always exercised with success, made her ridiculous, and her enemies were not slow to poison the ears of Alexander against her.

He even refused to see her when she revisited St. Petersburg in order to plead with him for the liberation of the Greeks, and advised her to leave his capital. By a strange coincidence she died in 1824 in the Crimea at Karasu-Basar, and Alexander, who was at Taganrog the following year, was able to pay her remains a last homage by praying at her tomb, within a month before he himself departed this life.

To take Mme Krudener seriously seems to us as mistaken as to assume from her numerous inconsistencies that she was a hypocrite. The truth seems to be, that she was a weak hysterical woman, who was no doubt a sincere and convinced Christian, but who did not cease to be weak and hysterical when she adopted a life of piety. This is the most charitable, and probably a truthful, estimate of her character.

We must now devote a few words to the other religious influences which manifested themselves in the Russian Court during the reign of Alexander I. Foremost and most interesting among these was the formation of the Russian Bible Society. Danileffski, who was a sort of Boswell to Alexander, tells us that the Emperor never travelled without a copy of a French translation of the New Testament, and that on one occasion, when his valet

lost or mislaid His Imperial Majesty's private copy, Danileffski saved the situation by producing one of his own, and at the same time informed the valet that he always carried several spare copies with him. To Mme Krudener the Emperor stated that he was in the habit of reading three chapters in the Bible daily. Nothing would therefore appear to be more natural than that Alexander should, with the assistance of Prince Alexander Golitzin, the Minister of Public Instruction, who had been a friend of St. Martin, and was accused of mysticism, found a Russian Bible Society. He was ably seconded by Alexander Tourguenieff. This society, owing to the obscurantist tactics of certain ministers of the established Orthodox Greek Church, notably the Metropolitan Photi, had but a short life, and was finally abolished by Imperial decree in 1826. Its head office was in St. Petersburg; it had, however, 289 local committees throughout the length and breadth of the empire, and collected 3,711,376 roubles, and translated the Scriptures into 41 dialects and languages spoken in the land. It distributed nearly half a million copies of the sacred writings, and in the year 1825 alone it printed 70,000 copies in various languages, of which 31,161 were circulated.

Alexander's own religious opinions appear to have been subject to considerable fluctuations, but his standpoint, as explained by him to the Quakers who visited him on the occasion of their journey to Russia in 1818, remained in all probability practically unaltered until his death. He is reported to have said to them regarding his early training that :

“ The persons presented to me had some good qualities, but were not believing Christians, and for that reason my early training did not leave on me any deep moral impressions. In conformity with the customs of our Greek

Church, I was taught to say by rote morning and evening certain prayers ; but this practice, which did not satisfy my spiritual requirements, soon wearied me. More than once when I went to bed was I overtaken by a keen sense of my sins and moral shortcomings, and my repentant spirit would prompt me to fall on my knees in the night and tearfully pray to God for forgiveness and for strength to restrain myself better in the future. This condition of the soul would continue for some time, but gradually, in the absence of all moral support from the people round me, I felt these beneficent experiences less frequently and less strongly ; in the midst of the distractions of the world, sin obtained a stronger and stronger hold over me. At length, in 1812, God again, in His merciful goodness, called me to Him ; and the former experiences were renewed within me with fresh strength. At that time a pious soul (Prince Alexander Golitzin, according to Schilder) advised me to study the Holy Writ, and placed in my hands a Bible, which I beheld for the first time. I devoured the Bible, and found its words gave me a new sense of peace such as I had never experienced before, and satisfied my cravings. God, in His mercy, bestowed His Holy Spirit upon me, so that I might understand what I read. To this inward instruction and illumination I owe the spiritual blessings I have received from reading the Divine Word. This is why I regard interior illumination or instruction from the Holy Spirit as the strongest foundation for a saving grace."

The Quakers further reported that whenever they had an interview with the Emperor he asked them as a favour to join him in silent prayer before they left.

While this was the simple faith of the Autocrat of all the Russias, St. Petersburg society was given up to every kind of religious eccentricity, if we may venture to say so.

Spiritualism and the more occult forms of mysticism were the fashion ; more especially Martinism, which has been confounded with the doctrines of St. Martin. The former sect was founded in the eighteenth century by a certain Martinez Pasqualis, a Portuguese Jew converted to the Roman Catholic religion, who had made a superficial study of Swedenborg, and, perverting the beautiful philosophy of that seer, created a sort of Spiritualist Freemasonry with symbolic rites presenting some of the features of the synagogue ingrafted on certain Roman Catholic forms of worship. Many lodges of this strange association were formed in France, some of the members of which were even believed to be found in the royal family. Some Russian noblemen were infected by the craze and opened lodges in Russia. According to Pisemski, whose novel *The Free Masons* deals with this subject, Speranski was supposed to have belonged to this peculiar sect, and even the Emperor was reported to have been initiated. Pisemski, whose picture of the times is more accurate than artistic, but who took great trouble to get up his facts, can hardly be regarded as a safe guide in abstract philosophical questions, or in unravelling the hidden secrets of the mystic rites, but it is nevertheless a fact that an organisation of some kind or other under the name of Freemasonry had been introduced into Russia, and was at that time as suddenly and unaccountably suppressed.

Prince Alexander Golitzin, whose name has been associated with every form of unorthodox religious manifestation, was dismissed from the Ministry of Public Instruction and Culture ; but, to show that he had not lost his Imperial master's favour, was given the Department of Posts. Hence the mot at the time that in Russia Ministers were not selected for their fitness to fill their posts, but departments were created to give Ministers a position.

Pisemski, who evidently believed these stories about Golitzin, makes all the Post Office officials in his novel Martinist masons.

With the various Moravian and sectarian movements among the peasantry during this reign we do not propose to deal, seeing that we have confined the scope of these pages to the Court of Russia only. The expansion of the Roman Catholic religion by the aid of the Jesuits, and their subsequent expulsion, deserves, on the other hand, a chapter to itself, in view especially of the rumour that both the Emperor and the Empress-mother had secretly been converted to that faith ; but the scope of this work does not permit us to give more space to this subject.

CHAPTER VIII

SECRET SOCIETIES

EVERYBODY knows that it was a palace revolution which put Alexander on the throne, and that in this respect he was not singular, the history of Russia during the eighteenth century being made up of such revolutions. But these were dynastic ; they had for their object a change of persons, not a change of system. It was reserved for the nineteenth century to introduce into Russia the germ of political discontent, although its existence had been suspected by the Empress Catherine II.

In Russia, as many writers have pointed out, including the novelist Tourguenieff, all movements have come from above, and we have endeavoured to show in our Introductory Chapter how Peter the Great was the first Russian revolutionary. If Peter I. may justly claim this questionable merit, Alexander I. is entitled to be regarded as Russia's first political reformer, and the pioneer of the discontent which, commencing with a small and select band of academic idealists, gradually so increased in volume that it may to-day be said to fill the whole country from Virjbalovo to Vladivostok.

Our readers have been told how Alexander gathered round him men of enlightened minds, and how, animated by the noblest and most unselfish ideas, he confided to them his dissatisfaction with the existing order of things. When he ascended the throne his general attitude towards

political questions seems to have been already fairly well known, and there was consequently a general expectation of change, a vague feeling that better times were at hand. We have seen that this popular attitude, this sense of relief, was so patent to all observers, that even so unphilosophical and superficial a recorder as Baroness de Bode seized upon it as a salient feature. But the good intentions of the Emperor remained unfortunately in embryo, and their normal development was arrested, owing largely to his own distrust of himself, the strong opposition he encountered in his own country, but chiefly, no doubt, to the reactionary spirit of the times which found expression in the counsels of Frederick William III. of Prussia and Count Metternich. Nevertheless the disappointment thus engendered gave rise to that remarkable development of discontent which ultimately culminated in what is known as the Decembrists' Conspiracy.

Very soon after the accession of Alexander I. foreign affairs claimed the best part of his attention. The Napoleonic Wars were followed by congresses and conferences at which the presence of the autocrat who had liberated Europe from the thralldom of Bonaparte appeared indispensable. Alexander was therefore absent from Russia for considerable periods, and on repeated occasions. During these absences the country was governed in the good old-fashioned way, and especially when Araktcheyeff's influence was in the ascendant, with needless severity. The public were growing dissatisfied, but the first intimation of anything like organised discontent reached the Emperor at the Congress of Troppau in 1820, most opportunely for Metternich's reactionary schemes. This was the famous mutiny of the Semyonoffski regiment of Foot Guards, of which the Emperor was himself the chief. Alexander, in writing to Arak-

tcheyeff about it, justly says: "It is easy to imagine what grief this has caused me; it is an event which may be said to be unheard of hitherto in our army. What makes it sadder still is, that it should have occurred in the Guards, and for me personally it is particularly melancholy that it should have taken place in the Semyonoffski of all regiments. But, accustomed as I am to speak absolutely frankly to you, I may tell you that no one on earth can convince me that this event originated with the men, or was brought about solely in consequence, as is alleged, of the cruelty of Colonel Schwartz. He was always known to be a good and well-behaved officer, and commanded his regiment honourably. Why should he suddenly become a barbarian? I am convinced that there are other hidden reasons. The instigation was not, it seems, from a military quarter, for a military man would have made them use their weapons, which they did not do; they did not even take their side-arms. The officers, moreover, zealously strove to quell the mutiny, but without success. From all this I conclude that the impetus was given from outsiders and not from military quarters. The question arises: whence was it? This is difficult to say; I confess that I ascribe it to secret societies, who, from proofs in our possession, are in communication with each other, and to whom our meeting and collaboration in Troppau is most disagreeable. The object of the mutiny was to frighten us. . . ."

The hand is the hand of Alexander, but the voice is plainly the voice of Metternich. Of course, Araktcheyeff in his reply agrees with his Imperial master's view, but adds that he believes the mutiny was only a try-on, and that more was in store, consequently it was necessary to sift the matter thoroughly. The Grand Duke Constantine was of the same mind. In his opinion the mental infection was widespread, and was everywhere noticeable. Schilder

has published the report of Adjutant-General Zakreffski on the mutiny, as well as the letters of Colonel Boutourlin describing the events; both these accounts agree in the main particulars, and the facts may be taken to be as follows.

The Semyonoffski regiment, one of the crack regiments of Foot Guards, had of late years grown very slack. The commanding officer, a general and a perfect gentleman, was easy-going and indolent, the young bloods who officered the regiment had a legitimate and lordly contempt for drills and disagreeable duties, and so the regiment had become slovenly and was getting from bad to worse. Now, the Emperor was its chief, and an enthusiast for mechanical precision and smartness; it was felt that the regiment must be pulled together at all costs before the Emperor's return. So the old C.O. was retired, and Schwartz was appointed in his stead. But the appointment of Schwartz was in itself resented by the regiment as an insult. In the first place, Schwartz was not a general, not even a Guardsman, but had been transferred from a line regiment, into which he had put the fear of God, and which he had made the smartest in the army; moreover, he was not a gentleman. He used to address the regiment on parade in language of so cerulean a character that even the privates were disgusted with his foul-mouthed oaths. He would spit in the men's faces, tear their moustaches out, and proceed to fisticuffs on the parade ground. Boutourlin says of him: "Sans être grand rosseur, il eut le talent de se faire plus détester du soldat que s'il l'eût assommé." Such a person could not be respected by his brother officers any more than loved by his men. The officers of the regiment openly scoffed at him, and so, instead of improving matters, Schwartz only still further lowered the tone and discipline of the regiment. By way of climax this zealous officer introduced Sunday drills.

This was the last straw. Having been warned for Sunday drill, the Emperor's own company turned out at one o'clock in the morning, sent for their Captain, and told him that they had had enough of Schwartz, and that they would rather go to the galleys than serve under him any more. The Captain tried to bring the men to a sense of duty, but in vain. He went to the Battalion Commander, who had no better success, and begged Schwartz to come out and address the men. But Schwartz, instead of rising to the situation, barricaded himself in his quarters, and thus demonstrated, by his deficiency in physical courage, his right to the title of bully. Finally, the Battalion Commander succeeded in persuading them to return to their quarters, promising to have their grievances inquired into by their Brigadier-General. Unfortunately the brigade was under the command of the youthful and inexperienced Grand Duke Michael, the Emperor's youngest brother. This Prince's indifferent and apathetic manner made no impression; he failed to bring the men to their senses, and so the entire company was marched off to the fortress, where it was imprisoned. This, it was hoped, would close the incident; it really set fire to the train. At first the remaining companies of the first battalion mutinied because they had been deprived of their head company, from them the mutiny spread to the other two battalions, until the entire regiment was in open revolt. However, the men behaved quietly and perpetrated no disorders; about a hundred of them, under the influence of liquor, tried to force their way into Colonel Schwartz's quarters, but contented themselves with thrashing one of his servants; nearly four hundred others got away, and fears were entertained lest they should infect other regiments, or create disturbances in the capital. Patrols were therefore speedily organised, and these stragglers were finally

captured. In the meantime the insurgents had been quickly surrounded by other troops and were marched off to join their comrades in prison. All this created the greatest uneasiness. The civilian population of St. Petersburg were disturbed by this display of military force, and did not know what to expect, whilst the commanding officers dreaded an organised mutiny of the entire garrison, saying : " It is Schwartz's turn now ; who knows whose turn it may be next ? "

The fate of the men was not enviable ; they were drafted in small batches into line regiments, where the treatment they received did not err on the side of leniency. Colonel Schwartz was broken, and the officers were drafted into line regiments stationed at the greatest possible distance from the capital. The regiment itself was remodelled, a remnant of 700 men who had not mutinied serving as a nucleus. One of the consequences of this unfortunate outbreak was the organisation of a military police attached to the Corps of Guards. Schilder asserts that Alexander was not altogether wrong in attributing the outbreak to outside influence, and states that during this affair an appeal from the Semyonoffski regiment to the Preobrajenski regiment, calling upon their comrades to support them, was found in the precincts of the Preobrajenski Barracks. This, we are informed, was a scurrilous libel, and was signed by " a lover of his country and a friend of the suffering, Your Fellow-countryman." The real author of this mysterious document was never found, but suspicion fell on Karazin, once an intimate of the Emperor's, and an object of dislike and suspicion to Kotchubey, the Minister of the Interior. The unfortunate man was therefore promptly exiled.

On the 5th June 1821 Alexander returned to Tzarskoye Selo, after an absence from Russia of nearly a year. Im-

mediately on his return Adjutant-General Vassiltchikoff waited upon him "in order," to quote Schilder's inimitable language, "to bring to the knowledge of his sovereign the secret, the dreadful responsibility of which had weighed so heavily upon him for so many months, and which he did not believe himself justified in confiding to another. Thereupon the following remarkable scene took place. Vassiltchikoff began by reporting on current business. The Emperor was seated at his writing-table; Vassiltchikoff sat opposite. Having concluded his report, he told the Emperor that he had to hand to him information regarding a political conspiracy which had been laid before him during the Emperor's absence, and shortly before the occurrence of the events in the Semyonoffski regiment; together therewith Vassiltchikoff submitted a list of names of persons implicated in the conspiracy. The Emperor, after listening to these denunciations, which did not appear to take him by surprise, without uttering a word remained rapt in thought for some time, immersed in profound and silent meditation; and then he pronounced in French the following words, which possess an important historical significance: 'My dear Vassiltchikoff! you, who have been in my service since the commencement of my reign, you know that I shared and encouraged these illusions and these errors.' After a long silence Alexander added: 'It is not for me to punish.' . . . Indeed, Alexander was obliged to admit that the aims of the secret societies were not opposed to his former convictions, and that consequently by prosecuting the members of those societies he would be prosecuting himself, the Alexander of 1801 and the succeeding years."

Schilder states further that the Emperor received at about this time a Memorandum on Secret Societies by Adjutant-General A. Benckendorff, Chief of the Staff of the Corps of

Guards. This document was found among the Emperor's papers after his death, and Schilder records that the envelope in which this paper is preserved bears the following pencil inscription in French in Benckendorff's handwriting: "The paper in question found again in the Emperor Alexander's study at Tzarskoye in the year 25. Handed to him in the year 21." On the memorandum itself Benckendorff has made the following note: "Handed to the Emperor Alexander in the year 21—four years before the occurrences of the 14th December 1825." This memorandum was the principal cause of Benckendorff's appointment as Chief of Gensdarmes by Nicholas, who also placed him at the head of the famous Third Section of H.I.M.'s Private Chancellery which he created. Schilder adds that this memorandum described so accurately the secret societies then existent in Russia that nearly every statement was subsequently confirmed by the prosecutions of 1826, hence this same memorandum bears a remarkable resemblance to the famous report of the Committee of Investigation which was written by Bludoff. Thus Alexander was in full possession of all the facts four years before they were brought to light, but refrained from taking measures which, in the opinion of Schilder, an opinion we are not prepared to endorse, would have prevented the subsequent outbreak. The memorandum is so interesting that it is well worth reproduction, if only in abstract, the tone and wording being rather too archaic for literal translation.

After showing how the Napoleonic Wars had familiarised with revolutionary ideas the officers who had accompanied Russia's victorious armies across Europe, the memorandum asserted that these officers had become freemasons, and maintained relations with the members of various secret societies. The ostensible object of those "free-thinkers" was the introduction of constitutional government, "a

system in which nothing should restrain the public licence, and a free rein should be given to ardent passions, boundless ambition, and the desire to shine. Of course, they also desired to occupy the highest positions in the government, and fearing no loss (seeing that they had nothing to lose), to profit by political changes." The memorandum then proceeds to describe the superficial acquirements and subordinate position of those people who "imagined themselves capable of ruling the country." "They hastened to disguise their illiterate ignorance by plunging into the study of political science, and attended private courses of lectures, where they were blinded by brilliant but shallow phrases, and listened to high-sounding but empty words. Their weak intellectual stomachs, devoid of preparatory grounding in the auxiliary sciences, were unable to digest the works of the best writers, for which reason all their culture was but as tinsel." Benckendorff then goes on to explain how the capital afforded exceptional opportunities for these "mental aberrations," which, he darkly hints, were probably encouraged by interested parties. Various associations were formed, only to dissolve in course of time. One of these, however, which outlived most, and with which others amalgamated, was called the Bond of Virtue (probably a translation of the Tugendbund of Germany), the rules of which were embodied in a "Green Book." This, Benckendorff states, was written in obscure mystical language, and borrowed, with inept adaptations, from the bye-laws of foreign secret societies, the main objects of the Bond being ostensibly the cultivation of the arts and sciences, political economy, jurisprudence, etc., so that only the initiated few within the inner ring were fully cognisant of its real purpose, namely, to exercise an influence on every branch of the administration, the means to be used for effecting this purpose

being the circulation of rumours, the dissemination of scandals, the publication of books and newspaper articles with a view to directing public opinion, and unconsciously preparing all classes of the people. Attention was to be constantly drawn to slavery, chains, oppression, tyranny, miscarriages of justice, etc., in order to create a feeling of discontent with the existing order of things. As a first step towards enlisting the suffrages of the lower classes, the emancipation of the serfs was advocated, which every member was pledged to support, together with the diffusion of schools for mutual training. By teaching the lower classes and the rank and file of the army to read it would be possible to interest them in tales, novels, songs, tracts, etc., and this was attempted. The principal members of this society constituted its council, who elected from their midst for periods of four months a president, an inspector or secretary, and four presidents of sections. These officers held weekly meetings, whilst the council was summoned at least once a month. The society had its own seal, a hive with bees, minutes and records, and funds. Correspondence was carried on in an obscure, mystical language, and despatched by messenger. Members had to go through various stages of probation, and were given distinctive names in order to disguise their identity, such as "The Green Lamp," etc. No person was admitted to membership without the preliminary consent of every member of the supreme council. Under the supreme council there were subsidiary councils, each under the presidency of a member of the supreme council, and these subsidiary councils received instructions from the supreme council as to what subject should be discussed by their members, what literature was to be read and circulated, whose character was to be defamed, what opinions regarding the latest acts of the Government were to be spread. Their

opponents were stigmatised as "servile" or as belonging to "Grandmamma's period," *i.e.* the period of Catherine II. The subsidiary councils consisted of not less than eight and not more than twelve members. As soon as this number was exceeded a fresh branch was formed. Every member had to report fully to his council anything of interest that came within his knowledge. It was also the duty of every member to discover and to endeavour to enrol in the society persons of ability, more especially persons enjoying the confidence of people occupying important positions, with a view to being in the secrets of the Government and obtaining early information, and when necessary warning of pending measures. With regard to the army, the intention was to have as large a quantity as possible of adherents in the Guards, but to be content with the support in the line of a number of determined regimental commanders, so that an example set by the Guards could be promptly and effectively followed by entire regiments. At first St. Petersburg was made the headquarters of the society, later the centre was transferred to Moscow, with the object of enlisting the old resident nobility. The leader was not to be elected until all was ready; he was to be a grandee who should be equally popular with the army and the aristocracy. Great things were expected from residents in France and from Vorontzoff, whom the Tourguenieffs were trying to influence, and developments were impatiently awaited in Prussia and Poland. The original members of this society were the four brothers Mouravieff, three of whom had been on the General Staff, one a colonel, and the fourth had served in the Semyonoffski Guard regiment; Pestel, who had been aide-de-camp to Count Wittgenstein; Prince Troubetzkoy, late of the Semyonoffski Guards, resident abroad; Bibikoff, aide-de-camp to H.I.H. the Grand Duke

Michael ; Prince Dolgoroukoff, of the Artillery of the Guard, late aide-de-camp to Count Araktcheyeff ; two von Wiesens, one a colonel of Chasseurs ; Perovski, Quarter-Master General of the 1st Corps of Cavalry of the Reserve ; Shipoff, Commanding Officer of the Crown Prince of Prussia's Regiment ; and Novikoff, a Court official who had served in Saxony under Adjutant-General Repnin. In 1818 this society increased in importance, and its membership rose to two hundred. These were recruited principally from the crack Guard regiments. Amongst them we find such names as Koutouzoff, Narishkin, Orloff, Nicholas Tourguenieff, and Glinka, all belonging to the select and highest circles of Russian society. Through the stupidity of an officer General Vassiltchikoff got wind of this organisation, which, however, the members were able to dissolve, burning all their papers before actual discovery. Benckendorff, however, thinks that the moving spirits, having got rid of incautious members, formed another society, but is unable to substantiate his surmise, which was, however, fully justified by subsequent events. He advises the careful shadowing of these ring-leaders, whose names he gives, but adds that the delicate task of espionage should not be confided to the Governor-General of St. Petersburg, because they had a number of adherents on that gallant officer's staff.

In conclusion, Benckendorff very accurately, as it turned out, summarises the situation. " With the exception of the Baltic provinces, nobody in Russia wants a constitution ; the nobles are opposed to any change from motives of self-interest, and as for the lower classes, they need not be discussed ;—the mob," he says, " has always and everywhere been the mob, and will never be anything else." Benckendorff then recommends careful watch to be kept over the army, with the adoption of benign but

continuous measures, by means of which he is confident of the ultimate removal of the evil. He does not, however, explain what he means by "benign measures." He further counsels the discontinuance of lectures on political economy, which only cause those who attend them to allow their imaginations to get excited, and to grope about in the dark without any guidance for their minds.

Schilder, while giving Benckendorff every credit for the accuracy of his facts, questions the trustworthiness of his explanation of the causes which led up to the formation of these secret societies, and points out that while Alexander I. had already become, in his own estimation, a fatigued martyr, and was wavering between the constantly growing influence of Araktcheyeff on the one hand, and the liberal opinions acquired in his youth on the other, the events of 1812-15 had produced an entirely different effect upon Russian public opinion. The war of 1812 raised the spirits and awakened the national consciousness of Russia to a remarkable degree. The subsequent invasion of France brought people into closer contact with European institutions, and awakened their interest in politics. Nothing was more natural than for them to compare the way things were ordered in their own country with the conditions abroad. Schilder inquires, what met their gaze on their return home? and points in reply to the total absence of any consideration for the personal rights of the individual, the terrible system of military colonies, in which peasants had to support soldiers whilst having to follow the plough in uniform, were taken from the fields to carry out public works, and were flogged into thrift, cleanliness, and a sort of appearance of prosperity, besides many similar outrages in other departments. Hence no surprise need be expressed because the cultured classes, who were animated by a deep patriotic feeling, responded

to the grievances and sufferings of the people. Thus there was presented a curious phenomenon. While the educated classes formed secret societies with a view to reforming the existing order of things, the disappointed and wearied Emperor, succumbing to malign influences, was placing himself at the head of the reactionary movement in Europe, and turning his back on those enlightened principles of which he stood up as the representative at the noblest period of his life. Alexander seemed in his later years to lack the courage to face the problems of internal government, and is reported to have told one of his generals that reviewing troops did not fatigue him, but that when he reflected on how little had been accomplished in the interior of his country the thought of what still had to be done weighed him down and made him feel tired.

The shrewd surmise of Benckendorff that the Bond of Virtue, although dissolved, was probably revived in another form was, as we have said, correct. From that society there sprang two others, the Northern and the Southern Unions. The first was run by Nikita Mouravieff and Nicholas Tourguenieff. Later, in 1823, the society was joined by Condraty Ruyleyeff, who became leader of the Northern Union, which was in favour of a constitutional monarchy. The Southern Union, which was confined at most entirely to the army, was organised and led by Paul Pestel, a colonel commanding a regiment, and the son of the corrupt Governor of Siberia. This union advocated a republican form of government, in support of which Pestel edited and issued secretly the famous periodical called *Russkaya Pravda*. Many of the members of this league were of opinion that for the salvation of Russia it was not only necessary to assassinate the Emperor Alexander, but absolutely indispensable to exterminate the entire Imperial family. This was at least a favourite theme of discussion.

The operations of this society called into being yet another named the Slavonic League, or the United Slavs, the members of which were less interested in the form of government to be established than in the speedy and effective removal of existing conditions. They represented the extreme and irreconcilable wing of the forces making for revolution, and Serge Mouravieff-Apostol used to describe them as chained mad dogs.

In order to consolidate all these elements still further, Pestel opened negotiations with Prince Yablonski, the representative of the Polish Patriotic League; but the details of these pourparlers are little known.

“Such,” says Schilder, “was the dangerous and barren path along which were led astray some of the best representatives of thinking Russia. Every year the crisis grew more and more inevitable, and in the meantime the Government confirmed itself more determinedly than ever in its reactionary course, thus indirectly strengthening the secret revolutionary propaganda. With regard to the Emperor Alexander personally, he grew more and more melancholy and increasingly suspicious.”

In 1824 the Emperor wrote: “There are rumours that the pernicious spirit of free-thought or liberalism has been spread or is being spread even in the army, and that this is permeated with secret societies or clubs who have their secret missionaries.” He then correctly gives the names of some of the leaders, among whom, he said, there were generals, colonels, and staff officers.

Kosheleff, in a retrospect of those times, describes very vividly the state of things. Everybody blamed the Emperor for the weakness he displayed in giving way to Metternich and Araktcheyeff. Old men, middle-aged men, and youths joined in abusing the Government. Whilst some apprehended a revolution, others ardently desired it.

CHAPTER IX

LAST DAYS

IF the early years of Alexander's reign were spent in formulating good resolutions, his detractors have maintained that the later ones were devoted to breaking them. This is rather too epigrammatic to be accurate; more correct would it be to say that during the latter years of his reign he spent such time as was not devoted to congresses abroad in travelling throughout the length and breadth of his wide domains. Like a prudent landowner, he visited his large estates and carefully inspected the details of administration. These journeys may have partaken too much of the nature of military inspections, and may seem to us to have been of so perfunctory and superficial a character as to have had very little influence on the course of affairs and the well-being of the nation; they were none the less real for all that, and entailed a considerable amount of personal fatigue and labour. They kept the various local administrators on the alert, and gave the people under their control opportunities for placing their grievances at the feet of the autocrat, of which they availed themselves fully. In this way Alexander kept himself in touch with his subjects, and felt that he was not neglecting his duty. He inspected the various local garrisons and military colonies, in the latter of which he saw that the hovels of wood and mud, which formed the usual residences of the peasantry, had

been replaced by cottages of brick, that the men had shaved their beards and cut their hair, that even the children wore uniforms, and that the smallest details of the daily life of both men and women were subject to printed regulations, failure to comply with which called down the inevitable strenuous application of the instruments of corporal punishment. Moreover, he observed the condition of the roads, the cleanliness of the towns, the state of repair of the public buildings, and generally did his utmost to ascertain whether the officials to whom had been intrusted the local administration were efficiently acquitting themselves of their duties, and able to account for the sums they had ostensibly expended. These journeys were not conducted on a luxurious scale. The Emperor travelled in the ordinary springless vehicles for which Russia is still famous, nor did there exist then, any more than now, remedies to cure the backaches they produced. He slept on a regulation camp-bed, the mattress of which was stuffed with straw, the pillow with hay. Two luxuries only did he permit himself; he never travelled without a certain brand of Burgundy and a sufficient number of bottles of Neva water for his table.

Wearied by the cares of his exalted position, bowed down by the weight of a crown he had never desired to wear, distracted by the conflicting tendencies by which he was surrounded, dismayed by the disastrous effects of some of the hasty reforms he had imprudently attempted, inadequately equipped by the mental training he had received for the difficult problems he was called upon to solve, distrusting, not entirely without reason, the efficiency and integrity of the few available intelligent instruments of his will, the Emperor Alexander, never over confident in his own infallibility, seemed to lose his self-reliance entirely, to question the wisdom of his earlier ideals, and to

content himself, in his despair and disillusionment, with the barest routine work, in the zealous performance of which he sought oblivion from the self-reproaches that haunted him. Being suspicious of all his surroundings,—even the great Araktcheyeff was no exception, but was shadowed and watched by the army of spies which an ubiquitous secret police had called into being,—he was in his later years as self-contained and reticent as he had been frank and ingenuous before. Possibly his deafness was not without influence on this attitude of aloofness which he now assumed, confiding in nobody, not even his nearest relations, and leading a life, in one of the gayest capitals of Europe, of strenuous labour and of austere simplicity. Schilder, who has made a careful and voluminous study of Alexander's character, which certainly does not err on the side of leniency, constantly returns to and emphasises what he calls the duality of Alexander's nature. Whilst, on the one hand, we perceive a well-intentioned young man of noble impulses, whose ardent imagination has been fed on ill-considered platitudes by an impracticable and immature Swiss doctrinaire republican ; on the other, we behold the drill-sergeant, trained in the minutæ of military exercises by a stern disciplinarian in whose half-witted brain the affections and the higher aspirations have been supplanted by an irascible temper, disappointed vanity, and a mania for manœuvring in quaint formations large bodies of uncomfortably attired men. By his father, who was after all the author of his being, Alexander was made to feel the all-importance of the goose-step, and how the welfare and security of the empire depended absolutely and entirely upon the precision and rapidity with which a line could be formed into fours. And thus were produced in the character of Alexander those contradictions which made him capable of apologising

to his servant for a rudeness and almost in the same breath of condemning to severe punishment a soldier who had a button missing or a buckle out of place. This explains, to Schilder's mind, how it was possible for a man like the Emperor to have at one and the same time both Speranski and Araktcheyeff for his friends and confidants; how he could make Czartoryski his Foreign Minister, and yet sit at the feet of King Frederick William III. of Prussia; challenge Metternich to fight a duel for insulting him, and give audiences to Quakers. He tells us how trying this "Angel" could be to his surroundings, and quotes Prince Volkonski as saying that he would never travel with the Emperor again, because he could not put up with his tantrums. "You have only occasionally seen," said the Prince to Danileffski, "what I suffer; but you have no idea, nor does anyone know, what I am exposed to." He then proceeded to quote instances. On one occasion the King of Prussia arrived at a ball, given by Prince Vorontzoff, before the Emperor, for which unfortunate solecism Alexander "spoke such words" to Volkonski that the latter "felt disposed to quit his service that minute." On another occasion some English ladies arrived late for dinner, when the rest of the company had already sat down, for which poor Volkonski also got a terrible scolding, and so on.

We venture to think that it is quite unnecessary to seek for "duality" in Alexander's character to account for his shortcomings and failures. To say that he was inconsistent is but another way of saying that he was a human being; none but very dull and unimaginative persons can lead such colourless lives as to be uniformly consistent, or can invariably suit their actions to the estimable sentiments which we are all prone to express on occasion, and have so often copied in our youth as to have got them ingrained in our minds. In our opinion the

tragedy of Alexander's life goes far deeper, and his failures are attributable to a very different cause. After all, it is a tactical error to defame the character of the autocrat when the desired object is to discredit the autocracy. The obvious counter-attack which such tactics invite is the retort that a bad autocrat discredits autocracy no more than a bad priest discredits religion. A number of people will continue to maintain that, provided the autocrat be wise and benevolent, autocracy, or one-man rule, is the only efficient, and therefore the best, form of government. Hitherto the fight has always raged round the character of the autocrat, and the real objective has been lost sight of in the thick mist of personal venom thus raised. If it were possible to prove the hated tyrant to be a pattern of all the virtues, a paragon of wisdom, and a Niagara of energy, and yet to show that he failed, this would do more to discredit the system than any number of slanders and denunciatory invectives. Unfortunately the perfect despot, like the perfect man, has yet to be found, and will not, we fear, be discovered so long as error, the distinctive characteristic of the human species, continues to differentiate us from animals.

