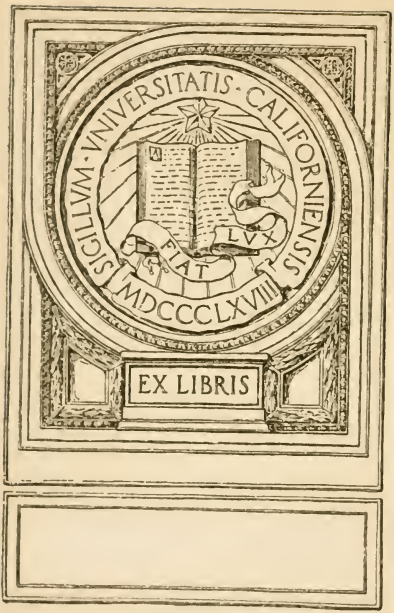
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FRIENDLY RUSSIA

BY

DENIS GARSTIN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

H. G. WELLS

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

ADELPHI TERRACE

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TO

SASHA KROPOTKIN LEBEDEFF,

I GRATEFULLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK:

YET NOT SO MUCH IN GRATITUDE

AS IN FRIENDSHIP.

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INTRODUCTION

Nobody reads Introductions. Only Publishers, following the occult laws of their being, demand them. At its best the Introduction is a gesture of respect to the new from the old, and so let the writer, who has been a pleased and admiring first reader of the book while it was still only in the stage of proofs, testify to the lucidity, humour, and wisdom of Mr. Garstin. He is engaged here upon one of the most necessary and beneficial tasks of our time, the explanation of a people much maligned, the increase of sympathy and understanding across spaces and ignorances that have separated men from men.

For a couple of hundred years Russia has been a fabulous country to the English imagination, a wilderness of wolves, knouts, serfdom, and cruelty. It has been the foil to our dazzling liberties, the darkness to

accentuate our enlightenment. It has also been Bogey, Bogey Russia, which had "designs"—on India, on all the world. Incredible cynicism and wickedness was its mental quality, combined with amazing political devotions. It was not simply a case of ignorance; it was a case of imaginative misrepresentation upon a basis of ignorance. There was a vast literature in which this convenient Russia, all anarchists and secret agents, played its part. And not ten years ago I saw at Folkestone a play of contemporary Russian life in which there were still serfs and knoutings, in which the villain claimed the heroine as his serf and found on her rudely exposed shoulder-blade the neat brand of the estate. Mr. Garstin in his opening chapter distinguishes very neatly between the two Russias—Russia which is ogre-land and the real Russia he saw; I thought we all did; and it is only when one finds such people as Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, and Mr. Keir Hardie taking this imaginative playground, this penny-dreadful country of hardship and wickedness, in all seriousness as the real Russia, that we begin to realize the need of more explicit statements on the matter. One

man's play may be another man's poison, and it is clear that wicked Russia, like the "immemorial East," that East which is East while "West is West and never the twain shall meet," like the Indians of the Moonstone and the Jesuits of Melmoth, must be taken carefully out of the way of muddle-headed people before we begin to discuss the grave affairs of mankind.

Happily the knowledge of the real Russia is no longer the secret of a few travellers. A new unbiassed literature grows up to set us right. We have Dr. Williams's admirable "Russia of the Russians" if we want an ordered statement of facts; we have Mr. Maurice Baring, Mr. Stephen Graham, and now—a welcome recruit—Mr. Garstin if we want aspects and atmospheres. Of all that he tells so briskly and vividly I think I can guess what will most astonish the English reader, and that is the workman from the slums of Odessa who had been in England and who pitied the English poor. "They are so poor," he said, "so terribly poor!" My own experience of Russia has been of the briefest, but that tallies very closely with my own impression. I went into one or two villages of the Government of Novgorod and

into several peasants' houses. They are roomier than English labourers' cottages; they look more prosperous: the people seem more free and friendly in their manners, less suspicious of interference, and in all the essential things of life better off. . . . I draw particular attention to the frequent sunlight in Mr. Garstin's testimony because I believe that the superstition that Russia is a wretched country is even more deeply ingrained in the Western imagination than that it is a mysteriously wicked tyranny.

H. G. WELLS.

THE RUSSIANS IN PEACE

FRIENDLY RUSSIA

I

THE TWO RUSSIAS

I HAVE lately made the discovery that a certain country has—for me, at any rate—two distinct personalities. The one I feel is real, the other I merely know to exist in actual fact.

I made the discovery at a play. I arrived late, and felt from the general atmosphere of the house that something morbid and tragic was occurring on the stage. Then I saw rough-clad peasants grouped in sulky attitudes about a richly appointed room. They were speaking to each other in gloomy prophecy when a seigneur appeared and spoke harshly to them. Despite myself, I gave a little gasp of excitement, of recognition, for I saw at once that I was back again in that strange, savage land of Russia, stories of which had so chilled and thrilled me in my childhood.

Nothing was left out. There was passion and brutality, steadfastness and feminine inconsistency, simplicity and grim cunning; there was murder and suicide, torture and broken hearts; there were even grim Cossacks and rumours of wolves. I think there were knouts; I saw revolvers, and high emotions ran riot.

I was too much interested in recognizing each factor in that Russian life to notice if the play was good or bad. Technical faults only occurred to me in after-thoughts. I enjoyed it all thoroughly, as I enjoy seeing the Red Indians appearing in "Peter Pan," and if only a devoted servant could have thrown himself to ravening wolves, to save a master, my happiness would have been complete.

"And is Russia really like that?" asked a friend at the fall of the curtain.

"Why, it's exact," I answered, not realizing that he was muddling up the actual with the traditional.

"And you have lived among those kinds of people?" he continued in amazement.

"I? No, never." And I explained that the two countries should be kept distinct.

It was then that I tried to remember at

what date I had accepted the one and forgotten the other. On my journey, while passing through Poland, I saw some mounted soldiers clearing the streets of the Jewish quarter in Warsaw, when a crowd had collected to watch a match factory blazing to high heaven. And I remembered saying, "Yes, that's exactly what I expected to find in Russia," forgetting that I was really in Poland.

That was my one glimpse of traditional Russia. My first knowledge of the actual came some few hours later, when I saw some light-haired, merry-looking khaki soldiers sitting or standing in a circle by some log-huts. One of them was playing on a balalaika, the majority were singing and clapping, while a trooper danced away before them all amid clouds of dust. I asked a companion what they were.

"Kasaki," he replied.

The dictionary gives the translation of that word as "Cossacks," but I shall never be convinced that they are the same men who were a happy terror to me as a child.

And so on through all my journey across that sun-baked land. Before a day had passed I had perforce learned the word "Nitchevo." Does any one, in the Russia

that we know, ever shrug his shoulders and say, "It doesn't matter? It is nothing?" We passed through miles on miles of golden cornland. "Ah," I said, "and in winter all this is bleak snow." My companion nodded. "And there are wolves, perhaps, too?" I ventured. My companion threw back his head in a wild yelp of laughter, and that was the last time I tried to reconcile the two Russias.

Instead, I settled down very happily to a life of pleasant homeliness. My Christian name became Russianized, my father's Christian name was also given me with *-ovitch* (son of) added, and as such I was known by friends and servants. Through the latter I began to learn Russian; they would talk to me for hours about their own lives, or inquire about mine. It was a life of extreme simplicity, of little variety, of general kindliness.

Nowhere else do people live together in such a friendly way. After some few months I felt I knew them better than many persons I have known for years. There was no pretence about them. They were like children without the veneer of conventions putting an abnormal gloss upon their

manners. I have seen them playing like children, and furious like children, saying unimaginable things in wild bursts of anger, and smiling again almost before the frown had passed from their foreheads.

And so the romance of Russia lies, not in passionate savagery but in a charming simplicity—at least, that is the charm of the Russia I have visited and where I hope to return. The pleasant, easy life among pleasant, easy people comes back to me sometimes with an insistence that makes me smell again the hot dust and the leather and the cabbage soup and the amber-coloured tea, and I heard the kindly "Zdrast'ee, Denis Normánovitch," from black-bearded workmen stopping their songs, as they trudged home over the dunes, to wish me well.

Memories such as these come willy-nilly, hinged on no definite word to denote the country where they once existed in reality, unless I think of the country as "the Land of Nitchevo—of never mind." For the word "Russia" always has sent a little tremor of excitement down my back, pregnant with wolves, passion, and savagery, and, though I should live there for the rest of my life, it always will.

II

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

To the traveller on board ship, who watches the Crimea rising mountainous in blue mists out of the sea, there comes a fine exhilaration of near adventure. The haze gives it an appearance of mystery. The splendid sunshine invests it in romance, while the mountains seem to rear themselves up into a towering hinterland and, to the traveller from the West, make pretence of a grand aloofness. Encircled by the liquid blue Euxine, it fits well the description of some fabled land in Grecian poetry or barbaric shores visited by Argonauts. It is a new world, rugged, strange, and incredible after the long, monotonous journey across Europe.

So, indeed, did it seem to me one summer morning as I came up on deck and stood among a crowd of Asiatics watching our goal draw slowly near. It was halcyon weather.

Round the bows, in the glassy comb of cleft waters, plunged and tumbled a pair of dolphins, racing along with the ship, diving under her very keel, and crossing and re-crossing with hardly an inch to spare before the sharp bow. Then they fell back, other dolphins took up the sport, and so we made our way towards the Crimea.

The sea, notoriously Black, was blue and smiling. The sky above also was clear blue, but of a lighter shade, all luminous in the heat, to which the sea alone seemed indifferent, while to the left the fantastic mass of mountains quivered bluey-grey as the day grew hotter.

Tired at last of the dolphins, I turned to watch the quarrel of some Easterners near me, feeling thrilled by my proximity to possible bloodshed; but in that drowsy heat there was not enough breeze to fan any passion, and the quarrel subsided.

"Came up to see what the row was," an English voice near me broke in on my wonderings. "English, aren't you? Thought so. Anybody killed? No? Oh, well. Funny coves, aren't they? Look savage all right, but I bet they're pretty soft when you tackle 'em. Nothing like roast beef, I say, and beer."

The little man hit his chest and smiled briskly at me. He was short and plump, with a grisly beard that tried vainly to mask the extreme redness of his complexion. Knowing no Russian, French, or German, he was delighted with his ignorance and with the methods by which he impressed people into his service. I felt I was being impressed.

"Sunday to-day," he said; "and I left Huddersfield Wednesday. Prompt, eh? Feodosia to-morrow, back again Huddersfield on Sunday, with luck. That's travel, huh? When do you—swheep?" He waved an arm towards England, signifying my return.