The explanation of Alexander's failure need not be sought in any other circumstance than the accident of his birth. We have seen how little Russian blood actually coursed in his veins. Born of a German mother, and educated under the auspices of a German grandmother by a Swiss doctrinaire, Alexander from the outset presented all the racial characteristics of his Teutonic parentage. He was sentimental, and sought out friends with whom he cemented bonds of union which read like a pale reflection of the vowing of brotherhood, still one of the picturesque and humanising customs of German universities. Both his good and his bad qualities were patently racial. He

was meticulous and pedantic, and was deficient in that saving grace which some call humour and some common sense, but which is a much higher gift than either, and really a sort of intuitive lumen which suggests instinctively to the mind the difference between practicable ideals and moonshine, between real wisdom and pretentious foolishness. United to an impracticable sentimental idealism, so characteristic of German youth, was a stern conscientiousness, which manifested itself in a strong sense of duty, a love of order, methodical neatness, painstaking laboriousness, unrelenting discipline. He had, moreover, that chivalrous conception of honour which is peculiarly Teutonic, and he was wanting in that rare quality, a sympathetic imagination, an eminently Slavonic characteristic, which is so epigrammatically defined by the French proverb: "to understand everything is to forgive everything." Alexander never understood his subjects, and consequently could not forgive them for their failure to understand him. That they did not understand him is quite excusable. The Russians and the Germans, although next-door neighbours, have never understood each other. The German regards the Russian as a lazy, dishonest, untruthful barbarian; whereas to the Russian the German appears as a sort of giant or superman, a monster of energy, knowledge, and greed, whose industry and thrift are only equalled by his cruelty. The Russian is quite incapable of looking on life from the German point of view. He marvels at the patient, unimaginative laboriousness of the Teuton, and cannot comprehend the object of all this self-denial, this ceaseless work without haste, without rest, this slow accumulation of wealth and power. *Cui bono?* The Russian is, after all, a good deal of a fatalist; he can suffer in silence and with heroism, he will bear with resignation misfortunes that would drive a stoic to

despair, but he cannot stand being regarded as a factor in a mathematical problem. He is a human being of flesh and blood, with human passions and emotions; he will excuse defects of character in others, sensible as he is of his own, but he resents to be treated as a machine. To the cold logic of the German mind there are no human beings, there are only mathematical problems and animated machines. The German inflicts and accepts punishment for a breach of the law as an act of justice. The Russian regards all criminals as "unfortunates," and has been led, by centuries of oppression, to look upon all evasions or infractions of the law as perfectly excusable; it is his misfortune to be found out. Hence the Russian will condone arbitrary outbreaks of temper, while inflexible and relentless justice will arouse his deepest resentment. Moreover, the German "Gemüth" is a very sober, chastened, and prudent thing as compared with the expansive and selfless "shirokaya natura" of the Russian.

On the very threshold of his reign Alexander was confronted by the difficulty of finding trustworthy servants. The aristocracy were self-indulgent and pleasure-loving, the officials were dishonest and self-seeking; ignorance was universal, and even intellectual men like Karamsin, for instance, were incapable of understanding the problems before the nation. Foreign countries had not recovered from the shock of the French Revolution; Metternich and Castlereagh were not isolated phenomena, they were types. Canning went so far as to call Metternich the greatest liar in the civilised world, but he might have described a number of contemporary statesmen in the same manner. Is it surprising that Alexander, finding no support either at home or abroad, should have ended by distrusting everybody, including himself? The German pedantic sentimentalist, the autocratic ruler of sixty

millions, could establish no bond of sympathy between himself and his subjects, who conspired to murder him because they could not understand him. The Emperor told La Ferronaye, the French Ambassador, that he was in favour of constitutional government, and believed that every decent person was of his opinion, "but," he added, "is it wise to introduce constitutional forms of government into every country without distinction? Such as I was, I am now, and shall always remain. However, every nation is not equally ripe for such institutions." The emancipation of the serfs was another difficult problem which exercised him throughout his reign; finally, he confided to his trusted favourite Araktcheyeff the elaboration of a scheme, and thus unwittingly adopted the safest means of shelving it.

Little remains to be told of the last days of Alexander, which have been graphically described by Dr. Robert Lee, F.R.S., who visited Russia in 1824 in order to join the family of Count Vorontzoff. After describing the famous inundation of St. Petersburg—when "the Emperor Alexander, ever benevolent and humane, visited those parts of the city and suburbs most afflicted by this catastrophe, and in person bestowed alms and consolation to the sufferers, for the most part of the lower classes, and in every way afforded such relief, both then and afterwards, as won for him the still greater love and admiration of his people"—Dr. Lee proceeds to give us a picture of Odessa. "Here," he tells us, society "seemed as free and unrestrained as in London, and there was nothing apparent to a stranger from which it could at this time be suspected that a conspiracy existed to destroy the Emperor Alexander and subvert the government of the country." At a public ball, however, after he had been seen talking to Count de Witt, Prince Serge Volkonski whispered in his

ear, "Take care what you say; he is the Emperor's spy," which afterwards was actually proved to be the case. "On the 14th October 1825 (O.S.), at Odessa," Dr. Lee records that he received a letter from Count Vorontzoff at Taganrog informing him of the Emperor's determination to visit the Crimea, and requesting the doctor to join the Count. The object of the Emperor's visit was to find a dwelling-place for his consort, whose delicate health was already undermined by the cold winters of the northern capital. Dr. Lee describes his voyage, and refers to Admiral Greig, the Scottish commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. He then states that "Count Vorontzoff, General Diebitch, Sir James Wylie (the Emperor's Scottish physician), and myself, with one or two others, had the honour of dining with the Emperor on this occasion, the last day he was destined to enjoy" (this last phrase is a little obscure). "The Emperor addressed himself chiefly to Count Vorontzoff, who was seated next to His Majesty, and the greater part of the conversation was carried on in French and English. . . . There were oysters for dinner, and a small worm was adhering to the shell of one presented to His Majesty. This was shown to Sir James Wylie, who said it was quite common and harmless; and he reminded the Emperor of a circumstance which had occurred to him at the Congress of Verona. A person at Venice had then sent to the Emperor to entreat that he would abstain from the use of oysters, as there was a poisonous marine worm or insect in them. . . . His Majesty made a frugal repast, and drank little wine. When champagne was presented Count Vorontzoff said: 'Sire, may we be permitted to drink to the health of Her Majesty the Empress?' He replied, 'Most certainly,' and all immediately rising did honour to the toast."

Soon after this dinner with the suspicious oysters the Emperor was attacked with symptoms of slight catarrh, which later assumed the decided form of remittent fever, but refused to take any medicine, and on the 19th of November he died at Taganrog.

Dr. Lee says: "On the evening of Friday, the 27th of November, I proceeded, at the request of Count Vorontzoff, to the residence of Sir James Wylie, for many years physician to the person of His Imperial Majesty, for the purpose of obtaining an account of the Emperor's illness, and the treatment which would have been pursued had not His Majesty strenuously refused all medical assistance. Sir James read to me the whole of the reports of His Majesty's case, written down by him from day to day, and which contained the fullest and most satisfactory explanation of all the attendant circumstances; those reports were also signed by two other physicians, who coincided in the views entertained by Sir James respecting the nature and proposed treatment of the disease. As these reports were about to be forwarded to St. Petersburg for the satisfaction of the Government I could not procure a perfect copy, but the following are the most important facts they contained, and were noted down by me in shorthand as I heard them. Dr. Reinhold, surgeon to the Empress, who had remained with the Emperor during the night of the 12th of November, came in when Sir James Wylie was thus occupied, and declared to me in the most unequivocal manner that he was entirely of the same opinion with the other physicians respecting the nature of the disease, and of the means that would have been employed.

"The weather suddenly changed on the day the Emperor left Aloupka, the 27th of October. A thick mass of clouds covered the mountains in the afternoon, the east wind was cold, and a shower of rain fell. The previous

day had been intensely hot on the coast, and at the time the Emperor was riding from Yoursouff to Aloupka. His Majesty was accustomed to travel in an open calèche with a light military cloak, trusting solely to the vigour of his constitution against the sudden changes of the atmosphere. After quitting Aloupka he went to that part of the road where the ascent of the Mordvem commences, and hesitated for some time whether to proceed by this difficult pass over the mountains, which are between three and four thousand feet high, into the valley of Baidar, or by that of Foros. After a little delay he decided for the former, and arrived at Baidar fatigued, perspiring, and unusually irritable on account of the unruliness of his horse. At Baidar a calèche awaited him, but no refreshment was prepared—his *maître d'hôtel* having gone on to Sevastopol. From Baidar he proceeded to Balaclava, and reviewed Colonel Ravigliotti's regiment of Greek Guards. The Emperor again entered his calèche, and drove to that part where the road turns off to the monastery of St. George. Here he mounted a horse and rode to the monastery alone, a distance of at least ten versts. Sir James had gone forward before him to Sevastopol, but the Emperor did not arrive there until it was quite dark, having remained upwards of two hours in the monastery, where was a bishop and several priests. He entered Sevastopol by torchlight, and before going to the house prepared, went to the church, and afterwards reviewed some troops drawn up in a line along the street through which he passed. His Majesty dined alone, and, it was said, scarcely tasted anything. The following day, at twelve o'clock, he examined the barracks, hospital, and forts, and then set out for Bachesarai. On the journey he was observed to be asleep in the carriage. At Bachesarai the Emperor also dined alone, and the following morning

he informed Sir James Wylie that he had suffered from an attack of bilious diarrhœa in the night, but that he was then perfectly well. Thus, he said, will all my complaints pass away without the help of medicine. Sir James did not state to me the circumstances which led the Emperor to believe that medical treatment was of no avail in arresting the progress of disease, and to determine him not to have recourse to its aid. There could be no doubt that the Emperor had some peculiar views about the doctrine of predestination, but whether his scepticism respecting the efficacy of medicine originated in these opinions I could not ascertain. His Majesty that day went to Chupet Kali, and returned in the afternoon to Bachesarai to meet the Tartar chiefs. Next day he went to Kosloff, and on arriving there Sir James observed that they had passed some marshes which emitted a most disagreeable odour. The following night he slept near Percop, and on the next between the Isthmus and Orehoff. At this place he was observed by his *valet-de-chambre* to be ill, but His Majesty did not inform Sir James of the circumstance, and the latter saw nothing unusual in the appearance of the Emperor the next morning during their visit to an hospital close by this village. But the valet afterwards stated that His Majesty had been very ill in the night, and inquired if Sir James did not observe how pale he was. In the carriage with General Diebitch, on the road to Marienpol, the Emperor was attacked with violent shiverings, and on arriving there had a strong and distinct paroxysm of fever. A warm bed was prepared for him, and he took some hot punch. As the place they were in was of a wretched description, Sir James recommended him to push forward to Taganrog on the following day, and then to take the proper remedies. He reached Taganrog on the 5th of November (O.S.). On the two

following days the Emperor suffered severely from derangement of the liver and digestive organs, and experienced severe paroxysms of fever. It was evident that he was severely attacked with the bilious remittent fever of the Crimea; but at this time there was no headache or any other symptom of the brain being affected. Four grains of calomel were given and some purgative medicine, with great but temporary relief of the febrile symptoms, yet His Majesty would not consent to a repetition of these remedies, or to the adoption of any other means. On the 8th the fever continued with undiminished violence, and as the Emperor positively refused to avail himself of the aid of medicine Sir James requested that Dr. Stofregen, physician to the Empress, should be called into consultation. His head had now become burning hot, and a marked change was perceptible in His Majesty's countenance. When Dr. Stofregen was introduced he said: 'I am distressed to see your Majesty suffering in this manner.' 'Say nothing of my indisposition,' replied the Emperor, 'but tell me how the Empress is.' After being satisfied on this point, His Majesty told Dr. Stofregen that Sir James Wylie considered him in a dangerous state, but, he added, 'I feel that I am not seriously ill, and that I shall recover without the employment of medical aid.' It was the opinion of the physicians that the Emperor should have been bled at this time, and that calomel and cathartics should have been freely administered, and this opinion they gave to the Emperor in a decided manner, but he would not consent to the employment of any remedies. The paroxysms of fever recurred, but there were occasional remissions when the pulse came down to the natural state—once to seventy-one and repeatedly to ninety, but it was at all times during the progress of the disease extremely small and feeble. On the 13th of the

month, and tenth day of the disease, it was again proposed to take blood from the Emperor, but he would not submit. On the morning of the 14th, Sir James and the other medical attendants again urged him to the same purport, but he refused, even to the application of leeches to the head. He rejected this proposal with the greatest impatience and obstinacy. The Empress on her knees implored him to consent, but he would not."

"He preferred," he said, "to rely on his constitution. Sir James, feeling that his life was in imminent danger, proposed sending for a priest. On the 15th he received the last offices of the Church, but as a private individual, and on the 19th he was dead, after having been delirious for some days." The Empress had been kneeling by his bedside, with her eyes fixed upon him, as he gradually became weaker and weaker, until all signs of life were gone. Then rising, she closed his eyes, and with a handkerchief bound up his head, to support the lower jaw. After this she folded his arms over his breast, kissed his hand, and then knelt down by the side of the dead body for half an hour in prayer to God. Throughout the whole of His Majesty's illness she manifested the strongest attachment to her husband, and at his death was inconsolable.

"On the *post-mortem* examination of the body being made, the appearances observed were such as are most frequently met with in those dying from bilious remittent fever, with internal congestion. Two ounces of serous fluid were found in the ventricles of the brain, and all the veins and arteries were gorged with blood. There was an old adhesion between the dura and pia mater at the back part, but of no great extent. The heart and lungs were sound, but too vascular. The liver was turgid with blood, and of a much darker colour than natural. The spleen was enlarged and softened in texture.

“ The prevalence of fever in the Crimea during the autumn, the sudden change of the weather when the Emperor left the coast, the usual symptoms appearing in the course of a few days after quitting Perecop, as I had before observed in others, with the subsequent history of the disease, and the appearances after death, rendered it certain that the Emperor Alexander was cut off by the bilious remittent fever of the Crimea.”

The independent testimony of his British medical man, who was a F.R.S. and a man of character, is of considerable importance in view of the existence of a legend among the Russian people to the effect that the Emperor did not die at Taganrog at all, but perpetrated a sort of pious fraud, substituting a dummy for his body, while he himself emigrated to Siberia, where he lived the life of a hermit and subsequently died in the odour of sanctity.

Indeed, in 1864 there died in Tomsk, at the age of eighty-seven, therefore the same age as Alexander I. would have been had he lived so long, a mysterious hermit, Theodor Kuzmitch by name, who was, during his lifetime, the subject of official correspondence as a person about whom false rumours had been circulated. The legend, which originated in Tomsk and spread from thence throughout Siberia, Russia, and even foreign countries, was to the effect that Theodor Kuzmitch was no other than Alexander I., who had elected to conceal his identity and was spending the remainder of his days in the exercise of an exemplary piety. In 1891 there was published a life of this hermit which went through several editions.

Nothing is known of this mysterious person's life anterior to his appearance in Siberia. In 1836, near the town of Krasnophinsk, in the province of Perm, a man, about sixty years of age, was arrested as a vagrant. He received twenty blows with the pleyt or knout, and was sent to

Siberia. From 1837 onward his fame and sanctity as a hermit began to get noised abroad, and his saintly reputation continued to his death. He invariably refused to communicate any particulars of his early life, would never say what his real name was, or tell people where he was born.

Theodor Kuzmitch is reported to have been tall, broad shouldered, and of a majestic appearance. By his fine presence and melodious voice, which was well modulated, his speech being gentle but deliberate, he produced on all he encountered a sense of awe and veneration. Everybody felt there was something majestic in his noble carriage; his splendid head with its grand features, his kindly eyes, his walk, his movements, his language, all were instinct with dignity and grace. He had an eloquence all his own. Sometimes he was stern and even imperious. All this caused those who approached him incontinently to prostrate themselves before him and go down on their knees. Portraits represent him standing in front of his cell wearing a white shirt tied at the waist with a sash; he is depicted as an old white haired and bearded man, with one arm on his breast the other behind him. A picture of the Crucifixion and of the Virgin can be distinguished inside the cell. The features of the hermit bear a resemblance to those of Alexander I.

This holy man had the gift of healing all suffering, whether physical or mental, and his fame grew and spread all over Siberia. All the afflicted throughout that vast region made pilgrimages to the hermit, to see and hear him and be cured. Schilder relates how two former palace servants who had been exiled to Siberia came to live in the vicinity of Theodor Kuzmitch. One of them fell ill, and so his friend and associate got somebody who knew the old hermit to take him to his cell, in order to procure the

restoration to health of his comrade. He was duly taken to the famous man, and admitted to his cell, which he entered unaccompanied, his guide remaining outside. When he found himself in the presence of the hermit he fell on his knees, overcome by a strange feeling of awe, and with head bent low related his comrade's plight and begged for relief. Presently the venerable old man raised him to his feet and began to speak to him in a voice that was strangely familiar ; looking up in surprise, he recognised standing before him the features of the Emperor Alexander I., his old master. With a cry of astonishment he fell down in a swoon. The guide who had waited now came in, and was told to carry the prostrate body home. "He will come to presently," said Theodor, "but warn him not to tell anybody what he saw. As for his friend, he will recover." This proved to be the case, but the fact that Alexander I. had been recognised by one of his own servants was circulated all over the empire.¹

We feel, in concluding our fragmentary review of Alexander, that we cannot do better than quote a famous passage from his favourite book : "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Alexander was assuredly not worldly.

¹ A pamphlet has recently been published by the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevitch, jun., exposing the absurdities of this legend.



THE EMPEROR NICHOLAS I

FROM A PENCIL SKETCH TAKEN FROM LIFE BY KRÜGER

PART II

NICHOLAS I

CHAPTER X

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

ON Thursday the 25th June (O.S.—6th July, N.S.) 1796, at 3.45 a.m., the Grand Duchess Mary, wife of the Grand Duke Paul, was delivered at Tzarskoye Selo of a son, who received the name of Nicholas, which had so far never been borne by any member of the ruling house of Russia since the days of Vladimir. The Empress Catherine, foreign to her custom, was not present at his birth, but arrived soon afterwards, in time to assist at the thanksgiving offered up by her chaplain. Princess Charlotte Lieven reported that the Empress was astounded at the size and beauty of the infant, and blessed him. Writing to Grimm to announce the happy event, Catherine says, speaking of the infant : “ He has a bass voice, with which he screams in a surprising manner. He is a yard long all but two inches, and his hands are nearly as large as mine. In my life I have never seen such a warrior knight. If he continues as he has started his brothers will be dwarfs by the side of this colossus.” Less than a fortnight later she again writes : “ Sir Knight, Nicholas, three days ago, began to take pap, for he is for ever feeding ; I do not believe that any eight-day child has ever had such meals

as he ; it is unheard of. The arms of all his nurses are fit to drop ; if he goes on like this I should not wonder if he was weaned at six weeks. He stares at everybody, and moves his head as I do."

This "warrior knight" ascended the throne as the Emperor Nicholas on the 14th December 1825, and, as Schilder says with truth, fulfilled by his life and reign the prophecy of Catherine, "for Nicholas indeed lived and died a true knight"; he might have added, "of the Middle Ages."

Derjavin, in his poem on "The Christening of the Grand Duke Nicholas Pavlovitch," says :

"The child shall rank with Tzars,
And glory shall he earn,
Of Catherine's soul the peer."

After the christening the mother returned to her gloomy Pavlovsk, whilst the infant, in accordance with established custom, remained under the eye of his grandmother. In the November of the same year, however, the Empress died suddenly, and Paul reigned in her stead,—the fierce meteor, according to Karamsin, which flashed across Russia. Nevertheless his grandmother had time to render Nicholas at least one good service, by providing him with an excellent nurse, and had she lived there is no doubt that he would have received an education at least as liberal as that of his two brothers, Alexander and Constantine ; but this was not to be. The nurse whom Catherine selected was a Miss Lyon, the daughter of a Scottish sculptor or modeller, who had been invited to come to Russia together with other artists by the Empress. During the first seven years of his life Miss Lyon had sole charge of the Grand Duke, and it was her boast that, in spite of her British nationality, she was the first to teach him the Lord's Prayer in Russian. Nicholas was passionately

devoted to his "lioness nurse," as he called her. She seems to have possessed to a pre-eminent degree the Scottish characteristic of efficiency.

Baron Korff, in his *Life of Nicholas* published by the Imperial Russian Historical Society, thus describes this lady :

"The character of Miss Lyon was unusually bold, determined, straightforward, and noble. In the seven years during which she had charge of the Grand Duke she more than once acted in direct contravention of the orders not only of governesses and the Countess Lieven, but even of the Empress Marie Theodorovna herself." Baron Korff then goes on to say that she frequently even acted in defiance of medical authority, but there is the following marginal note in the original MS. against this statement : "This is not true," in the handwriting of Alexander II. Korff continues that while Miss Lyon was often reprimanded for her temerity, she always retained the confidence of the Empress, because whatever she did invariably proved to be right. "She was very hot-tempered, but like the majority of irascible people, extremely kind-hearted. Her attachment to her august charge amounted to a passion, a fanaticism, which she retained to the end of her days. . . . Nicholas was ardently devoted to his nurse—indeed, he was ardent in all his attachments, and cherished his respect for her and the memory of his former feelings up to the day of her death (she died in 1842). He would frequently visit her in the suite of rooms of the Anitchkoff Palace, which the Emperor placed at her disposal on her widowhood, and sometimes took tea with her accompanied by his entire august family. Is it not permissible to assume that during the first years of the life of the infant Grand Duke, when the child acquires unconsciously all its feelings, impressions, and antipathies,

there existed between him and his nurse an affinity, and that the heroic, chivalrous, bold, and frank nature of this "lioness foster-mother" exercised a very strong and the happiest influence on the formation and fortification in its most essential element of the character of the Russian eagle and hero?"

This very splendid Scottish lady had smelt gunpowder, and knew what was meant by "battle, murder, and sudden death," for she was in Warsaw in 1794 and witnessed the revolting spectacle of Poles murdering Russians in the streets. She was arrested with a number of Russian ladies, and kept in the arsenal without food or the ordinary decencies of life, thirty ladies being incarcerated in one room. From this position they were rescued by Lord Macarthy, and placed in the Bruleff Palace. Four months later the ladies were transferred to a private house, to be finally rescued by General Suvoroff after a total incarceration of seven months, during which they had to suffer many hardships and were in constant fear of their lives.

Nicholas attributed his hatred of the Poles to the influence of Miss Lyon, whose stories of the cruelties practised by them used to rouse his indignation, and were among his earliest recollections.

We have seen that Miss Lyon was often in conflict with Countess, afterwards Princess, Lieven. This lady was not so fortunate in earning the affections of those she was brought in contact with. The Grand Duchess Marie, a sister of Nicholas, has recorded that "The Princess Lieven was proposed to the Empress Catherine by the Governor-General of Riga, Count Braun, in whom she had confidence. After the death of Mme de Benckendorff, who held a post about my elder brothers and my sister Alexandra similar to that occupied later by Mme de Lieven about the rest of us, the Empress wrote to Count Braun

asking him whether he knew a woman who was unpretentious but had genuine merit, in which case he was to send her over. Mme de Lieven, who was the widow of a General who had served in the Artillery with distinction, arrived in St. Petersburg, and did not fail to let the Empress know how little she thought herself fitted for the post. Her frankness pleased the Empress so much that she decided in her favour. I have often heard Mme de Lieven tell this story. She even kept the letters which the Empress wrote to Count Braun, and these she used to show us. I have found many details bearing on this in the *Memoirs* of Count Sievers which agree with what I have said, and which I have not forgotten. Mme de Lieven had very little of what is called literary education, but she had an active and shrewd mind, a sound judgment, and common sense such as are rarely to be found. One might say of her what is said so often of generals who have distinguished themselves in their profession, that she possessed the instinct of a tactful commander; and she needed it badly, or she would never have managed so successfully that feminine legion which was under her orders. We were surrounded by a great number of people, and the Countess manœuvred them in such a manner as to satisfy at once the Empress and our parents, which proves that Princess Lieven knew how to demean herself. She spoke German as that language is commonly spoken in Livonia, Russian indifferently, seeing that she could make herself understood, and French imperfectly; but with this she became more familiar later. Her care for us was ceaseless, and we were very attached to her."

The Grand Duchess Anne has added a note of her own to this record. She says: "I have nothing to add to this panegyric of Princess Lieven, unless it be to say that I share the opinion that she did not speak any language

properly, which, however, did not prevent her from scolding us a great deal. Nevertheless, she was incapable of correcting a single mistake in language or orthography. But she possessed a German library which was sufficiently excellent to enable the worthy Storch to draw from it the necessary supplies for my lessons in literature."

Korff further states that, according to the Book of Accounts of the Court for 1797, one of the three ladies appointed as governesses to the Grand Duke Nicholas was Julia, the widow of Colonel Adlerberg, who had commanded the Viborg regiment of Musketeers. On her husband's death this lady, being left destitute with two children, a boy and a girl, was recommended by Baron Nicolay for a Court appointment. The boy, Vladimir, was destined to rise to be Minister of the Court, and one of the most important figures in the entourage of the Emperor Nicholas, whom he survived by many years, dying at a very advanced age towards the end of the century. In the early seventies he was still one of the bucks of St. Petersburg. He wore a wig and stays; and it was said of him that when he was attired in his standing-up coat he was so tightly laced that he could not sit down, and that when he was sitting down he could not stand up without the assistance of his aide-de-camp or private secretary, who pressed a spring in his stays which brought the mechanism of these supports into the upright position. He was a universal favourite, and revered by all who knew him for his genuine kindness of heart, combined with the traditional elegance of manner of the old-fashioned courtier. His grand-nephew, Councillor of the Russian Embassy, was for many years a well-known and popular figure in London society, and his nephew was one of the best Governors Finland ever had. The friendship between the infant son of the widowed governess and the Grand Duke Nicholas,

four years his junior, was formed in a most characteristic manner. One day, presumably, we are told by Korff, in 1799, Nicholas, who was being taken to the Empress by his nurse, saw little Adlerberg, and was so attracted by him that he immediately took him by the hand and insisted on his accompanying him. The Countess Lieven, the boy's mother, and the other ladies in attendance, endeavoured to dissuade him, and to induce him to walk by himself and not to descend to familiarities with ordinary mortals, in pursuance of the instructions of the haughty Empress Marie. But the Grand Duke was not to be thwarted; with screams and tears he insisted on retaining the hand of his new-found friend. Miss Lyon, in order to put an end to what promised to be a protracted nursery tragedy, took all responsibility on herself with her usual courage, and allowed the two children to proceed hand in hand to the august presence of the Empress. The latter seemed at first displeased at the sight of the two children thus unceremoniously walking together, but, on the Emperor Paul taking little Adlerberg under his protection, she unbent, especially as the little fellow's winning ways had won her heart also. He thereupon was constituted the playmate of Nicholas, whom he continued to address by the familiar "thou" through life; moreover, the Grand Duke was henceforth allowed to have other playmates.

After the death of Catherine and during the first half of 1797 the infant Nicholas saw more of his mother. Previously she had paid him an official visit once a day, now he was brought to her in a kind of perambulator every morning at some time between eight and twelve, and every evening between six and nine. These visits lasted half an hour, but were sometimes prolonged to an hour, the Empress usually spending her evenings with her children until the balls or other Court entertainments commenced. Speaking

generally, however, it would seem, according to Korff, that the Empress Marie, that angel of benevolence and charity, was rather cold and distant in her relations with her children during their infancy. While Paul was an affectionate parent, his consort was stern and rigid, a great stickler for etiquette and forms, and a severe disciplinarian. Her life was largely devoted to the observance of meticulous duties, and the circumstance and pomp of her position naturally appealed to a woman whose proud character had been held in subjection for so many years by her mother-in-law, who never really liked her. In view of this love of ceremony and pomp, it is not surprising to learn that almost immediately after Catherine's death the infant Nicholas was made chief of the Cavalry regiment of Life Guards, the first battalion of which was called after his name. We find that when he was scarcely a year old he had already an extensive wardrobe of furs, principally sables; and in 1798 he began to wear silk stockings. In the same year he was given a piano and a concertina, the latter as a reward for the courage with which he bore his vaccination. Later he was allowed to have pets, such as various birds, including canaries, and dogs. Miss Lyon was allowed sixty pounds wherewith to purchase English toys for her charge. As early as 1799 Nicholas received his first uniform, that of his own regiment; in 1800 he was made chief of the Ismailoffski regiment of Foot Guards, and from that date he generally wore the uniform of that regiment; he also received in this year the star of the Order of St. Andrew and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, both of which he had to wear when he was not more than four years of age. At the age of five he commenced to ride.

From 1802 onwards Nicholas was gradually removed from feminine influences and placed under the supervision

of tutors. The choice of governor fell on Count Matthew Lamsdorff, the ancestor of the late Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Lamsdorffs were descended from a very old noble family who owned large estates in Westphalia, and settled in the Baltic Provinces in the fifteenth century. In 1620 we find an ancestor of Lamsdorff's confirmed in the knighthood of Courland of the first class. Matthew's father was educated in St. Petersburg, and commanded with distinction the Vendenski regiment. Matthew himself was born in 1745, and also embraced the profession of arms. He went through the Turkish War of 1770 as aide-de-camp to General Soltykoff, and received rapid promotion. In 1784 he was colonel commanding the Kazan cuirassier regiment, when he was appointed one of the tutors of the Grand Duke Constantine, a post which he held for ten years. In 1795, being already a Major-General, he was made Catherine's first Russian Governor-General of Courland, in which office he won golden opinions. When visiting Mittau in 1797 Paul was particularly gracious to Lamsdorff; and it is recorded that at a certain dinner, when the Governor-General evidently hesitated to seat himself next to the Grand Duke Constantine, Paul called out for everybody to hear, "Sit you down there, General; the little good that is in him he has got from you!" Indeed, Schilder tells a story to the effect that on one occasion Constantine as a boy was disobedient, which happened very often, and threatened to jump out of the window; whereupon the self-possessed Lamsdorff opened it for him, with a bow, and said, "If you please, your Imperial Highness!" This so completely took Constantine aback that he apologised and became tractable. The wise courtier was subsequently promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General and made director of the Corps of Cadets, and later, in 1800, selected by Paul to be the governor of his

two youngest sons. "If you do not wish to do it for my sake," Paul said to the protesting Lamsdorff, "you must do it for Russia. But one thing I wish to tell you, and that is this, take care that my sons do not grow up to be such scamps as the German Princes."

Lamsdorff had married a sister-in-law of La Harpe; but, as Schilder correctly points out, it is fallacious to attribute his appointment to the influence of the Swiss Jacobin, whom Paul had expelled from Russia.

On the death of Paul, Alexander left the education of his brothers and sisters entirely to his mother, who fully approved of Lamsdorff. Korff expresses surprise at the choice of this General, who, according to him, possessed none of the qualities essential in a trainer of youth, and who tried to break rather than develop the character of Nicholas. Schilder in his *Life of the Emperor Nicholas 1.* says: "The system of education then in vogue was harsh, and corporal punishment played a large part therein." The severity with which it was attempted to curb the high spirited tempers of the Grand Dukes appears to have been fully approved by the Empress, but did not, it seems, effect its purpose. Korff tells us that Lamsdorff thrashed his pupil mercilessly, not only with a ruler, but even with a ramrod; and that his severity instead of abating, increased as the years rolled on.

In the meantime Miss Lyon had to leave. The seven years of her agreement had come to an end; moreover, her position had become intolerable. She was an extremely attractive girl in the full bloom of youth, seeing that she was barely seventeen when she commenced her duties; and her beauty had awakened the admiration of the amorous though austere Lamsdorff, who was about sixty, but who persecuted her with his attentions and questionable overtures, which the virtuous Scottish lady indig-

nantly rejected, until the senile passion of the veteran governor turned into hate.

When Nicholas was told that Miss Lyon was about to leave him to get married he burst into tears, and he fretted for a considerable time after his nurse. However, nothing was to be done; in 1803 Miss Lyon got married, and a separation became inevitable. Yet he never ceased to miss her; for it was to her arms that he was accustomed to fly for solace from the harsh pedantry of his unimaginative task-master.

The daily life of the two Grand Dukes, Nicholas and Michael, is described in detail by Korff. As soon as they got up they commenced playing with soldiers. They had a large quantity of wooden soldiers, which they would set up on tables indoors, when the weather did not allow of their going out, but which they would dispose in the garden in the summer, building fortifications and redoubts, and storming them. Besides wooden soldiers they also had some of porcelain, and they possessed an arsenal of guns, pikes, helmets, etc. General Korsakoff gave them small pontoons, fully equipped, with the necessary tools, which they were taught to use, and even a number of small cannon made specially for them. Captain Klokatcheff gave them a small 74-gun ship of mahogany, and taught Nicholas seamanship, thus giving him a taste for naval matters which remained with him to the end.

The Empress and the tutors appointed by her did their best to wean the young Princes from their hereditary love of soldiering, but to no purpose; nevertheless it is curious to learn that Nicholas as a boy was far from possessing that heroic courage with which he was credited in later life, but was, on the contrary, rather a coward, and was particularly frightened at the sound of guns and fireworks, and even thunder. He was also unable to

stand on a high eminence or look down a precipice without feeling giddy. From a very early age he took the liveliest interest in all branches of engineering, to which he remained devoted through life, frequently speaking of himself as an engineer. In the summer he was allowed to look after a small piece of garden which was assigned to him, and which he took a delight in digging up and tending generally. Carpentering was another occupation the young Princes were allowed to indulge in.

The tutors complained that the Grand Dukes were too rough in their games, which generally ended by one or the other being hurt; besides, Nicholas was accused of being too violent in everything he did, and of having very bad manners: he was reported to make grimaces and contortions, and, worst of all, to get fits of the sulks, when he refused to play for no reason whatever, and would remain by himself. His temper, moreover, appears to have been very irascible, and lamentable disputes and fights were not infrequent. When he was thwarted he did not hesitate to call people names, to break up his toys;—he was even known to spit in his sister's face—that sister Anne whom he loved to enthrone and crown as empress, and who has herself generously denied the truth of this grave charge. Both Grand Dukes were shy with strangers, more especially Nicholas, who was considered less intelligent than his brother Michael.

With regard to his religious training, Nicholas used to say, "My children were better off than we in this respect, for we were only taught to make the sign of the cross at stated parts of the Church service, and to repeat by heart various prayers; what was going on inside us nobody troubled to learn."

While the Grand Dukes loathed their dancing lessons at first, they later grew so fond of dancing that they

actually danced ballets composed by their sister Anne. It was the same with music, which they first hated, but later became passionately fond of, Nicholas developing a remarkable ear and memory for music which continued his solace to his dying day. Latin he hated, and he would not allow his own children to be taught this dead language. French, which he was taught by his mother, he also showed little aptitude for ; on the other hand, he seems to have liked German, which he did not commence to learn until 1804. His teachers considered him a boy of "limited intelligence," and complained of his rude and imperious manners, his frivolity, love of joking, and absence of all seriousness.

Nicholas had to get up between seven and eight ; he would dawdle over his dressing, and drank tea in the morning. At dinner he ate little, and for supper he had only a piece of black bread with some salt. His tutors complained of his manners at table, how he used to put enormous pieces of food into his mouth, and drink with indecent avidity. Both Grand Dukes loved caviare and ices ; but on one occasion, when Michael, by way of punishment, was not allowed to have any of either, his brother voluntarily declined to take them.

He went to bed at ten, but before doing so he had to write up his diary, which he hated doing, as all forms of composition were irksome to him.