"Oh, some time next year, I s'pose," I answered. Huddersfield, a place I have never seen, seemed strangely undesirable at the moment; but the little man grasped my hand in silent sympathy. Suddenly his eyes lost their look of vague sentiment and were astonishingly alert.

We had been coasting along the Western Crimea, but now seemed to be making straight for shore, and, indeed, our course did seem erratic, until there appeared a sort of crack in the coastline, that opened out at our approach, as did the mountains in

the fairy stories, and, entering, we found ourselves in a bay split into several inlets. The water of it was blue, brilliant blue, and the shore rose in high land all around, and then into mountains, while on either side of one creek a mass of white houses gleamed dazzlingly in the sunshine, their glare broken by occasional avenues and clumps of trees and old pink roofs.

"Da Sevastōpol," said a Russian near by, nodding in answer to some inquiry.

"Tchuk!" spluttered Mr. Barnes. "Funny. D'ye hear how he pronounced it? Well, I don't suppose they talk about the place much over here, not in their history books—sort of Majuba to them. So that's Sebastopol, is it, where they did the fighting? Well"—as the ship came to the pier—"shall we stroll about and *parlez vous?*"

It was then I explained that as yet I knew no Russian; but Mr. Barnes soon forgave me. "Same boat," he said. "Come along; we'll make 'em take notice."

We landed, and my first feelings were of disappointment. I had expected to find a new type of human beings, living differently, walking differently, enjoying themselves differently, and dressed entirely differently;

but all the difference I could find at first was that the language was alien and that the names over the shops were written in fantastic lettering.

There was the Dover crowd waiting on the jetty to see us disembark, taking no definite interest in us, but come there just because it meant to them an occupation. We were met by fruit-sellers, hawkers of post-cards and of souvenirs. We found a Sunday parade in full swing on the garden promenade, the men, indeed, for the most part dressed more nationally in simple Russian shirts and the women with red scarves enwrapping their black hair ; still, the general effect was Western. The band was playing, officers in khaki tunics swaggered here and there, waiters in the usual evening dress bustled from table to table in the dust and sunshine. Trams clattered through the streets. The faces of passers-by might have been English, though somewhat sallow. Schoolboys I mistook for cadets in their neat uniforms, the schoolgirls reminded me of orphans in their regulation dresses. I saw some Turks moving through the European crowd, and in their distinctiveness I realized how easily a Russian might

pass unnoticed in an English street. So I suggested seeing the sights.

"Don't like seeing the sights," said Mr. Barnes. "Don't believe in 'em. A friend came to stay with me once; saw everything —Town Hall, factories, music-halls, everything—and so thought he knew the place inside out.

"'Well,' I said, 'and what are we—Methodist, Unitarians, Plymouth Brothers, or what?' He didn't know. 'Then you don't know Huddersfield,' I said. No, Pubs. are the best places. See people there and get a drink at the same time. But as we don't know the lingo, we'll stick to the trams—if you can call them trams."

We clambered on to a small open vehicle, and after much pantomime took tickets for the circular tour of the town. Mr. Barnes put his hands on his knees, elbows out, and looked expectant. "Now let's look at it," he said, as though it were a performance.

I am afraid we disapproved of Sevastopol *in toto*. The pink-and-white town, nestling in ridges between creeks of vivid blue; glimpses of white alleys with their riotous patches of colouring; the warm, sweet scents that came down these alleys from the banks

of flowers—all these did not appeal to our æsthetic soul. For a time we tried to people the little town with soldiery and the horrors of war to pander to our lust for sensations —held these barren hills with Russian, those with English troops, and annihilated thousands on various slopes; but bathos would creep in.

"But if they held that hill they'd just be murdered, the whole lot of 'em—well, they deserved to be if they wore whiskers like that old lollipop. And that's a fact, and, what's more—ah! that's the Malákoff they talk so much about over there. Well, what I say is that it was a fool's game trying to take a rotten hole like this. So that's where the French attacked, is it? Didn't know the French had anything to do with it. Did most of the work? Nonsense! How is it I haven't seen a Russian in a waistcoat? Haven't they got here yet? And coats seem curios."

"Too hot," I said, enviously regarding the shirt-clad passers-by.

"Unbusinesslike!" snapped Mr. Barnes. "Not but what I don't appreciate travel," he said suddenly. "Broadens the mind. Makes you appreciate old England. My, but you should see our trams!"

Two companies of infantry swung up the road—fine fighting men, marching with rhythm. Some of them glanced up as we passed, and, seeing our two constrained selves, smiled.

Then we found ourselves by the jetty again, and went on board. In the gardens above girls, boys, matrons, soldiers, students, and workmen eddied in streams of bright colours, and laughed and chatted in holiday mood. Only a statue of the gallant defender served to remind us of the past.

On the hills around, instead of battle smoke, there lay a summer haze. The Malákoff, seen through a telescope, was just a hill on the most desolate outskirts of the town, dotted here and there with couples all concerned with their own romance, forgetful of the old.

We stood leaning over the stern, while the screw thrashed the transparent blue water into frothy cream. The crowd on the terrace grew smaller and less animated as we thudded out to sea again ; but until the coast hid it from our sight the town shimmered ever bright and peaceful, with the waves lapping gently at its edge.

"Doesn't seem to have done much good,

that old war. Who's up on it now?" demanded Mr. Barnes. "Poor blighters!"

We coasted along, rounded a promontory, the mountains growing more rugged, and, nearer to the shore, passed a little gap, almost hidden from the sea, that once guarded the Allied ships in the harbour of Balaclava, and soon found ourselves on the eastern coast, making for Yalta. Here we found the mountains that had appeared to tower up from the hinterland, as we sighted them from the west, in reality rising almost sheer from the sea, dotted here and there with little villages and Tartar towns, perched against the steep slope, tier upon tier. Woods covered the mountains, broken by gorges and occasional waterfalls, that tapered foam-white against the green masses. Then we came to Aloupka, with its little mud houses clustering round the white mosque, and in magnificent distinction the great summer palaces of Grand Dukes glistening along the seaboard; then the Tsar's palace, the Livadia, among its parks and gardens brought all the ship's company to the side to admire it; and so, as we stood there, picturing, as people will, the mighty ones walking about those very paths at which we

gazed, forcing our imaginations, we found that we had already arrived at Yalta.

Yalta is one of the most obviously beautiful places I have ever seen. A town of white houses that struggle for a foothold between the great green heights and the blue sea, it has often been compared to Monte Carlo, and the inhabitants, having been infected by our disease of calling one place by the name of another, continually think fit to advertise it as Russia's Riviera.

When I came back to live there I found it had a personality no European town could ever acquire, as also when I returned to Sevastopol I found it very different to the radiant port I visited with Mr. Barnes.

But that evening as I left Mr. Barnes, the last Englishman I was to see for many months, and was hustled down the gangway to change boats, it seemed to me a wonderful chromo-lithograph, far too beautiful to be true, and I watched the droshky-drivers whip up their horses and clatter off to the town without feeling for a single moment that I wished they were taking me.

III

DATCHA LIFE

Why I woke I do not know; but wake I did, very suddenly, and sat up in my berth, struggling for consciousness, jostled from fancy to fact, and straining to my own real sphere like a bather overwhelmed by a wave.

For a moment I sat dazed, awake physically but not mentally; then I remembered why I was in a berth and not in a bed, that the waters were Russian and not English, that I had been travelling for many days, and that I should arrive at my Crimean destination early in the morning. It was then very early, just before sunrise; the ship was at anchor, and from my port-hole I saw a boatload of passengers making for shore. I jumped down, ran into the passage, and, meeting a man, made signs, pointing to the land, and looked inquiring. "Soudak," he said. Now, Soudak was my destination.

In a few minutes I was on deck, collected my luggage, and showed my eagerness to land. A big-bellied cargo-boat lay alongside, rolling nudgingly against the ship; and into this I was hoisted, and there on a pile of bales I sat, most correctly dressed, straw-hatted and in spats, with two stage-villain Turks rowing me to the shore.

It was on the "backs" at Cambridge that I first heard of Soudak. I had taken the bulky letter inviting me there to read in a punt, and the words "Soudak is one of the most beautiful places you could ever conceive" inspired me vastly. At once I tried to imagine it, and created a wonderland, adding to it bit by bit, until at last, a fortnight after hearing the name for the first time, I was in a position to compare the real with the great ideal, and I have never been so disappointed. The picture was a monotone in grey—grey sea, grey sands, and, behind, grey mountains. From the boat I could see no grass and few trees; the mountains were innocent of any colour save the universal lead grey, and it looked the bleakest spot I had ever seen. Except for a few white villas in the foreground, I could see no houses of any kind—European houses that is, though

where the mountains surrounding this unexpected plainland joined again in the distance, a little town of mud-built huts showed vaguely in the early light.

A chill breeze swept over the bay, heralding the sunrise. I shivered. It all seemed so different to the happy pictures I had drawn of the place, lying in a punt, looking down the pleasant vista of the "backs." It hardly seemed the same world. The Turks, rowing at their ease with short, sharp digs, stopped and looked towards the mountain, which was screening the sun. Then they talked to each other, and, coming to some decision, spat on their hands and rowed me on a little farther.

We had come just half-way when the sun, after a show of hesitation, came up with a swoop from behind its barrier. Immediately my boatmen leaped up from their seats and rushed towards me. Too surprised to act, I let them come—let them even use my shoulder as a stay, so as to clamber past me; then, unrolling each a mat and laying them on the stern, they stood stark and rigid looking over the sea, then bowed, then knelt, then touched the ground with their foreheads, and rose again.

But all the while a miracle was happening. It was like the transformation scene in a pantomime on an immense scale. As the sunlight blazed out over the mountain the whole bay sprang from grey death into life. The sea became blue and twinkling—blue as the Mediterranean, blue as I had seen it the day before in the Gulf of Sevastopol. The shore was dazzling gold and the mountains, so colourless and macabre a moment since, glowed rich and glorious in the fresh blaze of sunlight, while even the villas, dotted here and there about the valley, sprang into white splendour, reflecting a spasmodic glare. Only my spats and my astonishment saved me from joining the two Turks prostrated on the stern.

At length they rowed me up to the jetty, where a black-jowled Russian in a blue shirt, baggy trousers, and student cap caught hold of my luggage, threw it into a light carriage, bade me clamber in, and drove me furiously along an ill-made road, asking me no questions as to whom I was—wisely, for I could not have answered him.

We drove along the shore past the little white bungalows I had seen from the sea, planted haphazard among the dunes, and

seeming very lifeless in the heat—for already it was quite hot, and I could not believe that I had seen the sun burst up over the mountains only half an hour before. Day, like the children, matures quickly in the south.

At last, swinging suddenly out of the road through some pretentious gates, I found myself before the datcha wherein I was to live.

In the summer every Russian of means leaves the town for his datcha in the country. These datchas are much the same in the south, go where you will, for the most part being low-built villas, bungalows in stone, with pleasant whitewashed verandas stretching on three sides of them. There is generally one living-room, with bedrooms opening out of it. Often the living-room, too, becomes a bedroom, and its divans are seldom unoccupied at night; for the life is very simple, and sleeping accommodation is not considered as seriously as it is in England. The first time I was asked out to tea at a neighbour's house our host's daughter was ill in bed, but she had her tea with us notwithstanding, for her bedroom happened to be the living-room also.

At first, diffident about my "English manners," they put a screen around her bed; but that put conversation to an unwonted strain, and her father, a charming old university don, asked me in careful German whether it would be too much for my delicacy if the screen were removed. The screen, of course, disappeared, and with it the restraints of conversation.

There is no need to be told when there is an English governess in a datcha. Our feeling that "there is a right place for everything" is ineradicable. The Russian is not so sure, and puts everything where it seems most convenient to him. I once heard two governesses discussing their situations. Said one:—

"Yes, mine are certainly very nice, but so easy-going, without any idea of how to keep the servants in their place."

"I always say they are so uncivilized," said the other, with an air of discovery. "I don't mind so much about their not keeping the servants in their place, but mine actually wanted to keep a dinghy in the drawing-room. I pointed out, however . . ." And I could imagine her doing it, calmly disregarding her employers' expostulations, and

insisting on their observing our English etiquette: "Why not? Why, the very idea of a dinghy in the drawing-room is perfectly preposterous. It doesn't matter *what* Ivan says. It *must* be stored somewhere else." Yet somehow I soon began to prefer a datcha where the English influence was unknown.

It takes some time, however, before one can acquiesce in a new mode of life and of thought. We imagine that because England is politically free it is a free country. Any form of freedom that is not countenanced by our conventions we call licence, and licence, we say, is wrong. Thus it came about that I found myself living among a people who, to the English mind, were politically in a position of abject slavery, which is abhorrent to all good Britishers, and socially in a state of complete licence, which to us is more abhorrent still.

I began, of course, by disapproving. The free-and-easy Russian life shocked me, and, being shocked, I became frigid, according to the traditions of English culture. The Russians are a simple folk, admitting their own lack of civilization, and are desirous of learning the mysteries of behaviour from the

English. They asked me, then, how they should improve their manners, on which point I showed myself most willing to instruct them; but Russians are altogether like children, and, like children, they want to know why. The word "why" came on me with a shock. There was something reminiscent about it, dating back to my own childhood, and I racked my brains to remember the answer I had been given in the same context. On this point, however, my memory became vague and indefinite, as, I imagine, the answers had been. To the Russians at first I quoted convention. I said, "But it's what is done," or "not done," according as I instructed or condemned. My hosts, however, could not believe that a great civilized people like the English regulated the whole of their behaviour by each other's conduct. It was too much like the behaviour of sheep—and so uncomfortable.

In vain I quoted Swift—I think it was Swift who said that "he is the best mannered in the company who makes the fewest persons uneasy." They agreed with the *mot*, but assured me that English manners did not conduce to a feeling of easiness. They refrained from saying that my manners had

made them all feel uneasy, they did not even infer it, they were too kindly; they merely doubted that the English forms and observances of behaviour were natural.

"For instance," they asked me, "do you discuss everything in England—everything?"

I thought for a moment. "No," I said, "we do not—not in mixed circles, as a rule, and almost never during dinner."

"Is it good manners not to discuss——?"

"It is good manners not to discuss, or even mention, several things," I interrupted.

"Isn't that insinuating that the other person——"

"Has no interest in them." I finished the sentence with authority. At this they all seemed very amused, and pestered me with questions as to whether we really and honestly believe in the lack of interest we pretend.

"In either case your minds are not really free," they said, but I reserved judgment.

Another thing they called in question was our hospitality. With us a guest has, like the actor, his exits and his entrances. We know, as a rule, when to expect him to come and when to go, how long he will stay after lunch, or tea, or dinner. We are host and

guest, very different to the same two people who meet in the street or at the club or at another person's house. In England the host confers the favour, in Russia the guest. The guest, too, has a knack of "dropping in." He may stay for an hour, or for the day and night, or for weeks. There is no ceremony. He is given the best of everything. Stint is a crime unpardonable and unknown, and the guest who has not a large capacity for eating the profusion of delicacies showered on him is liable to seem uncivil and disdainful. He comes when he wishes, he stays as long as he wishes, and goes when he wishes. In Russia, of course, our half-hour calls and week-end visits would be absurd. Distances there are too enormous. The nearest country neighbour is often ten miles away. A railway journey generally includes a night in the train, and always there seems to be a long drive to and from the stations. And so in that friendly land the phrase "make yourself at home" really would have a meaning, if it were ever needed.

It is a friendly land, datcha-land, especially with the long hot days spent sprawling on the sands or bathing *en famille* in the cool surf; the magical evenings, that changed

the glaring, golden mountains into dim, mysterious heights, enjoyed lazily from the cliff edge, where we watched the Turkish fishermen pulling in their nets until in the moonlight the verandas gleamed snow-white against the rich black shadows, and we went in for coffee; nights like Sim's pictures, fantastic, incredibly beautiful, with occasional fireworks streaking the sky and swooping up to eclipse the myriad stars for a moment, then dying in a blaze of glory. White triangular sails flapped in the little breeze as boats went by; some one playing on a balalaika would stop, and one could hear the flop-flop of waves against the bows—for a moment only, then a girl's voice would begin a folk-song, and her companions join in the insistent chorus. Formalities soon grow dim in that atmosphere. It is a friendly life, and London and evening dress seem very far away. A Russian, lately returned from England, lay back in his chair one evening after supper and picked his teeth in a manner that was far less offensive than many of my compatriots' mode of eating. We chaffed him, saying we expected better manners from a traveller to England. He is an ardent admirer of this our land, but

we evidently touched on a sore point. He broke out, addressing himself to me.

"Oh, that England of yours! It's an extraordinary land," he said. "We Russians have our priests, it is true, but you have them also in another form—in one form, rather—the conventions. Oh, the things I have seen in England, the silly little rules even in the family. You must sit—so; you must eat—so; you must speak—so; you must walk—so; you must think—so; you must lead all your life—just so. And if you do not 'people will talk.' But we in Russia can do as we like, we are free. One day, perhaps, we will govern ourselves, and our police will be our helpers and not our tyrants, and we will become civilized—just so. But I will be dead then, thank God! Tell me, is it better to be free in one's politics or in one's home among one's friends? Answer me that—not now, but when you go home again and find yourself a slave."

IV

SERVANTS

In that friendly life the servants play an all-powerful part. The Russian seldom does for himself what he can get a servant to do for him, and the results of this are twofold: firstly, that the servants hold the household in the palms of their hands, and, secondly, that the Russian, in paying any chance person to do his bidding, has created an incredible habit of tips.

In Russia one can do anything with a tip, nothing without; but even Russians themselves are often nonplussed by claims made on them for "na tchai." "Na tchai" is a more explicit demand than "pourboire," and means literally "for tea," though it must be said that the vodka-shops more usually reap the profit. Aivazovski, the painter, used to tell a characteristic story of this national trait. He had just finished one of his immense

sea pictures, and thinking that they might like to see the work before he sent it to Petrograd, invited his workmen into the studio. For a long time they stood there gazing at it, and expressing, as best they could, their admiration of it, one saying that he could almost hear the waves and smell the salt spray. As they seemed after some time to be getting weary, not quite knowing how to make a move towards the door, the artist opened it for them and ushered them out. But the foreman stopped.

"We have admired it very well, eh?" he asked.

"Why, yes," said Aivazovski, a little astonished.

The foreman mopped his brow. "It is hot," he said. "Surely you will give . . . something . . . na tchai," and he held out his hand.

Russian servants, however, do not abuse their tyranny—as ours do. Although they do not fear their masters (God and the Tsar are the only objects of their fear), their masters certainly return the compliment. I have never heard "before the servants" used as the awful caution we feel it to be. In revolutionary times I believe there was

a terror that every dvornik was a spy, but ordinarily and socially the servants may know everything, and they certainly do. They all form part of one family beneath one roof, and the ills and fortunes of that one family are shared by all alike. At first they felt I was an intruder. I could speak only to the masters, and to them only in French. One of them, Arina, the housemaid, complained to her mistress.

"He has lived with us for nearly a month," she said, "and except for 'Good-morning,' and 'A peaceful night,' he has said nothing to me. I do not know where he comes from, nor if he has parents or sisters or brothers. Lukyan found him on the pier and brought him here, but before that—nothing. He understands nothing; if I wish him a happy working-time he smiles and shakes his head. He is strange, truly." On the other hand, no one tried harder to teach me than did these simple souls. At all times of the day Arina would discover some implement or vegetable of whose name she thought I was ignorant, and she would hurry off at once with it to find me and teach me how to pronounce the word. If I was "naughty" and forgot it, I was not offered

a second helping at the next meal, but the rewards of remembrance were great.

They were a lazy, contented, faithful little group, those servants, in whose hands we were as children. For our meals we were utterly dependent on their humour.

I remember a Sunday meal some months after my arrival, when luckily I knew enough of the language to understand the little crisis.

Arina, long expected with the soup, came to the veranda empty-handed.

For half an hour our sole fare had been zakouska, the Russian *hors d'œuvres*, but we still waited patiently, looking out with half-closed eyes on to the Crimean mountains dazzling with sunshine, and the Black Sea, too, ablaze where the sunlight struck it. And so, though it was too hot to eat, I longed for something liquid, both for its refreshment and to divert my attention from the surrounding glare.

Also, being English, I found a half-hour's wait between courses to be somewhat disconcerting, especially with many guests at table.

But Arina, strolling slowly along the veranda, calmly mopped her face with a loose end of the scarf about her head. She was

hot, but in no wise flurried. Resting a hand on the hostess's chair, she looked at us all, then remarked casually—

"Doonia is drunk."

Now Doonia was the cook.

The bomb that I used hourly to expect when I first began my Russian life could have startled me no more. Not so the hostess.