His room was apparently kept very carelessly ; because, as Korff records, it was necessary to purchase insect powder for the purpose of exterminating the bugs which it contained. The Grand Duke Nicholas never powdered his hair, but had it frequently curled. It was not often cut, however. This latter operation was invariably performed by Frenchmen, who were paid the fabulous sums of one hundred roubles and fifty roubles a time. His nails

were cut by his valet ; but Nicholas hated the process, and always abused his servant whenever he was subjected to it.

One good trait in the characters of the Grand Dukes at this period of their lives must be here recorded, and that is, that they never showed any signs of that cruelty which boys of their age so frequently exhibit. They were uniformly kind to animals ; and Nicholas even sympathised most affectionately with his dog for being ill. His own health was, on the whole, excellent, though he suffered occasionally from biliousness and some of the minor inconveniences to which boys are subject.

As the Grand Dukes did not make the desired progress in their lessons, the Empress, their mother, decided to separate them from the possible evil influences of their companions and playfellows. Adlerberg and others were bundled off, and the Empress took her boys with her to Gatchina, where, secluded from the world, and safe from all outside interruptions, they were to pursue their studies. Even this plan does not seem to have given her satisfaction, for we find her planning the formation of a Lyceum, or public school, at Tzarskoye Selo for the education of her sons, together with descendants of the flower of the Russian aristocracy. This Lyceum was duly opened, and among others the poet Pushkin was educated at that Russian Eton ; but the plan of the Empress-mother of putting her own sons there was not carried out, owing, it is believed, to the strong objections of the Emperor Alexander. Nevertheless, it was felt at that early date that Nicholas might very probably be called to the throne some day, and that it was indispensable that he should be properly equipped for the great position which he might be called upon to fill. Professor Storch was therefore appointed to teach him Social Science, which he divided into four subjects, namely, Philosophy, History, State and National Law, and Political

Economy. Further, he combined under the science of government the theory of constitutional forms and the art of governing. The whole of this ambitious programme, for the details of which we have no space, he was not, however, permitted to carry out, and his lessons were confined to a simple course of political economy. Nicholas fretted over his books, and longed, especially as he had been promoted to the rank of General in 1808, to be allowed to join his brothers in the defence of his country, which was then, in 1812, being invaded by Napoleon.

It was not until 1814, and after all the fighting was over, that the two youngest Grand Dukes were allowed to go to Paris. They were accompanied by Count Lamsdorff, a doctor, three tutors, and a colonel; and every care was taken to protect them from the dangerous temptations which lurked in the capital of dissipation and pleasure. Here Nicholas met again his comrade Adlerberg, whom he soon afterwards appointed his aide-de-camp and from whom he was never again separated. In Paris, Nicholas won golden opinions. He and his brother Michael returned to Russia *via* Brussels, The Hague, Amsterdam, Saardam, where they visited Peter the Great's house, and Berlin. Here Nicholas for the first time set eyes upon Princess Charlotte of Prussia, whom he was destined to marry, and with whom he fell in love. "This," as Schilder says, "could only facilitate the realisation in the near future of the pious wishes of the Emperor Alexander and his friend, Frederick William III."

When the war again broke out in 1815, Nicholas experienced less difficulty in obtaining permission to join the army, although his education was still considered incomplete. Both Nicholas and his brother Michael were, however, kept under very strict supervision, and great care was taken to prevent them from catching the contagion

of licentious living and loose morality which was so prevalent in those days. It seems, moreover, that the motherly watchfulness of the Empress, who inspired everybody in their entourage with a similar spirit, was entirely successful in protecting the young Grand Dukes from the temptations to which they were exposed. Nicholas was able to say later, as Emperor, that he had always eschewed promiscuous relations with women, and had, previous to his marriage, led a life of virtue and chastity, thanks largely to the wise counsels of his body physician, Dr. Crichton, and that he was bringing up his son in the same manner.

CHAPTER XI

TRAVELS

ON the occasion of their first journey abroad the Grand Dukes Nicholas and Michael received from their mother a remarkable letter of advice and farewell. In this epistle, dated 5th February 1814, and addressed : " To my dear sons Nicholas and Michael," the Empress-mother writes :

" The moment approaches, my dear children, when you must leave me . . . my maternal care can no longer be your guide and haven. . . . You are on the eve of the epoch of your entry into the world, when you will appear on the field of honour and glory, but when also, my children, every one of your words and acts will be judged severely though justly ; for the opinion of the army is nearly always impartial, and it will determine that of your country. Deeply affected by these thoughts, I wish to converse with you, my children, and give you counsels drawn from my heart, thus finding some consolation for our separation."

It is unnecessary to continue the recital of this estimable letter, which, like all the correspondence of the Empress Marie, is replete with virtuous maxims, and does equal credit to her head and her heart. She exhorts them to obey their tutors and their military mentor, and cautions them against foolhardiness and bravado, which are very different from real courage. She enjoins them to spend their leisure in study, so that they may fill their minds with the ideals

of the ancients. "Idleness," she says, "the indolence of the mind, undermines the faculties and stifles the germs of the noblest aspirations." She begs them to be kind and courteous to everybody, and to be careful not to wound the feelings of those they may be brought in contact with. They are to refrain from sarcasm and ridicule; their deportment is to be noble without pride, polite without familiarity. Whilst they are to be amiable to all, she expects them to show discrimination in the choice of their friends, whom they should first learn to esteem. She advises them to seek the society of their elders in preference to that of young people. She warns them against paying too much attention to the trivial details of military life, but urges them rather to study to be leaders. They are to be generous without extravagance, prudent without meanness, kind to their servants but never familiar; they are to reserve their judgment on all matters, and listen to the opinions of their seniors.

The Grand Duchess Marie, his eldest sister, thus describes Nicholas at this time :

"In the month of February 1814, unless I am mistaken, my younger brothers arrived in Germany to join the army which had already crossed the Rhine and had entered France. As I had not seen them since 1809, they had grown a great deal, and my mother had thought with reason that I would not recognise them. She thought to surprise me, and so Nicholas arrived dressed very much like a courier. I knew that my brothers were due, but did not know when to expect them; and as it was very early in the morning, and messengers were constantly passing through, to whom I intrusted letters for my brothers with the army and for my mother and sisters in Russia, I was not surprised when a family courier was announced; and when I asked him whence he came and whither he was going,

to which he replied very simply, I was only struck by the general distinction of his appearance, and by the fact that he was accompanied by Colonel Engelhardt, the Russian Commandant of Weimar, who did not usually come in when I received couriers. But a more careful examination of the youthful figure standing before me, and the sight of that Greek nose, so regular and so handsome, which was one of the characteristics of Nicholas, caused me to recognise him with joy impossible to describe. We have often since laughed over this, and that it was by his nose that I knew him again."

In 1815 Nicholas and his brother Michael had less difficulty in getting permission to accompany the army ; and the Empress-mother even writes to them to say, " Present circumstances prescribe the sacrifice of a fresh separation." But their protracted stay in Paris caused her the greatest uneasiness. She writes to General Konovnitzin, to whose care they had been intrusted, to say, " Of course, I do not doubt that the sound moral principles, the religion and virtue, instilled into them, will protect them from actual sin ; but the ardent imagination of youths in such a place, where there is found at every step a picture of vice and frivolity, may easily receive an impression which may darken the native purity of their minds and shake the stability of their ideas, which has been hitherto so carefully preserved. Depravity appears so attractive or so amusing, that young people, carried away by externals, accustom themselves to regard it with less abhorrence and find it less repulsive. I dread this destructive influence all the more in view of the innocent pleasure with which the Grand Dukes, in consequence of their inexperience, look back on their first visit to Paris, unsuspecting the hidden evils. But now that they are older, these impressions must be revealed to them in their true light, and I

beg you earnestly to protect them from these by your fatherly care, as well as to use your discrimination in selecting the entertainments they may go to, which frequently are the means of poisoning imperceptibly, and hence all the more dangerously, the minds of the young."

To this anxious letter the worthy Konovnitzin replied that his charges were in splendid health, that their conduct harmonised entirely with their mother's wishes, and that they went nowhere unaccompanied by tutors. They dined with the Emperor every day, they accompanied him in all his ceremonial functions. Once he took them to the theatre. During their spare time they went sight-seeing, and one day was spent in visiting the fortifications.

These assurances did not, however, entirely calm the anxious heart of their mother, who wrote that she would be very glad to hear of their departure from Paris. It seems that they saw a good deal of the Prussian Princes. William, writing to his brother Carl, says that he sees them every day, and likes them more and more. They talked of nothing but the pleasant time they had spent in Berlin.

Greatly to the relief of their mother, the Grand Dukes left Paris on the 2nd October 1815 and proceeded to Dijon, where the Emperor had preceded them. "I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to Providence," wrote the Empress-mother, "for removing them at last from Paris." From Dijon the young men went to Berlin, where the betrothal of the Grand Duke Nicholas to the beautiful Princess Charlotte was at last announced; but the wedding was not to take place until the Grand Duke attained his majority.

On his return to Russia, Nicholas resumed his studies; but in the summer of 1816 he was sent on a journey through Russia for the completion of his education. During this voyage of inspection of his future dominions he was made to keep two diaries, one to contain descriptions of

civil life, the other devoted purely to military matters. These diaries contain some very interesting entries. At this early date a bias against the Poles is already noticeable. Thus he says :

“ The country gentry of White Russia, consisting almost entirely of very wealthy Poles, who had never exhibited any loyalty to Russia, had all sworn allegiance to Napoleon.” At that date this district, it seems, was already distinguished for its Jews, of whom Nicholas says : “ The general ruination of the peasantry of these provinces is attributable to the Jews, who are second in importance to the landowners only : by their industries they exploit to the utmost the unfortunate population. They are everything here—merchants, contractors, pot-house keepers, millers, carriers, artisans, etc. ; and they are so clever in squeezing and cheating the common people, that they advance money on the unsown bread, and discount the harvest before the fields are sown. They are regular leeches, who suck up everything, and completely exhaust this province. It is extraordinary that they were remarkably loyal to us in 1812, and even assisted us whenever they could, to the danger of their lives.”

The Grand Duke then proceeds to refer to the Roman Catholic propaganda carried on in this district, and the conversions effected by the Jesuits. At Porkhoff he describes the prison and hospital. This, he says, was in so pitiable a state that it was a sin not to say something about it. “ A miserable hut, consisting of three low-roofed lumber-rooms, practically without windows or ventilation, in the central one of which were lodged twenty-two pensioners who were never relieved, and in the other two sixty-six prisoners, without food or clothing, in a stifling, putrid atmosphere, without distinction as to their degree of criminality or age, one on top of the other ;

an old tumble-down wooden guard-house, in which were prisoners with infectious diseases lying on shelves, without clothes or medicine, guarded by pensioners, and without any monies for their keep beyond the contributions of the charitable: this is an accurate description of the local prison."

The military diary is severely criticised by Baron Korff for confining itself solely to trivial details.

Nicholas returned to St. Petersburg on the 26th August (7th September), only to start on his foreign travels on the 13th (25th September), 1816, the principal object of which was to visit England, "that country," in the words of the Empress-mother, "so worthy of attention." The Grand Duke was accompanied by General Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff, Messrs. Savrassoff and Glinka, and Dr. Crichton. They were given as mentor Baron Nicolay, who knew England well, having formed part of Count Vorontzoff's Embassy. In all matters concerning his relations with the Prince Regent, all questions of etiquette, reception, invitations, etc., the Grand Duke was to be guided by the Russian Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, Count Lieven, whose wife, the sister of the General Benckendorff who subsequently became the chief of the famous Third Section, played so leading a part in English society. The Empress-mother was anxious that her son's morals should be watched over, and that he should maintain the strictest incognito. This latter stipulation did not appear to Alexander I. to be necessary, and was, in his opinion, to be observed in such cases only where it was desirable to avoid ceremony. On such occasions the Grand Duke was to adopt the style of Count Romanoff.

In her letters the Empress, after lamenting the open and brazen profligacy of London, insists on the importance of giving the Grand Duke a wide horizon, and making him

see everything that was of interest to humanity. With regard to the choice of a residence, she begs Count Lieven to bear in mind that simplicity was her motto.

Although the Empress-mother and Alexander regarded this visit of Nicholas to England as most desirable and profitable from an educational point of view, they clearly had their misgivings lest the free institutions of that country should present irresistible attractions to the Grand Duke and turn his head. In order to fortify his mind as much as possible against the seductive influences of political freedom, the Grand Duke was given a memorandum, prepared for him by Count Nesselrode, in which the constitutional history of England is passed in rapid review, and the conclusion is drawn that the institutions of a country are not the work of an individual, but are the fruits of time and circumstances. The Constitution of England is correctly described as the product of slow growth, and its uninterrupted development is ascribed largely to the geographical position of the country. The distinguished diplomatist concludes with the observation that, while the social and political structure of English life is deserving of the greatest admiration and praise, it would be rash to assume that the same system if translated bodily into another country would necessarily bring in its train the beneficial results which may be observed in Great Britain. It might, indeed, be possible to copy the letter of the British Constitution, but it would be a very much more difficult (and, no doubt, in his secret opinion a less desirable) thing to engraft its spirit. Hence the institutions of the English people were deserving of attention and study, with a view to an enlargement of the mind and as an intellectual exercise, but should not be regarded as a model to be followed in other climes and countries.

It has been suggested that the worthy Nesselrode in

thus labouring his point was flogging a dead horse as far as the Grand Duke was concerned, whose mental attitude was little calculated to lead him to espouse the cause of political freedom. He was neither a pupil of La Harpe, nor the friend of the enthusiast Parrot, but had been trained by a practical and unimaginative disciplinarian, under whose stern régime dreams and chimeras had found no place.

Nicholas proceeded to England *viâ* Berlin, where he spent a few delightful weeks at the Prussian Court and in the society of his *fiancée*. Passing through Weimar, Cassel, Coblenz, Cologne, and Brussels, he crossed over to England *viâ* Calais.

The Prince Regent was at that time in anything but a friendly mood towards Russia in general, and the Emperor Alexander in particular, especially because the Prince of Orange instead of marrying the English Princess Royal had espoused the Grand Duchess Anne. He did not miss the opportunity of letting Nicholas feel the weight of his displeasure. After appointing a certain hour for an audience, he kept the Grand Duke waiting twenty-five minutes, until at last Count Lieven caused the First Gentleman of Europe to be informed that the Grand Duke was waiting to see him. By way of revenge the Grand Duke purposely arrived late for the gala dinner which was given by the Prince in his honour. According to Lieven, the Prince Regent, thus taught a lesson, was more courteous to the Grand Duke ever afterwards.

Nicholas spent four months in England, and visited Edinburgh, Liverpool, and a large number of other towns and places of interest, including Plymouth and Portsmouth. Glinka reports that everywhere the reception accorded him was most cordial, and that everything was done to anticipate the wishes and divine the thoughts of His Imperial Highness, and to be agreeable to him.

Savrassoff, writing to the Empress-mother, says: "Justice compels me to state that His Highness throughout his journey did not neglect a single object worthy of his attention. He earned universal praise and respect by his personality and courteous manners." He adds further, that the Grand Duke "was a frequent guest at various country houses, and thus obtained a complete insight into the mode of life and hospitality of the English."

In a private letter Glinka writes: "It is difficult to convey to you the impression produced on the mind by so many towns, country houses, and beautiful landscapes, for we lead a truly nomadic life, moving rapidly from place to place. Thus, for instance, instead of staying several days at Bristol and Bath, two large towns presenting many points of interest, we shall only spend a few hours there."

In the January of 1817, Nicholas was the guest for several days of the Prince Regent at Brighton. "Here, without the least constraint," says Glinka, "he enjoyed the attentions and friendly advances of the Prince. The weather was magnificent, excursions and balls succeeded each other, and at the latter appeared the most beautiful women of the world to the accompaniment of lovely music. I think that at some future day, when looking back on these times, my imagination will conjure them up in the form of a series of enchanting fairy-scenes."

General Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff reported to the Empress-mother that "the Grand Duke was received at Brighton with military honours. During the four days of his stay His Highness rode out on horseback every morning, and one day attended a Cavalry review. On the day after our arrival there was a ball, and there was music every evening. The Prince Regent would seem to do all he can to make himself agreeable to the Grand Duke, and shows him the greatest respect on every occasion."

Savrassoff thus describes the visit to Brighton : “ On his arrival at this place, His Highness was met by two squadrons of hussars, and in general the reception accorded him on this occasion and during the whole time of his stay at Brighton by the Prince Regent was most distinguished. At dinner His Royal Highness drank the health of the Imperial family, and afterwards particularly that of his exalted guest. In the evening His Highness engaged in conversation with the most distinguished English personages.”

On the 16th January, Nicholas attended the opening of Parliament, and in the evening he went to the House of Lords, where, says Savrassoff, “ he was present at a conference concerning the unpleasant incident which happened to the Prince Regent on his return from Parliament when he was insulted by the mob. This circumstance is all the more noteworthy because not only were His Highness and suite admitted into the Upper Chamber, where all others, as well as foreigners, were expressly excluded, but he was taken to a separate room where a joint committee of both Houses was sitting to discuss this same incident, which, we are told, was unprecedented. Later, His Highness deigned to spend some time in the House of Commons.”

This prolonged sojourn in England gave Nicholas opportunities of meeting the various political lights and great statesmen of which she could then boast. Personally, however, the Grand Duke preferred the society and conversation of the representatives of the British Army. Among these, the Duke of Wellington, who had met him before in Paris in 1814 and 1815, considered it his duty to show him particular attention, and to accompany him on his inspections of various military and industrial institutions.

Generally speaking, Nicholas made a most favourable impression on English society. Baron Nicolay, writing to

Count Vorontzoff, was able to say: "He has pleased everybody by his amiable ways and his noble and natural manners, and especially by his frankness, which has been very much remarked." "In London society everybody has been struck by his distinguished and modest bearing, and his easy conversation and sound sense."

When Nicholas rode out on horseback in the streets of London or the Park, the people, admiring his handsome and majestic figure, would exclaim: "How is it possible not to say, on seeing him, that is the heir to the Russian throne?"

General Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff, reporting to the Empress-mother, said: "The attentiveness and intelligence displayed by the Grand Duke in his inspection of everything that is of interest in this land has won for him universal respect."

Nicholas took least interest in the oratorical debates in Parliament and in the discussions they aroused. Speaking to Koutouzoff on this subject he said: "If we should be so unfortunate as to have transplanted to our country by some evil genius these clubs and meetings which make so much noise and accomplish so little, I would pray God to repeat the miracle of the confusion of tongues, or, better still, to deprive of the power of speech all those who thus misuse it."

While he was in London Nicholas paid a visit to the Princess Royal at Claremont, who was already married to Prince Leopold. On this occasion he was seen by Stockmar, the Prince's famous factotum, who has left us an attractive portrait of the young Grand Duke. He describes him as an exceptionally handsome and charming young man, as straight as a pine, with regular features, a broad open forehead, fine eyebrows, a remarkably beautiful nose, a fine small mouth, and a clear-cut chin. His military

clothes were distinguished for their simplicity. " His bearing is animated without affectation or shyness, but very distinguished. He speaks French volubly and excellently, accompanying his words with becoming gestures. If his conversation was not uniformly very witty, it was at least agreeable ; he evidently possesses a decided talent for paying court to the ladies. When he wishes in conversation to give a special shade of meaning to what he is saying, he raises his shoulders and lifts his eyes somewhat affectedly to heaven. In all things he manifests very great self-confidence, but without assertiveness, however. He did not pay very much attention to the Princess, who addressed him more frequently than he addressed her. He was very abstemious in his food, for a young man of his age, and drank only water at table. After dinner, when Countess Lieven had played on the piano, he kissed her hand, which the English ladies considered highly extraordinary, but at the same time decidedly desirable." Mrs. Campbell, the lady-in-waiting on Princess Charlotte, remarkable for her punctiliousness and the severity of her judgment of men, was loud in her praises of the Grand Duke. " Oh, what a charming creature ! He is devilish handsome ! He will become the most handsome man in Europe ! " At night when they all went to their rooms the Grand Duke had brought him from the stables a bag which his people had filled with hay on which he always slept. This was rather ridiculed as a piece of absurd affectation, but we have seen that his brother Alexander had the same peculiar habit.

In the month of March, Nicholas took leave of England and crossed from Dover to Calais. On French soil he was greeted with an enthusiasm which, his mentor, Koutouzoff, was not slow to point out, was manifested rather for the brother of the deliverer of the French people from the

Napoleonic yoke than for the youthful though promising Grand Duke. He spent Easter at Stuttgart with his sister Catherine, having visited on his way his sister Anne at Brussels. At Stuttgart he took Holy Communion, as is the custom of the Orthodox Believers, at Easter. This rite is preceded by fasting and confession ; and Koutouzoff, writing to the Empress-mother, says that if Nicholas did not fast quite as strictly as was customary in Russia, it was nevertheless certain that he confessed with the clear conscience of a true Christian.

He passed through Berlin on his way back to Russia ; and a few months later, on 1st July 1817, he was married to Princess Charlotte of Prussia, whose tender and affectionate husband he ever after remained.

CHAPTER XII

ACCESSION

IN 1817 Nicholas was duly married to the Prussian Princess, who, on embracing the Orthodox faith, took the name of Alexandra; and we shall in another chapter deal at length with the character and happy married life of this accomplished and kindly lady, who did so much for the culture of Russia, and gave an example of a pure and joyous domesticity, which had the effect of regenerating the once profligate Court of St. Petersburg, perverted by a succession of voluptuous empresses whose influence still survived after an interregnum of semi-monastic austerity.

The Grand-Ducal couple were given the Anitchkoff Palace on the Nevski Prospect for a residence, and were there received, after the marriage ceremony, banquet, and ball, by the Emperor and Empress, who, in accordance with time-honoured Russian custom, offered them bread and salt. Here a small family supper was then served, to which, appropriately enough, Count Lamsdorff and the Countess Lieven were invited. Nicholas was now appointed Inspector-General of Engineers and Chief of the Sappers of the Guard, and was able to indulge his taste for engineering and the exact sciences, which were then only in their infancy, and had scarcely given a promise of the importance they were destined to assume.

At this time Nicholas was a tall and thin angular youth,

with regular features, but hollow cheeks, and a certain shyness of manner which owed its origin to an honesty of character which refused to ape the elegances and insincerities of courtiers, and in its manly protest against "foreign monkey-tricks" erred on the side of brusqueness; on the other hand, his frank cheerfulness and love of fun were contagious. The Empress-mother regarded her two youngest sons as wanting in the graces of the great world, and compared them to their disadvantage with the smart Prince William of Prussia, who lived to become German Emperor. She described them as sitting in a corner with drawn and melancholy faces, looking like a couple of young bears or marabouts. The Grand Duchess Alexandra admits that her Nicholas when in society, and especially at a ball, assumed an expression which was precociously philosophical for his twenty-one years. "We, he as well as I, were only really happy and contented when we were alone in our own rooms." The Empress-mother even went so far as to make Nicholas scenes for his coldness and want of amiability in Prince William's presence, and told her son to take an example from the latter. Indeed, the Empress-mother persisted in treating her youngest sons like children. On one occasion, meeting Nicholas and Alexandra returning from a drive, she asked them where they had been; and being told that they had visited Tzarskoye Selo to call on the Empress Elizabeth, she reprimanded them for going there without asking her permission.

It is much to the credit of Nicholas that he cherished no ill-feelings towards his brother-in-law, but, on the contrary, conceived for him an affection which years only seemed to strengthen. There was, indeed, a great deal in common between these two chivalrous natures, both so unselfishly devoted to duty. Nicholas once told Schneider,

the German author of the *Soldatenfreund* (The Soldiers' Friend), that he regarded the life of man as a military service; "for," he added, "we all have to serve." This simple idea of duty remained his philosophy to the end of his days. In addition to his other duties, Nicholas had a brigade of Guards to command, and later a division. He does not appear to have been popular, and on one occasion there was something like a mutiny among the officers against him. He was too little of a courtier, too little of a respecter of persons, too stern in his sense of discipline and devotion to duty to be a favourite with the pleasure-loving dandies, who considered their military service an irksome interruption of the more serious business of fashionable life. Nicholas has himself left it on record that he was at that time the only officer who insisted on doing his duty. He relates how officers used to arrive for drill in dress coats and mufti evening clothes, with a military cloak and cap for uniform. He tried hard to reform the army, but suspected that behind this slackness something more lay concealed.

This shy soldier, trying to do his duty amongst surroundings that were entirely out of harmony with his mind and character, was informed in 1819, as we have seen, by his brother Alexander, that the succession to the throne would devolve on him.

Baron Korff has given a most graphic description, which was evidently inspired by the Empress Alexandra, of the interview between the Emperor Alexander I. and his brother and sister-in-law, nobody else being present, when the Emperor told Nicholas that Constantine had no intention of ascending the throne, and that he, Nicholas, would have to prepare himself to fill some day the arduous office of Emperor. The young couple were taken entirely by surprise. "Up to that moment," we are told, "the

Grand Duke had never been called upon to take any share whatever in State business, nor initiated into the management of affairs connected with the higher branches of administration. Down to the year 1818 he had not so much as been charged with any duties connected with the public service, and his whole acquaintance with the world was confined to such impressions as may have been made upon his mind from his daily passing an hour or so every morning in the ante-chambers of the palace or in the secretaries' rooms amid a noisy crowd of civil and military functionaries who were admitted into the presence of the Emperor, and who whiled away the time until the moment of the audience for the most part with quips and jests, and not seldom by intriguing as well. These hours were not thrown away on the young man, however, but furnished him with opportunities of studying human nature." The curious thing is, that after Alexander had made this confidential communication, he continued his mysterious and self-centred life, and did not again return to the subject, so that when he died Nicholas was at a loss to know what to do, and perpetrated what proved to be the great mistake of proclaiming Constantine Emperor.

Constantine's conduct has been freely blamed, and with justice had he been a responsible person. He should, of course, have come post-haste to St. Petersburg and publicly renounced the throne. Then there could not have been any doubt about Nicholas's right to ascend it, and there would have been no excuse for the mutiny which followed. But Constantine did nothing of the kind. He sent a private message to his brother, and kept away from the capital. When the Metropolitan Philaret produced Alexander's solemn decree, which had been deposited in Moscow, the whole position was cleared up; but until then it seems that not even the Empress-mother knew the true state

of affairs. The only person whom Alexander had taken into his confidence was, it appears, the Prussian Prince William, and to him he had mentioned his decision as a strict secret.

A sense of the invidiousness of his position seems to have clung to the simple-minded and duty-loving Nicholas through life, and it was evidently at his wish that Alexander II. caused Korff to compile his very interesting, though not absolutely accurate, account of the accession of Nicholas, in which Schilder has discovered a few trifling errors.

That Nicholas was selected to succeed Alexander I. can surprise nobody who knows the inner history of the period. At that time, however, the information which is accessible to us to-day was not published, and people did not know that even Catherine, as we have seen, never destined Constantine for the Russian throne. He was to restore the Byzantine Empire, and wrest Constantinople from the Turks. His subsequent career disqualified him absolutely for any exalted position. Nicholas, on the other hand, seemed designed by nature to be Emperor; like Saul, he towered above his brethren, and he had contracted an alliance which at once made him respectable, and assured the succession. That he was likely to reign seems to have been present to the mind not only of his mother, but of a number of highly-placed persons about the Court. Alexander I. did not reveal the secret even on his deathbed. At the moment of his death not one of the three confidants who had accompanied him to Taganrog—Prince Volkonski, Baron Diebitch, or Tchernitcheff—knew that the succession had been transferred from the elder brother to the second. When the Empress Elizabeth was asked by Volkonski whether the Emperor had committed to paper a declaration of his last wishes, she replied that she had no knowledge

of anything definite, but advised that inquiry be made at Warsaw. It was then suggested that possibly some important document might be found in the small packet which Alexander was known to have always carried about him. The Empress opened this packet at the request of Volkonski, and it was found to contain two papers and references to certain chapters in the Bible. Consequently both Volkonski and Diebitch felt it was their duty to despatch their report of the death of the Emperor to Constantine at Warsaw, who was the legitimate Emperor in accordance with the decree of 1797. At the same time, Diebitch sent a letter to the Empress-mother communicating the sad intelligence, and adding that he was "loyally awaiting the commands of his new legitimate sovereign, the Emperor Constantine."

On the evening of the 25th November 1825 the Grand Duke Nicholas was presiding over a children's party at his residence, the Anitchkoff Palace, when Count Miloradovitch, the military Governor-General of the capital, was announced. He was weeping, and informed Nicholas that Alexander was dying. Nicholas, after telling his wife, hurried quickly to his mother's residence, who had in the meantime sent for him, and found that she had received similar intelligence. He passed the night in the ante-chamber of his mother's room. The next morning, while prayers were being read in the private chapel of the Winter Palace for the Emperor Alexander, news of his demise was received.

The scene is thus graphically described by the poet Joukoffski, tutor of the future Alexander II.:

"Suddenly when, after the loud chanting of the choir, the church became instantaneously still, and no sound was heard except the low-voiced prayer of the priest, there fell upon the ear a sort of gentle tap at the door—I am ignorant of its cause; but I remember shuddering when I heard it,

and that everybody present cast anxious looks at the doors. No one entered, and the service was not interrupted for some minutes at least, until the north doors opened and the Grand Duke appeared, coming from the altar and looking as pale as death. He raised his hand to command silence. All was still; we were immovable, so to speak, with suspense. Suddenly everyone seemed to understand that the Emperor was no more, and the entire congregation uttered a kind of inarticulate murmur. Then all was agitation, the crowd burst into a confused chaos of moans and sobbing and weeping, and gradually dispersed. I remained alone; in the confusion of my thoughts I did not know where to go, and at last, instead of leaving the chapel by the usual door, I passed mechanically, as it were, through the northern entrance to the altar. Here a touching scene met my gaze. The door leading to a side room was open, and there the Empress-mother lay, practically insensible, in her son's arms. Before her was kneeling his wife, the Grand Duchess Alexandra, who was imploring her to compose herself. 'Mother, dear mother! In the name of God, be calm!' At this moment the priest took the cross from the altar, raised it high, and approached the door. The Empress immediately prostrated herself before it, bowing her head to the ground close to the feet of the priest. The unspeakable grandeur of this spectacle overpowered me: carried away by my feelings I fell on my knees before the sanctity of maternal grief, before the head of this Princess bowed to the dust in front of the Cross of the Redeemer. The Empress, almost unconscious, was placed into an armchair and carried into the inner apartments, the doors closing behind her . . .";

Leaving the Empress to be attended by his wife, Nicholas proceeded to the guardroom and announced that Russia had lost her father, and that it was incumbent on

all to take the oath of allegiance to the legitimate sovereign, Constantine, as he was himself about to do. Nicholas then proceeded to the chapel, attended by Count Miloradovitch and a number of distinguished persons who were present, and took the oath of allegiance to the Emperor Constantine, the priest still being there. His example was followed by everybody present. He then hurried back to inform his mother. The Empress exclaimed, "Nicholas! what have you done? Do you not know of the deed by which you were declared heir-presumptive to the throne?" This was the first intimation of the existence of such a document that he had received, says Korff, and so he replied: "If there be such a deed, I know nothing of it, nor does anybody else; but we know that our master, our legitimate sovereign, next in succession to the Emperor Alexander, is my brother Constantine. We have therefore done our duty, come what may!"

As soon as the intelligence was conveyed to Prince A. V. Golitzin, who was at Mass at the Church of the Monastery of St. Alexander Nevski, he immediately proceeded to the palace, and reproached Nicholas for not respecting the late Emperor's wishes. But Nicholas remonstrated that these alleged wishes had been kept secret, even from him, and that he could not have acted otherwise.

On the same day, the 27th, an extraordinary meeting of the Council of the Empire was summoned, at which Prince Golitzin recorded that he "bitterly deprecated" the "unnecessary precipitation in taking the oath" of the Grand Duke, seeing that the Council had in its custody a paper relating to the succession; moreover, that he had himself copied the paper in question, that other copies were to be found in the Synod and the Senate, and that the original deed had been deposited in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Moscow, with orders that the packet was

to be opened on the decease of the Emperor by the military Governor-General and the Archbishop of the diocese.

Prince Lobanoff-Rostovski, the Minister of Justice, who had already sworn allegiance to Constantine, retorted that it was unnecessary to open these papers, that he had no intention of doing so in the Senate, that the Council of the Empire was nothing more than the Emperor's Chancelry, and that "the dead had no will power." While his view was supported by two other speakers, the remaining members of the Council were all of the opposite opinion, and it was decided to have the packet produced and opened. The document it contained had scarcely been read before Count Miloradovitch arrived and announced that the Grand Duke Nicholas had solemnly renounced the rights the manifesto conferred upon him, and had sworn allegiance to the Emperor Constantine.

It has been pointed out that on this occasion the Council of the Empire missed the chance of elevating itself into a constitutional body or "a great organ of State authority." One of the Decembrists is reported to have said at his trial "that an opportunity was lost, such as fifty years would not again offer," and "that if the Council of the Empire had possessed a few men in it with heads, Russia would have sworn allegiance not only to a new Emperor, but to new laws." We have some difficulty in accepting this view. The bare fact that such an idea does not appear to have presented itself to the minds of the Council, would seem to be sufficient proof that the times were not ripe for such action. Moreover, the members of this Council were, after all, but the creatures of the Emperor, and the Council itself constituted nothing more than the crown, so to speak, of the bureaucratic system. How could these men have been expected or have been able to emulate the example of the English barons at Runnymede? It is

more than probable that either Constantine or Nicholas would have made very short work of these right reverend seigniors had they ventured to do anything that could have been regarded as exceeding the limits of their duty. Indeed, so humble and abject were they that they "addressed an urgent entreaty to Count Miloradovitch that he would use his influence with His Imperial Highness to obtain permission for the Council to present themselves for a personal audience with His Highness, in order that they might be honoured with the satisfaction of hearing from his own lips his final and irrevocable pleasure on the matter." The above extract from the Minutes or Journals of the Council does not read as though it had been composed by men capable of carrying out a great constitutional *coup*. Nicholas granted their request, and received the Council in the apartments formerly occupied by the Grand Duke Michael, when, we find it recorded, "His Highness deigned personally to repeat verbally to the whole Council of the Empire that he would not listen to any other proposition from them, with the exception only of their readiness to take the oath of fealty and allegiance to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor Constantine." This shows conclusively how little Nicholas was disposed to humour any attempt at constitutionalism on the part of the Council. The character of Nicholas was well known; his austere devotion to duty had made him universally feared; and although it had also made him extremely unpopular, there were no two opinions as to his energy and determination. So little did these bureaucratic councillors feel themselves competent to constitute an embryonic House of Lords, that, while protesting that they still regarded Nicholas as their rightful ruler, they added, "But if your determination is immutable, we must obey it: conduct us, therefore, yourself to the oath." Like a

flock of sheep led to the slaughter, they followed Nicholas to the palace chapel, took the oath of allegiance, and were then presented by him to his mother, who said that she felt herself in justice bound to acquiesce in the generous sacrifice of her son Nicholas.