"I was expecting it," she said. "She stood near me in church this morning. She must have been drunk overnight. Is she too bad to cook?"

"No," said Arina, "but she prays, and things go slowly." Our hostess sighed. The others went on chatting. Some smoked, as they usually do throughout the meal. I saw, in imagination, prompted by memory, the stifling kitchen, heard the hubbub of flies, saw the cook sprawling on the ground and making sanguine efforts to convince herself and her beholders that she was, in reality, wrestling in pious prayer.

In the morning we had driven through the long straggling village, a mile or so away, to the white-walled, green-domed church. The belfry stood apart and formed a gateway to the sacred enclosure, and for a while we

had stood among the semi-worshippers—those who do not enter the actual church, but stand in little groups in the sun-laden air, listening to the singing of the choir within and joining sometimes in the responses. I remembered having seen Doonia in the church—a brave red scarf over her head and big in voluminous white clothes, swaying slightly in the packed congregation, and seizing every opportunity to prostrate herself devoutly on the ground.

"Servants are a great nuisance," said the hostess when Arina had brought the belated soup and departed. "We have had all these ever since my marriage, but I never know how long we will keep them."

A murmur from the children at the far end of the table for a moment stayed the Russian version of the servant problem.

"Little mother, there are no pirashki," came from Mitya, the youngest boy.

The idea of Sunday soup without those little meat or cabbage patés for a moment or two roused the placid Russians to exasperation. But the horror was soon forgotten and the slow meal continued.

"But they have been with us so long that we cannot send them away, they are part of the family almost. Besides, they are good,

faithful children. That Arina now — her father and grandfather were dvorniks in my home—she is lazy but very contented. She loves dried fish and sweets and much sleep, and then she is always happy. Arisha," she called, and the buxom servant came slowly at her bidding.

"What was the water like this morning?" asked her master.

"Beautiful," said Arina. "It seems more beautiful now when I think of it—like most pleasures. I love bathing," she explained to the company at large.

"Well, go and get coffee now," said her mistress, and the servant departed. Then we all rose and, instead of grace, thanked the givers of the meal, the men and children kissing the hostess's hand.

When I returned from a walk that evening, I found Ivan, the coachman of one of the guests, singing and playing on his balalaika in the yard. A fair-haired little fellow, with a magnificent moustache, and glorious in a clean red shirt, he sat and sang merrily of woman and wine.

"And where is she—the woman?" I asked him.

"Over the mountains," he answered with

a fine sweep of his arm. Beyond the mountains there are always enchantments.

"And to whom do you sing now?"

"To myself," he laughed, "and to the saints."

Arina appeared in the doorway and stood shading her eyes against the setting sun, looking towards us.

"No, to Arisha," said Ivan, and he proceeded to tell her of his love in song, whereupon she gurgled at his insolence, and, beaming, boxed his ears. "Go and play thy balalaika in the house," she said. "They wait for thee."

We went in together, and Ivan, making a bow, sat down and strummed happily for near an hour, while some of us sang and danced, and all the servants crowded in to watch.

V

THE ADVENTURE

The adventure took place once daily. Now this requires an explanation, for the essence of adventures lies in their surprise, and they should not be capable of being billed as taking place at 11 a.m. precisely, with matinées on Saturdays—which is the Russian market-day. Yet such was the case. So I will proceed at once to the explanation.

Every morning at a quarter to eleven I set out across the sandy wastes to the little village that lay a verst or so inland. Pariah dogs, barking and snarling, were generally the only living creatures that I met, until I arrived at the little collection of cosmopolitanism.

Sometimes as I trudged along my daily road, visions of schooldays came back to me. Grim lack-lustre struggles with Latin elegiacs

and Greek roots mocked me. I found that I was swinging along to the rhythm of such poems as :—

> Bijou, caillou, chou,
> Genou, hibou, joujou, pou.

And I cursed my ineffectual education. For the Greek who mended my shoes stared blankly when I framed sentences based on his language of two thousand years ago. An Italian barber has no knowledge of the speech of his Roman forefathers. And the motley crowd of Jews, Armenians, Turks, Germans, Bohemians, Russians, Tartars, or Circassians were none the wiser when I talked to them of *bijoux, cailloux, choux,* or even *poux.* But if they were, my adventure would have ended ; perhaps it was better so.

And it was an adventure, say what you will. If you do not believe me, go Eastwards and walk up any little Oriental street, populated with any people save your own, hearing any speech except your own, and knowing that by some means or manner you have to effect an exchange of your money for a bottle of quinine, say, or a mouse-trap. You can point

to a cheese or seize upon cloth, but a mouse-trap, if not on view, will give you a good half-hour's pantomime.

In my village of cosmopolitanism there was but one general store, kept by a serious, taciturn man, by name Triandapheelo. As you enter the whitewashed building you pass through a row of men, sitting smoking on the little mud terrace and basking in the sun. Within are more men seriously discussing things of local moment. To these, with their own rigid ideas of deportment as firmly ingrained in them as those of your next-door neighbour, there appears a young man, speaking none of their languages, who is quite liable to spend ten minutes going through a most ridiculous performance with the ultimate effect of making them realize that he is a mouse.

To them it seems a most stupid but harmless ambition on the part of the stranger, but when he arranges the crates, puts some cheese therein, and is eventually caught—hoist, most ridiculously, by his own petard—these conventional Easterners begin to wonder vaguely whether they ought to give him something, or inform a perfectly incompetent police. Then the stranger suddenly

changes, brushes the dust and his foolishness from him, and shows by his own immense seriousness that he has no intention of raising a laugh. At last Triandapheelo produces a mouse-trap, and asks why the stranger could not have said "Mweeshelovka" at once and have done with it.

Hence my daily adventure; and I would have missed it for nothing in the world.

In the long, straggling street that formed the village, the indolent crowd sat in the low balconies, or lounged round the kafenias and the wineshops; men leaned drowsily against the whitewashed mud-houses, or followed the long, labouring bullock-wagons that creaked and screamed on ungreased axles. As I drew near there was a stir of excitement. I was known, just as my rival the gipsy, with his contortionist family, was known—though my tricks were far more varied. The gipsy complained that the village, when I came, grew tired of the sight of his daughter circling backwards round his waist, and preferred seeing me in the agonies of one who desired quinine. I responded to kindly "Zdrast'ees," or "Seelaam a laykume," or guttural "Guten Tags," and the kafenias or bullock-wagons were left for my

next performance. I was a celebrity—although the Bohemian talked disparagingly about undercutting amateurs.

Sometimes I went up the street, and had to confess that it was only butter that I needed, but there came times when there was a need of great difficulty, and, like a grim hypnotist about to struggle with a refractory medium, I swaggered along, expectant, tingling, and confident.

The end was bound to come sooner or later, even as I was bound to learn the language ; but it came sooner than it needed, for Triandapheelo, in whose general store all my vivid performances took place, married a wife one day.

He went away for a week, and left in his place an assistant, whose denseness gave me perpetual delight. But it was a flash in the pan.

My popularity on that last day was immense. Brimful of the difficulties that lay before me in buying a Tartar woman's costume, I swaggered up the street. My admirers all along the route were enticed by my awful mystery to leave their idleness and to follow me. And then as I entered the cool shade of trees before the door, I became

aware of a strange, fat, intelligent woman behind Triandaphcelo's store.

"Qu'est-ce que vous désirez, monsieur?" she asked in perfect French.

VI

A CELEBRITY'S BIRTHDAY

I MET Alexander Glazounoff as he was being escorted round the kitchen-garden by our hostess, and we joined forces and superlatives in praising the outward appearance of some red water-melons. Glazounoff, I must say, seemed rather phlegmatic on the subject, but my hostess assured me that he was always like that and never grew demonstrative. The externals of water-melons are not, of course, sufficiently conducive to enthusiasm as a general rule for me thereby to assert that the great composer is naturally of a calm and undemonstrative character. However, subsequent acquaintance with him merely bore out Madame's words.

He is an immense man, almost ponderous, with sandy hair and a pale face, in which his small, dark eyes are the most arresting feature. He had come to spend his birth-

day with his friend and fellow-composer, Spendiaroff, and all the neighbourhood was agog to meet him. In the prevailing excitement he alone did not share. He made plaintive efforts to escape, and, when captured, sat in the darkest corner of the salon like a brooding Buddha, veiled in the incense of his smoke, until only the intermittent glow of his cigar would mark his presence.

Sometimes, inspired by dinner and his cigar, and when there was no crowd of strange faces to awe him, he talked of his wanderings in Morocco and England. Whether he wished it or not, he gave me the impression that the strangest experience of his life was when he was dressed in the appropriate red robes to receive the honorary degree at Cambridge. It recurred again and again in his conversation, and something almost resembling a chuckle seemed to move within him. He also told me an adventure he had had among Moors, but it was not nearly so thrilling as the scene in the Cambridge Senate House.

His birthday was the occasion for a grand "fête." In Russia—certainly in the Crimea—a fête consists of eating, drinking, and fireworks. I have been to a great many such

functions, and they were always the same. Even one bitter autumn night I saw a man in a fur coat ramming sticks into the hard earth and sending rockets to be swept away by the chilling wind to signalize a wedding feast.

But Glazounoff's birthday falls in the Russian July, and we all stood out in the warm night air to admire and sigh in crescendo, as the rockets whizzed up, burst, and showered down a rain of colours. Then something went wrong, a batch of fireworks refused to light, and both the children and those technically older could not disguise their disappointment and chagrin.

We had spent most of the day grappling with wire and trellis-work to decorate the roof terrace with fairy lights. And thither, the fireworks over, we went for dinner beneath the stars, which made all our lights look trifling and laboured. The sky was just one mass of the little twinkling things, slashed across and across by the paths of shooting stars, while the Black Sea, like a strangely peaceful lake, glowed with their reflection.

Yet the terrace itself looked very pretty, with the long table laden with all kinds of fruit and fishes and meats and flowers, with

the dark-haired women in red turbans and white dresses, and the white stone balustrade with the little fairy lights peeping about and the great rich purply black night all around.

We feasted royally that night. Toasts with musical honours and the popping of corks were only interrupted or forgotten in continual salutations, embraces, and hand-kissings. Speeches and stories followed. To cap each story a fat old professor from Kieff, browned by sun-baths till he seemed made of polished, well-rounded mahogany, jumped to his feet before the laughter had begun to die down, and, clutching each prong of his beard, grew vehement with the telling of his own anecdote.