No time was lost by the energetic Grand Duke, who at once despatched messengers and personal emissaries to acquaint his elder brother officially and privately of what had been done. The following is the wording of his characteristic autograph letter :

“ MY DEAR CONSTANTINE,—I present myself before my Sovereign with the oath of allegiance, which it is my duty to offer him, and which I have already taken, together with all those who are attached to me, in the church, at the very moment when we were overwhelmed by the intelligence of the most cruel of all calamities. How I sympathise with you, and how unhappy we all are ! For God’s sake, do not abandon us in our distress !—Your affectionate brother, who will live and die your faithful subject,

NICHOLAS ”

Arrangements were now made for having the oath of allegiance administered throughout the Empire. In the meantime the arrival of Constantine was impatiently awaited in St. Petersburg. The situation was somewhat complicated by the absence of the Grand Duke Michael, who had been staying with his brother at Warsaw, but was now on his way back. On his return everybody wanted to know whether he had also taken the oath of allegiance to Constantine, to which the members of his suite replied in the negative, while the Empress-mother was closeted with him. Presently she appeared before Nicholas, who was awaiting her in an adjoining room, and exclaimed to him : “ Well, Nicholas, go down on your

knees before your brother Constantine, for he is sublime, and worthy of admiration in his unalterable determination of giving up the throne to you." Nicholas was thrilled by these words, but could not help reflecting that the conduct of his brother scarcely called for much enthusiasm. Which of the two was making the greatest sacrifice? He who, knowing his own unfitness, had determined to renounce his rights, and faithful to that decision, was thus enabled to retain a position he had himself chosen in surroundings consonant with his taste and wishes; or he who, unprepared by training, was suddenly called upon to sacrifice all his personal inclinations, peace, and domestic happiness for a position which he had never desired, simply at the request of another? Nicholas therefore replied to his mother: "Before I obey your behest, mother, and prostrate myself, as you wish, may I ask why; for I cannot see who is making the greatest sacrifice, he who refuses or he who accepts?" There is, moreover, reason to believe that the Empress-mother herself, with a very little pressing, would have been quite prepared to take the reins of government into her own hands, and rather resented, indeed, that this was not suggested.

The position was therefore sufficiently complicated; for although Constantine had refused the crown, and had despatched his refusal by his youngest brother Michael, that refusal had been formulated before the nation had acclaimed him Tzar and sworn allegiance to him. The situation had since changed. Would Constantine persist in his refusal now, when he had become Emperor *de facto* as well as *de jure*? Moreover, it was felt that a letter only from Constantine would be insufficient evidence to the nation that he had indeed renounced his right to the crown. The only safe and practicable course was for Constantine to come himself to St. Petersburg and pro-

claim his renunciation publicly. Nicholas and the Empress-mother consequently wrote autograph letters imploring him to start for the capital without delay; and these were despatched by courier on the 3rd of December.

Meanwhile the Grand Duke Michael refrained from taking the oath of allegiance, and public opinion became generally considerably exercised as to what was really going on behind the scenes. Gradually the conviction grew that Constantine had waived his right, and that a fresh oath to Nicholas would have to be taken. This was regarded by the discontented spirits and conspirators, to whom we have referred in Chapter VIII., as likely to afford an excellent opportunity for the execution of their plans. The longer the present interregnum lasted the more time would they have for preparing and maturing their plot.

In order to help the Grand Duke Michael out of a most invidious position, he was, at his own request, despatched to Warsaw. While he was on his way, there arrived in St. Petersburg a letter from Constantine in which the latter warned Nicholas that if he obstinately persisted in refusing to give effect to the late Emperor's will, he, Constantine, would "remove into a still more distant retirement." However, this letter, dated 2nd December, was no reply to the letters of the Empress-mother and Nicholas which had been despatched on the 3rd. While the return of the courier was being impatiently awaited there arrived at St. Petersburg, on 12th December, Baron Friedericks, from Taganrog, where he had acted as commandant during Alexander's residence. He presented himself at six o'clock in the morning in order to hand Nicholas a packet from Baron Diebitch, addressed, "To His Imperial Majesty, for the Emperor's own hand," and marked "Most urgent." Nicholas was prevailed upon to open it, and found it to contain revelations of the existence of a widespread

conspiracy against the throne, which had been known to Alexander for years, and which his confidants considered themselves bound to communicate at once to his successor. Diebitch had already arrested one of the ringleaders in the South, Colonel Pestel, and recited the names of a number of others. Nicholas at once sent for Count Miloradovitch, the Governor-General of St. Petersburg, and Prince A. V. Golitzin, the intimate friend of Alexander, and Postmaster-General. It was decided to arrest such of the conspirators indicated by Diebitch as were supposed to be resident in St. Petersburg; but inquiries elicited the fact that they were all absent on leave. This was a most suspicious circumstance, because Diebitch had stated in his letter that all these persons had left St. Petersburg in order to attend a general meeting of conspirators. Of course all this was concealed from the Empress-mother.

On the same day, which was a Saturday, while Nicholas was at dinner, the long-expected courier arrived from Warsaw, with letters from his brother Constantine which admitted of no doubt as to the inflexible determination of the writer to renounce all claims to the throne.

There was no possibility of misinterpreting the terms of his letter. Moreover, in view of the information he had received from Diebitch, there was no time to be lost, and Nicholas took up the reins of government. He proceeded immediately to the Empress-mother and communicated his decision, and then dictated to his friend and aide-de-camp, Count Adlerberg, the heads of a manifesto, the wording of which he confided to Karamsin the historian. On the recommendation of Prince A. V. Golitzin and Count Miloradovitch, however, the final draft was drawn up by the famous Speranski, who had been practically rehabilitated in Court favour, and was a member of the Imperial Council. Arrangements were made for sum-

moning the Council on the 13th, and the 14th December was fixed upon as the day for the public promulgation of the manifesto and the administration of the oath of allegiance.

While these preparations were being made, and at about nine o'clock in the evening of the 12th, a packet was handed to Nicholas, which, on being opened, proved to contain a letter from a young lieutenant of the regiment of Chasseurs of the Guard, named Rostovtsoff. This mysteriously worded missive hinted that "a concealed revolt was fermenting" against Nicholas, which would "burst out at the moment of the new oath of allegiance." No names were mentioned. The writer only begged that if his prediction turned out false he might be punished with death; if correct, he implored Nicholas not to reward him in any way, but to allow him to remain "disinterested and honourable in your eyes and in my own." As a favour, he wished to be arrested.

On receipt of this letter Nicholas sent for Rostovtsoff and received him in his study, and asked whether there was a plot against him. The young man replied in general terms, refusing to mention persons. Nicholas thereupon told him not to name anybody if he considered by doing so he would be acting dishonourably. The conversation between Rostovtsoff and Nicholas, recorded by both Korff and Schilder, did honour to both men. The information obtained, however vague, pointed to the existence of a plot to make the transfer of the oath of allegiance from Constantine to Nicholas the excuse for a revolt. So serious an aspect did the situation assume that Nicholas wrote to Prince Volkonski, "On the 14th I shall be either Emperor or dead!"

At eight o'clock in the evening of the 13th December, a Sunday, the members of the Council of the Empire

assembled, and Nicholas, after fruitlessly waiting for his brother Michael, whose return was expected, read his manifesto and communicated the letters of his brother Constantine, and proclaimed himself Emperor. The 14th December was reserved for the administration of the oath of allegiance. When the Emperor left the Council and returned to his own apartments, where his mother and his wife were awaiting him and praying, it was one o'clock in the morning.

The Emperor rose early on the 14th and received, while dressing, Aide-de-camp General Benckendorff, to whom he is reported to have said, "By this evening, perhaps, neither of us may be alive, but we will at least die doing our duty."

He entered his reception-rooms at seven o'clock, where were assembled the principal commanding officers of the garrison. To them he explained the renunciation of his brother, whose letter he read, together with his manifesto. He then asked the assembly whether any of them had doubts. The unanimous reply of all present was that they had none, and recognised him as their rightful sovereign.

The Emperor then retired a step or two backwards, and with a truly imperial grandeur and dignity exclaimed: "After this you will answer with your heads for the tranquillity of the capital; and, as for myself, if I am to be Emperor for only an hour, I will show myself worthy of it."

All the commanding officers then took the oath of allegiance, and were ordered to proceed to the troops under their command and administer the oath to them. The Synod and the Senate were being simultaneously sworn, and the Court was summoned to attend at the Winter Palace at eleven o'clock to assist at a solemn thanksgiving.

Count Miloradovitch now arrived to assure the Emperor that the town was absolutely quiet, that he did not believe in all the rumours of plots and conspiracies, and that, happen what might, all necessary and possible precautions had been taken. Gradually reports came in concerning the swearing in of the following regiments:—The Life Guards, the Preobrajenski, Semyonovski, Pavlovski, and Rifles, the Finland regiment, and the Sappers of the Guard. No news arrived of the other regiments, but this was attributed to the fact that all the other barracks were situated at a good distance from the palace. After a time, however, there arrived the General commanding the Artillery, who stated that there had been some difficulty with the first brigade, several officers having demanded a personal assurance from the Grand Duke Michael, whose return was still awaited. Order had, however, been re-established, and the recalcitrant officers had been put under arrest. “Return them their swords,” said the Emperor, “and do not tell me their names. I prefer not to know them. But I expect you to be responsible for good order.”

At this very moment the Grand Duke Michael arrived, and was immediately sent off to the Artillery barracks, with the happiest result.

A few minutes later the Chief of the Staff of the Guard, Neidhardt, rushed in, crying, “Sire! the Moscow regiment is in open mutiny, Shenshin and Friedericks are severely wounded, and the mutineers are marching on the Senate. It is with difficulty that I have succeeded in getting ahead of them. Pray order the first battalion of the Preobrajenski and the Life Guards to march against them!”

Indeed, two officers of the Moscow regiment had succeeded in prevailing upon the men against taking the oath to Nicholas, alleging that it was all a trick, and that both

Constantine and Michael had been seized and put in irons. The men were told that Constantine loved his regiment, and intended to increase the soldiers' pay. "If anybody be disloyal to him, run him through!" With these instructions the men were ordered to load their muskets. The two above-mentioned officers, Shenshin and Friedericks, were wounded, and the regiment, led by Bestujeff, an aide-de-camp of Duke Alexander of Würtemberg, proceeded in great disorder to the square of the Senate, accompanied by a mob all shouting, "Hurrah for Constantine!"

Nicholas instantly recognised that this was not a simple mutiny, the result of a misunderstanding, but the first-fruits of that conspiracy against which he had but recently been warned. He felt that hesitation or weakness would be fatal, and that energetic action was called for. He therefore instructed Neidhardt to move the Semyonovski regiment towards the barracks of the Moscow regiment, in order to overawe those mutineers who had not yet turned out, and to order the Life Guards to hold themselves in readiness. At the same time he sent Major-General Strekaloff to bring the first battalion of the Preobrajenski to the Winter Palace, and he sent one of his aides-de-camp to the Anitchkoff Palace to fetch his children. Ordering a charger to be got ready, he made the sign of the cross, and as he went through his wife's apartment he merely informed her that the Artillery had shown hesitation about taking the oath. He had scarcely left the room when the Empress-mother rushed in, crying, "Don't make any toilette, my child; there is disorder, revolt!"

Meanwhile the Emperor descended the stairs to the main guardhouse of the palace. A detachment of the 6th Marksman's company of the Finland regiment of the Guard was on duty. Nicholas ordered the salute to be given with the colours, and the drums to beat to quarters.

Meeting the colonel of the Chevalier Guards, he ordered him to bring up his regiment. He then addressed his Finnish Guards; and on ascertaining that they had already sworn allegiance to him, he asked them whether they were prepared to die for him. The men replied with cheers, and the Emperor, giving the words of command himself, led the detachment to the principal palace gates. The square in front of the building was full of sightseers watching the various distinguished persons who were driving up in their carriages to attend the levee. As soon as the Emperor appeared in the courtyard the populace outside, who were thronging the gates, made obeisance to him. At that moment a colonel arrived, covered with blood. Nicholas told him to retire somewhere out of sight so as not to attract attention, and then proceeded through the gateway with his troops. These he drew up outside, whilst he himself advanced unattended into the square. The people now cheered him loudly. In order to gain time for the arrival of the Preobrajenski, he asked one of the crowd to give him a printed copy of the manifesto, which he proceeded to read in a clear loud voice, but very slowly, pausing every now and then to explain the meaning of a word or sentence. He had scarcely finished before Neidhardt galloped up to inform him that the vast open space or square in front of the Senate had been occupied by the Moscow regiment. Nicholas did not for an instant hesitate to tell the people what had occurred. In response the crowd closed round him, promising to defend him with their lives: two old veterans took up a position one on each side of him, and the people kissed his hands and even his clothes.

Nicholas raised his voice again, and calmness was restored: "I cannot embrace you all, but this is for every one of you," and he embraced the men standing nearest

to him, who in their turn embraced those next to them, thus passing on the salutation of the Emperor among his people. He now once more filled the square with his sonorous voice, and told the crowd that disturbances would be quelled by the authorities; no private persons should dare to interfere. He then advised the people to go home. "Now give us room!" he cried, and the orderly crowd retired to give place to the first battalion of the Preobrajenski Guards, which had arrived with commendable promptness, Adlerberg having, to save time, told them to put on their greatcoats but not to trouble about their uniforms.

At this moment a common hackney-coach arrived with the new heir-apparent, Alexander the son of Nicholas, accompanied by an aide-de-camp, who was immediately despatched, on his arrival, to fetch the Pavlovski Guards. These were disposed so as to defend the approaches to the palace. Just as the Emperor had finished a short but impressive speech to his Guards, Count Miloradovitch, the optimist Governor-General of St. Petersburg, rode up: "Things are shaping badly, Sire!" he exclaimed. "They have surrounded the statue of Peter; but I am going to talk to them."

That was not the time for reproaches, and Nicholas was too magnanimous to taunt the veteran with having lived in a fool's paradise. He let him go, to see what he could do with the mutineers.

Nicholas now led the first battalion of the Preobrajenski regiment in person and on foot in the direction of the Admiralty Square. On his way his charger was brought him, which he mounted. At the sound of firing he made the men load their muskets, and despatched the three fusileer companies to the Senate Square; he placed himself at the head of his own Grenadier company, and followed

the fusileers. At the corner of the Nevski Prospect an officer of dragoons wearing a black bandage across his head rode up to him and said insolently, "I have been with *them*, but when I found they were for Constantine I left them to join you."

"Thank you," Nicholas replied; "you have learned your duty. Wipe out the past by going back to your people, and recall them to their obedience, if you are not afraid."

The officer proved to be a conspirator named Yakoubovitch, whose sole object was to reconnoitre.

While Nicholas was proceeding to the Senate Square, Miloradovitch had already arrived there, and forced his way, on horseback and alone, through the crowd till he reached the mutineers, whom he proceeded to harangue. While he was so doing a conspirator crept up behind his horse and shot him with a pistol; at the same moment several muskets went off, and the brave old hero fell off his horse into the arms of an officer who had succeeded in gaining his side.

The news of the death of Miloradovitch was conveyed without loss of time to the Emperor, who turned to the crowds in the streets and implored them to retire. "They will presently fire on me," he said, "and some of you may get hit. Go home. You will hear all about it to-morrow."

By this time the Cavalry had come up, and were formed in front of the insurgents, most of whom were drunk, while the Marines of the Guard were expected to arrive. This they very soon did, but only to join the mutineers.

The Emperor thereupon, accompanied by Aide-de-camp General Benckendorff, rode out to the Senate Square to examine the insurgents more closely. His appearance was greeted with musket shots.

The Grand Duke Michael, who had, on his arrival in St. Petersburg, proceeded to the barracks of the mutinous

Moscow regiment, lost no time in swearing in the few companies who had not yet mutinied. With these he marched to the scene of insurrection just as the Emperor was from his reconnoissance. Michael begged his brother to allow him to remonstrate with the mutineers; but Nicholas would not hear of it. More loyal troops had now been brought up, and these had been skilfully disposed so as to cut off the retreat of the insurgents. As, however, the attitude of the mutineers grew more and more menacing, Prince Eugene of Würtemberg, who was fuming with impatience, at last prevailed upon the Emperor to order a cavalry charge. Unfortunately the streets were slippery, and the cavalry charge was repeatedly repulsed, with considerable loss of life. There was nothing left but to bring up the artillery and try a whiff of grape-shot. Meanwhile the Emperor rode back to the palace to take measures for its protection. On his way he met a large body of soldiers with arms and colours. He commanded them to halt, but they shouted, "We are for Constantine!" "In that case," said Nicholas, with great presence of mind, "your road lies in that direction," pointing to the Senate Square, and commanding the troops to let them pass.

Nicholas now made arrangements for transporting the Imperial family under escort to Tzarskoye Selo, and sent Adlerberg to console the ladies, while he returned to the Senate Square, where the Grand Duke Michael in a rash attempt to persuade the mutineers had had a narrow escape of being killed. It was nearly three in the afternoon and getting dark, as it does in those northern climes during midwinter. The mutineers had been repeatedly called upon to surrender, but held their ground, even against cavalry charges. The famous whiff of grape-shot was now determined on, although the Emperor, in reply to the argued appeal of General Toll for the use of artillery, said:

“ Then you wish me to shed the blood of my subjects on the first day of my reign ! ” “ Yes,” General Vassiltchikoff replied, “ to save your empire.” Before opening fire on the rebels they were once more called upon to surrender, but shouted in reply, “ Give us a Constitution.” It is said that the soldiers who were thus clamouring for representative institutions did not know what they were shouting for, but were under the impression that the Russian word *Constitutzia* was the name of Constantine’s wife. Be this how it may, the order to fire the guns was given and repeatedly countermanded by the Emperor. Finally, the guns went off, but at first the shots went above the heads of the mutineers ; the next round, however, was better aimed, and presently the insurgents broke up and fled in every direction, a great many climbing over the Neva Embankment and tumbling into the snow ; others hid themselves in cellars and other places of concealment. But three rounds of grape-shot, without doing much execution, stopped the mutiny.

Nicholas, when informing Constantine of his accession, wrote :

“ Your desire is accomplished : I am Emperor ; but at what cost, good Heavens ! at the cost of the blood of my subjects.”

In the next chapter we propose to trace the inception of this wide conspiracy, and to recite the fate of the conspirators, who have been handed down to posterity as the “ Decembrists,” and who are regarded in Russia as the pioneers of the revolutionary movement. Whatever may be thought of their methods, of their organisation, or of their intelligence, there can be little doubt that the country was not ripe for the Constitution they plotted to introduce, the very name of which their own instruments did not understand.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DECEMBRISTS

IN 1798 there was born in Kent, not far from London, John Sherwood, whose father, a mechanic, was invited two years later to come to Russia by the Emperor Paul, to act as foreman to the Alexander Cotton Mills. Young Sherwood, who accompanied his father, grew up to be an exceptionally intelligent youth. He knew English, French, German, and Latin, and early displayed great powers of observation and signs of a remarkably logical mind,—this is, at least, the verdict of Schilder. In 1819, at the age of twenty-one, John Sherwood enlisted as a volunteer in the 3rd Ukraine Lancer regiment; he was promoted to the rank of non-commissioned officer after a few months' service, and continued for six years as a sergeant. The regiment was stationed in the town of Mirgorod, in the province of Kherson. Thanks to his good education and knowledge of languages, Sherwood was welcomed as an acquisition by the officers of the regiment, who admitted him into their society, and he enjoyed the favour of his colonel, whose English name, Graves, suggests an explanation of the young man's exceptional position. Graves sent him on a number of expeditions, and was always satisfied with the manner in which his protégé acquitted himself. These commissions took him to the Crimea, to Kieff, Odessa, and even as far as Moscow, and brought him in contact with the gentry

of various provinces. According to his own published *Confessions*, Sherwood was often struck during his travels in 1822 and 1823 by the talk he heard of the imminence of some great change in the State, the meaning of which he failed to understand. He records how the officers in intimate conversation permitted themselves to discuss the Emperor with great freedom, and used to refer to the approach of some event, until no doubt was left in Sherwood's mind that something was brewing. At last Sherwood became convinced that there existed a plot amongst people of the highest social standing to bring about a constitution which was characterised satirically during a private discussion overheard by Sherwood as a "constitution for bears," by a Count Bulgari who had not yet been won over to the movement. It would take up too much space to relate how Sherwood became possessed of conclusive and damnatory evidence of the existence of a secret society with many ramifications. He states that he was devoted to the Emperor Alexander I., not only from motives of loyalty, but from gratitude for the many favours his father had received from him, and therefore determined to acquaint his Imperial master with the disquieting facts which had come to his knowledge. He wrote the Emperor a letter begging him to send for him on some pretext or other, as he had a communication to make which concerned His Majesty alone. This letter he enclosed in another addressed to Sir James Wylie, who handed the enclosure to Alexander. The result of this action was a curious interview between Sherwood and the redoubtable Count Araktcheyeff, who sent for him. Taking him by the arm, and leading him into the garden of his country-house, Araktcheyeff asked him who he was, to which Sherwood replied: "A sergeant of the 3rd Ukraine Lancer regiment, your Serenity." The following conversation then ensued.

The Count (with impatience): "I know that better than you do yourself, my friend. But tell me what your nationality is?"

Sherwood: "I am an Englishman, your Serenity."

Count: "Have you a father and mother, and where are they?"

Sherwood told him they lived in Moscow, and then recited his life-history. The Count then asked him what languages he knew, and when Sherwood had told him, exclaimed: "Oho, my brother! you are more learned than I. But you are an Englishman. Now let me tell you that in our Russian service things are done in this wise: when a sergeant wishes to write a letter to the Emperor he should go and hand his letter to his captain, his captain must hand it to his squadron commander, who must hand it to the commanding officer of the regiment, who will hand it to the brigade commander, who will hand it to the divisional commander, who will hand it to the commander of the corps, who should hand it to me, and I would have submitted it to His Majesty the Emperor."

Sherwood: "Your Serenity, may I venture to ask you a question?"

Count: "Speak up, my son."

Sherwood: "Supposing I did not wish my captain, nor my colonel, nor my general, nor even your Serenity, to know about this, how would you, your Serenity, command me to act?"

The Count stopped short, looked hard at Sherwood, disengaged his arm and said: "Well, my son, in that case you have acted very wisely. Nevertheless, my son, you know that I am your commanding officer, anyhow. No doubt you know how devoted I am to the Emperor, therefore tell me what this is all about, and what it is that you want to communicate to His Majesty."

Sherwood: " I know full well, your Serenity, that you are my chief, I am convinced of your devotion to His Majesty the Emperor, but I make so bold as to assure you, as an honest man, that this is a matter which concerns neither your Serenity nor the military colonies, nor absolutely anything or anybody but only His Majesty the Emperor himself, and therefore, your Serenity, why do you wish to deprive me of the happiness of explaining it personally to the Emperor myself ? "

Count: " Well, in that case I will not even question you ; proceed on your journey in God's name."

Sherwood was so completely taken by surprise at these words that he exclaimed: " Your Serenity, why indeed should I not tell you ! It is a question of a plot against His Majesty ! "

Sherwood was despatched by Araktcheyeff to General Kleinmichel in St. Petersburg, and was taken by him to see the Emperor. The interview will bear translating :

" The first question the Emperor asked me was whether I was the son of the Sherwood he had known who had been on the Alexandrovski Mills. I answered : " The same."

The Emperor: " You wrote to me. What did you want to tell me ? "

" Your Majesty, I am led to believe that there exists a conspiracy against the peace of Russia and your Majesty."

The Emperor: " What leads you to believe this ? "

Sherwood recited to the Emperor in detail all he knew, and the latter, after a pause, replied: " Yes, your suppositions may be correct. But what do they want, those ——? Are they really so badly off ? "

Sherwood replied that dogs went mad when they were over-fed. He pointed out, however, that the system of military colonies was a grave mistake,—men had guns given them, but were left without food. He then explained that

whilst the peasants were expected to maintain themselves and their families as well as the soldiers and reservists who were quartered on them, their time was so taken up with building operations and the carriage of materials and timber from long distances that they sometimes had no more than three days left during the entire summer for field work, and that men had been known to die of starvation. Further, he cited the prohibition forbidding people residing in one district to sell corn to people in other districts. The Emperor listened to all this with the greatest interest, talked to Sherwood in perfect English, and commissioned him to take the necessary steps to unravel the plot he suspected.

This interview took place on 29th July 1825; by the end of that year Alexander was no more.

In the interval Sherwood ascertained a number of facts in connection with this widespread conspiracy,—notably that it was intended to exterminate the entire Imperial family, and that hearty co-operation was expected from Poland. Sherwood got a list of the leading conspirators, among whom were many influential officers in the Guards.

The above facts were summarised by General Diebitch and despatched to Nicholas, who received them, as we have seen, on the 12th December. Sherwood was subsequently lavishly rewarded, and received the title of "Faithful."

Let us now turn to the doings of the secret society in St. Petersburg during the interregnum. Nicholas Bestujeff, a naval officer with the rank of "lieutenant-captain," gives a very accurate account, we are told by Schilder, of what was going on among the conspirators.

Ruyleyeff, the poet, and one of the ringleaders, led Bestujeff to believe that their society was large, that its members were very numerous and influential, and that its

affairs were in a most flourishing condition. While the conspirators were in this delusion they were unexpectedly overtaken by the death of Alexander I., which was to have been, so at least Bestujeff understood, the signal for action. Nothing was ready, nothing was prepared. Bestujeff, with his brother and Ruyleyeff, decided to go about among the troops and tell them that Alexander's will had been suppressed, that he had desired the peasants to be made free and to reduce the period of military service. While this work of propaganda was progressing, the awkward contretemps occurred with the Grand Duke Constantine, and his refusal to accept the crown to which he was entitled. This gave the conspirators an opportunity of working still further on the feelings of the Guards, with whom Nicholas was particularly unpopular. There appears, however, to have been very little confidence of success; nobody hoped for the mutiny of an entire regiment, — individual company commanders were prepared to vouch for their companies, but only under "favourable circumstances." Hence certain conspirators were perfectly justified in their contention that a premature outbreak in St. Petersburg unsupported by similar manifestations on the part of the other members of the secret societies scattered over the length and breadth of Russia would only serve to nip the movement in the bud. This was the view of Prince Troubetzkoy. Other more fiery spirits were of opinion that so exceptional an opportunity should not be allowed to slip by, especially in view of the unpopularity of Nicholas in military circles. Numerous secret meetings were held, at which young and impetuous officers formed the majority. Although Miloradovitch was informed of these meetings, which took place at the residence of Ruyleyeff, the editor of *The Polar Star*, he considered them to be of a purely literary character and

attached no importance to them. Baron Rosen complained that the measures adopted were vague and indefinite, to which Prince Obolenski and Colonel Boulatoff replied that it was impossible to have a rehearsal. Ruy-leyeff seems to have been the life of the movement; whenever doubts and fears were expressed he used to say they must do something, and that even if they failed their example would encourage others. "We must dare, and if we are unlucky, others will be able to profit by our mistakes."

As soon as decisive action was determined on it became necessary to choose a leader, and so Colonel Prince Serge Troubetzkoy was elected dictator. Troubetzkoy proposed that the first regiment to refuse to take the oath should march with drums beating to the barracks of neighbouring regiments; in this way he hoped that one regiment would seduce the others, and they would all assemble in a formidable body, which even the battalions outside the town would join. The Grenadiers of the Guard were to seize the arsenal, while the Finnish Guards were to possess themselves of the fortress of St. Peter and Paul. The co-operation of the Council of the Empire had even been promised, provided the troops were taken outside the town in order to avoid disturbances. Other counsels prevailed in favour of assembling the troops in the Senate Square, capturing the Senate, and persuading that body to issue a manifesto in favour of the conspirators. Colonel Boulatoff was to command the troops in the square. Numerous officers in the conspiracy had ascertained that the men were quite unprepared to change their allegiance from Constantine to Nicholas, and that they would never believe that the former had really waived his right unless he came to St. Petersburg in person to proclaim the fact. The regiments from which information had been received were the Ismailoffski, the Chasseurs, the Grenadiers, the Finnish and Moscow regi-

ments, the Marines, and some of the Artillery ; moreover, the Preobrajenski were known to be very unfavourably disposed towards Nicholas. The plan of operations was based upon the refusal of the troops to renounce their allegiance to Constantine, which turned out to be a perfectly sound assumption. The regiments were to assemble in the Senate Square, and to compel the Senate to issue, in the first place, a manifesto setting forth the exceptional circumstances in which the country was placed, and the desirability of calling together the chosen of the people to decide who was to ascend the throne, and on what conditions he was to be allowed to do so. In the second place, they were to form a temporary government pending the election of an Emperor by the people. Speranski was to be a member of this government, which was to be in the form of a triumvirate, and should formulate the conditions to which the newly elected Emperor was to subscribe. The principal heads of these were to be the institution of representative government on the model of the civilised countries of Europe, and the emancipation of the peasants from their territorial serfdom. On the promulgation of this manifesto by the Senate the troops were to be withdrawn from the capital: this being the condition on which certain members of the Council of the Empire had promised their support. Michael Bestujeff gives an interesting account of the meeting held at Ruyleyeff's residence on the evening of the 13th of December. He describes it as largely attended but high-strung and feverish. Grandiloquent phrases and empty words succeeded each other. Yakoubovitch was particularly boastful. Ruyleyeff, on the other hand, was magnificent; his ugly features were transformed, his hesitating delivery became eloquent and inspired. It was nearly midnight before the meeting broke up, after resolving to "dare." The result has been

described in the previous chapter. When Prince Troubetzkoy, the dictator, was placed as a prisoner in the fortress of St. Peter and Paul, Lieutenant-General Levashoff exclaimed to him: "Ah, Prince! You have done Russia a bad service, you have thrown her back fifty years!" Count Sologoub writes: "In the opinion of truly cultured and sincerely patriotic people, of that time as well as later, the insurrection retarded the development of Russia by several decades, in spite of the absolute nobility of character and the unselfishness of the conspirators. Moreover, it sowed in the heart of the Emperor Nicholas I. a permanent distrust of the Russian nobility. This is the explanation, according to Count Sologoub, of the introduction of that large German element which, in his opinion, did Russia so much harm. The Count forgets that the German parentage and Prussian wife of Nicholas were factors which have also to be taken into consideration; nor is it so very certain that the German influences in Russia have been uniformly baneful.

The attitude of Nicholas is very apparent from his letter to Constantine, in which he recites the history of the insurrection, and displays an intimate acquaintance with the ramifications of the conspiracy. The letter is too long to quote *in extenso*, but we may be permitted to cite a few passages. The following is characteristic:

"All is quiet, and the arrests are being continued in due order; the papers seized have put us in possession of some curious information. The majority of the mutinous soldiers have by this time voluntarily returned to their barracks, with the exception of about five hundred men of the Moscow and Grenadier regiments, who were taken on the spot, and whom I have ordered to be placed in the fortress; there are others there besides, about thirty-eight marines, as well as a lot of all sorts of minor blackguards,

nearly all dead drunk. . . . I hope that it will soon be possible to send you a detailed account of this infamous business. We have all their papers, and three of the principal leaders are in custody. . . . The evidence of Ruyleyeff, a local writer, and Troubetzkoy has disclosed all their plans, which had wide ramifications within the Empire. What is most curious of all, is that the change of ruler was but a pretext for this outbreak, which has been long prepared, with the object of killing us all and establishing a constitutional republican Government. I have even Troubetzkoy's draft constitution, the production of which quite upset him, and led him to make a full confession. In addition, it is very probable that we shall discover a few more tail-coated blackguards (*i.e.*, civilians). . . ."

The Empress-mother, writing to Count Kotchubey about the events of the 14th of December, says: "The noble conduct of my son Nicholas, his magnanimity, his firmness and his admirable self-abnegation, as well as the fine courage of Michael, have saved the State and the family."

After the failure of the insurrection General Benckendorff took command of the Vassili Ostroff, the residential part of St. Petersburg at that time, especially of the commercial classes. Finding the people in a state of unrest, and gathered together in knots, he invited them into the nearest church and there read them the manifesto of Nicholas, which quieted them completely, and had the effect of calming the entire locality.

The Emperor, who spent all night in receiving reports and making all necessary arrangements, was in the saddle by eight o'clock on the following morning, the 15th December, and rode off to inspect the garrison. The marines implored his forgiveness, which he graciously granted, after having their flag sprinkled with holy water in order to cleanse it from the defilement to which they had sub-

jected it. The entire garrison then marched past in review, and from that moment the town was as quiet as though nothing had occurred. Nevertheless the events of the preceding day left an indelible impression on the Emperor's mind. He told La Ferronaye, the French Ambassador, that nobody could have an idea of the pain he felt, and would continue to feel until his dying hour, whenever he called to mind that day. On the slightest manifestation of political opinions opposed to his own, or the least disorder, he would say: "Oh! how are my friends of the fourteenth!"

When he was interrogating the prisoners who were brought to him, he turned to his brother with the words: "The revolution is at the doors of Russia, but it shall not effect an entry, I swear, as long as I have a breath of life, as long as I am Emperor by the grace of God."

His own position he summed up as follows: "Nobody feels more than I do how necessary it is for us all to be judged indulgently, but let those who judge me do me the justice to take into consideration the extraordinary manner in which I found myself transferred from the post of a recently appointed General of Division to that which I occupy at this moment; whom I succeeded, and in what circumstances; and they will agree that but for the protection of Providence and of him whom I consider as my benefactor during his lifetime, and whom I like to regard as my guardian angel still, it would have been impossible for me not only to acquit myself well, but to satisfy the demands which my ordinary actual duties make upon me. But I am firmly convinced of that divine protection which is exercised over me in a manner so obvious that I cannot help seeing it in all that befalls me. Hence it is my strength, my consolation, my guide in all things."

Meanwhile the relations between Nicholas and the

Empress-mother appear to have been somewhat strained, for we find the Countess Nesselrode writing to her brother as late as 19th March 1826 :

“ Complete friendly accord has not yet been established between the Empress-mother and her august son. I believe she would have preferred to be more consulted and to have more influence, and that what she pardoned in the late Emperor she takes very much amiss from the present one. They are at considerable variance on all points, which is wearing out the monarch, whose mind is constantly engaged on serious matters.” The Countess concludes by blaming the want of tact of this ambitious mother of two emperors, who could not gain by experience what nature had denied her,—dignity and aplomb.

Nicholas was indeed engaged on serious matters, as his letters to his brother abundantly prove. On the 23rd December 1825 he was already able to say : “ Our investigations are progressing perfectly well, likewise the arrests of all persons within our reach, members of this horrible and extraordinary conspiracy ; an account of what is being done in this respect is sent you by this courier. You will there find well-known names, and I have the weightiest reasons for believing in the justice of my suspicions, that the affair has spread even to the Imperial Council, as far as Mordvinoff, to mention a name. But as I have made it a rule not to seize anyone who is not actually denounced or who is not gravely suspected, I am not forcing the pace. . . . Here everybody is full of zeal to assist me in this horrible task. Fathers bring me their sons. All wish to have the conspirators made examples of, and more especially to have their families purged of such creatures, and even of suspicions of that nature. I am awaiting the arrival of Michael Orloff and Lopoukhin, who must have been arrested by this time.

Those of the 2nd Army are the most important. This is confirmed by Vadkoffski, who was brought here yesterday, and by all the others. It is principally Pestel and Serge Volkoffski whom it is important for me to get hold of. I am also expecting Mouravieff and Tchernisheff. This is where we are. I am worn out with work,—you will understand and feel for me, and excuse the disorder of these lines ; but my head is giddy, and, after all, the essential thing is that you should know everything.”

The above optimistic estimate of the general feeling towards the conspirators is not quite borne out by the facts. There can be little doubt that the educated and cultured classes secretly sympathised with the movement, nevertheless these were in a small minority. The great majority of the population regarded this attempt to limit the powers of the Lord's anointed as an act of sacrilege and as “ an historical anomaly.”

One of the first measures taken by the Emperor was to appoint a Commission of Inquiry. The composition of this commission was a very serious question. To the honour of Nicholas be it said, that he did not allow it to degenerate into an inquisition or to become a vehicle for private vengeance, which might have very easily been the case had its constitution been left to such congenial spirits as Araktcheyeff or Kleinmichel. As the plot had taken the form of a military mutiny, Nicholas very properly instructed General Tatistcheff, the Minister of War, to draw up the reference to the commission. The Minister confided this work at once to his military adviser Borovkoff, whose draft was submitted to and approved by the Emperor. Borovkoff in his reference laid particular stress on the importance of a careful investigation of the guilt of every individual examined, for, he added, “ following the example of our illustrious ancestors, it would be more

agreeable to us for guilty persons to be acquitted than for an innocent person to be wrongfully condemned." On reading these words the Emperor embraced his Minister, and told him he had correctly divined his wishes. "I dare say," he added, "that we shall find a good many implicated who joined the conspirators thoughtlessly and not from conviction; we must distinguish between these two categories."

On the 17th December 1825 the Emperor issued a secret decree to the Minister of War appointing him chairman of the Commission of Inquiry, the other members of which were to be Prince Golitzin, General Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff, General Benckendorff, and General Levashoff. To these were added later the following generals—Potapoff, Baron Diebitch, and Tchernitcheff, besides Adlerberg, Borovkoff, and Karassevski. Writing to his brother Constantine, Nicholas says, referring to the ring-leaders, that no mercy should be shown them. In the opinion, however, of Prince Eugene of Würtemberg this opportunity of conquering the hearts of his subjects by generosity and forgiveness should not have been allowed to be lost by the Emperor. But these counsels, which were advanced, if at all, through the intermediary of the Empress-mother, did not prevail. The Emperor gave the example. He examined every prisoner himself, and then handed them over to the commission, of which he made his brother Michael president. The latter seems to have taken great pains to make certain that no innocent persons should be condemned, and is reported to have said, after the examination of Ruyleyeff, that he was glad he had not met him before, otherwise Ruyleyeff might even have implicated him (the Grand Duke) also. There can be little doubt but that Ruyleyeff tried to drag as many distinguished names as possible into the conspiracy in order to increase its importance.

Unfortunately, the methods of examining prisoners which obtain in this country, where the liberty of the subject has been evolved, and is, according to some, still in process of evolution, as the result of centuries of struggle and growth, had not penetrated to Russia at the period of which we are writing, and the prisoners were treated as criminals before their guilt could be proved. Some of them were marched through the streets, and brought before the Emperor with their arms tied with ropes behind their backs. Sometimes it happened that the Emperor, enraged by their obstinate reticence, had them loaded with irons, and kept in that condition for a considerable period. Nor should it be forgotten that the food they received was prison fare, that they were kept confined in the damp casements of the fortress of St. Peter and Paul, that they were frequently visited by the prison chaplain, who admonished them in "suitable terms," that they were kept in solitary confinement, and even threatened with torture. The Decembrist Rosen, describing the commission, says that it was composed principally of generals, who were from the very first biassed against the accused. "Thank God," he adds, "that there were some cultured and honest men amongst them !"

On the 6th June 1826 the Emperor writes to his brother to say that the report of the Commission of Inquiry had been handed to him ; indeed, it reached him on the 30th May. The case was then given over to a Court specially constituted by an Imperial manifesto, and composed of members selected from the Imperial Council, the Senate, and the Synod. Speranski was one of the number. To this Court were handed over for trial 121 prisoners, of whom sixty-one were members of the Northern Society, thirty-seven of the Southern Society, and twenty-three of the United Slavs. This Court appointed a committee to revise the report of

the commission, and to ascertain from the accused whether they had appended their actual signatures to their depositions, and whether these had been voluntarily affixed. They were further to ascertain whether they had been confronted with their accusers. This formalism served no useful purpose. The prisoners did not know why they were asked these questions, nor by what authority they were put. By the 10th June the committee had tied up its parcels with red tape, and another committee was appointed which had to classify the prisoners into categories. Speranski was obliged to serve on this committee. On the 28th June the Court assembled to receive the report of this second committee, and on the 3rd July it selected three members to draw up the loyal finding of the Court for submission to the Emperor. Speranski was one of the three. In spite of the presence of this, Russia's most enlightened statesman at the time, on the final committee of three, the Court definitely submitted to the Emperor on the 9th July the following recommendations.

The five ringleaders, including Pestel, Ruyleyeff, Mouravieff-Apostol, and Bestujeff-Ryoumen, to be quartered alive; thirty-one others to be beheaded, and the remainder to be sent to penal servitude for life, and otherwise punished in accordance with the degree of their guilt.

The Emperor commuted these harsh sentences, and consented to the death penalty being inflicted in the case only of the five ringleaders, whom Nicholas wished to have shot because they were officers and gentlemen, but the counsels of Benckendorff, if we are to believe Schilder, prevailed, and they were hanged. Everybody knows the story of the bungle with Ruyleyeff, who had to be hanged three times before he was successfully executed, which led to the famous mot, put into the mouth of the victim himself: "In this accursed country they cannot even hang you properly!"



THE EMPRESS ALEXANDRA, WIFE OF NICHOLAS I
FROM A PAINTING BY HESSE IN BERLIN

CHAPTER XIV

A HOHENZOLLERN EMPRESS

IN a previous chapter (Chapter XI.) the fact is recorded that the Emperor Nicholas, when still a Grand Duke, married in 1817 a daughter of his brother Alexander's friend and comrade-in-arms, Frederick William III. of Prussia. This charming and cultured Princess, the beautiful daughter of a famous and beautiful mother, lived to exercise an influence on Russian society of which it is not too much to say that the effects are still making themselves felt. In a country only just awakening out of a long barbaric slumber, in which the arts and humanities were yet in their first infancy, she was the centre of sweetness and light. By her love of music and the fine arts she did much to kindle and develop those dormant artistic qualities latent in all Slavonic races, which, in the case of Russia, have grown so generously and luxuriantly, creating schools of music, painting, and literature peculiarly national, and destined to excite the admiration and emulation of the rest of the world. Moreover, she set an example of happy domesticity such as had not as yet been given to any Russian Empress or even Grand Duchess to exhibit, the Empress Marie, the wife of Paul, not excepted. Her biographer and faithful servant, A. Th. von Grimm, says without exaggeration that "she was the soul of the Imperial house and society, and her example, though quiet and almost imperceptible, yet powerfully influenced

the tone and ennobled the spirit of society in the capital."

At the time when she made her entry without any presentiment that she was destined to adorn the Russian throne as Empress for five-and-thirty years, Princess Charlotte's biographer could say that in St. Petersburg "the highest circles of society were French on the surface, the ranks immediately beneath being wholly European, with very little national admixture; for national narrow-mindedness and provincialism disappeared before the flexible forms, the polished manners of a society whose hospitality attracted and captivated both natives and foreigners. St. Petersburg vied with Paris in wit, sarcasm, and brilliant conversation, and surpassed Berlin in the wealth and splendour of its domestic and social life. Russian ladies of the highest circles could challenge comparison with the rest of Europe for culture, intelligence, charm, taste and elegance, versatility of talents, linguistic knowledge, and general attractiveness." For all that, Russian society concealed under a superficial refinement much grossness and barbarity, to say nothing of its profligacy.

Princess Charlotte was born in troublous times, and first saw the light in 1798; she was baptized three days after the battle of Aboukir. For nearly two years after the dreadful events of 1807 the royal children of the house of Prussia travelled about with their parents as fugitives rather than members of a reigning family, and their education was therefore somewhat intermittent in character. Princess Charlotte was nine years old on the conclusion of the Treaty of Tilsit, and ought at that age to have been undergoing regular instruction. A young Frenchman, Chambeau by name, who accompanied them, gave them such lessons as he could, and Queen Louisa herself

instilled into them their religious ideas, and inculcated those maxims of devotion and piety which the Empress of Russia subsequently declared to have been the fairest heritage left her by her mother. But the necessary means for paying efficient tutors and governesses were wanting. The life of the royal family at Memel was not merely simple, like that of ordinary citizens; it was frugal to the degree of privation. Every piece of plate or article of value was given up by the King and converted into specie, in order to lighten the burdens which Napoleon had laid on the people. The Princesses could not afford new dresses, and so great was the poverty of the royal family that they could not bear to allow strangers "to witness their limited household means." A contemporary diplomatist who spent an evening with them at Memel says: "I would not exchange my memories of that spectacle for a thousand Court festivals with gold-laced uniforms and stars. At a shabby table which was devoid, like herself, of all outward show was seated a Queen, whose charm, loveliness, and dignity stood all the stronger in bold relief." He describes how the eldest Princess, like the bud beside the full-blown rose, "shared with her mother the arrangement of household affairs." The Princess Charlotte indeed strongly resembled her mother, although, according to the latter, she was reserved and thoughtful; but, like her father, concealed under a seemingly cold exterior a warm and sympathising heart. "She has something stately in her appearance, and, if God spares her life, I anticipate a brilliant future for her." Of that future the noble-hearted Louisa was not fated to live to be a witness. Not many months after her re-entry in state into Berlin in the December of 1809 the much abused, sorely tried, and fondly worshipped Queen of Prussia died. Charlotte now became the confidante and solace of her father, and the

first lady at the severely formal but chivalrous Court of Berlin. Here Nicholas saw her, and fell in love with her, as we have seen.

At that time Russia was even less known and understood than in the present day, if that were possible, and to the young Princess it was practically a sealed book. A Russian priest, Musoffski by name, was despatched to Berlin to teach her the Russian language and the tenets of the Orthodox faith, which she had to embrace. In these no doubt severe exercises she was sustained by the frequent visits of her *fiancé*, whose fluent knowledge of German and contagious gaiety must have encouraged and consoled his intended bride. At that period Nicholas is described to have been frank, confiding, susceptible, indulgent, and gay to excess.

Although all writers seem to be agreed that the marriage of these two exalted personages had been planned and schemed by Alexander and Frederick William, Grimm strongly insists upon its accidental nature and the genuine mutual, romantic affection on which it was based. It seems, however, unnecessary, in order to prove the love-match, to deny the preconcerted plan. The truth seems to be that while both Alexander and Frederick William desired the match, their natures would have shrunk from doing anything to force the inclinations of the young people, who were allowed to meet without any previous knowledge of an existing tacit understanding.

At last, the time of instruction and probation being ended, the Princess was despatched on her regal progress to Russia, attended by a small but select suite, and escorted by her second brother, William, whose character presented many points of similarity with that of Nicholas.

The presentation of the bride to her new relatives was characteristically Russian and cordial. Alexander received

her with that chivalrous grace of manner for which he was so much admired in Europe, while the stately Empress-mother embraced her with "sincere tenderness." This haughty lady was fifty-eight at the time, slender and animated, with an "energetic and imperial aspect." The Princess was too agitated to distinguish the various personages assembled. Alexander's consort seems to have been overshadowed by her more militant mother-in-law, and approached the bride with the words: "Have you not a kind glance for me too?"

It was with great relief that the dazed Princess found herself in her own room and alone, but suddenly the door opened, and there entered unannounced a venerable lady, who in unceremonious and familiar manner said: "You are very sunburnt. I will send you some water at once." This turned out to be our old acquaintance, Princess Lieven, whose linguistic abilities we had occasion to describe in a previous chapter (Chapter X.). Expected to dine that evening with the Imperial family, the bride-elect did not await the arrival of her gala dresses, and presented herself in very simple attire before the assembled Court, who carefully observed her every movement and gesture, her mien, deportment, and conversation. She immediately received the nickname of "Goloobtchick"—little dove, a Russian term of endearment.

The first five days after her arrival the Princess spent in seclusion and religious instruction. On the 24th June she made her confession of faith in the Slavonic tongue before the entire Court, her future brother-in-law, Alexander, standing sponsor. She adopted his name, and was from henceforth to be known as Alexandra Feodorovna. The classical beauty of her features was emphasised by the severe simplicity of her white dress, a cross on her breast being her only adornment. The betrothal and wedding

of the young couple followed each other in rapid succession, and the Grand Duke and his Prussian wife soon found themselves established with a small Court of their own at the Anitchkoff Palace. The unassuming and natural graces of manner of the Grand Duchess, her frank conversation, her happy expression, all in sharp contrast with the rather haughty dignity, not to say *morgue*, of the Empress-mother, won universal approval. From the first she seems to have established an atmosphere of brightness and cheerfulness around her, and she instantly ingratiated herself in the affections of her austere mother-in-law, whilst the Emperor Alexander continued her firm friend and ally to his death. The small Court of the grand-ducal couple included Princess Volkonski, Lady of State or Mistress of the Robes, whose badge of office consisted of a miniature portrait of her mistress set in brilliants, two maids-of-honour, Countess Shouvaloff, and Mme Oushakoff. The suite was composed of Court Marshal Narishkin, Count Tchernisheff, two chamberlains, and one equerry. Nicholas had two aides-de-camp, Count Adlerberg and Baron Friedericks, who was married to a Countess Gouroffski, who had been a playmate of the Grand Duchess's, by whom she was always spoken of as "my friend Cecilia." The other intimates of this small circle were Field-Marshal Paskievitch, Count Perovski, Count Orloff, and the poet Joukoffski, who was later appointed governor of the future Alexander II., and who instructed the Grand Duchess in the Russian language. The latter, who had pronounced literary as well as musical tastes, and was a devoted admirer of Jean Paul Richter, spent a certain portion of her day in literary pursuits. In the evenings a small coterie assembled in her boudoir, which could conveniently hold about a dozen people. Here the tone was easy and cultured, the stiff etiquette of the dour

Empress-Dowager giving place to light-hearted cheerfulness, round games, music, and brilliant conversation. Among the outside members of this little coterie the Countess Orloff, Princess Troubetzkoy, and Mme Koutouloff should be mentioned. The first, an old maid of great wealth, whose anecdotes of the Court of Catherine probably amused if they did not always edify, the second a German by birth, and the third the wife of that Koutouloff who accompanied Nicholas to England. In this agreeable society the Grand Duchess presided a sort of fairy-queen, and developed and chained the generous affections of her devoted spouse, who grudged every minute that he had to spend elsewhere. The most perfect happiness would have reigned but for the intriguing propensities of Narishkin, the proud descendant of one of the greatest families of Russia, whose members have for centuries consistently refused all titles and distinctions. This exalted person took upon himself to treat the grand-ducal couple as children, to curb their youthful spirits, and to read them lessons of deportment and dignity. Not satisfied with this, he even endeavoured to set husband and wife against each other by commenting unfavourably on one married partner to the other. This Alexandra could not stand; she would hear nothing against her Nicholas, and still less would she allow anybody to poison his mind against her, so she rose with all the energy of the Hohenzollern race and had Narishkin turned out, much to the surprise of Russian society, where the Grand Duchess had been little suspected of so much spirit, not to say courage. His post was conferred on Count Modene, who acquitted himself to the satisfaction of husband and wife. It is recorded of this period of their married life that Nicholas and Alexandra often spent their evenings alone together, when he would read to her Sir Walter Scott's novels.

Alexandra's first child, a son, who was christened Alexander, was born in Moscow, before Nicholas, who was twenty-one when he married, had attained the age of twenty-two. The fortunate circumstance immediately gave the Grand Duchess a position in the country which the wife of Alexander I. had never enjoyed. She was now closely and inseparably connected with the history of her adopted country. Her father at once decided to visit his daughter, and arrived in Moscow, where the old aristocracy vied with each other in entertaining him. He was accompanied by the Crown Prince, later Frederick William IV., who was at that time already famous for his genial wit and absence of formality. His free and easy ways seem to have rather puzzled the punctilious courtiers of St. Petersburg, who were nevertheless delighted with him. His sister seems to have been particularly cheered by his visit.

Not long after these events the Emperor Alexander I. made that famous and mysterious communication to the grand-ducal couple to which we had occasion to refer before. Nicholas seems to have been very much puzzled by it, especially as he did not find that it entailed any change in his position or circumstances. He found himself considerably straitened in means, and had much difficulty in getting his modest allowance increased. One is led to assume that he consequently put the whole affair out of his mind, devoted himself to his military duties with his usual zeal and conscientiousness, which, as we have seen, had made him unpopular, and sought relaxation in the society of his charming wife, composing marches and singing national songs to his wife's accompaniment; another amusement being landscape painting, which he studied under Sauerweid, a painter whom he had met in England, who contributed to the gaiety of the little Anitchkoff parties by his amusing and instructive con-

versation. No respecter of persons, he was frankness itself, and from him the grand-ducal couple had to hear many home truths. And thus, uneventfully, occasionally visiting Berlin and the interior of Russia, Nicholas and his spouse spent the early years of their married life infusing a healthy tone of domesticity into a somewhat dissolute capital from which the Emperor was too frequently absent, and the Empress-mother stood austere aloof. But the young Princess, brought up by an over-indulgent father, laughed at her mother-in-law's formal etiquette and stiff ceremony, and at her husband's child-like submission to his parent.

As we have seen, the sudden death of Alexander found this couple quite unprepared for the great position which they were called upon to occupy, and some time had to elapse before Nicholas could be persuaded to give effect to the wishes of his two elder brothers. The melancholy circumstances attending the accession were not without their effect on the young Grand Duchess, who during the eight years of her married life had presented her husband with one son and three daughters, all of whom were under the care of English nurses, it is interesting to note. From that terrible day dates the nervous malady from which Alexandra suffered to her death, and which manifested itself in a tremulous shaking of the head, and later deprived her of the use of her limbs.

The young Empress was soon called upon to take her place as the first lady in Russia, and to preside at those fatiguing entertainments of the Winter Palace and the Hermitage whose origin dates back far into the eighteenth century. They are loved by the Russians, but were irksome to Alexandra, who preferred the free interchange of ideas which is alone possible in small coteries, from which the restraining and oppressive influence of Court etiquette

is removed. At a time when Nicholas felt that he must impose his will on his people, and crush sedition and conspiracy by firmness and discipline which would brook no argument or contradiction, Alexandra was, on the contrary, accessible to the views of intellectual and generous persons, and kept her mind unsullied by any bias or prejudices. Thus, for instance, she made a friend of the young Countess Sophie Bobrinski, wife of Alexis Bobrinski, a member of the old Moscow nobility, who possessed great independence of character, and whose manners resembled "the simple bearing of the English aristocracy." The two ladies became close friends, and mutually confided in each other. The Bobrinskis were imbued with liberal ideas, which the Count did not hesitate to make known to the Emperor, "with such an air of profound conviction that, though Nicholas seldom agreed with his opinions, he rarely contradicted them." To Count Bobrinski belongs the credit of having been one of the pioneers of modern Russian industrialism.

The Empress, besides presiding at the great Court functions of the Winter Palace, had to go to the houses of her subjects. One of the most fatiguing of the Court functions was the celebration of the Emperor's or Empress's patron saint's day, the name-day as it is called in Russia. The Winter Palace on these days threw open all its rooms. All who had been presented at Court assembled to pay their respects on these days, when the Emperor and Empress, accompanied by the Imperial family, passed through the reception rooms on their way to church. Titles, orders, and presents were distributed on these occasions by the fountain of honour. On the way to church the Imperial party would be acclaimed by crowds of people. Then would follow the stately but very fatiguing High Mass, for in Russian churches the worshippers have to stand throughout the

service. To the subsequent banquet only the three highest classes in the official table of ranks could be invited. The Court ball which succeeded the banquet consisted only of a polonaise by the Imperial family. An eye-witness writes : " The stranger, on such occasions, seeing a splendour of bright uniforms and dresses, ladies in the stately national costume, toilettes of fairy-like magnificence, often displaying all the wealth of diamonds and jewels in the whole realm (?), is filled with the most unbounded astonishment."

The capital contained a number of wealthy families, who coveted the honour of receiving the Imperial couple. So long as the Empress was able to dance these invitations were gladly accepted, for the entertainments were usually on a most magnificent scale. The staircases and halls were turned into gardens of flowers, and for the Empress herself, whose fondness for these flowers was well known, a bower of camelias was usually prepared. Such parties would cost thousands of pounds. Should the Empress be prevented by indisposition or any cause from coming, the absence was put down to pride and haughtiness, so she had to go whether she felt equal to it or not, especially as she knew that the success of these parties depended entirely upon her. Many of the palaces of the great families in St. Petersburg can bear comparison with those of our own nobility.

Christmas Eve was regarded as an essentially family holiday. Christmas trees were lit up, and all the members of the Imperial household received gifts and surprises. The Empress resumed her place as the mother of her children, whose playfellows were also invited and presented with gifts, though the latter were not confined to those present. New Year's Day was another great holiday on which presents were distributed. In the early years of the reign of Nicholas, New Year's Eve was a holiday for the

whole town, the palace being open literally to everybody, even the lowliest peasant. More than 30,000 people would be admitted into the palace on that evening, and many would return home with their clothes torn to pieces by the crowd. In later years, out of consideration for the failing health of the Empress, this reception was discontinued. The Empress made repeated attempts to introduce fancy-dress pageants, which were very much in vogue at the Court of Berlin, but never succeeded in transplanting this custom to Russian soil. The first weeks of the year, down to the close of the carnival, called Butter Week in Russia, were the height of the season. The great aristocratic families, more exclusive perhaps than any other aristocracy in the world, gave balls, at which the Imperial couple were present and opened the proceedings with a polonaise. During Lent a lull in the gaieties of the capital set in, all the theatres were closed, the balls were all over, and the only form of entertainment countenanced were concerts, at which the best artists of the world performed and reaped rich harvests. The sober Lenten weeks were succeeded by the boisterous gaiety of Easter, and then the Imperial family betook themselves to one of their country residences, preferably Tzarskoye Selo, where the Empress enjoyed the quiet and repose she so much needed, and Nicholas endeavoured to forget the cares of state in the society of his children. He loved to drive them out to picnics in a brake, and to spend the evening playing round games with them in the spacious apartments. During dinner the Empress used to have a military band to play outside her windows.

Later in the summer the Court would take up its residence at more distant Peterhof. As soon as the Empress awoke strains of music from a military band playing her favourite pieces, such as the overture to the

Freischütz and the first valse she danced with Nicholas in Berlin, greeted her ear. When her toilette was completed she would enter her own salon, where she would find the Emperor and her children awaiting her. The morning was spent in the garden. Amiable and gracious, always gentle and sweet-tempered, her appearance was welcomed by all, and she had a pleasant word and genial smile for everybody. In the evenings grand fêtes were not uncommon, when the spacious gardens were brightly illuminated, and the still night was made melodious with music, the Emperor and Empress with their suite making a stately tour of the illuminated paths to receive the obeisances of their guests and subjects. These more formal entertainments were varied by round games, tableaux vivants, and charades in which the Imperial family took part, and other unsophisticated kinds of amusement. A frequent guest after 1830, when she first visited St. Petersburg, was Henrietta Sontag, the famous singer, in listening to whose voice the Empress always took a lively pleasure. Later this lady became the wife of Count Rossi, and returned to St. Petersburg to be the hostess of the Sardinian Embassy. Although no longer able to sing at public concerts or on the operatic stage, she loved to pour out her melodious voice at the private concerts and small select parties of the Empress, who showed an enlightened appreciation of the arts. All the talent of Europe was attracted to St. Petersburg, especially that of Germany. Hither came such great stars as Franz Liszt, Henselt, Leopold Meyer, Döhler, Thalberg, to mention only a few. But the Empress did not limit her admiration of mental gifts to foreigners, she also encouraged native talent. Thus she made Mlle Pauline Bartenieff, who had no great family interest to advance her, lady of the palace, solely on account of her beautiful voice, from which position she was speedily advanced to

that of maid-of-honour. Nor should the two Counts Vielgorski, Alexis Lvoff, and Modest Resvoy be overlooked. Thus the Empress surrounded herself with an atmosphere of artistic refinement, which did much to raise the tone of society generally.

The winter of 1837 was marked by the disastrous fire which broke out in the Winter Palace. The Imperial family were at the theatre when the outbreak was first discovered ; anxious not to alarm his consort, the Emperor kept the news secret, and proceeded alone to the scene of the conflagration. Gradually, however, the news spread among the audience, and presently the Empress discovered that she and her party in her box remained the sole occupants of the theatre. She felt that something extraordinary must have occurred, and decided to return home at once to the Anitchkoff Palace. On her way she learned of the disaster that had overtaken the Winter Palace, and instantly drove there, to find her children safe. She caused Miss Koutouzoff, who was an invalid, to be removed, and then proceeded to her private study, where she was able to save her papers and correspondence. There can be no doubt that this great fire, which gutted the palace, was a terrible shock to the Empress, whose health had not improved during the twenty years of her residence in Russia, and who was rapidly becoming a confirmed invalid. Ivan Golovine, who is very chary of his praises of any member of the Imperial family, says of the Empress that she had always exercised a beneficial influence over her husband by tempering his passion and his excesses. The Emperor surrounded her with every attention and mark of affection. She had but to express a wish and it was given effect to, as though by magic. Thus, for instance, on one occasion, at Peterhof, she expressed a vague desire to hear an opera, and said the place

would be perfect if this were but possible. That same evening a stage was fitted up, and after dinner the Emperor led her forth into the improvised theatre, when an excellent performance of the opera she had expressed a wish to hear was given. Another time she suggested that it would be very charming to have in the park a summer-house built and fitted out in the style of a Russian peasant hut. By the evening a hut of the kind stood ready to receive her on the spot indicated.

But the devotion and affection of Nicholas were powerless to restore the bloom of health to her cheek, especially after the death of her favourite daughter, her saintly Alexandra. She had to pay frequent visits to Western Europe, wintering in Palermo and other parts of Italy, and spent the latter years of her life, from 1841, stretched on a couch, or in a recumbent attitude generally. The death of the Emperor was the last blow to her nervously exhausted constitution, and she did not long survive him. She died at Tzarskoye Selo in 1860, having been kept alive during the last few years by taking nourishment like an infant, for which purpose she was always accompanied by wet nurses. In her will she attributes to the love of her children, and especially the care and tenderness of her eldest son, her survival for so many years of her husband. She expressed the wish that her apartments should be inhabited by her family, adding: "I hope and believe that the spot where I lived the happiest of wives and mothers may also one day be the scene of the felicity of both yourselves and your children."

CHAPTER XV

THE GRAND DUKE MICHAEL

THE youngest son of Paul, had he been born in another sphere of life, would in all probability have attracted but little attention to himself, and passed through his pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave, after carefully boiling the peas in his shoes, without incident or distinction. As the only surviving brother of an Emperor he, however, filled a large place in the public eye, nor was his importance lessened by his judicious marriage to a beautiful and highly cultured Princess who survived him many years and continued to exercise a considerable influence on St. Petersburg society to the day of her death.

Michael was a genial, rather stupid, somewhat self-indulgent officer, who was unsurpassed in the barrack-yard, and looked up to by both his elder brothers, neither of whom was deficient in that respect, for his perfect mastery of every detail of military drill and goose-step pedantry. He belonged emphatically to that school of military genius which has been so gracefully described as the school of spit-and-polish, but it is probable that he would have lost his head on the battle-field. On the occasion of the famous mutiny of the Semyonovski Guards his presence produced no effect upon the men, and on the fateful 14th December 1825, although he displayed a fine courage, he does not appear to have manifested a strikingly masterful ability. On the parade-ground he was occasion-

ally subject to lamentable outbreaks of passion ; and in this particular he seems to have resembled his brother Constantine. It appears somewhat curious that the Empress Marie, the wife of Paul, should have produced her four sons in series of two, a long interval of daughters intervening ; and that while the eldest of both series should have been destined to occupy the throne and to astonish the world by an exceptional ability amounting almost to genius, the youngest should have remained upon an intellectual level which cannot without almost fulsome adulation be described as even mediocre.

Both in intellect and character Constantine and Michael resembled each other, with this difference, that in the former an energy of temperament emphasised and gave prominence to defects, which in the case of his more lethargic brother were rather latent than glaring.

While Nicholas was born on the 6th June 1796, Michael saw the light on the 28th January 1798. The two brothers became as inseparable as Alexander and Constantine had been, and were the favourite children of their father, to whom they did not bear the least resemblance, although they were very much like each other, just as there was a great similarity of type between Alexander and Constantine, Michael being, however, a distinctly good-looking child and man, whilst Constantine would at no period of his life have seemed to be anything but hideous. Paul used to call his two youngest boys his little lambs, and was fond of caressing them and otherwise demonstrating his affection, whilst their more Spartan mother never relaxed her dignity in her relations with her children.

The early training of Michael, like that of his brother, was confided to a nurse of British nationality, a Mrs. Kennedy, whose maiden name was Ramsbottom, and who was the widow of the English chaplain to the Anglican

Church of St. Petersburg, who had taught the Grand Duchesses Italian, and was evidently, like all Englishmen resident in the capital in those days, esteemed at Court. In this connection it is edifying to reflect how completely our diplomacy succeeded in counteracting the friendly feeling towards this country which the national good qualities of individual British residents in Russia had won for us. The two Grand Dukes, one of whom was destined to go to war with England, were, for instance, passionately devoted to their nurses, and used to have fierce disputes as to which of the two was the better; Michael, unable to get the better, in argument, of his brother, maintaining that they were at least equally clever, whereupon Nicholas, conceding this point, would nevertheless insist that Miss Lyon was the kinder-hearted,—in which, to judge by the reports of the tutors in attendance, he was right, for Mrs. Kennedy could lose her temper when vexed.

Both Michael and Nicholas were shy and even deficient in physical courage as boys, but they early exhibited their love for military matters; and although they liked to listen to the piano-playing of their sister Mary, stoutly declared that they preferred the drum. Of the two, Michael exhibited the more lively disposition, and early manifested a sense of humour and a love of jokes which remained with him through life. While, however, Nicholas was distinctly constructive in his childhood, and loved erecting fortifications and building generally, his younger brother was so destructive, that Nicholas used to dread his arrival on the scene of his structural labours. Michael seems to have frequently ridiculed the timidity of his brother; but he nevertheless was fully imbued with the superiority of intellect and character of Nicholas, whose praises he was never tired of singing; and he was commendably modest

about his own achievements. Indeed, Nicholas seems to have treated his brother with some condescension, and asserted his intellectual supremacy at an early date. Paskevitch, for instance, writing from Paris in 1814, says that Nicholas was fond of his brother, but did not "admit him to serious discussions," for which, indeed, the latter had little inclination.

It was to this same General Paskevitch, whom Alexander regarded as his best General, that the Grand Duke Michael was intrusted when he grew up. The General had to act as his "bear-leader," and escort him on his various journeys through Russia and on the Continent, the Empress-mother being solicitous of keeping her sons under the strict supervision of trustworthy people. No better companion could have been found for him. Less edifying, though possibly more amusing, was the company of the Grand Duke Constantine, who conceived a very strong affection for his amiable and unassuming brother. Occasionally the latter would come to Warsaw, sometimes the former would pay a flying visit to the capital, and on these occasions the elder brother, interminably smoking cigars and drinking tea, would sit up all night with young Michael and tell him stories of his past experiences, of the reign of the Empress Catherine, of the Emperor Paul, of the Suvoroff campaigns, and of old times generally. Previous to these conversational orgies, Michael had to take supper with his mother. This was a daily duty. At ten o'clock punctually he had to present himself every evening to the Dowager Empress, and after his meal he was dismissed, and supposed to go to bed.

In 1822 the Grand Duke Michael was betrothed to Princess Charlotte of Würtemberg, who, later, took the name of Helen on being received into the Orthodox faith. The Emperor Alexander, who met her on his return from

Verona, was charmed with this Princess, who exceeded his most sanguine expectations. Writing about her to his sister-in-law, the Grand Duchess Alexandra, wife of Nicholas, he says : " I will content myself by simply telling you that she unites infinite calm with aplomb to a very great sweetness and affability. In short, I do not think there are many of our fellow-mortals who have been so well favoured as Nicholas and Michael. I consider the latter should return thanks to God, for it is not conceivable that he could have done better for himself." In the February of 1824 the young people were married in St. Petersburg. They were very handsomely lodged in the Michael Palace ; and the Grand Duchess Alexandra, writing to her brother-in-law, the Emperor, at Taganrog, on 7th November 1825, says : " Helen is established in her splendours, and is quite happy. Whilst admiring her handsome rooms, I would not exchange my little study for all Helen's salons." There were no sons born of this union, and the Grand Duke predeceased his wife by many years, dying in 1848. The Grand Duchess Helen was one of the few members of the Imperial family for whom Ivan Golovine in his *Russia under Nicholas 1.* has a good word to say. He speaks of her as a woman of superior understanding, " which," he adds, " often exposes her to a degree of jealousy on the part of the Empress, which is betrayed in frequent petty domestic quarrels." He then relates a spiteful anecdote : " On one occasion, when the Grand Duchess returned from abroad her trunks were strictly examined at the custom-house ; and although her new dresses lost something of their freshness, they, nevertheless, eclipsed all others at Court." What a revelation of the little tragedies and heart-burnings, intrigues and uncharitableness from which even such exalted ladies are not quite free !