Suddenly, as the professor paused once for breath, a voice seemed to issue from Glazounoff, who was seated at the head of the table, immobile and, as it were, quite unconscious of the story that his voice was telling. At its end the professor was up again, jeopardizing the point of each anecdote by springing it on to the end of its predecessor. Again he paused for breath. Again a story issued from Glazounoff. It became a duel—the professor gesticulating, tugging at

his two-pronged beard, straining to conjure the spirit of laughter out of us—the composer growing perfectly motionless, his eyes staring at the same object, and the story proceeding from him in the same irresponsible way—until at last the mountains took shape against the lighter sky and we went indoors to bed.

Two nights later some Turks, making pools of phosphorus in the black water, rowed us out to a steamer at anchor in the bay. Glazounoff clambered on board, and we saw the end of his cigar glowing and growing dim as he stood on the stern and steamed away. But the picture of him that remains strongest in my mind is as a musician—which is as it should be.

I can see the white veranda now with the moonlight throwing rich, black shadows across it. Sitting on the veranda we looked through the open windows into a white room. And I can see Glazounoff staring dully at the piano, and frowning as though puzzled by the noise the keys made as his fingers touched them. Then he would experiment again, and again be puzzled. And yet, in so doing, he charmed his Valse Concerto with its echoing melody as I have never since heard it.

For with Glazounoff the composer, as with Glazounoff the man, there is, overwhelming all other characteristics and traits of personality, the charm of complete unaffectedness.

VII

A FRIENDLY PILGRIMAGE

I DISCUSSED our route with Lukyan, the gardener. When he had at last given up trying to understand my plan of driving far inland for several days with no definite purpose, but just "for an excursion," he laughed at me a little for a madman, and began to give advice.

"But that road," he said, "is dangerous. There used to be brigands there."

"And now?" I asked.

"I do not know. When the police had nearly captured them, their chief became a monk, and so was safe. But he made all the others swear to continue as brigands. He exhorts them sometimes now from his monastery. He is ninety-five—a great man. But go by Saloie. My parents live there. It is forty versts from here. They will be glad to see you. Tell them I am well, and

that I have another son—called Michael. They must come and see me one day, tell them, and my sister, too."

"But all your wife's relations are with you!"

"Yes," said Lukyan, "and so if my parents come, it will be very nice. They have not seen my house either."

Lukyan's house consists of one room adjoining the stables. But the smallness of his home did not impair the largeness of his hospitality.

We set out for our drive on a blazing August day. Our way wound between the Crimean mountains, leaving the Black Sea, blue or glistening, just visible through rocky gaps behind us. Sometimes we rattled along a road, sometimes we jolted up river-beds, lifted the light cart over boulders, and found ourselves faced with dry cascades.

For the most part we met with Tartars; we ate with them in little fly-infested kafenias, exchanged tobaccos, whether smuggled or legitimate, or shared our food by wayside fountains. Some we passed would come running back after us with gifts of grapes, and once women from an overhanging orchard showered down plums upon us.

But Lukyan's brigands we never found. However, we went to see his parents.

We turned aside from the dusty mountain road by a rutted way into the village of Saloie. At the river, which ran through the straggling Russian village, some yoked oxen were drinking composedly, taking no notice of us as we splashed through the shallow water. But a score of dogs rushed out at us, as we struggled up the farther bank, barking and yelping around our horse.

A small boy passed by and beat a number of them sturdily over their heads. We asked where the parents of Lukyan Afanaseivitch lived. The boy pointed to a little thatched house with an immense old green gateway opening into the yard beside it.

We hammered at the gate among the snarling dogs until a baba—an old peasant woman—came out. She bade us enter, scolded the dogs, called for a boy to put up our horse, and having ushered us into the parlour, departed in search of refreshment for us, before we had time to say who we were.

The room was small, scrupulously tidy, and covered with ornaments. The walls were entirely hidden with ikons—some thirty

of them—sacred pictures, cheap lithographs of the Tsar, Tsaritsa, and their children, calendars decorated with saints and lovers, and crude photographs of their own family taken at a fair. But by far the most imposing article, dominating over all in the room and insisting on all observance, was the bed.

It was a massive creation in itself, made still more imposing by layer on layer of bedding and mattresses and pillows reaching high up the wall and covered with black and red embroidered counterpanes. It was a monument of Russian peasant respectability rather than a suggestion of any repose.

I was marvelling at it when the baba returned, laden with thick potato pasties and wine and fruit. We sat down to eat, and my companion explained who we were and gave the messages. The old woman nearly embraced us in her effusive welcoming. A boy was sent to call in the husband, who was out on the hillside gathering fagots. A little girl went toddling down the village to round up all the relations she could find, and soon we were the centre of a crowd of rough peasants, who tried to cover their shyness by pressing us continually to eat.

The husband, a shock-headed old peasant, came last. His wife poured out all the news to him, referring every moment to us for confirmation of each detail, and whenever we said "Truly!" to her remarks he turned his hat round in his hands and said: "Thank God! But eat and drink some more."

"You have a very fine house," I said to him. He stared at me, puzzled by the unusual "you."

"Yes," he said finally, struggling into the plural, "we have. Tell Lukyan he must come to visit us with every one. There is much room."

"But only one bed," I said.

Again I puzzled him. "Yes," he said, "there is a bed, of course."

My companion nudged me. "No one sleeps in a bed," he whispered.

The baba, glad of any reference to that piece of furniture, had stripped off the covering. "See," she said, "one, two, three, four —fifteen mattresses. That is enough for every one, is it not?"

"They all sleep on the floor," said my companion. "My grandfather used to, too, when he was staying in the country."

It was long before we could drive away, and then we found our little cart piled high with melons and pasties. To refuse them would have been an insult.

"Oh, it is nothing," said the peasant, "but you must go by Staryi Krim from here. The other roads are dangerous—brigands. My cousin lives at Staryi Krim—Ignati Ivanovitch. Tell him Lukyan has a son. I invite him to visit me. I bow towards him and Avdotia Vasilievna, and also to Dmitri Nikiforovitch. You must stay with them. God be with you!"

We might, I am sure, have journeyed for weeks through the land, bearing the glad tidings of the birth of a son to Lukyan, and passing from village to village as honoured guests. Yet we did not go to Staryi Krim, but saw it only, lying white and sleepy and peaceful in a fold of the swelling steppes below us, as we climbed back into the mountains, following a little caravan up the wooded slopes.

Wearing only a Russian shirt and canvas trousers, even so I was painfully aware always of my European self. The caravan went slowly in the heat, axles screamed and shrieked, the bullocks plodded slowly on,

splashing out little ripples of dust in their ungainly tread, heedless alike of the shouting and of the sultry heat and of the inviting fountains. On they went imperturbably, dragging the noisy wagons.

Drivers lounged along, gossiping with each other, laughing or shouting out halts to the bullocks, but the bullocks shuffled on relentlessly, like Fate, and the men shrugged their shoulders and followed after.

"Devil take them, they never stop!" said one man, mopping his forehead. "Nu, stop there!" But he wasted his breath.

"Ah, I will show you," said a boy, and he ran after the cart, jumped at the heads of the bullocks, and threw all his weight on to them, pressing them to the ground. For a little while the beasts still trudged on, ploughing up the dust with their noses, then stopped.

We came up to the boy, who was sitting on their heads.

"That was fine, truly!" he said. "May I drive the bullocks myself now?"

His father laughed. "But their heads are free. How wouldst thou stop them if they were yoked high and close to the pole?"

"I will show," said the boy, standing up. "See, I would hit them," and he pummelled a broad forehead. The bullock thus attacked finished chewing the cud of some forgotten meal, looked placidly at his assailant, and slowly began to move forward again up the hill.

The boy stood aside in amazement, then as we laughed he buried his face against his father's thigh in shame and cried, for he was very little.

They were going, I learned, up to the convent—whither we also were bound—taking various produce. It was a Tartar's job really, but periodically, they said, the sisters became nervous of the Tartars and preferred to get everything from the lowland Russians. The sisters, they added, were very holy, but somewhat foolish creatures and believed in all manners of tales. Anyhow, they wished that these rumours would not always occur in the hot weather, when they had enough thirst in the villages, let alone after toiling up the mountain-side.

Descriptions of their thirst and of the amount that would be needful to allay it occupied us until at length we arrived. A working sister, coming out of the stables,

showed us where we could put up our horse, found a man to do it for us, then sent us across to the convent to ask for lodging for the night.

It was a beautiful place of retirement, that convent amid the mountain forests. They had cleared the trees for some little way around, and there had planted orchards, and built quiet terraces, and laid out pleasant walled-in gardens, wherein all flowers rioted, just as the grasses grew thick and high beneath the apple-trees. Their pleasaunce strayed at random beside a little stream. The cemetery alone was carefully tended. You came on the simple enclosure by a gate from the orchard. There were trees growing there too, but the grass was cut short around the wooden crosses. Beyond, a shed had been built over a shallow well, whose waters were holy, and where the sisters on occasions came to bathe themselves.

As we sat there looking down across the lowlands to the north, a nun came to us, bringing us a welcome from the holy mother. "It is peaceful here, truly," she said. "They are like a sea, those steppes, with all their waves of land, I think, and we are safe here on the shore trying to look across it all.

But come now, I will show you your room," and she led us into a big building with numberless cells for travellers, bare except for two beds and a table, wherein we were told to make ourselves at home.

She then asked us every imaginable question about ourselves and our relations, our wealth and our piety, and might have gone on for hours had not a tinkle of bells warned her of evensong in the chapel across the broad square.

Had our pilgrimage been one of privation instead of hospitality, it would have been worth while coming twice as far to hear that singing. Standing among fellow-travellers, peasants mostly, we found the heat and the incense almost stifling, so we waited till the priest came out from behind his ornate screen, where he had sat in awesome mystery, praying very terribly. He came out eventually, a strange little old man like a gnome on Danish Yule cards, clad in rich robes, wearing a hat like a rimless "topper," and swinging his censer violently before us, he blessed us. Then we went out, and in the cool night air we sat and listened to the plaintive chants, ringing out clear as tinkling bells, fresh as the wind that was blowing all

mists away from a moonlit land, virginal as the stars that shone out so crisply above us.

We supped that night on thick cabbage soup and black bread, which a working sister brought to our cell, and slept on boards for beds, yet slept as though we were *habitués*.

Next morning the little nun we had seen before came with ikons from the holy mother, and asked for subscriptions to the great church that had been half finished years before, but left thus for lack of funds. Several came to see us off, and were full of advice.

"No, don't go that way," said Sister Marya, who seemed to claim us as her discoveries. "Go by the main road."

"Is it so dangerous the other way?" I asked, smiling.