THE GRAND-DUKE MICHAEL PAVLOVITCH
AFTER A PORTRAIT BY LADOURNIÈRE

The Grand Duchess Helen continued close to the end of the last century to be a force in Russian society, and to hold her salon, which was frequented not only by the brilliant and witty nobles of the Court, but also offered its hospitality to the most distinguished men of letters and of science who visited the country.

Golovine has also a word of faint praise for the Grand Duke Michael, of whom he says that "he has a kind disposition, but a rough exterior, and has a propensity to make puns. It is affirmed that he has been seen to weep at seeing Russian soldiers slain in Poland, while his brother Constantine rubbed his hands, saying, 'What do you think of my Poles?' It is not said whether Michael shed tears for the soldiers whom he sacrificed at Brailoff, but it is pretended that he would not wear the Order of St. George, conferred upon him for the deplorable siege of that place. He is, however, the greatest courtier in Russia; in public he is always seen bent double while speaking, with manifest veneration, to his brother. He is the first servant of the Tzar. I once heard him say, with regret, at a ball, 'All my colleagues have preceded me in the service.' At one time, however, there was a coolness between the two brothers, after which Michael went to Moscow or abroad, where he pretended to amuse himself excessively, and sought popularity not only among the nobles, but likewise among the officers. The Emperor reprimanded him severely for fraternising with his inferiors, to which he answered that he had not expected to be so treated by his brother and his Sovereign."

The few stories that Golovine tells of the Grand Duke are rather to his credit. Thus he reports him as saying to Count Kleinmichel, Chief of the Department of Public Works, who had caused some cadets to be flogged and drafted as private soldiers into the Caucasus: "You have

cast a stain on the reign of my brother." Truth to tell, it is to be feared that Kleinmichel cast a large number of stains on the reign of Nicholas, and tried to conceal a good many more.

According, moreover, to Golovine, the Grand Duke Michael brought about the disgrace of Count Strogonoff, the Minister of the Interior. It seems that an ex-officer of the Guards solicited the patronage and interest of the Grand Duke for the post of gorodnistchi, or prefect of a small town. Michael gave the officer a letter to Strogonoff, who, however, declared that he had no vacancy. But the officer was not to be discouraged, and consulted the Minister's Chef de Bureau. The latter hazarded the opinion that it might be possible to find a vacancy provided the search was facilitated by means of a lubricant of 5000 roubles. Of this the persistent officer informed the Grand Duke, who supplied the money out of his own private means. That very same evening Michael met Strogonoff at the Imperial Palace, and told him to what extent the Minister was in his debt, subsequently informing the Emperor of the whole business. The Emperor is reported to have exclaimed that he would rather have in his service able men who stole themselves than men who suffered others to steal without being aware of it. For Strogonoff's great wealth placed him personally above suspicion. The Minister was in disgrace, and asked for four months' leave of absence. "You shall have four years," the Emperor replied. Strogonoff then begged to be appointed Ambassador to Vienna; but received the cryptic retort that appointments to such posts were made by the Emperor alone. The Minister then retired to Paris, where he spent his declining years attending courses of lectures, especially on medical subjects.

Nevertheless, Michael was as little popular in the army

as his brother, and Schilder writes that when he was appointed chief of the corps of Guards, Nicholas had to restrain the outbursts of passion of his brother. "The severity and meticulous pedantry of the Grand Duke were inevitably bound to give rise to discontent among his subordinates. Kind, chivalrous, noble-minded, filled with paternal solicitude for the welfare of the troops confided to his care, the Grand Duke, carried away by his zeal for drill, to which he was passionately devoted, and by the excitability of his temper, occasionally indulged in excessive manifestations of displeasure." He used even, according to Golovine, to knock the men about on the parade ground.

Benckendorff puts the matter still more strongly: "For some time past complaints against the petty exactions and severity of the Grand Duke Michael had so grown in volume, that they began to give cause for anxiety: Count Kotchubey, General Vassiltchikoff, and finally I myself spoke about this to the Emperor, but without preconcerted action, thus proving that the matter was one of general comment. I was instructed to talk to the Grand Duke about it. Such a scene was calculated to cause me some agitation and to be full of difficulties, besides creating great annoyance for the Emperor. The result has been, that for the last four days His Highness is completely changed, he is polite and affable, in short just what he should always have been, whilst I have probably estranged myself from him for ever."

Unfortunately these periods of reformation did not last. Very soon the Grand Duke would break out again and arouse a veritable storm of indignation. The distracted Emperor would write little notes to Benckendorff to accompany the reports and complaints against his brother which used to pour in. "This is painful to read," he would write; "I do not know how this nuisance is to be

abated. I have argued, ordered and implored in vain. What am I to do ? ”

The following interesting description of the Grand Duke Michael and his ménage is from Grimm's *Life of the Empress Alexandra*, translated by Lady Wallace : “ Nicholas was, as we know, grave and formal ; Michael Pavlovitch, on the other hand, always in a good humour and gay, meeting the most annoying events with a witticism. He fulfilled the duties of his service with the fidelity and conscientiousness of a subject, and at his public appearances before soldiers and officers he assumed his proper dignity. This same man, whom the careless officer avoided in the street, or only formally greeted in prescribed form, cherished his regiment with the heart of a father, and in his own house, and to his friends and intimates, was all heart and feeling, cheerfulness and benevolence. He was better informed than any one in the empire of the position and the good or bad fortune of the various officers. He supported their requests to the Emperor, rewarded and punished with the same impartiality, and his generous hand, like that of the Empress, was too lavish for his means. The Turkish and Polish campaigns found him as fearless in danger as on December 14. Like the Tzar, he was often to be seen in the streets of St. Petersburg wrapped in a soldier's cloak, walking slowly and observingly, greeted by every one with the same respect as the Emperor himself. His wit was keen, but not personally offensive, like that of Prince Menstchikoff. The labours of his post were not less than those of the Minister of War, and his devotion to the Tzar induced him to renounce all the pleasures of life. . . . Seldom did the untiring Michael grant himself a holiday by going abroad. In 1847 he had serious thoughts of passing a year in another country for the re-establishment of his health and laying aside his uniform. . . . ‘ At

first,' said he, ' I shall look quite ridiculous in my own eyes out of uniform, but after I have worn other clothes for a month I shall rather like them. When I travel I become a private individual in every respect. I should like to move about from town to town with only one friend and one servant, without seeing one single soul of my thirty relatives in Germany ; above all, I should wish to be one month in Paris, which I had only a glimpse of when young. I would give a good deal to see a review in Paris as an unknown civilian.' Such was the project which animated him in the autumn of 1847 when thunderclouds were already gathering on the horizon of Europe. No one appreciated so highly the womanly dignity of the Empress, and her admirable influence over the Emperor, as her brother-in-law Michael, who often called her the Palladium of Russia."

The death of the Grand Duke in Warsaw in 1848, as the result of a fall from a horse, caused great grief in the Imperial family, especially to the Emperor, who cherished for his brother a warm and sincere affection.

"The Grand Duchess Helen also, whose intellect was quite masculine, and who had hitherto looked so young and handsome, could not withstand the sorrow of so many losses (she had lost two daughters besides), and became deeply dejected. In the society of her youngest daughter she passed a solitary winter in the large and now deserted palace, formerly frequented daily by hundreds of officers and generals. She was not fettered by so many oppressive considerations as the Empress in the Winter Palace, and she always contrived to amuse her leisure hours. Her house and her salon were entirely separate from that of her husband, who devoted himself exclusively to his official duties, while his wife received both at dinner and in the evenings not only the representatives of all the

branches of Russian life, but distinguished foreigners, travellers, artists, and *savants* in St. Petersburg, who were all welcomed by her. The Academician Von Baer, father of the new system of physiology; Count Keyserling, celebrated as a geologist, found a regular place at her table and her *soirées*; Count Bloudoff was a staunch friend of the family; and she was also intimate with the most conspicuous foreign and scientific men and statesmen. The tone of conversation was more free, nay, more philosophical, than that usually adopted in the Winter Palace, where as now this august lady was long invisible to the public in her first grief, and only her most intimate family friends could venture to approach her."

Michael was in his youth much better looking and more genial than his austere brother, but he never attained the majestic stature and truly imperial demeanour of Nicholas, whom he resembled in appearance, although his features were much coarser, and there was a total absence of that air of lofty nobility of mind which distinguished the Emperor.

Michael's military qualities were, as we have said, more those of the drill-sergeant than of the General. In the latter capacity he can scarcely be said to have shone. Golovine thus describes the taking of Brailoff in 1828, which was supposed to be the Grand Duke's great military feat:

"The Grand Duke Michael besieged Brailoff at the head of the Seventh Corps, and the Emperor repaired thither in person on the 20th May. On the 15th June an attempt was made to take the place by storm, but it failed; one mine blew up too soon, another did not explode at all, and no practicable breach was effected. The troops rushed to the ramparts and sustained great loss, and the Grand Duke was compelled to give the signal for retreat.

In the course of the next day the mine which had not previously exploded made a considerable breach. The Turkish Pasha surrendered the place on the 18th June, and withdrew with the honours of war. The Emperor conferred on the Grand Duke Michael the Order of St. George of the Second Class."

CHAPTER XVI

ENTOURAGE

ONE of the first effects of the accession of Nicholas I. was the disgrace of the much-hated Araktcheyeff.

This worthy, who had, shortly before the death of Alexander, reported himself as too ill to attend to his duty, suddenly regained his vigour on the proclamation of the accession of Constantine as Emperor, to whom he immediately reported himself on the 30th November (Old Style) as being restored to health, and as having resumed command of the military colonies. In the night of the 6th December he was so much better that he arrived in St. Petersburg, and took up his residence in his house there, refusing, however, to receive anybody. His wonderfully rapid restoration to health did not prove lasting, and he experienced an equally remarkable relapse as soon as it became evident that all hopes of Constantine's accepting the burden of empire must be abandoned. So ill indeed was he, that when Nicholas, during the interregnum, despatched General Count Miloradovitch, Governor-General of St. Petersburg, to summon him to his presence, Araktcheyeff refused to see the emissary of Nicholas, but wrote the latter a cringing letter in which he explained that after the death of his benefactor and master he had but one remaining wish, and that was to join him as soon as possible. He would present himself wherever commanded to go, but begged

to be received alone, as he could not bear meeting people.

Subsequently to the 14th December, Nicholas thereupon relieved this faithful servant of the duties of Secretary to the Committee of Ministers, and Chief of His Majesty's Chancelry, but retained him in his position of Commander-in-Chief of the military colonies. After Alexander's funeral, however, Araktcheyeff found his health so shaken that he begged to be allowed to lay down his command and to go abroad to drink the Carlsbad waters. He added that he had served four Russian sovereigns as an officer since 1787, and throughout these thirty-nine years this was the first time that he had begged for leave of absence to go abroad. He enclosed an account of his stewardship of the military colonies, together with a request that he might be permitted during his absence to continue to draw his official salary, which he ventured to point out was very modest. There is an abject insolence about this letter, the tone of which we despair to reproduce in English. He went on to say that if his request could not be granted, he would endeavour to raise the necessary funds by mortgaging his estates. There was, however, no necessity for him to put this insolent threat into execution. The Emperor Nicholas granted him leave to go abroad, and awarded him 50,000 roubles for his expenses. Araktcheyeff now committed an act of inconceivable impudence by handing this sum to the Empress-mother, with the request that the interest on this capital should be devoted to providing for the education and maintenance of five supernumerary girls in the Imperial Military Orphan Asylum. He added the amount of the first year's interest, so as to enable the poor girls to profit immediately by this endowment. This was felt to be in the worst possible taste, seeing that the asylum had been founded and endowed

by Alexander I., and the addition of this paltry sum could affect it but little. Moreover, in order to raise the funds necessary for his journey, he proceeded to sell his valuables, consisting of presents and mementoes from various exalted personages. These were purchased by Prince Golitzin, against whom he had intrigued in the past, for account of the Emperor.

Araktcheyeff now departed ; but before he left, his command of the military colonies was handed over to his Chief of the Staff and chief executioner, General Kleinmichel, who later rose to be Director-General of Means of Communication and Public Buildings, was created a Count of the empire, and lived to exercise an influence very nearly, if not quite as baneful as that of Araktcheyeff himself.

On Araktcheyeff's return a fresh misfortune overtook him. It appears that he had printed for private circulation the intimate letters which from time to time Alexander I. had addressed to him, in which that remarkable sovereign humbled himself before his servant and astute flatterer. The vanity of Araktcheyeff could not suffer these testimonials of Imperial favour to be hidden away, and so he presented copies of this printed volume or pamphlet very nearly broadcast. A copy fell into the hands of an influential enemy, who informed the Emperor Nicholas that Araktcheyeff had published the private and confidential letters addressed to him by Alexander ; and General Diebitch was commissioned to write to him about his indiscretion. Araktcheyeff indignantly denied the charge, and demanded an inquiry into the whole matter in order to ascertain who had been guilty of this breach of trust. Nicholas thereupon despatched Count Tchernisheff to Araktcheyeff's country seat, and got a full confession from him, together with eighteen copies, supposed to be all that remained, of the

volume ; Araktcheyeff explaining that he had no idea these privately printed volumes had been meant when he was accused of publishing his former master's letters, and submitting that such a private edition, printed as it was with Alexander's consent, could not be described as publication. This completed the fallen favourite's disgrace. Nicholas characterised his statement as an "impudent lie," and wrote to him to say that it was unnecessary for him to enter into a discussion of a subject which they regarded from such totally different points of view. "I have done my duty," he adds, "as brother and sovereign."

Araktcheyeff spent the remainder of his days on his estate. Here he erected a monument in bronze to his benefactor. He left 50,000 roubles at compound interest to be handed ninety-three years later to the best historian of Alexander I.

Nicholas on ascending the throne complained that he had no one but himself to rely on. This was no doubt in a large measure absolutely true, seeing that he had not been trained for the exalted position he was called upon to fill, and had not been brought in contact with the various statesmen and leading minds of the time. His military duties had occupied him to the full, and left him little leisure for politics. Suddenly placed upon the throne, he had to select his entourage, and it must be conceded that he manifested considerable wisdom in the dispositions that he made. Although he had been prejudiced against Speranski, he did not allow this to weigh with him, but confided to him the codification of the laws,—that great work for which the name of Speranski will be always revered in Russia.

The most unpopular person of his immediate surroundings was probably General Count Benckendorff, who was made Chief of Gendarmes and head of the famous Third

Section of His Imperial Majesty's Chancelry. This honest and conscientious soldier, who had fought for his country in the Napoleonic Wars, and displayed conspicuous courage and ability, appears to have performed the disagreeable duties intrusted to him with commendable tact and humanity. Those were heroic times, and little sentiment existed among the governing classes for political reformers, who were pretty generally regarded as traitors, not only in Russia, but all over the Continent. Benckendorff's want of sympathy with liberal ideas and all political agitation generally, we were able to gather from his report to Alexander on Secret Societies. He there betrayed his utter contempt for political economy, and for the young men who had the temerity or foolishness to try to understand matters for which they were not adequately equipped by education and training—in other words, who were not members of the bureaucracy. He does not, however, appear to have been a vindictive or malignant man. He does not seem to have abused his power for the purpose of venting his private spite, as others did,—like Kotchubey, for instance. Moreover, his counsels appear to have been generally in favour of mildness, and he seems to have advocated preventive rather than punitive measures. Nor must it be forgotten that he had very serious responsibilities. He was fully conscious of his own unpopularity, and writes: "From day to day the anger of the higher officials, and especially of the Governors-General of the two capitals, increases towards me in proportion as public opinion is in favour of the establishment of a high protecting police, and on account, I venture to say, of the manner in which I administer the same. As long as I find it possible, I will shield the Emperor from all annoyances whatsoever; I may grow grey from it, but I shall never complain; should these intrigues exceed my



GENERAL COUNT ALEXANDER BENCKENDORFF

FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY POL

endurance, I shall ask for a cavalry command like my brother's. There at least, when the guns go off, intrigues remain behind the ranks."

Although the name of Benckendorff is still execrated in certain circles in Russia, he was indisputably a gentleman, who did his duty with tact and discretion, and that is more than can be said for a good many Russian high officials of that period.

Ivan Golovine, that very bitter and sub-acid writer, says of him: "Count Benckendorff was a good man in the full sense of the expression, for he was as good as he was incapable. In order to advance his own fortune he made drawings of frigates in the Emperor Paul's album, which obtained for him the epaulettes of the aide-de-camp to the Tzar. He was General of Division at the accession of Nicholas, who placed him at the head of the Secret Police, that infernal machine, the offspring of fear and insanity. Everybody agrees in saying that Count Benckendorff, in his melancholy post, did as little evil as possible, which is a pretty considerable negative merit. But an unskilful friend is worse than an intelligent enemy, and the incapacity of the Count has undone many persons whom more clear-sighted men might have saved and even made useful." Latterly it seems that the Count lost both his memory and power of work, and, according to Golovine, overlooked the most important matters, and even forgot people in exile and in prison. Golovine accuses him of not having been impeccable, but the instances he cites of presents given to him do not strike one as very heinous examples of bribery; besides, they are so very obscurely worded that one cannot help feeling some little suspicion as to their authenticity.

"Count Benckendorff died," says Golovine, "in the bosom of the Catholic Church, through the influence of Mme

Krudner (not Alexander's Egeria), to whom he latterly devoted his fortune, his time, and his repose. He had conceived for her that affection of an old man which ends only with life, a platonic and unhappy affection which hastened his end. His conversion was not made known till after his death, and greatly scandalised the Emperor and Court; but his having become a Roman Catholic is said to have saved a great number of innocent persons who professed the same religion. Mme Krudner designated him the best man in the world, and her opinion has become that of the whole country; and for my own part, I take pleasure in not contradicting it, *especially considering the wrongs which the Count may have done me.*" We shall see in another chapter that Benckendorff knew how to reconcile and restore to the fold the sheep who had gone astray.

The veteran Count Orloff, Benckendorff's successor, when he was made Minister of Police, is reported to have said: "I do not comprehend the utility of all this!" meaning his predecessor's elaborate system.

The Russian Minister who loomed largest in the eyes of Europe during the reign of Nicholas I. was undoubtedly Count Nesselrode, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was raised to the dignity of Chancellor of the Empire and was a prime favourite at Court. Of him A. Th. von Grimm writes that he was the most fruitful source of social pleasures at the Court of the Empress. "His statesmanlike qualities he shared," we are told, "with his contemporaries, Talleyrand, Metternich, and Pozzo di Borgo; but in the sense of the Aristippian philosophy, he was not only the most accomplished, but one of the wisest men of any time; he understood the art of living as Horace recommends in his Epistles. Equally removed from arrogance and from obsequious servility, his manner was conciliatory and

propitiatory, and the most benevolent expression beamed from his large clear eyes. No offensive word ever escaped his lips, and even under the most trying circumstance he could always control himself and the words he uttered. Whether important affairs of state or merely a *soirée* required his presence in the palace, his quick firm step was the same; no one knew better how to combine aristocratic dignity with simplicity and modesty. Superior to the inevitable intrigues of a Court, his appearance was everywhere hailed with almost the same reverence as that of the Emperor himself. His house was a model of domestic order and aristocratic arrangement in every corner, and adorned with all that can ennoble the charm of life; the scholar found a large, well-chosen library in every branch of knowledge, and the artist the masterpieces of every school of painting dispersed in his salons; the musician the best instruments and cultivated ears to listen; the number of guests at his richly furnished table on common occasions was never under that of the Graces, and never exceeded that of the Muses; the conversation was easy, unrestrained, and all opinions had free scope. It was not experience and loyalty alone that made him the first statesman in the kingdom, but still more his profound insight into the connection of events; while the repose of character with which he examined every subject, and the mildness of his manners, especially, caused the Empress to invite him to her *soirées*."

This fulsome adulation is not quite echoed by other writers. Schnitzler, who is on the whole fair and impartial, describes Count Nesselrode as a mediocrity, whose adroitness and suppleness received every support from his home influences, and who was too good a courtier not to change his principles whenever circumstances made it necessary. He had been one of the chiefs of the Depart-

ment of Foreign Affairs since 1815, and remained in sole charge after the resignation of the more conscientious Capo d' Istria. Schnitzler adds: "Count Nesselrode always showed more self-abnegation, and resigned himself to play a subordinate rôle, consenting to be a mere instrument, the representative of his master's principles and not of his own. Thus he kept his own counsel when Nicholas, after the revolution of July 1830, irritated more particularly by the sympathies of France for Poland, adopted an attitude towards King Louis Philippe even less dignified than beneficial to the interests of his empire. Possessed of such a character, Count Nesselrode succeeded in retaining the portfolio of Foreign Affairs in the face of the opposition of the Russians, who resented his German origin and his preference for foreigners. Indeed, says Schnitzler: "The most notable names in Russian diplomacy during the last thirty years (he was writing in 1847) are those of Pozzo di Borgo, Lieven, Oubril, Ribeaupierre, Brunnow, Meyendorff, Suchtelen, Nicolay," etc.

Ivan Golovine, who wields a bludgeon rather than a rapier, lets himself go as follows: "Seven cities contended for the honour of having given birth to Homer; in like manner four European Powers might claim the glory of having Count Nesselrode for their subject. He was born in sight of Lisbon on board an English ship of German parents in the service of Russia. (The year was 1780, and Pope Gregory XVI. wittily said of him that he represented a quadruple alliance.) As there was no Lutheran clergyman on board the vessel, the infant diplomatist was baptized according to the rites of the Church of England. He might therefore be claimed by Great Britain, since he was born under her flag, and since the vessel of a Power is always considered as part of its territory; England, however, is rich enough in statesmen to give up one to Russia without

much detriment. His family is of Westphalian origin ; the Nesselrodes are Counts of the Holy Roman Empire, and therefore the Chancellor has always positively refused the title of Russian Count which the Emperor has repeatedly offered him. It is not thus that Russians acted who, like him, and long before him, were Counts of the Holy Roman Empire ; the Golovines and the Menstchickoffs have never hesitated for an instant to accept the titles of their country, but Count Nesselrode is not enough of a courtier to be national, and thinks that a title of the Holy Empire is highly preferable to its Russian equivalent. Nevertheless, he would doubtless do violence to his feelings and accept the title of Prince if it were offered to him. Meantime he is waiting patiently, obtaining vast estates in the south and east of Russia, where he pays a great deal of attention to sheep-breeding. Count Nesselrode was first a sailor and then a cuirassier and an officer in the Horse Guards, but the Emperor Paul thought that he looked like a diplomatist, and accordingly transferred the Count to the Department of Foreign Affairs. It is well known that Paul was no physiognomist ; he several times made his subjects interchange parts, transforming masters into servants, and servants into masters, from mere caprice. Having become a diplomatist by order of the Tzar, Nesselrode, like so many others, made his fortune through the fair sex, though the woman to whom he paid his addresses, or who paid him hers, was not distinguished for her beauty. For a first attempt this was a master-stroke, it was playing with the certainty of winning, and the conditions of the bargain were fixed beforehand. Countess Gourieff, daughter of the Minister of Finance, after having in vain intrigued for several good matches, where her riches were not considered a compensation for her ugliness, turned her attention, for want of doing better, to Nesselrode, who brought by

way of portion the powers with which she undertook to invest him. His wife has ever since exercised unlimited influence over him; and no person, unless sure of her assent, can rely upon any favour from him. To please the Countess it is necessary to flatter her taste in the fine arts; she is a great admirer of pictures and busts, and does not disdain either copies or originals. The Count is short and restless, and generally wears the cross of St. Andrew on his coat, with the medal of the Turkish campaign, a very adroit mode of paying court to the hero of Varna. He is passionately fond of cards, and people say that he has lost his heart to them, but he has lost nothing else, for his Merinos thrive admirably. Count Nesselrode is the chief of the German party; two-thirds of the officials in the Foreign Department are Germans—Lippmann, Ostensacken, Beck, Moltke, and Fuhrmann; and Russia is represented in England by Brunnow, in France by Pahlen, in Prussia by Meyendorff, in Austria by Medem, at Stockholm by Krudener, at Berne by another Krudener, at Hamburg by Struve, at Copenhagen by Nicolay, at Dresden by Schröder, and at Teheran by a second Medem. Somebody once advised Count Nesselrode to endeavour to place Russians in official positions abroad, to which he coolly replied: ‘The Russians have never done anything but make blunders.’”

Golovine then proceeds to demolish the foreign policy of Nesselrode and to expose his mistakes. He was nevertheless a most laborious and conscientious person, whose position was no bed of roses, considering the impulsive and emotional master he had to serve, who would brook no contradiction, and was not always animated by considerations of diplomacy or even common prudence.

According to Golovine, Count Nesselrode was the bitter enemy of Prince Alexander Mentschikoff, the Minister of

Marine, who was subsequently very much discredited on account of his management of the Crimean War. Golovine says that Mentschikoff was rather witty and rich than profound and independent. Grimm, who only uses superlatives, speaks of him as "a man whose character was most singular and much discussed by both the people and the city, whose energy and fame were diffused over the whole" of the empire. "All the attributes peculiar to the enlightened Slav were combined in him : ease in acquiring foreign tongues and foreign knowledge, quickly fathoming new circumstances and mastering them ; cool equanimity in reverses, winning men in office by kindness and benevolence, making himself popular with all his aristocratic pride, giving full scope to his unsparing brilliant wit, and thus gaining over to his side mockers and sneerers,—these qualities distinguished the Prince. . . . His sarcasm was not less dreaded than the wrath of the Emperor ; but the Prince himself feared no man and spared no man. He had the less cause to do so as his energy was accompanied by a princely fortune, and his position assured by his high birth. His manner was amiable and polite, his conversation as attractive when serious as when witty ; the inferior official could rely on his favour and intercession, while his sharp arrows, justly or unjustly, always hit the lucky upstart, and hit sure too. On Nicholas's accession he was given the management of the navy, a branch of the administration quite novel to him. After having given himself two months to learn all that was essential in his new sphere he entered on his duties, and continued at the head of that branch of the Government the greater part of his life. He never lost an opportunity of obliging any one. The city became so accustomed to his witticisms that they were looked for every week as regularly as the papers." The Duke of Leuchtenberg, hearing that one of the Ministers was on the

point of death, met the Prince and asked him whether he had any news of his colleague. "I hear he is dying," said the Duke. "Oh! my news is much worse," the Prince replied; "I hear he is recovering." Prince Mentschikoff had attained a ripe old age when he undertook the conduct of the Crimean War, but his want of success did not daunt his spirits. On his return he atoned for his failures by his wit, and the former was almost forgotten in the brilliancy of the latter. Grimm hints that while the Prince was popular in general society, "in more confined and intimate circles his character was depicted as heartless and impatient of the merits of others."

The Minister of War was Prince Tchernitcheff, a distinguished General who had won his laurels in the Napoleonic Wars, and had formed part of the army of occupation in Paris. This remarkable statesman and soldier used to rise at five o'clock in the morning and work all day, and would yet find time to frequent the society of the Court of the gay capital in the evening. It seems that he was very popular with the ladies on account of his elegant and agreeable manners, and that wherever he went he diffused a spirit of brightness and gaiety.

The Lord High Chamberlain, Count Golovkin, had been banished from Russia in the eighteenth century, and spent his early years in England, where he was converted to the Protestant religion. He learned Latin at fifty, and used to amuse himself by reading Tacitus.

Count Kankrine, the Minister of Finance, was a German, educated at Giessen, hard working, learned, but neither courtly nor courteous, rather uncouth in fact, who insisted on smoking his pipe even within the sacred precincts of the Winter Palace itself, and whose conversational repartees more resembled stones thrown straight in his antagonist's face than sharp shafts of barbed wit. In the Council

of the Empire his speeches were often so insulting that they would certainly have led to duels had they been delivered in an assembly of German students. He was called the Colbert of Russian Finance, and even Golovine is bound to admit that he really aimed at the good of Russia, and Schnitzler says of him that he was a man of a superior type, with bold conceptions, and integrity above all temptation, a strong will, careful about details, as exacting towards himself as he was severe with others, but permeated with the scepticism which was the curse of his time, and that Nicholas, who had had but little training in finance, relied upon and trusted him. It may not be uninteresting to translate in abstract the views of Korff, who worked with him, and who was present at the famous discussion at the Imperial Council regarding Gerstenberg's proposal to introduce railways into Russia. Kankrine seems to have opposed the project on the ground that these railways would be built with foreign capital, which would derive all the profits therefrom, so that instead of enriching Russia these railways would only put money into the coffers of the foreigner. Nicholas was not misled by this fallacious argument, and agreed with Speranski, who took the modern and enlightened view of the question. On that occasion the Emperor, as usual, gave evidence of his lofty sense of honour by pointing out that it would be his duty to ascertain, if possible, whether these railways would be safe investments for shareholders; he would never consent to investors being ruined through any negligence of his. Certain members of the Council thought that this was the business of the investors, but the Emperor would not listen to such arguments. He felt that if he granted a concession for railways, and people invested their money on the faith of that concession, he became to a certain extent responsible for the success of the undertaking.

Finally, Kankrine's opposition prevailed, and the Gerstenberg scheme was rejected; many years had to elapse before the famous St. Petersburg to Moscow railway could be built. Korff considers Kankrine to have been one of the ablest men of his time. "With wide if not always equally profound knowledge in every department of learning, possessed of remarkable energy and a power of rapid work, together with a clear-sighted prescience, he had an exceptionally practical mind, with which was combined an extraordinary gift for finding a simple and easy solution of the most complicated and delicate problems. His speeches, notwithstanding their curious German construction, and still more curious pronunciation, always contained something plastic, which was adapted to every class of intellect. When he was unable to convince by argument, he summoned ridicule and even the coarsest forms of jests to his aid, thus often succeeding in enlisting support for his views and proposals by the Homeric laughter he awakened." Thus on one occasion, when the Imperial Council was examining the question raised by the Senate, whether it was possible to admit as members of the Protestant presbyteries persons belonging to other religions, Kankrine said in a full meeting, and in the presence of the Grand Dukes: "I shall not be surprised to hear that the Imperial Council has been consulted as to whether it is permissible for men to act as wet-nurses." Korff considers that Kankrine rendered great and valuable services to Russia, and steered the country safely through many dangers. He is, however, prepared to admit that he made mistakes, that, while he did much, he left undone a great deal that he might have done, and he attributes these shortcomings rather to faults of character than to mental obtuseness. Kankrine's principal failing was a boundless vanity, which made him look down on everybody, and led him to have a confidence

in himself which nothing could shake, and to exhibit an obstinate hostility to anything that did not emanate from him. He had a scornful contempt for all outside suggestions, advice, or ideas,—it might even be said, for the intellectual attainments of the entire human race. Moreover, his manners were rude and uncultured, and, notwithstanding his natural good disposition, which generally prompted him to acts of kindness, he failed to acquire popularity. By his obstinacy in some matters, and his apparent premeditated inactivity in others, he created many enemies, who were in some cases not slow to impute to him motives unfavourable to the welfare of Russia. Golovine says of Kankrine, that he was the most ardent partisan of the protectionist system. He fostered manufactures while he neglected agriculture, a mistake of which no true Russian could have been guilty. The question of serfdom was beyond his sphere, “and his regulations respecting the coinage were a mere groping in the dark, where, by dint of feeling at random, he sometimes” hit upon the right thing. He seems to have tried to set a limit to the extravagance of Nicholas, “with a perseverance which the Tzar called obstinacy, without venturing to cross him too much.” Golovine concludes: “The merit of Mazarin is that of having given Colbert to Louis XIV.; Count Kankrine, by leaving M. Vrontschenko as his successor, has rendered a very ill service to Russia.”

The President of the Imperial Council was the veteran General Prince Ilarion Vassiltchikoff; he was not a man of brilliant intellect or very active brain, but he had the courage of his opinions. “Superior to all petty jealousy and pride of birth, he addressed the Emperor,” says Grimm, “as well as the poorest who sought his house or his charity, with the same free independence. He was a jewel among the men of that day, especially in Nicholas’s reign, who

once declared that means failed him worthily to reward such a treasure ; with his candid, clear understanding and his warm, upright heart he did more real service to the extensive realms and reign of his Emperor than many of his juniors whose lips were always overflowing with the good of their fatherland."

Another distinguished member of the Council was the brilliant Count Kisseleff, Minister of Domains, who was appointed in 1840 to study the question of the emancipation of the serfs, and paved the way for that great reform, of whom Korff says that he always had brilliant ideas, and brilliant words with which to express them. Golovine says sneeringly of him that he was "one of the leaders of the Russian opposition, of the liberal party, and a reformer ; an opposition which cannot be called one ; a liberalism which is only in name ; reforms which are destitute of plan. He is considered as the most dangerous enemy of the Emperor, for the inevitable effects of his measures are to raise discontent, and seem calculated to excite revolutions. Being a moderate liberal, and not daring to venture on an open opposition ; a moderate statesman, and under the influence of such opposing principles, he cannot pursue a steady course. Instead of seeing in his injudicious measures a tendency to revolution, it would be better to ascribe them only to the bad faith of his agents. What does him most honour is that he is an advocate for the emancipation of the serfs." Grimm confirms that the Count was appreciated by few, and that his administration was often severely censured ; but adds that no amount of adverse public opinion made him falter in his work. He maintained relations with "enlightened foreigners to accomplish his object, persuaded Alexander von Haxthausen to come to Russia, and to travel through that enormous empire, and thus succeeded in

bringing to the universal knowledge of Europe many portions of this little known country. Count Kisseleff was a patriot in the antique sense of the word, who closely and clearly apprehended the present wants of his fatherland without losing sight of the future ; with him love of country did not mean, as with too many at that time, hatred and persecution of other lands, but carefully cherishing the spirit appropriate to the time. In all periods of his fruitful life he sought instruction and recreation in history, literature, and philosophy, and he was therefore always in excellent spirits."

Count Ouvaroff, Minister of Public Enlightenment, may be described as the leader of the national party, and one of the pioneers of that Slavophil movement which has been the source of so much trouble to Russia and to Europe, and had for its watchword the motto : " Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and the National Spirit." Ouvaroff is described as a man of many accomplishments and great learning, a consummate courtier who nevertheless failed to attain the full confidence of the Emperor. Indeed, Nicholas, who is reported to have said to Korff in 1847 that it was possible to be a good Russian without hating indiscriminately everything foreign, could hardly have been expected to espouse the Philoslav cause. That did not become possible for another generation to come, and was reserved for his grandson, Alexander III., whose path had been smoothed for him by the invention of Tory Democracy by Lord Randolph Churchill, who had copied the idea from Napoleon III.

A very different stamp of man was the Grand Duke Peter of Oldenburg, the Emperor's nephew, who was the son of the Grand Duchess Catherine, that brilliant Princess who lived to be Queen of Würtemberg. Educated in Germany, and animated by liberal ideas, this Prince was of a shy and retiring disposition, but distinguished by an unosten-

tatious benevolence. He married a Princess of Nassau, and lived in a palace of his own which, we are told, contained one of the happiest families ever known. To this Grand Duke belongs the merit of introducing a training school for lawyers, where young men were instilled with lofty ideals and honest principles, and equipped with a sound knowledge of jurisprudence to fit them to administer the laws of their country.

Although the space at our disposal compels us not to dwell too long on any one subject, we cannot conclude this chapter without a reference to that admirable Scotchman who did so much for Russian industrialism, and whose portrait may be seen hanging in the meeting-hall of the Institution of Civil Engineers in Great George Street, London, we mean General Wilson, the founder of the Oboukhoff Ironworks, who continued in the service of his adopted country during the Crimean War and never had cause to regret it. He was the means of bringing to Russia a number of those sturdy sons of "Caledonia stern and wild" who are to be found in the remotest corners of the earth. Their influence has been wholly for good, and they have done more towards winning the respect of Russia for the subjects of Great Britain than anybody.

General Wilson, whose military rank was bestowed upon him by the Emperor Nicholas, but who was eminently a man of peace, was also a man of sterling character and a probity which stood out conspicuously in times and in a country where the body politic was permeated with corruption, and it was considered not only excusable but justifiable and even meritorious to rob the Government.

So bad was the state of public morality at that period that the Emperor Nicholas is reputed to have said that there were only three people in the Empire whom he could trust not to rob him. One was himself, the other the

Grand Duke Alexander, the heir-apparent, and the third was General Wilson.

Wilson was careful in his selection of men, and it may be added, he was also singularly fortunate. Those early pioneers, some of whom it has been our privilege to know, were Nature's true gentlemen, and they set up a standard of integrity, energy, and fitness, to act up to which their successors may not always find easy.

CHAPTER XVII

ATTITUDE TOWARDS LITERATURE

THERE obtains a general belief that the Emperor Nicholas, chivalrous and high-spirited though he might be, was, in his attitude towards the literary men of his time and country, a perfect Philistine, a Goth, who had the greatest contempt for any form of authorship, and regarded all people who wrote as so many dangerous characters. If this had really been his view we might have been prepared to admit that there was a great deal to be said in its favour, nay, that it was probably justifiable. But in the interests of veracity it will be our duty to show that Nicholas, so far from being an enemy of authors, was rather a patron of letters, and did a great deal to counteract the distrust and dread which all forms of literature seemed to arouse in the honest and unimaginative breasts of the worthy German military men and their school by which he was surrounded.

One of the most interesting chapters in the history of European literature is the history of the relations of Nicholas with Pushkin, the poet.

It is no use mincing matters, or trying to gloss over facts ; Pushkin, like Byron, Heine, and a number of other geniuses with artistic temperaments, was a scallywag. If he had had any respectable English maiden aunts among his relations, he would have given them so great a series of shocks that they would have been driven to



ALEXANDER PUSHKIN
FROM A DRAWING AND ENGRAVING BY WRIGHT



early graves. We do not propose to dwell on the details of Pushkin's private life; his public life is sufficiently eccentric. He was a member of one of those secret societies which brought about the incident of the 14th of December. Fortunately for him his superstition saved him from being implicated in the riots. Already in disgrace he was living on an estate in the country when Alexander I. died, and he immediately started for St. Petersburg. Various bad omens, however, made him give up his journey, among others he met a priest, a very unlucky sign in Russia. This one solitary event of evil augury would not have deterred him from his purpose had not a worse thing happened, a hare three times crossed his path. This was too great an ordeal for his scepticism, but he was finally convinced of his danger by seeing a funeral procession advancing towards him. The least superstitious man must be weakened in his purpose by three bad omens following in rapid succession, so Pushkin returned to his estate and awaited developments. These were not slow in coming. Nicholas, having ascertained that Pushkin was a member of one of these revolutionary societies, sent for him. The Emperor, who had already expressed the opinion that Pushkin was the most remarkable man in Russia at the time, has himself related what occurred at this interview. "I asked him," he said, "what he would have done had he been in St. Petersburg on the 14th December. He replied that he would have been in the ranks of the mutineers. On my asking him whether he had changed his views, and whether he would give me his word of honour to think and act differently if I let him go free, he paid me a lot of compliments regarding the 14th of December, but hesitated for a long time to give me a straight answer to my question. Only after a protracted silence did he give me his hand and promise to reform."

Pushkin in his own account says that the Emperor told him that he had been playing the fool long enough, and that he hoped that he would in future be more sensible, and that they would have no quarrels. "You will send me all you write. From to-day I myself will be your censor."

Pushkin expressed the conviction afterwards that in speaking to him as he did Nicholas was inspired by Peter the Great, adding that he believed the dead could sometimes inspire the living. By whomsoever Nicholas may have been inspired, everybody must admit that it could not have been by the spirit of vindictiveness. Nicholas took the poet under his "paternal protection," to use the words employed by Benckendorff, who was instructed to inform Pushkin that he was not to consider himself as having incurred the Emperor's anger, but that he had been intrusted to the care of Benckendorff, who was not, however, to act towards him in his capacity of Chief of Gendarmes, but as his best friend and protector. Pushkin had many enemies, and subsequently recognised the kindness of Benckendorff in a letter in which he speaks of himself as being persecuted, and adds, "if you were to cease to be Minister to-morrow, I should be put in prison the day after." It came to the ears of the Emperor that Pushkin had given a reading in Moscow of his new tragedy, *Boris Godounoff*, and so Benckendorff had to reprimand the mercurial poet for not keeping faith with his sovereign and failing to let him see the MS. Pushkin immediately despatched it to Benckendorff, explaining that the reading had not been public but only before a select circle of friends. It is interesting that the Emperor should afterwards transmit his criticism of the play through Benckendorff, point out that it was more a metrical romance than a play, and suggest that Pushkin should turn it into an

historical novel somewhat after the manner of Sir Walter Scott's, whose works we know Nicholas was so fond of reading aloud to his wife. Pushkin in reply expressed his agreement with the Emperor's opinion, but regretted his inability to alter what he had once written. In appreciating the relations between Pushkin and the Emperor it must not be forgotten that the former regarded himself as quite as good as he. He could trace his lineage through an uninterrupted succession of noble Russian ancestors extending over six hundred years, and even longer, as he says in one of his letters, and among his progenitors was that negro of Peter the Great's who was supposed to have been the descendant of kings. Moreover, he was on terms of intimacy with the leading aristocratic families. Nicholas does not seem to have treated Pushkin otherwise than as a spoilt and naughty child, for the poet was constantly getting into mischief and could not restrain his caustic wit from satirising the great ones of the land. On one occasion, when Benckendorff chid him for publishing a pasquinade on one of the Ministers, probably on Kotchubey, whom he hated, he denied that he had had the dignitary in question in his mind. "Whom did you intend to hold up to public scorn, then?" Benckendorff sternly demanded. Thereupon Pushkin, without a moment's hesitation, rejoined: "Why, your Excellency, of course!" and performed a sort of war dance round the room. No wonder that the conscientious and unimaginative German soldier decided that Pushkin, though considered a genius by his Imperial master, was really an irresponsible lunatic who required very careful watching and a strong hand. A collection of Pushkin's lampoons, printed at Leipsic, is still offered for sale in Germany, and among them there are squibs on the Emperor which would have been discreditable to an Eton boy, and are hardly worthy of the

genius of Russia's premier poet. For instance, there are the famous doggerel lines :

“ Our Russian Tzar's a Prussian,
A German, not a Russian ”;

or the wretched verses in which we are told that there are no laws in Russia, but in their place there is only a post, and on that post a crown. Pushkin's numerous enemies, who had felt the shafts of his criticism, did not miss any opportunity of keeping Nicholas fully informed concerning the poet's literary delinquencies. But these did not seem to vex the sovereign's mind. He paid Pushkin's debts, appointed him historiographer, and allowed him what was considered in those days the very handsome salary of 10,000 roubles per annum. It is unnecessary to go into the story of Pushkin's duel, or the truth about the anonymous letters, in which he was himself held up to ridicule and his wife's honour was aspersed. Pushkin met his death in defending his good name according to the custom of his time. When Nicholas heard that he had been mortally wounded he sent him an autograph letter worded as follows : “ Should God have decreed that we are not to meet again, I send thee my forgiveness and at the same time my advice, counselling thee to fulfil thy duties as a Christian. As for thy wife and children, do not fret thyself about them, I will take them under my own guardianship.” The tone of this letter will be better understood when it is explained that the Russian on his deathbed asks forgiveness of his friends and relations for any wrong he may have done them, and begs them not to remember their injuries against him.

Another literary man with whom Nicholas was closely allied was the poet Joukoffski, who was a member of his household, taught his wife Russian, and subsequently became the tutor of his eldest son Alexander. Tourguenieff,

the novelist, gives an interesting portrait of this remarkable courtier-poet as he saw him in 1834, when Tourguenieff was sixteen years old. His mother had taken the trouble to embroider a cushion for Joukoffski, and sent it on the holiday of his patron saint as an offering by the hand of her son to the Winter Palace. Tourguenieff relates :

“ I was to state my name, explain whose son I was, and hand him the present. But when I found myself in the enormous palace, to which I was a total stranger ; when I had to find my way along the interminable stone corridors, climb the stone staircases, constantly coming upon immovable sentries, who looked as though they also were of stone ; when I finally discovered Joukoffski’s suite of rooms, and found myself in front of six feet of red footman with gold lace down all his seams, and imperial eagles on the gold lace—I was seized with a sort of tremulousness, and felt so nervous that when I entered the study, into which I was shown by the red footman, and where from behind a long desk the dreamy but affable face of the poet himself looked at me with dignity and some surprise, I could not, in spite of all my efforts, give utterance to a single sound. My tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, as the saying is, and, consumed with shame, the tears all but starting from my eyes, I stood rooted to the threshold of the door, and could only hold out—like a baby at a christening—the cushion on which, as I can still call to mind, there was depicted a young lady in a mediæval costume with a parrot on her shoulder. My confusion must have awakened a sense of pity in Joukoffski’s kind heart. He approached me, gently took the cushion from me, asked me to sit down, and considerately entered into conversation. At last I succeeded in explaining to him why I had called—and as soon as I possibly could I bolted. At that time Joukoffski had already lost in my

eyes his importance as a poet. Nevertheless I was rejoiced over my interview, in spite of its poor success, and on my return home recalled with pleasure his smile, the caressing sound of his voice, his deliberate and agreeable movements. The portraits of Joukoffski are nearly all like him, for his face was not one of those which are difficult to seize, or subject to frequent change. Of course, in 1834 he had not retained a trace of the slim youth, as 'The Bard in the Ranks of Russian Warriors' must have presented himself to the imaginations of our fathers, for he had developed a stateliness verging on the portly. His face, which was somewhat full, the colour of milk and without wrinkles, had an air of placidity; he held his head bent forward, as though he was listening and thinking. His thin and scant hair was arranged in small strands over his skull, which was almost entirely bald. A calm beatitude shone from the deep gaze of his dark eyes, which had an upward turn in the Chinese manner. On his rather full but most regularly outlined lips there was a perpetual scarcely discernible smile of sincere goodwill and welcome. His semi-oriental origin (his mother, as everybody knows, was a Turk) was reflected in his whole countenance."

On another occasion Tourguenieff took an old friend of Joukoffski's youth, who had fallen on evil days, or who had rather been outdistanced by his former associates, to see him. This man was a Voltairian, and had posed as a sceptic philosopher in his early days. Joukoffski was delighted to meet him, and, to show that his friendship had not grown cold with age, presented his companion of the past with a splendid edition of Voltaire's works. This became the solace of the cynic's old age. He would sit and console himself, as Frederick the Great and Catherine II. had done before him, with the mordant wit of the great French philosopher, reverently turning the gilt-edged

pages of this *édition-de-luxe* in his poverty-stricken dwelling, and silently remembering Joukoffski with gratitude.

Joukoffski was a sufficiently remarkable and prominent figure in Russian literature to warrant our devoting some little space to his career, especially as his name is not so well known in this country as that of several of his contemporaries. The natural son of a wealthy country gentleman by a Turkish prisoner of war who was established as the *mattresse en titre* of her senile lover, to the disgust of the venerable but amorous lawful wife, Joukoffski was born in 1783, with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth. Even the lady who had been supplanted by his mother in his father's affections adopted him as her own son, thus triumphing by her charity and tenderness over the seductive Turk, her penitent husband being so touched by her devotion that he returned to her arms, her own son having previously died. A neighbouring country gentleman stood his sponsor, and gave him his name of Joukoffski, and on the death of his father he found himself possessed of a small but adequate fortune. As a boy he was dull and indolent, and he did not begin to put forth any signs of his intellectual gifts until he was entered at Moscow University, where he had for his friends and associates Ouvaroff, who became Minister of Education, Prince Vyazemski, Bludoff, Dashkoff, etc. Here he sprouted forth into a minor poet, besides translating several of Kotzebue's novels from the German. On leaving the university he returned to his father's estate in the province of Tula, bringing a huge library of foreign literature with him. Here, surrounded by charming young ladies, his nieces, he translated Gray's *Elegy* at the age of nineteen, and became a regular contributor to the periodicals of the day. In those days he was an imitator of Dyerjavin and a friend of Karamsin, whom he succeeded as editor of the critical

review, *Vestnik Evropui* (The Bearer of Tidings of Europe), which is still published in St. Petersburg. He now produced his two most famous poems "Lioudmilla," an adaptation of Bürger's ballad, and "Svetlana," a metrical romance,—Pushkin refers to the first in his own contemporary satirical epic, "Eugene Oneyguin,"—besides translations of Dryden, Schiller, etc. It was in 1812, when he joined the militia, that he wrote his famous "Bard in the Ranks of Russian Warriors," which voiced the patriotic feelings of the nation and brought him to the notice of the Empress-Dowager. This poem of 672 verses was followed by his "Message" to Alexander I. after the taking of Paris in 1814, which consisted of 500 stanzas. This was followed shortly by another lengthy poem entitled "The Bard in the Crimea." It is difficult at this time of writing to convey to the mind of English readers the remarkable effect these works had on his contemporaries. The last-mentioned poem was read to the Dowager-Empress by A. Tourguenieff (not the novelist of course) in the January of 1815, in the presence of the Grand Duchesses and the entire Court. A magnificent edition of 1200 copies, printed at the expense of the State, of the "Message" was issued by command of the Empress-Dowager, and was received throughout the country as an official hymn to Alexander. He was presented to the Empress-Dowager in the same year, and his friends procured for him a perpetual pension of 4000 roubles a year. In 1817 he was appointed Russian instructor to the wife of Nicholas, and, as he himself says, the romance of his life was over, its historical period was now to begin. This lasted till 1841, and during these twenty-five years Joukoffski, "pavilioned in splendour," lived in palaces and did little work beyond a few translations, more especially Schiller's *Maid of Orleans* and Byron's *Prisoner of Chillon*, besides a number of metrical fairy-tales for the heir-apparent,

Alexander. Covered with honours, he retired in 1841 and settled in Baden Baden, where he died in 1852 after translating the *Odyssey*, which must be described as his *magnum opus*.

Fortunate and successful as Joukoffski was in his circumstances and his literary career, he was not happy. His tender and susceptible nature seemed incapable of awakening responses in the hearts of those who captivated him; he was unable to inspire the young ladies at whose feet he languished with sufficient affection to accept his hand, and so, repeatedly heart-broken, he remained a bachelor until he was about sixty, when he succeeded in obtaining for wife the nineteen-year-old daughter of his friend the German painter Reutern. They lived together for eleven years,—he a valetudinarian with shattered nerves, she so delicate and constantly ailing that Joukoffski was more her nurse than her husband. Moreover, she seems to have been afflicted with religious mania, and generally made the last years of the courtier-poet anything but comfortable. He died on the 7th of April 1852, and was buried in the Alexander Nevski Monastery in St. Petersburg by the side of his friend Karamsin.

While the Emperor Nicholas thus distinguished Joukoffski, and even confided to him the education of the heir-apparent, he could treat other poets with considerable severity on occasion. Thus, for instance, Polejayeff experienced the indignation and severity of his sovereign. In 1826, when he was in Moscow, Nicholas sent for this poet, who was a university student and had perpetrated a scurrilous poem entitled "Sashka," the contemptuous diminutive of Alexander, which enjoyed a fairly wide clandestine circulation in MS. The unfortunate poetaster had to read his squib aloud to the Emperor in the presence of the Minister of Education.

“ What do you say to that ? ” said Nicholas, addressing the Minister on the completion of the reading. “ I will set a limit to this depravity. These are still traces . . . (of the revolutionary movement), the last remains. But I mean to root them out ! ”

The Emperor then turned to Polejajeff and said : “ I will give you a chance of purifying and redeeming yourself by military service. Your fate depends upon yourself.” He kissed him on the forehead, Russian fashion, and dismissed him. On the 4th of August 1826 the young poet was already appointed as a non-commissioned officer to an infantry regiment of the line.

Gogol, on the other hand, that merciless satirist of the bureaucratic system of Russia, whose great play, the *Revisor*, has been very ably translated into English by Mr. Arthur A. Sykes, a contributor to *Punch*, under the title of *The Inspector-General*, experienced very different treatment at the hands of the Emperor. Writing to the critic Stchepkin, Gogol says (29th April 1836) :

“ Everybody is against me, aged and distinguished bureaucrats cry out, saying that for me nothing can be sacred, if I dare to speak as I have done about men who serve their country. The police are against me, business men are against me, literary men are against me. Everybody abuses me, but they all go to see the play. There is not a seat to be had for the fourth performance. If it had not been for the exalted protection of the sovereign my play would never have been produced. People were actually intriguing to have it prohibited. Now I know what it is to be a comic writer. If you exhibit the smallest indication of truth everybody rises up against you, not merely individually, but entire classes.”

Indeed, if it had not been for the insistence of the

Emperor, whose attention had been drawn to the piece before it was printed, it would never have been put on the stage. Nicholas himself witnessed the performance, and by his stentorian laughter showed the world how much he appreciated the satire, which really paved the way for those reforms in legal procedure which were among the most beneficent measures of the early part of the reign of Alexander II.

The venomous reception accorded to the *Revisor* was too much for the valetudinarian mental constitution of Gogol. Far from robust either in body or in mind, he was worn out by long years of struggle and, it must be added, failure, although he was but twenty-seven at the time. The generosity of the Emperor Nicholas, however, provided him with the means of seeking repose and recuperation in a tour of Europe, when he visited Rome. On his return he was given a pension of 1000 roubles. Various professorships which he held from time to time he proved himself incompetent to retain. He received a substantial income by his novels and other publications, especially *Taras Boulba* and *Dead Souls*, but gave away all he had to poor artists, and finally succumbed to religious mania, which prompted him to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and to wear himself out by protracted fasts, to which his early death in 1850 is attributed. Gogol resembled, in the blamelessness of his life, the gentle slyness of his wit, and in his physique and general unfitness for the struggle for life, our own Charles Lamb. Intellectually, however, he was much more creative and virile, and exercised an incomparably greater influence. He has been called the Russian Dickens, but those English readers who can enjoy him in the original will be the first to admit that his touch is more subtle, his method more artistic.

Equally pathetic was the fate of Lermontoff, that

firebrand of Scottish descent, whose fierce soul rebelled against everything and everybody, and whose beautiful mind was concealed from the eyes of the ladies whom he hopelessly adored by an ugly and repellent exterior.

Lermontoff's ancestor was a Scottish soldier of fortune who went to Poland in the seventeenth century, whence he was invited to Russia by the Tzar Michael in 1621 to organise a cavalry regiment. He came of a warrior race, and all his descendants in Russia were warriors and soldiers too. Michael Lermontoff was born in Moscow in 1817, and began to write verses as soon as he went to school. His university career was brought to a rapid and ignominious close by expulsion for joining in the "ragging" of an unpopular professor. He was put in the Russian equivalent to our Sandhurst, and as a cornet of Hussars of the Guard had already written his famous *Demon*, of which Rubinstein has made so beautiful an opera.

The sad death of Pushkin in 1837 affected young Lermontoff, who was his ardent admirer. Unfortunately, society in St. Petersburg was divided into two camps concerning the rights of the Pushkin duel, the great majority being ranged on the opposite side. Lermontoff in his indignation wrote a lampoon satirising several highly placed persons. This was circulated in MS. and came to the ears of a vicious old lady who had a spite against him, and told Benckendorff about these disgraceful verses. Benckendorff's strict sense of duty compelled him to report the affair to the Emperor, who ordered young Lermontoff's rooms to be searched. What horrible revelations resulted from that search history has discreetly veiled; suffice it to say that the impetuous young Guardsman was put under arrest, and then transferred from the Hussars of the Guard to a Dragoon regiment stationed on the Caucasus.

Here it was thought the hot head of the young genius would be kept cool, and he would be able to expend his energy in fighting Circassians and Georgians, whilst having no opportunities for getting into mischief. Two years later, thanks to the good offices of his grandmother, he was re-transferred to his old regiment and recalled from exile. Returned to St. Peterburg, Lermontoff plunged into a life of dissipation and pleasure. In 1840 Lermontoff had his famous duel with the son of the French Ambassador, who called him out for insulting him at a ball. Lermontoff fired in the air, but the affair got noised abroad and became the subject of an inquiry, and the poet-guardsman was again placed under arrest. He stated in his evidence that he had fired in the air. This his opponent denied. Lermontoff found means of having a secret interview with him, and promised to go abroad on his release and fight him again. This leaked out and made things worse. He was again exiled to the Caucasus by command of the Emperor, but, this time he had to serve in an infantry regiment of the line. He distinguished himself in action, but picked a quarrel with a brother officer who was paying his addresses to the same lady as he was. In the duel which ensued Lermontoff lost his life, and at first there was an attempt to deny him Christian burial, which was, however, abortive.

Some consider Lermontoff a finer poet than Pushkin, and his gift of melodious language was certainly greater; if he had lived longer he might possibly have produced work of equal quality. As it is, his poetry is more lyric in nature, and betrays a more limited outlook on life.

It seems extraordinary that under Nicholas nearly all the great men of letters who have contributed to the glory of his reign were fated to lead unhappy lives, and that

many of them had to spend years in exile. Even Tourguenieff, the great novelist, who has been reproached for being too great an artist to take any notice of the political and social questions that perplexed and vexed his contemporaries, spent several years in disgrace.

CHAPTER XVIII

CRIMEAN FIASCO AND DEATH

THIS is not a history of political events, and consequently we do not propose to dwell at any length on the conduct of Nicholas towards Poland, Hungary, or Turkey, but some reference must be made to the Crimean War, which was pregnant with such remarkable consequences to Russia, and exposed to the eyes of her people as well as to those of Europe the failure of the régime of Nicholas. The Emperor's premature death is attributed to a broken heart, the proud spirit of the unbending autocrat was broken by that defeat; it was too inflexible to bow to the inevitable. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? How could the Emperor be expected to survive the defeat of his armies, and the humiliation this entailed? In the eyes of Russia the failure of the Crimean War meant the exposure of the Emperor's system of government. It had been tried and found wanting; the hard logic of facts had proved its viciousness. The army as a machine, or as to the individual men, had been splendid, but the system had been at fault. The system had failed, and the war had revealed the corruption and peculation which that system had fostered. Yet his régime was part and parcel of Nicholas. He could no more have brought himself to alter it than he could have been guilty of a mean action.¹ Nicholas was a born soldier. He had

¹ His conservatism was so great that he refused to abolish flint locks long after they had been superseded in other countries.

governed his country as he would have governed a regiment. When the day of trial came he discovered, and all the world with him, that he had failed to make his country efficient, even as a regiment should have been efficient, and he could not survive the shame. He felt himself disgraced, he felt that he had disgraced his regiment, and that his regiment had disgraced him, and that there was no further use in his living. If the chef of Louis XIV. could commit suicide because he had cooked a bad dinner, how much more comprehensible must it not be for an Emperor to refuse to survive the disgrace of a defeat and the loss of so many brave men ?

The conduct of Nicholas towards the Poles has been stigmatised as cruel, his Hungarian campaign has been ridiculed as quixotic, but the Crimean War was worse : it was a fiasco. Napoleon the Great used to say that a mistake was worse than a crime. The Crimean War was a mistake which, while in the eyes of Nicholas it was no doubt worse than the greatest conceivable crime, really conferred on Russia incalculable benefits.

¶ Nicholas did not want the Crimean War ; he had an honest and sincere respect and admiration for the English people, and earnestly desired to cement these personal feelings by a political alliance. Fortunately for the Russian people, our statesmen were blinded at the time, and Nicholas was misinformed.

Lord Augustus Loftus, in his *Diplomatic Reminiscences*, says :

“ On 3rd July 1853 the Russian army crossed the Pruth with the avowed object of occupying the Principalities ‘ as a material guarantee ’ for the satisfaction of her claim against Turkey. It was the moment for action of the four Powers. Had they declared collectively to the Emperor Nicholas that the passage of the Pruth would be

regarded by them as a *casus belli*, it is very certain that the Emperor would not have crossed the Pruth, and in every probability war would have been averted. But the Emperor had been misled by the reports he had received from Baron Brünnow and from Count Kisseleff at Paris, who both expressed the opinion that an alliance between England and France would not be brought about. Princess Lieven, who was in correspondence with Lord Aberdeen, also wrote to the Tzar, saying that England would not embark in war; and these reports, confirmed by a deputation of English Quakers representing the Manchester Peace Party, who were received by the Tzar at St. Petersburg before his departure for Germany, exercised great influence on the Emperor. . . ." The Secret Correspondence (1853) of the British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, Sir Hamilton Seymour, throws still stronger light on the situation. He reports the Emperor as saying to him: "You know my feelings with regard to England. What I have told you before I say again: it was intended that the two countries should be upon terms of close amity; and I feel sure that this will continue to be the case. You have now been a certain time here, and, as you have seen, there have been very few points upon which we have disagreed; our interests, in fact, are upon almost all questions the same." Sir Hamilton Seymour replied, agreeing in substance with this statement, and the Emperor went on to say that it was essential for the two Governments to be on the best terms, and that this necessity was never greater. He then said: "The affairs of Turkey are in a very disorganised condition; the country itself seems to be falling to pieces. The fall will be a great misfortune; and it is very important that England and Russia should come to a perfectly good understanding upon these affairs, and that neither should take

any decisive step of which the other is not apprised." Sir H. Seymour replied that that was certainly the view he took of the manner in which Turkish questions should be treated. Thereupon the Emperor continued: "Look here, we have on our hands a sick man—a man seriously ill; I tell you frankly, it would be a great misfortune if he were one of these days to slip away from us, especially before all the necessary arrangements had been made." At a later interview Nicholas, returning to the charge, while disavowing all intention of carrying out the dreams and plans of the Empress Catherine, pointed out that Turkey might fall to pieces at any moment, and urged that it would be better to be provided beforehand for such a contingency "than to incur the chaos, confusion, and the certainty of a European war."

Sir H. Seymour explained that Turkey had long been plunged in difficulties which many thought insurmountable, but that his Government objected to "taking engagements upon possible eventualities, and would perhaps be particularly disinclined to do so in this instance."

Nicholas then rejoined: "Now, I desire to speak to you as a friend and gentleman. If England and I arrive at an understanding in this matter the rest of the world matters little to me; I am indifferent to what others may do or think. Frankly, then, I tell you plainly, that if England should think of establishing herself one of these days at Constantinople I would not allow it. I do not attribute this intention to you, but it is better on these occasions to speak plainly."

Sir H. Seymour seems to have been convinced of the sincerity of the Emperor's desire for a friendly understanding with England, and in his despatch home he points out that if "the proposal were to remain unanswered a decided advantage would be secured to the Imperial cabinet,

which in the event of some great catastrophe taking place in Turkey would be able to point to proposals made to England which, not having been responded to, left the Emperor at liberty, or placed him under the necessity, of following his own line of policy in the East."

Later, when Nicholas hears that the nature of the British reply is not exactly what he had been led to expect, he says: "I think your Government does not well understand my object. I am not so eager about what will be done when the sick man dies, as I am to determine with England what shall not be done upon that event taking place"; and further: "If your Government has been led to believe that Turkey retains any elements of existence, your Government must have received incorrect information."

Seymour now jumped to the conclusion that Nicholas had determined on the partition of Turkey, that he had got the consent of Austria, and wanted England to join, leaving France out.

The Emperor's plan was to give to Servia and Bulgaria autonomy under the protection of Russia, and to let England have Egypt and Candia. Nicholas was a bad diplomatist. His Memorandum of 1844 was supposed to be a pledge against the dismemberment of Turkey, his present proposals were treated as impossible, and the result was a war by which the only gainers were the defeated party, the Russian nation, who obtained through it a certain measure of freedom. But the curious thing is that Nicholas, if a bad diplomatist, was at least far-sighted; if anything, indeed, he looked too far ahead. To-day Servia and Bulgaria are independent States, and Egypt is a British protectorate. All this has been brought about at a cost of human life which might have been entirely avoided if our statesmen had not been quite so virtuous.

At this time it is not too much to say that the Emperor

had attained a degree of influence and power unsurpassed by any monarch of the century, Napoleon the Great alone excepted. His constitution, however, was already undermined, the strain of autocracy was too great even for his iron nerves, and already in 1851 Dr. Mandt is reported to have said: "Science is capable of long preserving a feeble constitution like that of the Empress, and moreover, the singular serenity of mind she enjoys is the best medicine. . . . But the Emperor's state begins to rack my brains far more; a little oversight on my part might entail worse consequences than the loss of a great battle." Indeed, many observers besides Mandt noticed a change in the appearance and temper of the autocrat. He was occasionally overheard speaking aloud to himself, and in company he showed himself more irritable and impetuous than heretofore. In short, indications were not wanting to show that Nicholas was losing his old vigour, and that his health was shaken.

A. Th. von Grimm has depicted the opening of the Crimean War and the decline in the Emperor's health so graphically that we think we cannot do better than quote from him. He also incidentally throws considerable light on the position of Princess Lieven, and satisfactorily pricks the bubble of her supposed secret mission.

He relates that the Empress went to Schlangenbad in 1852 and here met again the Princess Lieven, who had left Paris after the revolution and lived at Brussels. Wherever she appeared secret conferences were believed to be held, at which political plots in the name of the Emperor were supposed to be hatched. Grimm says wittily: "The political mission of the Princess, the testament of Peter the Great, and the sea-serpent command the same degree of belief." He then proceeds to show how the two ladies had much to tell each other. "The Empress," he says,

“ took cordial interest in the fate of the Duchess of Orleans, and no one could relate more on this subject than the Princess, who gave a masterly delineation of the highest Parisian society, being well versed in the knowledge and details of the condition of France, and thus the pictures she drew could not fail to be of the highest interest to the Empress. Princess Lieven only spoke French, and her conversation, in brevity and terseness of expression, recalled that of Mme de Staël. All these qualities of this superior woman were well known to the Emperor, but this would not have induced him to intrust her with a political mission. . . . In many circles in St. Petersburg the idea prevailed that Nicholas never shared the cares of his Government with his wife, solely, however, from tenderness, and the wish not to injure her health. In fact, he always spared his consort any intelligence that could cause her a sudden shock. Once, in the midst of a concert, when called away by a conflagration which he wished to conceal from his wife, he ordered the different pieces to be repeated until he returned, and thus she did not hear of the fire till it was extinguished. . . . In the society of the Imperial family the conversation never turned on politics,—a subject on which the Empress especially avoided expressing her opinions. . . . All that inwardly grieved the Emperor was thoroughly understood and shared by her, although her views and his own were seldom in unison.” Grimm goes on to say: “ The journey of Prince Mentschikoff to Constantinople remained a mystery in St. Petersburg, so far at least as its object was concerned, even in the highest circles of society. When that witty statesman was questioned on the subject, he answered that he was being sent in order to bring about an alliance between a daughter of the Sultan and a Russian Prince.” It seems that much more interest was taken in

Mentschikoff's overcoat, the figment of newspaper invention, than in his mission. Even after his departure and the arrival of the British and French fleets in Besika Bay, and the mobilisation of the Turkish army, St. Petersburg utterly disbelieved in the possibility of a great European War. Grimm avers that the German newspapers, from hating the Turks, now became their enthusiastic friends, and dished up the story of the will of Peter the Great, and the duty which that supposititious document imposed on his successors of conquering Constantinople; but that all the Emperor desired was to remind the Sultan that the office of protector of the Greek Church devolved rightfully on the successor of the Empress Catherine. The Sultan, so far from disputing the Emperor's title to this office, renewed the treaty of Kutschuk-Kainardji in which this claim was allowed. France and England demanded the withdrawal of this firman of renewal and the Sultan yielded to them. Hereupon Prince Mentschikoff appeared with menaces, Turkey procrastinated, and Nicholas occupied the Danubian Principalities. "Thus," Grimm continues, "Nicholas in the evening of his life found himself involved in a war of greater magnitude than he had ever before encountered, having incurred the hatred of many who a year previously looked up to him with admiration and praise. This, however, did not affect him at all painfully; the admiration or the hatred of misjudging masses had always been indifferent to him. But to the delusions as to his good fortune in war were added disappointments about persons that he would have considered impossible. It was a most grievous and anxious time for the Emperor. . . . Not one piece of intelligence, so long as the war was confined to the Danube, was satisfactory, far less joyful or exhilarating; men fell there whom he personally knew and valued. . . . But the most painful of all trials was

that of 1854, when he discovered that the grand structure on which he had bestowed thirty years of intense zeal was made of materials neither durable nor sure. On one occasion, close to the capital, he by chance discovered three regiments so neglected that he deprived the general of his command; and the fund for wounded soldiers, in spite of the superintendence of several aides-de-camp generals, had disappeared. He was therefore sufficiently irritated without the additional calamity of an unsuccessful war. 'Sleep has fled from me for months,' he said to a foreign Ambassador, 'and I see the night of the future looming black before me.' . . . The Imperial family were at Gatschina when the foreign telegrams brought news of the defeat at the Alma; he said he would not believe it till a Russian courier from the battlefield confirmed it. Several painful days elapsed before a telegram arrived from Moscow to say that an express messenger was on his way." When this bearer of evil tidings appeared before the Emperor, and reported what he had seen, Nicholas, who was standing motionless, is stated to have exclaimed: "Have I heard rightly? Are Russian troops defeated, and have they fled before the enemy?" He had difficulty in believing the possibility of such an event. Throughout the war the Emperor did not allow himself sufficient rest or recreation. He had no time to see his doctors, and used to take a little *nux vomica* when he felt indisposed, too absorbed in his duty as an absolute monarch to give a thought for his health. At this time he was already in his fifty-ninth year, an age which none of his brothers or male predecessors had attained. The impossible position imposed upon him by the autocratic system was slowly killing him. The actual cause of death has been attributed variously to erysipelas, influenza, and poison. According to Grimm, he was seized with influenza,

which was very prevalent, on the 8th February, but paid no attention to it, continuing to work day and night as hard as usual. On the 21st February he drove off in his usual clothing to the large riding school to inspect some troops who were about to proceed to the front. His doctors had begged him to keep his room, but he disregarded their entreaties, saying: "You have done your duty, now I must do mine." It was a remarkably cold day, even for St. Petersburg. After the inspection he called on his sister-in-law, the Grand Duchess Helen, paid a visit to the Minister of War, who was ill, and received the report of his son, the Grand Duke Constantine, who was acting Minister of Marine. Throughout the day he suffered from rigours, he slept fairly well, and next morning, in spite of feeling worse, again drove out to an inspection. But this was his last public appearance. He had to admit that he was unable to perform his duties, and so the heir-apparent was appointed regent. "From that moment," says Grimm, who is our authority for the foregoing, "he lay on his camp-bed, covered by a soldier's cloak." On Friday morning, the 2nd of March (1855), he was no more.