"Yes," she replied. "There are Tartars. They robbed some folk last week. But go by the main road, and in the second village ask for one Beboutoff—he is a rich man."

"A relation?" queried my companion.

"No," she replied. "I come from far away—from Kharkoff. But go to him. Tell

him he promised us some money for our church. We wait for it."

But we preferred to return by Staryi Krim, bearing ever the news of Lukyan's progeny.

VIII

ON FINDING A TARTAR

Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar.
Popular saying.

What a Tartar actually was I had no idea, except that it had been a name applied to me in childhood to express a limit in rascality, and that the effects of catching one were notoriously disastrous.

In the course of time I became friends with Ablakim, a big, black-bearded Tartar with a rim of skin visible round his mouth that gave him a fierce and at the same time a humorous expression.

Sometimes I used to ride up to Taraktash —the little mud-built town on the mountain-side—leave my horse in the courtyard and climb up to Ablakim's house that is perched against the face of the slope. Ablakim would greet me on his balcony, very courteously.

His wife, Aribbé, in gorgeous clothing, would make us coffee, while we, the lords and masters, sat on cushions on the floor in a lavishly ornamented room, sipping the delicious liquid or scrunching our teeth into juicy red water-melons. And when we had refreshed ourselves, I would listen to Ablakim's philosophy, while the noise and odours of the peaceful Eastern town came up to us through the unglazed windows.

Everybody tells me that Ablakim is a consummate scoundrel, and probably an occasional murderer, but he is a thorough gentleman, and we are the best of friends. Ordinarily he is a courteous, hospitable gentleman of no occupation. His generosity is alarming. He would lie blandly to give me his last crust, while he would never taint the flavour even of the last crust by disparaging it. It is understood that he is giving me of his best, and he is too excellent a host to make excuses for his hospitality. For three weeks in the year he toils in his little patch of vineyard with his wife, his daughter, and his son-in-law, who one day will inherit it, picking the juicy grapes for the vintage. For the rest of the year he smokes and drinks coffee in the little balconied taverns, gossips

squatting with his cronies, or sells "his friend's" merchandise to neighbouring Russians.

Despite the fact that Ablakim lives in one of the few remaining savage Tartar towns, he is a well-informed man. That he has been to Mecca is shown by the gold-embroidered scarf round his black fez, and his favourite topic of converse with me—a man from the unheard-of land of England—is Russia and the Russians.

"They are good hosts," says Ablakim, "but ill-bred." Ablakim means that their hospitality is, as it were, hurled at one, and is overwhelming. It is not like his own, tactful and courteous, though neither is lacking in lavishness. "They are like children," says my friend, "pestering one to share their sweets. They are always like children. I feel old talking to a Russian."

The more I think of it, the more I agree with Ablakim's words. To my mind he stands for the cultured savage, while the Russian, once Asiatic himself, has been born again, and is now in the simple, delightful stages of childhood.

"Look," said Ablakim, and he pointed to his bare, brown, fat little son standing in the

doorway, finger in his mouth, gazing in awe at my riding boots. "Come here, my pettish, simple, screaming, solemn, laughing, wondering little Slav," he said, speaking in a parable, but the child could not understand the strange language, for his father spoke with me in Russian.

I tried to call him in Tartar, but he gurgled at my pronunciation and scampered away.

"He is afraid of you, but he will come back to look," said the father. "Your Russians were afraid of you when you came," continued Ablakim, who knows all the gossip, "but they used to come again and again to look at you. Did you ever see us men Tartars shrink away from you, though you are very strange?"

The child came back in excitement and spoke to his father. "They are killing a cow," he translated. "Come!"

From curiosity I went, and in horror I returned. The sight of all those people enjoying the torturings of that poor beast revolted me. The cruelty of it seemed to delight them horribly.

For comparison my mind goes back to a scene in the Moscow snow. An old man slipped on the frozen surface under a pass-

ing sled. In a moment a crowd collected, and they laughed at the ridiculous distortion of the old creature.

"But, my God!" some one cried, "he's hurt—he's killed!" In a moment the little group around the body stood bareheaded, horror-struck, penitent, and full of sympathy.

Usually it was night before I returned from the little town on the mountain-side.

I was looking back on it one night, wondering at the mysterious Eastern atmosphere of the place, when I heard two voices near me. I could not hear what they said, but they were quarrelling. One was Russian—a scratched Russian—and the other was Tartar, Ablakim, whom I had not seen that day.

Ablakim was seated on his long cart filled with grapes; his womenfolk, silent, soft-eyed creatures, walked beside in their baggy red trousers and blue caftans. His cart had been jammed into the side of the road, a mere river-bed, by a Russian four-wheeled lineika, and his bullocks were waiting patiently until they could move on again.

The Russian at first laughed, then, when Ablakim refused to do as he commanded, he burst into a terrific storm of abuse. In a moment it was over. We managed to get

the carts free, and the Russian sang out his good-byes merrily as he jostled down the lane. But Ablakim was hissing like a snake; something the Russian had said in his wild burst had struck home.

"Ablakim," I said, "we say that if you scratch a Russian you find a Tartar, but I think if you scratch a Tartar you find a devil."

Ablakim fingered his dagger and smiled, and his white teeth gleamed strangely in the darkness.

I found him one morning squatting on my veranda and watching a shoal of dolphins that curved gracefully out of the cool blue Black Sea.

"Zdrast'ee, Barin," he exclaimed, as I appeared, and I realized from his tone that there was business toward.

"Scarves to-day?" I asked, when we had greeted each other.

Ablakim laughed for the anticipated pleasure he was to give me. He began slowly, lingeringly, to display scarf after scarf, shrugging his shoulders at each new one, as though it were scarcely worth his while to dazzle with such repetitions of beauty.

At the bottom of them all Ablakim went through the act of discovering a treasure. Having given me the merest glimpse of it, he put it hurriedly back. Yet I knew that he meant to sell it to me.

I pretended it had escaped me, so he soon brought it out again. Despite myself, I gasped with admiration.

At each end of the scarf and on either side, worked in myriad golden threads, were Eastern baskets, from which grew golden trees that rose up and spread out in all kinds of symmetrically opposed golden fruit, leaves, and flowers. The stuff of the scarf was poor, and in places had given way beneath the wealth of embroidery. Reverse or obverse, it was just the same, and patient eyes and cunning hands must have grown weary month after month in the fashioning of it.

"Who made the scarf?" I asked.

Ablakim told me it was the handiwork of a Tartar girl before her marriage. When girls become of age they set to work on some such embroidery to show their craft and their worth to a likely husband. It is their testimonial, their diploma; and the better it is the more money the parents will receive for such talented daughters.

"Then on the wedding-day," said Ablakim, "the girl gives the scarf, its ends sewn together, as in this one, to her husband, and he tears it open at the seam—here—and puts it on; it is part of the ceremony."

And then I saw that the ends of the scarf were lightly tacked together. To my mind it represented the tragedy of the worker. I pictured the young girl growing into perfect womanhood as the scarf progressed, golden thread by golden thread, each dip of the needle bringing her nearer to her heart's desire, until at last it was finished, the ends tacked together, and both were ready for the lord and master.

Yet years afterwards the ends still remained tacked together, and the scarf remained as it had been made, a symbol of its virgin creator.

"Oh yes," said Ablakim, "she grew thin and coughed and died. How much?"

"How much do you want?" I answered.

"Sixty roubles."

"Of course," I replied, "and I expect it is worth it. But I am a poor man and must earn my own living. I could not think of such a price. You understand?"

"But naturally," said Ablakim. "Yet you

must not think that these are my scarves. They are my cousin's; he is poor and must sell them. I bring them to you because we are friends, and I try to help him. How much could you give?"

"Ten," I answered, hoping to end the matter by my low offer, and we talked of other things.

As he was leaving, after drinking coffee, Ablakim put on a crafty look and said: "Give me fifty, and I will manage my poor cousin." But the sum was beyond me, and he went his way.

The next morning I again found Ablakim on my veranda, and we talked of many things before he came to the point. Conversation veered round to relations, and he began telling me of his cousin. "He had bad luck last year in the vineyards. The frost nipped his grapes because we Mohammedans may not store our wine—and I think he will sell that scarf for forty roubles."

"It is well worth it," I answered. "But I am a poor man, and must earn my own living. I could not think of such a price. You understand?"

Again Ablakim understood and departed. Two days later I met him in a little smoky

coffee-house in the mountains. He shared my red water-melon, and we talked of the heat and the approaching vintage. "That Abdul," he said, "my cousin, should have a great vintage, but he has no money to hire pickers, and yesterday his wife fell ill. I think he will take thirty roubles for that scarf."

"It is well worth it," I replied. "But I am a poor man, and must earn my own living. I could not think of such a price. You understand?"

Ablakim shrugged his shoulders and scrunched his teeth in the melon. We were sitting on the little veranda, looking down the valley, that was already growing mysterious in purple mists. An old Tartar, with his womenfolk squatting in a jolting, long cart, passed by. He greeted Ablakim in Tartar, and the latter spoke with him, and pretended to be bowed in grief.

"What did he say," I asked, for Ablakim and I have only Russian in common.

"My cousin—that fool Abdul," he said—"has fallen sick, he says. He needs workers in the vineyards to take his place. He would take twenty roubles, I think."

"It is well worth it," I replied. "But

I am a poor man, and must earn my own living. I could not think of such a price. You understand?"

As I rode down the winding road I found a dejected figure huddled by the path from the village. "Barin," he called, "a boy has come to tell of my cousin—that Abdul—who starves. He will take your ten roubles."

That evening I heard that Ablakim got very drunk on spirits permitted by his religion.

IX

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Given any excuse, all the relations, connections, and friends of the family came down in their swarms to spend the day with us.

Sundays and birthdays were sufficient excuse, fête-days also, of which there are some fifty in the Russian year; and so I soon grew accustomed to finding all the relations, connections, and friends of the family seated on the veranda on my return from bathing.

"You're late," said Volodia to me one morning. Volodia—or Volodienka, as his mother usually called him—was a small cousin, who often came bathing with me.

"Of course I am," I replied. "That boot-maker promised me my shoes to-day, and when I went to fetch them he had shut up shop."

"All that walk for nothing!" laughed

Volodia. "Ooh! and it's hot too!" He squirmed about in the sand.

"I found him in the kafenia, half-drunk already," I went on. "But he didn't care; seemed to think it was natural—his name-day or something. Anyhow, the shoes weren't done."

"It's my name-day too," said Volodia.

"Who's Saint Volodienka?" I asked.