"Before his last strength abandoned him he called in his whole household, both that of the Empress and his own. He said to Frau von Rohrbeck: 'Bid farewell to my much-loved Peterhof for me.' Even the grey-haired Grenadiers, the sentinels of the Winter Palace, came to his bedside and, with tears in their eyes, saw for the last time their dying master. After he had blessed and dismissed them all he asked the doctor, with the cordial, sunny expression he reserved for his friends: 'When am I to be released?' 'Not quite at once,' answered Mandt calmly. Nicholas turned to his successor: 'I wished to bequeath to you a well-ordered empire, but it has pleased Providence to decree otherwise. I can now only pray for you and for

Russia.' His last words were spoken in fainter tones ; they were an allusion to Frederick William the Fourth. Now began the prayers for the dying. The departing soul followed them with evident consciousness, made the sign of the cross, stretched out his feeble hand to his confessor, and then to his wife, grasping hers with a final effort, and turning his dying eyes on the angel of his life. The clock struck twelve. It was Friday, 2nd March (N.S.) 1855. Twenty minutes passed before the calm, mild eyes closed for ever, when the dead hand fell from that of the Empress. The Emperor's heart was broken. Solemn stillness prevailed in the death-chamber, where all were kneeling, absorbed in heartfelt prayer. At last, amid a passion of tears that relieved their oppressed feelings, they rose. Alexandra remained for another hour in prayer beside the corpse, till her strength failed, and she was carried to her own room."

A very interesting, detailed, and romantic account of the Emperor's death appears in a sensational novel written in French and published by L. Kressner, Würzburg, entitled, *Les Mystères du Palais des Czars (sous l'empereur Nicholas 1.)*, par Paul Grimm. In this remarkable work the author frankly attributes the death of the autocrat to suicide by poison. The little book is an epitome of nearly all the contemporary scandals about Nicholas 1.; it is written in the worst possible sensational style, but it betrays so complete and so accurate a knowledge of the undercurrents of St. Petersburg Court life that one is constrained to assume that the writer must have been very familiar, not only with the men and women in the entourage of the Emperor and the gossip of the day, but with the immediate historical past. Virtually he makes but one mistake, and that of a kind which a person well acquainted with St. Petersburg was more likely to have made than any

one who had vamped up his sensational details from books, the untrustworthy tales of incredible travellers, or his own distorted imagination. In this respect his work compares very favourably with the numerous recent revelations of intimate details concerning the present Court of Russia, which betray so much ignorance of Russian life and contain so many statements which are stamped as untrue on their very face, seeing that they cannot possibly be supported by facts. Whether the story told by Paul Grimm be true or false, and it is probably false, it is evidently not one invented by an ignorant foreigner, but is clearly the faithful reproduction of the current scandal of the time. Moreover, it is free from the venom which invariably characterises the vamp. The only serious inaccuracy in the book is a description of Dostoyeffski as a poet, and the account of his death. The picture of St. Petersburg life at the period is, however, correct in every detail. That Nicholas committed suicide by taking poison is the common belief even to-day, although there is no official justification for it.

It is unnecessary for our purpose to recite the romantic circumstances under which Nicholas regains possession in this novel of the famous opal ring with the secret charge of poison by means of which he took his life. Suffice it to say that he obtains it from the *fiancée* of his natural son, whose identity is thus revealed to him. The history of the ring has an air of verisimilitude. It had been given, says Grimm, to Princess Lovicz, the morganatic wife of Constantine, by a fair Circassian who had made a conquest of the susceptible heart of General Grabbe, and had in consequence been saved from the sack of Aul Achulep by Yermoloff, who had all the inhabitants massacred without distinction of age or sex. General Grabbe brought her to Warsaw as his mistress, but left her behind him on his

being sent to Persia. She was given her liberty, but not allowed to return to her native country. Circumstances threw her together with the Princess Lovicz, whose friend she became. One day she gave the famous ring to the Princess, telling her that the stone concealed a poison which the daughters of the Caucasus alone knew how to prepare. "Perhaps," she added, "thou mayest some day have need of it; should thy husband's enemies triumph over him, or should he in a moment of caprice abandon thee, as he has abandoned so many other women, thou art proud and couldest not survive the shame." The Princess was never without the ring, and when, after the death of Alexander I., Constantine definitely refused the throne of Russia, his ambitious charmer attempted to press the opal to her lips, but the manoeuvre was intercepted by the watchful Grand Duke, who took the ring away. After his defeat by the Poles, when he was driven from his palace and his disciplined troops were beaten by untrained peasants, Constantine emptied half the contents of the poisoned ring, which he then despatched together with a number of secret papers to his brother Nicholas. The Circassian's ring continued to adorn the finger of the Emperor for a long period, until one day his mistress, Marie Assenkoff, to whom he had shown the contents, took it from him with the words: "An Emperor should not carry poison about him. In a moment of weakness he might press it to his lips, forgetful of the welfare of his people. Poison is the legitimate property of feeble woman who is unable to protect herself, and not of man who has the strength and the will to act." Marie Assenkoff did not take the poison, but died of a broken heart and disappointed love. And now by a mysterious chance Nicholas found himself again possessed of the fateful ring, after having vainly endeavoured to obtain poison from his faithful medical attendants.

The Emperor, of course, on the receipt of bad news, takes the poison, of which he dies slowly. The pictures given of the intrigues of the Court officials, of Kleinmichel the favourite Minister, Mlle Nelidoff the mistress, Bajanoff the priest, the Empress, and the other distinguished personages, is most vivid and convincing. Speaking generally, the death-bed scene resembles in its principal features the description given by that other Grimm from whose *Memoirs of the Empress Alexandra* we have had occasion to quote so extensively.

CHAPTER XIX

CHARACTERISTICS AND APPRECIATION

THE Emperor Nicholas may be described, without exaggeration, as the most majestic and most handsome figure of a man who ever occupied a throne. Wherever he went his appearance created a sensation and inspired awe. When he was in the full flower of his manhood, at the age of thirty-two, he was thus described by an eye-witness : " He was tall and thin, broad-chested, and rather long in the arm. His face was somewhat elongated in shape, clear, with an open brow, a Roman nose, a mouth of medium size ; his glance was rapid, his voice sonorous, like that of a tenor, but he spoke rather volubly and quickly. In general he was very well proportioned and smart. His movements betrayed neither haughty dignity nor frivolous flurry, but nevertheless exhibited a certain sternness which was obviously not assumed. The freshness of his complexion and everything about him was expressive of an iron constitution, and testified to his not having been coddled in his youth, and that he had led a sober and temperate life. From a physical point of view he far surpassed all the men on the General Staff or the officers, such as I had seen, of the entire army, and I may say truthfully that in our enlightened days it is very rare, indeed, to meet his like in the circles of the aristocracy."

With this characteristically Russian description let us

compare that of an English diplomatist, Lord Augustus Loftus, who was absolutely unbiassed at the time of writing, 1840, when he was sent to St. Petersburg with despatches.

“ We were presented,” he says, “ on the same day, but separately, to the Emperor Nicholas at the Winter Palace. His Majesty received me very graciously, made many inquiries as to the health of the King of Prussia (Frederick William IV.), and in regard to the Court and Society. He referred in kindly terms to English persons of note whom he had known—the Duke of Wellington, Lord Durham, and others—and inquired after a Colonel Ponsonby who had been reported dead on the field of Waterloo, but who had miraculously revived. There was something eminently imposing and grand about the Emperor Nicholas, and notwithstanding his sternness of expression there was a charm in his smile and in his manner which was very pleasing. He was a fine character, noble-hearted, generous, and much beloved by those in his intimacy. His severity was rather obligatory than voluntary ; it arose more from his conviction that it was necessary to govern and control his nation with a firm and vigorous hand than from any innate feeling of cruelty and oppression. The tragic death of his father, the Emperor Paul, the mysterious death of his elder brother, the Emperor Alexander, in a remote town of the empire, and the troubles which threatened the accession to the throne on the abdication of his elder brother, the Grand Duke Constantine, could not fail of producing a hardening effect on a strong and vigorous mind, and of disposing him, in governing with an iron hand, to dispense with the velvet glove.”

Curiously enough, this view of Nicholas is confirmed by Golovine, who cannot be described as the Emperor's apologist by any stretch of imagination. He says : “ Notwithstanding all that I have said, I do not think that Nicholas

is a tyrant by nature, but only ^{from} conviction. He is persuaded that if he acted otherwise public affairs could not succeed, and he is very well satisfied with the manner in which they have gone on during his reign. The habit of governing upon this principle has given him a taste for cruelty ; for the habit of tyrannising makes man a tyrant. The Russians say that it requires an iron hand to govern Russia, but that the hand should be gloved. Nicholas has the iron hand, but he has forgotten the glove."

Before investigating the charge of cruelty so often brought against the Emperor it may be interesting to quote from Schnitzler the description of Nicholas as Grand Duke, by Prince Kozlovski, which is equally applicable to the later periods of his life. Prince Kozlovski says :

" The Grand Duke has received from nature one of the finest gifts it can bestow on those whom fate has placed above others. He has the most noble countenance that I have beheld in all my life. The habitual expression of his face has something stern and misanthropic in it which does not put people at their ease. His smile is condescending, and is not the result of gaiety or the absence of self-consciousness. The habit of self-restraint has become a second nature to such a degree that no traces of awkwardness, embarrassment, or pose can be discovered in him ; nevertheless all his words are modulated as though he were speaking from a piece of music. There is something in the manner of being of this Prince which can only be described as prodigious. He talks with vivacity and with perfect simplicity and good-breeding. Everything he says betrays a brilliant intellect, but he is never guilty of common-place jokes, of levity of expression, or of using an ill-chosen word. There is nothing in the tone of his voice or the turn of his sentences to suggest pride or dis-

simulation. Yet you feel that his heart is closed, that you are separated from him by an impenetrable barrier, and that it would be madness to hope ever to be admitted to the intimacy of his thoughts or to possess his entire confidence. He has even to a certain extent imparted to his wife this expression of countenance. She often has a look of suspicion, and something which suits but ill the harmonious features of her face, which is by nature gentle and gracious. Perhaps I am mistaken ; perhaps it is not the example of the Grand Duke which has taught his wife the secret to distrust the human race : it is more probably that Court of Russia which has given them both that air of reserve and distrust,—that melancholy Court where since the days of the Mentschikoffs and the Ostermanns all moral independence, all loftiness of soul, are regarded with surprise as foreign elements, and where scandal and intrigue hiss like serpents incessantly in the ears of Princes. . . . The Grand Duke does not devote himself solely to military details, but is said to be an excellent engineer and consequently a good mathematician. He reads a great deal, and all those about him assure me that he possesses in a supreme degree that power of attention which, according to the memorable definitions of Montesquieu, is nothing else but genius. . . . The Grand Duke has limited himself for the present to the duties of his rank as general, but everything goes to show that he is quite as fitted to be a statesman ; and if this Prince should end his life without having accomplished great things it would only mean that he had missed his vocation, for nature seems to have destined him therefor. . . . Should the Grand Duke Nicholas ascend the throne some day, I doubt not but that he will be served with zeal ; not that he will win hearts by his genial disposition, like Henry iv., but because men love to obey a Prince who can always be

pointed to with pride, to whom the public can justly apply the two famous verses of Berenice, and who, under that seal of majesty imprinted by nature, possesses in addition a superior intelligence which can but strengthen the impression already made by his appearance. The human character is exhibited more particularly in our affections and hatreds. The Grand Duke loves his wife, as he does everything, in a simple and noble manner. . . . The Grand Duchess has a majestic figure, an air of sovereignty, and agreeable and regular features. When she becomes animated her distrustful scrutinising look disappears, and she is transformed again into a thorough daughter of the Queen of Prussia and the sister of the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg. The Princess is then less noticeable, and the woman in an angel's form is more apparent."

To this Princess Nicholas had given his virgin love, and his devotion to her seems to have survived sickness and adversity and even the vagrancy of the passions. For if Nicholas was a devoted, he cannot be described as a faithful husband, the fact being that he was a man of strong and impetuous nature. Golovine, whose hatred of Nicholas is only equalled by his contempt for his Ministers, is not disposed to judge the Emperor too harshly for his lâches in this respect. He says :

"The Emperor carefully conceals from his wife his little and great infidelities. The Empress has the more merit not to observe that she is deceived, or at least not to show that she sees it; although the lady-in-waiting who for the moment is honoured with the good graces of the autocrat is frequently in attendance upon the Empress, and has not always sufficient tact to hide the preference of which she is the object. We must do Nicholas the justice to say that he is, nevertheless, pretty constant in

his illicit connections, and keeps his mistresses a long time, though he indulges in some caprices. His present favourite charms him by her wit and amiability rather than by her beauty. These things are natural enough, and perhaps excusable, if we consider that the Emperor is still in the prime of life and that the health of the Empress is completely shattered, so that her physicians have enjoined her to keep quite apart from her husband, and this not for the purpose of pleasing the Tzar." Golovine adds a note which throws a flood of light on the state of Russian society at the time. In this he relates how a certain M., on discovering that the Emperor was his wife's lover, is reported to have exclaimed: "Does he who is blameless in the sight of the Tzar commit a sin in the sight of God?" Golovine adds: "Such laxity of morals in subjects, accounts for many faults in Princes." If Nicholas was not strictly continent himself, he did not encourage a loose tone of society, but was, on the contrary, a supporter of domestic virtue and the decencies of life. Whatever may be said of him, he was no debauchee, no Louis xv. or Henry iv. He was as elegant and graceful in his vices as he was in his person. His admiration of the fair sex partook of the gallantry of the Middle Ages. If he did not always do as was his duty, and honour the shadow of the ladies' shoe-tie, he was said to have been a great admirer of pretty feet. In St. Petersburg the legend still exists that in a number of cases, if not in the majority, the Emperor's attentions were limited to impressing a chaste salute on the neatly *chaussé* foot of the lady who had pleased him. Moreover, he was exposed to many temptations. His handsome presence and exalted position fired the imagination of the ladies of Russia, who often deliberately planned and plotted and intrigued for his favour.

Edward Tracy Turnerelli, immortalised by the wreath

he presented to Lord Beaconsfield, has left a very accurate picture of the Court of Russia in a work entitled, *What I Know of the late Emperor Nicholas and his Family*, which has the further merit of courage, seeing that it was published in 1855. Notwithstanding its many crudities, this little book describes very graphically and quite truthfully Mr. Turnerelli's point of view. Of Nicholas he says with characteristic modesty: "I can only speak of this monarch as I have known him. Attribute the fact to whatever cause you will, but it is a positive truth that during my long sojourn in Russia all that I witnessed, nay, all that I heard, was in general favourable to this sovereign. If he committed bad actions he certainly took great care to keep them secret, or his subjects took good care not to speak of them. Certain it is, I heard none; on the contrary, wherever I went, among the nobles, merchants, employés, and foreigners, the tone in which Nicholas was spoken of was one of unvaried admiration and respect. With the lower classes this was even carried to a degree amounting to worship. . . . Other writers, however, who pretend to know him likewise, bring serious charges against him, particularly on the score of his immorality. He gave, they say, in this respect a bad example to his Court and people; Princess this, Countess that, and Baroness the other, and a host of French actresses, dancers, etc., they assure us, could tell strange tales if they would. Why on earth do they not tell them? . . . I am more inclined to be guided in these matters by a remark made by one of the lightest and prettiest women in the circles of St. Petersburg, who, I believe for many reasons, ought to have known the Emperor as well as any one. 'He is certainly not immoral,' she said; 'he tells a woman plainly that he finds her pretty, and that is all she gets from him!' The Emperor frequented the masquerades, he loved to

chat with a witty and intelligent mask, little caring whether it covered a pretty or an ugly face,—what he wanted was a pleasant, agreeable chit-chat, and those who talked the best he chatted with the most and promenaded with the longest. He walked with twenty or thirty of an evening, —it was a relaxation for his mind after a hard day of business.”

The Empress, as we have seen, took no notice of her husband's infidelities. Indeed, there is ample evidence to show that as years went on the Imperial couple drifted more and more apart. The Empress was fond of literature and art of every kind, and appears to have been a woman of considerable culture and enlightenment, to whom the brutal measures of repression, of which she was bound to hear, must have been repellent. Grimm tells us that she often endeavoured to restrain her husband's stern temper, and was on the side of milder and more liberal methods. But the longer Nicholas lived the less accessible did he become to such arguments. In his later years he spent much of his time away from his wife. He was constantly journeying to and fro inspecting his empire, and the Empress was frequently compelled by her health to winter abroad. There is consequently every probability that the scandals about the Emperor, if not all true, were not all invented. For Nicholas, as he grew older, developed a great love of amusement. He was a patron of the drama. St. Petersburg could boast in his day of having the finest *corps de ballet* in the world; he loved the Italian opera, and he was devoted to masquerades and dances, as we have seen.

What sort of an idea have the few preceding chapters given the impartial reader of the character and disposition of this remarkable sovereign? If we have produced the impression we have desired to make, then Nicholas I.

must appear in the eyes of an Englishman as far less of a monster than it has been the fashion to paint him.

We must keep in mind the peculiar circumstances of his training and breeding. If Alexander I. possessed in a strong degree the peculiarities of the German race, we shall search in vain for Slavonic traits in the character of the iron Nicholas. His was even a more pronounced German nature than his elder brother's. Nurtured by a mother whose strong qualities, good and bad, were those of the energetic, virtuous, though perhaps somewhat narrow-minded Hausfrau; whose hatred of the French was as honest as her love of her children, whom she strove to bring up to be good and honest men and women, but for whom she did not manifest any signs of demonstrative affection; she was too serious, too much occupied with good works, hospitals, schools, and charities, to waste time in tenderness; Nicholas was later handed over to the severe care of an unimaginative, pedantic German soldier, who seems to have been as deficient in humour and sympathy as he was conscientious in his duties and pitiless with his cane. Released from the tutelage of this animated thrashing machine, Nicholas very soon rose to a command in the military service. Here he encountered a want of order, a general slovenliness which revolted every principle instilled into him as a boy. He conceived it to be his duty to restore discipline in his regiments, and his partly inherited, partly acquired German pedantry earned him the hatred of all his subordinates. He was as unpopular as he was conscientious. But his unpopularity did not deter him from doing what he conceived to be his duty. By excessive severity he drilled his troops into automata. As he could not be loved, he made himself feared, but he would achieve his object, and make his troops the finest in the army. In these endeavours and strivings this German Prince with

the Russian title was surrounded and abetted by German companions, such as Adlerberg, for instance. Russian was a language but little spoken in his entourage; the Russian people were regarded with some suspicion, a great deal of contempt, and more aversion. Alexander I. had tried to govern in a liberal spirit, but had given up the attempt as hopeless, and had handed his people over to the executioner, to the hard-hearted vindictiveness of Araktcheyeff, the virtual dictator, who found it to his advantage to promote that feeling of distrust of the Russian people which has always rather characterised their rulers. Stern discipline, severe repressive measures, fatherly chastisement,—it was by means of these alone that the hopeless, ungrateful, dissolute, treacherous, and lazy Russians could be governed. Now, the Russian people are neither treacherous nor ungrateful by nature, but they are a different race from the Germans, and the Germans and the Russians have never understood each other. To the forgiving and charitable character of the Russians the philosophical idea that all breaches of law must inevitably entail punishment is repugnant. They can excuse a cruelty which is caused by human frailty, but retributive justice they abhor as inhuman.

Suddenly Nicholas found himself thrust upon the throne, only to discover that the country was permeated with secret societies, that everybody was a conspirator, nobody to be trusted. Some of the highest functionaries of State, members of the oldest aristocratic families, all the men of culture and education, were in league against him,—in short, the country was, morally speaking, a revolutionary swamp, there was no safe place for the Emperor to rest his foot without danger of being swallowed up. He felt that his first duty was to put his house in order, and for that purpose he knew of no other method, no other means of enforcing

law and order, than those simple and drastic methods by which he had succeeded in maintaining military discipline. He was not vindictive. He was not animated by any feeling of vengeance. He simply set to work to do his duty, and to do it as thoroughly and as efficiently as he could. The obstacles which he encountered did not excite his anger; they were to be expected, they were part of his work, but they had to be removed, and in their removal he was not too squeamish about the means that were employed. He had got to lick his country into shape; it was a big licking which he would have to give it, and the sounder the thrashing administered the better chance of reformation. It was kinder to be severe, and to let everybody see that he would stand no nonsense and was inflexible, than to encourage resistance by half-measures and by weak-kneed mildness. This spirit of thoroughness permeated his instruments. They had to show their zeal, and they did. In Poland, in the Caucasus, the name of Nicholas I. is still a word of terror. In his instructions to his generals concerning the suppression of the Polish insurrection he emphasises his thoroughness; nothing is forgotten, he even warns them against the seductive influences of the Polish women, and urges them to see that the officers do not succumb to their blandishments. He had the fate of his brother Constantine before his eyes. He entered into details, endeavoured to do everything, or at least superintend everything, himself, and discovered that when he was not being conspired against he was being robbed. He used to say that there were only three honest men in Russia—himself, his eldest son, and General Wilson. Even as a young man he said of Louis XVI. :

“ King Louis XVI. did not do his duty, and was punished for it. To be weak does not mean being merciful. The sovereign has no right to pardon the enemies of the State.

Louis XVI. had to deal with an actual conspiracy, which shielded itself behind the fictitious name of liberty ; if he had not spared the conspirators he would have preserved his people, and saved them from many misfortunes."

These continued to be the views of Nicholas to the end. All his ideas of life were drawn from his military experiences. He considered the army the best school of citizenship, for, as he said, in the army everybody has his properly appointed place assigned him, and there is no scope for selfishness or vaingloriousness,—men learn to obey without murmuring, and to subordinate their own will and their own interest to those of the military units of which they form part. He had consequently no sympathy with the political aspirations of certain of his subjects. These were but manifestations of insubordination, breaches of discipline, and it was kinder to put them down with an iron hand than to temporise and, by showing signs of weakness, give rise to hopes which could only end in disappointment and unhappiness.

Nicholas acted perfectly consistently throughout his life. It is this very consistency which has created for him the greater number of his enemies. The wayward, fanciful, artistic, and passionate national character of the Russians was repelled by this careful, methodical, consistent drill-sergeant, whose peculiar education had given him a sternly practical turn. He had a mind for details and facts ; he had little patience with theories and general ideas. The vagaries of temperament he distrusted. His natural bent for engineering and mathematics placed him out of sympathy with the vague, fanciful dreaminess of his people, whose tendency to contemplative speculation is reflected in their idiomatic expressions, such as : " to smoke the heavens," " to pour from empty bottles into receptacles that have nothing in them," " to pound water," etc. In

short, he distrusted his subjects even as his brother had distrusted them, as his mother and his surroundings distrusted them. Nor can this cause surprise. His grandfather and his father had both been murdered, his brother had suffered disappointment and disenchantment, he himself had had to wrestle with rebels on his accession. The sympathies of his family, of his wife, and the tendencies instilled into him as a boy were all in favour of Germany and the Germans. These he was therefore disposed to trust. The Adlerbergs, the Benckendorffs, the Nesselrodes, the Kleinmichels, the Kankrins, the Korffs, these were the people on whom he relied. They too often interpreted his will with exaggeration. But Nicholas can be no more held responsible for the cruelties his generals and officials practised, say in Poland, for instance, than Alexander I. can be justly accused of approving and instigating the inhuman brutality of Araktcheyeff.

If the reign of Nicholas has become synonymous with severity, it must not be forgotten that many of his projects on his accession were liberal in tendency. Even Golovine admits this, and attributes to a want of knowledge as much as to a conservative apathy the failure of the laudable plans which Nicholas conceived after his accession to the throne. He was anxious to abolish the table of ranks, the *tchins* of Peter the Great, to make the proceedings of the law courts public, and abolish written procedure, which was the curse of Russia at the time, but he failed to carry these out; nor did he give effect to the project for emancipating the serfs, which had been so long maturing. Neither Alexander I. nor he felt that the times were ripe for this measure, the credit of which fell to Alexander II. Nevertheless all this goes to show that the Emperors of Russia have generally been ready to act as pioneers in every movement of reform, and that they have too often

been kept back, not by their own conservative instincts so much as by the reactionary counsels of their advisers, who have either doubted the efficacy of the measures proposed or feared their adoption. Just as it is a mistake to assume that the Emperors have all been either savage tyrants or benevolent demigods instead of fallible human beings, so also is it erroneous to attribute to the advisers of these monarchs none but the basest and most sordid motives. Russian statesmen have been as much human beings as the statesmen of other countries. The evolution of liberal ideas and free institutions is, however, necessarily slow. Under Alexander I. something like the rudiments of systematic government were introduced, and the Imperial Council took a definite shape. Under his successor this Imperial Council, which has latterly developed into a sort of House of Lords or Upper Chamber, became a still more important part of the machinery of government. It was here that all the various political and economic State projects were discussed, and Korff has left us a very interesting record of the work of that body during the reign of Nicholas. At the meetings of the Imperial Council the Emperor frequently presided, and he would take part in the debates. Korff gives a number of reports of the Emperor's speeches, which betray anything but a narrow spirit, as the following sentence taken at random illustrates. The debate was upon Kisseleff's Commission on Agricultural Property and the Emancipation of Agricultural Labour, and the Emperor, in the course of a lengthy speech, said: "I always love the truth, gentlemen, and, relying upon your experience and loyalty, I invite you to express your opinions with absolute frankness, and without any regard to my own personal convictions." Korff adds that he despairs of reproducing the effect of the sovereign's delivery, that expression in every word, in

every gesture, of the consciousness of his own exalted dignity, that imperial majesty of demeanour, that fluency of speech, in which every word was pregnant with meaning, that sonorous, penetrating voice, his magnificent appearance and absolute calm of manner, which so captivated his hearers. Allowing for a little of the adulation to be expected from a courtier, we must feel that the above is a true picture of the Emperor in council assembled, especially as it agrees with the description of his imposing manner given by foreign observers. From Korff we learn also that Nicholas regarded himself as the Lord's anointed and the instrument of Providence, and was animated in all he did by a devout spirit of Christian humility and a profound desire to act justly and wisely. He consulted his Council with the honest intention of adopting the most convincing recommendations of his advisers. Considering himself the final and decisive authority, he was anxious to hear all the arguments for and against the decision to be taken. In fact, he considered himself as the Public Meeting which passed the resolutions, and wanted the members of the Council to speak from that point of view. Not satisfied with the discussions at the Imperial Council, Nicholas was in the habit of appointing special committees, at which the proceedings were informal, and undress uniform was worn by the military men, and plain clothes, not official uniform, by the civilians. At these meetings the Emperor conducted the proceedings in person. He read all the papers himself to those present, his delivery being exceptionally good. He made speeches himself, and used to listen with genuine interest and attention to the speeches of others. Here all formality was put aside, and the Emperor would consult simply and without ceremony his advisers on questions concerning the welfare of the State, and in his unassuming simplicity his real dignity of char-

acter came out in even stronger relief. It must not be forgotten that in this circle of officials, and often of sycophants, the atmosphere was highly rarefied, and the adroit flattery to which the Emperor was exposed would have turned many a less clear-sighted head. In this respect the robust character of Nicholas was better suited for the difficult position he occupied than the more susceptible and sensitive nature of Alexander I., who was as wax in the hands of his favourites. Moreover, we are assured by contemporaries that whilst Alexander I. was capable of throwing over his friends, as in the case of Speranski, for instance, Nicholas, who rarely bestowed his favour, withdrew it even more rarely and always with great reluctance. In other words, he was a firm friend, a stern, but kind master, and a frank though often pitiless enemy.

Turnerelli, who lived in Russia for sixteen years, and knew the Imperial family personally, after describing the personal appearance of Nicholas and the remarkable power of his eye, adds: "With such a power in his eyes it may easily be imagined what a pleasurable thing it must have been for his ministers and officers to face the Tzar when he chanced to be in an angry mood, though I have heard that Nicholas rarely condescended to give way to sudden outbreaks of passion, and is said to have had an unusual command over his temper, which must have been terribly ruffled from time to time." After quoting various glowing descriptions of the Emperor's appearance, Turnerelli comments: "Had this nobility of person belonged to a common moujik, instead of the Autocrat of all the Russias, the admiration could not have been less, nor scarcely the feeling of moral awe. It was not the Emperor who was so magnificent, but the man who was so truly imperial."

The same writer gives an account of the daily routine of the Emperor's life ; the Emperor was an early riser, and, attired in an old grey military cloak, would spend his mornings at his desk. At eight he dressed and went out for a walk. At nine he had breakfast, and by ten he was receiving various high officials. He used to go out driving at one, and pay surprise visits to public institutions, hospitals, etc. Woe to the chief who was caught napping on these occasions ! Sometimes, however, the forenoon was occupied by military duties, such as reviews or inspections, and then the officials were safe. Later in the afternoon the Emperor again took a walk, and at five he dined. His meals were extremely frugal, and very little wine, if any, was drunk. After spending a few hours in his wife's boudoir he would then go to the theatre or to a ball, either with the Empress or alone, coming home at midnight, when he would do a couple of hours' work before going to bed. He slept on a hard horse-hair mattress stretched upon a small iron bedstead.

Notwithstanding his sternness and intensely practical spirit, Nicholas was a lover of the arts, he did much to beautify St. Petersburg and Moscow, he was the munificent patron of painters and musicians, and we have seen how he took certain authors under his protection. Nevertheless, the stifling atmosphere of repression was not particularly propitious to literary productions, yet the period of Nicholas's reign was one of extraordinary literary activity in Russia, and may be described as a sort of renaissance of culture. This was probably due rather to the general awakening of intellectual life which was so universal throughout the whole of Europe during the last century, and has been regarded, whether rightly or wrongly, as one of the after-effects of that general emancipation of the human mind which manifested itself in a rebellion

against the traditions of the Middle Ages and found more violent expression in the French Revolution.

To the disciplined mind of Nicholas this awakening seemed but an outbreak of the forces of disorder, and he considered himself especially elected by Providence to subdue these one and all. The collapse of Russia in the Crimean War, the complete breakdown of the administrative and economic machinery which that war entailed, revealed to him that his own house was in disorder, and may have led him to suspect that his theory of government was not infallible.

Whether he made criminal mistakes and thus brought his country to the verge of ruin, as some think, or whether he was a splendid, courageous hero who did the best he could for his country and helped it materially on the road to progress, liberty, and greatness, as others maintain, it is as yet difficult to say. We are inclined towards the view that when time has mellowed the controversies of to-day, and the name of Nicholas I. has ceased to inspire partisan feelings, it will be found that he did as much for the advancement of the true interests of his country as could be expected in the circumstances. He was certainly sincere and earnest. Nor should his human failings and shortcomings blind us to his many noble and truly admirable qualities. His manliness was one of his finest characteristics, and will always make him a sympathetic figure to the English reader.

In Russia he is regarded to-day as a hero, even by his detractors of the opposition camp, to whom he is the impersonation of reaction. In the popular imagination he fills a place, from which he is not likely to be ejected for a long time to come, as the ideal paternal autocrat, the subject of innumerable Haroun al Raschid stories, in which the Oriental despot is but faintly disguised. To the

European mind he appears as something prodigious, a superman, whose superhumanity was indeed able by inspiration to see the true principles of railway construction, and to connect St. Petersburg and Moscow by a railway running as nearly as possible in a straight line, but who was powerless to infuse life into the hopelessly rotten bureaucratic system which had been nourished on corruption for over a hundred years, until it had become a sort of festering excrescence on the body politic of the Russian State.

One characteristic story of Nicholas, which we have never seen in print, but which we know to be true, and with which we will conclude this volume, will exemplify the Nicholas régime better than reams of description.

While the Emperor was in Moscow witnessing a performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the splendid Opera House, one of the largest in the world, a fire broke out and the theatre was burnt to the ground. The Emperor calmly told the Governor-General: "I shall return here next year, on the same day; I shall expect to find the Opera House rebuilt exactly as it was before, and I shall listen to a performance of *Lucia* by the same company," and he was obeyed. He was, in truth, what the Russians call a Molodyetz, a smart fellow.

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