He looked at me gravely for a moment, then burst out laughing. "Volodienka! That's what our nurse calls him; we don't. Volodienka! Vladimir is his name, and it's my name too, properly. Vladimir Aleksandrovitch. You wouldn't call Saint Alexander Saint Sacha, would you?"

But those diminutive names were too much for me, and I said so.

"Hurry up," said Volodia, "and get undressed. I want to bathe."

"It's too late now," I answered, looking regretfully at the sea—"nearly dinner-time."

"Not for hours yet," said Volodia. "It's my name-day and Tania Vasilievna's birthday. Everybody's coming. Doonia won't have dinner ready for a long time. Come along!"

I had not the faintest idea as to who Tania Vasilievna might be, but I blessed her for having come into the world at such an opportune date and plunged quickly into the water.

The beach, as usual, was dotted all along with bathers, clothed either slightly or not at all, some of whom swam about or splashed in the surf, while the majority lay stretched on the sands and so lazed the hours away.

To us, lying drowsy in the golden brilliance, came the voice of Arina, as she strolled through the gardens, like the cry of muezzin calling the faithful to prayers.

"Cooshets, gospoda. To eat, messieurs, mesdames!"

We went, and found that indeed "every one" had come.

The long table, stretching half the length of the veranda, was filled to overflowing with a profusion of aunts, uncles, and cousins, and many I had never seen before. I had hardly gone the rounds of greeting when the sound of wheels was heard, and another party drove down to the house on a lineika—a four-wheeled vehicle, with a broad plank on which people sit facing outwards, like a long

and very low Irish car without any back support. We all left our seats to welcome the new-comers.

"Thank God, you've come!" said the hostess.

The arrivals, an aunt and an uncle, were a plump, friendly couple who lived in a rough little cottage a mile or two inland, surrounded by miles of vineyards, and were for all the world like a pair of worthy farm-folk, living frugally in that same spot where they had toiled throughout their lives. I heard afterwards that he was a prosperous Moscow lawyer, who came there every summer for the "season"; but by that time nothing was surprising me. With them came a lot of children, adopted children, for they had none of their own and so their poor relations benefited.

The children were sent off to another table and the meal began.

To me conversation was not easy, but I managed to understand the general drift. For the most part it would have been amazing scandal in this country, but scandal depends upon the attitude of the speaker, and these Russians seemed strangely tolerant. At one story, that would have brought blushes to

most English cheeks, I turned to my neighbour for information in French.

"And who is this young villain they're talking about?" I asked.

"It's my cousin—Leonid Arkadievitch," she replied. "It is a pity he is not here."

I am afraid I stared a little incredulously. "He is on good terms, then, with everybody still?" I asked.

"Oh yes. Every young man has his gay time—it is natural. Besides, those gipsy bands are most *troublants*. It is fashionable for young men in Moscow or Petersburg to go out to the restaurants after a gay night and finish there. The gipsies come and play wonderful music right in one's ears, the girls dance, and all one wants to do is to give them everything—money, jewels, everything—and to go for ever away with them. The music and the dancing are so terribly passionate, but the gipsy girls are most strict. Sometimes, however, they marry Russians. I know many people who have married gipsies and live most quietly. That young villain, as you call him, will settle down like every one else."

"But I thought he had lost his fortune."

"Yes; but he has so many relations.

And, of course, some one will look after Leonid."

"All very nice," I replied; "but it doesn't make for efficiency."

The girl laughed. "And what does that matter?" she asked.

Having finished the meal at last, with many toasts, we were sitting lazily about on the veranda when a droshky drove up. Out of it came a young and sickly-looking fellow, dressed carefully and somewhat modishly in comparison with our homely costumes.

"Why, it's Lionia!" gasped the plump lady who had arrived late in the lineika, and had been most graphic in the narration of his misdoings.

"I thought he would come," said my companion. "It's an excellent opportunity."

It was, and Leonid made the most of it. True, there were some who received him less warmly than did the others, but, on the whole, he was a welcome prodigal, and the lady of the lineika, I believe, added him to her number of adopted children.

When it grew dark we had fireworks, as usual, and went in to supper. And then I realized that half our guests intended to stay the night.

"And where will every one sleep?" I asked the prodigal.

"There is always the salon," he said.

Again I showed surprise. He laughed.

"But that is nothing; you should have come here long ago. You see that cottage there"—he pointed to a distant hovel—"why, the painter Aivazovski used to come and stay there with a large party for months. But this—ah! this is civilization; and anyhow—well, it's all a family affair."

X

THE STRANGER FROM SIBERIA

It was rare indeed, during my life in the Crimea, that any of us talked politics, for politics meant either too much or too little to each of us. A Russian, as far as I know, cannot grow hot over a mere theory and then acquiesce placidly when it comes to practice, as we do. He is a doer of politics, not a talker—a doer of politics or of nothing, and of the two he generally does nothing.

"But what does it all matter?" said the plump Arina, resting between her bathe and the laying of the next meal on the veranda. "I am happy; I can do nothing but what I must. I think it is all stupidity to fight against the great—like the baby Tasinka, who tries to beat his Niania. Foolishness!"

"I dislike that Niania," I said, "and I agree with Tasinka."

"She drinks too much, certainly," agreed

Arina; "but she is quite religious, and Tasinka is a baby. Foolish, truly!"

"If he gets into the habit of trying to beat his nurse, when he grows up he will succeed," said Arina's master; "and if we go on trying to beat our rulers, when we get stronger we too will succeed. Truly!"

"Perhaps," said Arina, dismayed at the prospect of any upset in her placid life, then adding more cheerfully, "if God allows."

"He will allow," said her master. But Arina sniffed; her master went to church far less than she and need not be believed in religious matters.

"Anyhow, one must eat now," she said, and went off for the food.

"And there you see the moujik," said my friend. "For him there is always the next meal or the next drink, and until he gets it he will do nothing, and when he gets it he is too drunk or too sleepy. And yet——"

Then the voice of his orthodox-minded wife broke in behind us. "Sacha, are you talking politics? Terrible, terrible! You would never imagine," she said to me, "that my husband, who is at heart so good, so religious, and so mild, could really be a Liberal. Yet he is. If it was not for me

he would scarcely have an estate left. As I say, if God wanted a change He would change everything Himself. But now, what would happen to the Tsar—and us too—if the moujiks became masters? But you never think of these things, you men!" she ended, including me in her scorn.

It was generally with such an impersonation of the great bureaucracy that our little rebellions were quashed or ever they began.

But one day a tall, spare figure came striding across the sands from the landing-jetty—a woman from the north, with high cheek-bones and eyes dull in repose, but inspired in flashes of excitement. Her hair was shock, and in her hand she swung a bundle. Roughly clad, and striding like a man, she set us all gazing at her, but none laughing. Then she caught sight of my host, and stretched her arms wide and came running towards him, calling, "Sacha!"

I do not think they ever explained, or troubled to explain, even to themselves, her exact relationship. She was a cousin, distant probably, who had been a revolutionary in her youth, and so had been sent to Siberia

for ten years. Now she was free, and wanted help to go to England. The children at first were terrified. A revolutionary, to their minds, was a kind of Baba-yagá, a witch, a malignant creature, who spent her life trying to destroy the good, the clean, and the beautiful—the princes of this earth, as of the fairy-tale, for as such indeed did the children imagine their rulers. But their mother told them that this Baba-yagá had been punished and was now good, and the children, sympathizing with one whose goodness had been so enforced, made shy overtures, then vied with each other in petting her and in being petted.

At first the stranger lay on the sands or climbed to any hilltop that took her fancy, glorying in her freedom to lie supine or scale the highest point with none to spy down on her.

She told us one day, to rejoice in the contrast, tales of the year-long tramp to Siberia, of the chains that clanked at every step, of her first year in the darkness; and she hit herself and spread out her arms to all the great dazzle of sunshine now about her. She told us of the infinite brutality of the life, of the infinite humanity of those

who lived the life, and of the interests that gradually obsessed them, how she took to painting, and made little sums of money by portraits for prisoners to send home. She told it all so simply and with no comments, nor outbursts either against those who sent her to that hell amid the plains. It seemed as though her exile had succeeded in creating that resignation in her without which she had been un-Russian enough to rebel, and for the lack of which she had been punished. "But now she is good and tired," said Mishook, the little boy who had also been known to rebel.

We spoke of ideals later, and then of Tolstoy; and I, proud of my possession, fetched a photograph of the old man and his granddaughter, which the little girl had sent me. At the bottom there is his prayer, which the stranger read:—

I know, O God, that Thou wilt that every man should love his fellow, and I wish to love every man, and be angry with no man, nor quarrel with any, but to think of others rather than myself, to give away that which is dear to me. I wish to be good. I wish and I forget, and I am angry and I quarrel, and I forget others and remember myself.

Help me remember, O God, that which Thou wilt.

Help me to be kind to all, not only to the dear and charming, but to every man on earth, whosoever he may be.

There was a circle round her while she read it. All of us, grown-ups, children, and servants, listened reverently to the gospel of one who tried to give his life for others, read to us by another such an one. When she ended there was a pause, broken by Arina, whom I once found bowing before that photograph as before an ikon. "And I wish," she said—"I wish to be good to every one too."

But the stranger thrilled at her words. There was rebellion, not resignation, in her poise now. Lank and untidy, she had a dignity; her very mop of hair seemed to bristle defiance, and her eyes . . .

"What? Good to every one?" she asked.

Arina nodded.

"What? Good to the Government who crush us and keep us miserable and drunken and ignorant? Oh, you know the misery!" —living in the easy Crimea we knew little from experience, yet we knew enough. "Good to those devils? Never, never, never, not while I live!"

"Don't talk like that—stop!" implored her

hostess. "Remember, if you talk like that you return. How could you bear that, eh?"

"I could bear it—why, certainly," she replied calmly.

"What, that awful life?"

"Why, listen, my friends. How can it be awful? One cannot carry light unless one knows of the darkness, and darkness is good somehow, when one is struggling to bring light for others. I would go back gladly rather than agree. Agreement only helps the Government. Perhaps, after England, I shall go back. Who knows?"

XI

THE WITCH

"I do not think," said Trophim, "that she is altogether a witch, but she is very awful. She is a hundred and fifty years old, and she has sixty cats. Once she quarrelled with her brother—long ago—and he killed her pet cat, and she did something very terrible to him. I forget what she did; I think she killed him. He died."

Trophim is thoroughly untrustworthy in his narratives; but, then, nobody except himself believes them. Whenever I had been to the village Trophim would hover round my room in the hope of my having brought back some chocolate. The children often used to leave bogus packets about the gardens and take delight in watching the big-bearded Russian workmen snatch up the empty temptations. The simple creatures never learned wisdom or caution against the fraud,

until at last even the children took pity on them, and their great faith was rewarded by occasional sweets. But in particular Trophim "adored chocolate," as he would say, and, in expectation of any I might have, he would talk with me for hours.

Olga, his wife, with a great pretence of bustle, came out from her washhouse to set him to work.

"Chop thy wood," she told him. "Hurry!"

Trophim laughed lazily at her, and gave her a chocolate that he had unrolled for himself.

"And what is he telling you?" Olga asked me. "Much silliness?"

"He is telling me what the cat-woman did to her brother," I said.

"What did she do?" asked Olga.

"Something very terrible!" said Trophim darkly.

"And what was that?" asked Olga. "She did nothing at all."

"What?" cried her husband. "What dost thou say? I tell thee she murdered him; she killed him with a curse, and—with many curses—and with—poison, and with—a knife."

"How?"

"With magic. She is a witch; she knows a word."

When Olga laughs all the house rings with her derision. Trophim scowled angrily at her pealing merriment.

"I tell thee," he said, "I know. I know it most surely."

His wife looked at him for a moment seriously. "How to you there is no shame, Trophim Afanasievitch!" Then she broke again into peals of laughter.

But to Trophim there was no shame. He let his wife laugh. "She was a poor woman," he said, and began accumulating a mass of vivid calumny against the witch. His imagination—barren as a general rule—became astonishingly fertile on the topic of her ghastly magic. In prosperous days Trophim had kept a café in a Crimean port, and there had heard many tales of strange adventures. To the witch he now attributed all the "devil-stories" he could remember.

We were just in the throes of a terrible tale, in which the distant Caucasus was happily mixed, when the son of the house entered the yard almost hysterical at the loss of one of his pigeons. He had just found the mangled body, and he was not bearing up

against the calamity with any approach to Russian fatalism. We went to look at the bird, and decided its death was the work of a cat.

Immediately the decree went forth against cats; any feline found in the grounds was to be shot, and all the neighbourhood was to know our decision.

"And who will tell the cat-woman?" asked Trophim.

The boy said he would tell her, and we went together.

When Trophim asserted that she was a hundred and fifty years old, it was merely because that number seemed good to him to express her advanced age. No one really knew how old she was. To me she seemed the oldest living creature I had ever seen, bent and shrivelled till she had lost all appearance of humanity, and yet possessed of a most incongruous virility. I am inclined to agree with Trophim's ready estimate as to the number of her cats. We found her in a little bare garden among an immense assortment of those beasts. There were cats tied to benches, cats tied to leafless shrubs, cats on the window-sill of the one-roomed hovel, cats in the blaze of sun-

shine, cats in the meagre shade, and cats following the old hag as she hobbled about. She called to them, and they came to her. She had names for each of that ill-favoured crowd, and scolded or caressed them as they should deserve.

We gave our message, and she scolded us most horribly. We could hear her rasping voice long after we had left her.

During the hot weather I used to sleep in the garden, and that night I took an air-gun with me. Chirkase's barking woke me up, and in the moonlight I saw a cat stealing close by me towards the pigeon-house. She was creeping stealthily, ready to spring away should Chirkase discover her. When she was quite near me I shot her.

It was some time during the next morning that I heard angry screams from the garden. Trophim, standing near a half-filled pit, looked like a child caught in the act of some disgraceful misdemeanour, and was thoroughly terrified. Beyond the pit, rising from the sear shrubbery, stood the cat-woman —transformed. She was a hag still, but a hag mighty and potent with an awful vitality. She was cursing Trophim, and her words came virulent and clear-cut.

"Talk to her," whimpered Trophim; "tell her I have done nothing. She curses me most awfully."

I told her that I had killed her cat—that Trophim was innocent, and I expected abuse to be showered on me. But she said nothing.

Instead, she seemed to shrink into a pitiful old woman, then she turned to the grave.

"Ah, my little Tasia," she began, "my little Tasousinchik!" But I waited to hear no more.

"Bah! what did I tell you?" said Trophim, following me, delighted at the *volte face*, and chuckling. "I said she was no witch. I don't believe she ever killed her brother at all. He just died."

But I was feeling rather ashamed of myself, and yet—her cats never came near our garden again.

XII

THE ART OF LETTER-WRITING

"Do you wish for any more tea?" said Olga, "or may I take away the samovar?"

I said that I should like some, and she filled my glass.

"You write very many letters," she remarked. "To your home?" I nodded. "You have sisters and brothers and parents?" I informed her on the subject. "And you have been here four months in the house, and I did not know," she said, implying that the fault lay with me.

"And what do you tell them?" she asked. "There is nothing to say. We eat and we talk and we sleep. That is all. But you write a great deal. I wish I could write. I have a mother and four brothers and three sisters far away in the north. My home is very beautiful. The house is built of wood, and

we used to wear red dresses and white shirts with red embroidery. Very lovely. Perhaps they still dress like that. I do not know. I wish I could write a letter! I do write, but very badly."

"Shall I write the letter if you tell me what to say?"

Olga smiled readily, and produced some paper which she had been hiding from time to time. I believe she thought I had fallen unwittingly into her plot. She had already begun with an address to her mother that I could not read. I began again below.

"Dear Little Mother,—I bow towards thee. Afanási Stepanovitch bows towards thee. Márya Filimonovna bows towards thee. I am well. An Englishman writes this letter. He lives here. Vera Aleksándrovna [the lady of the house] is well. Dmitri Ivánovitch is dead. I bow towards Yevgénia Petrovna. I bow towards Arina Petrovna. I bow towards Marya Petrovna——"

"Good gracious, Olga!" I said. "Are you going to bow towards everybody you know?"

"Of course," said Olga.

"Are there many more?"

"A great many more. It will be a long letter, like those you write."

It was. Her three sisters and four brothers had married, and each had several children. Olga bowed towards each by name, or rather by names. Then there came the neighbours and their families. After these came village friends, and yet more relations who might be there on a visit. Olga bowed conscientiously to each. At least, she said she did.

"And now?" I asked, feeling that all concerned had earned some news at last.

"I will write my name," said Olga. "It is a very good letter. They will be pleased, there in my home."

And that was all.

In that desolate part of the Crimea where I lived the only means of communication between us and the outside world was a steamer that stopped in calm weather in the bay as it coasted along from Odessa to Batoum. The agent for the steamship line was a fat, weary man with a walrus moustache. He always gave me the impression that he went to sleep while I stumbled through my Russian sentences. He would open his eyes at the end to answer my ques-

tion, and close them again for my next inquiry.

But one day he surprised me by giving me his undivided attention. I wondered at his attitude, and still more at his request to come with him into the dwelling-room. It was an untidy chamber, whitewashed, the usual ikon in the corner, two pallet beds along the wall, and its atmosphere, already stiflingly hot, with the assembled family, and the stove enclosed in the wall, made still less endurable by the strong smell of cabbage soup and tea.

I shook hands with every one, and wondered why I was in request. The agent's wife, a kindly, untidy woman, dressed in an alpaca dressing-gown, offered me tea and sweets, and begged me to sit down. For a time we talked on those general topics which my knowledge of Russian could accomplish. Then there fell an awkward silence, and I knew that the reason for my being asked was about to be disclosed.

Tania, the agent's dark, pretty daughter, seemed especially nervous. They had evidently, and very wisely, given her the task of broaching the subject. I noticed her toying with a letter, and I guessed what she was trying to say.

"Olga Petrovna has made me her letter-writer now," I said. "We are very proud of that letter, Olga and I."

All the family nodded at Tania to show her the opening Fate had given her. Tania frowned at them, then turned to me.

"My father's brother went to America some years ago. Russia was unhealthy for him, as Pushkin says."

We all laughed merrily at the joke. The agent nodded approvingly at his daughter. She continued, a little flustered: "And—and—oh, I forget! Anyhow," she started again, before she could be prompted, "here is a letter from him, but we cannot understand what he says, and——"

"Shall I try and read it?" I asked.

She gave me the letter, and I read it through quickly to myself. "It is not from your brother," I said to the agent. "Your nephew has written it."

"Ivan Sergeivitch?" he asked.

I looked at the signature a second time. "Er—yes—yes," I said dubiously.

"I remember him as a baby," said the agent's wife. "He has blue eyes."

"Does he bow to me?" asked Tania.

"You must remember," I said, "that he

has grown up in America and forgotten Russian customs."

"Yes, yes," they insisted, "but what does he say?"

I translated the letter into Russian as well as I could, and I hated the business.

"DEAR UNCLE" (it ran),—"Poppa is real ill, and is mighty sore he can't scribble a note to you right away. But he cannot. You might as well put a broncho to sort out crockery. Pop's all nerves. I am still at the technical school, and am doing well. Hope you are all keeping fit. Love to all.

"Your loving nephew,

"JACK S. JOHNSON."

I knew that I should never be able to explain that "Love to all" to the Ivanoffs. I never did.

XIII

THE REFUGEES

I FOUND him sitting on the top of a crag among the ruins of an old Genoese castle. Sheer below him the Black Sea lapped in a lazy motion at the cliffs, while out to sea a little flotilla of fishing-boats seemed to be making for the jetty at the base of the rock.

"Good-day," I said, sitting down beside him. "What are those boats, do you know?"

The professor sighed. "More refugees from the world, I suppose."

"Refugees?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, "we're all refugees here. All men fly to dead cities for refuge. I don't know why, but we do."

"And is this Soudak a dead city?" I asked, looking down on to the little group of mud-built cottages lying at the mouth of the valley which runs up through the eastern Crimean Mountains.

"Soudak!" he cried. "Why, Soudak was once one of the great cities of the East. A few cottages now, but once there were palaces there below us, and all the trade of the Black Sea passed through Soudak. The King of Constantinople was a suitor for the hand of a Princess of Soudak, and she refused him. So he gave the Genoese help in conquering this place, and they built this castle here. Over there is a Greek temple. But now—refugees only come here. Fuit Soudak."

"And who are the refugees?"

"All of us. Some are Russians, tired of the great cities, persecuted perhaps in our homes. And that German colony there, why did they leave their country, which now they have forgotten? And those Tartars in their little towns on the mountain-side are but relics of their great empire that held Russia for centuries—now they are driven to the mountains and are disappearing here. The Greek who mends my boots so badly will never say why he left Athens to come here. No, we are all refugees—and you, too, probably," he said suddenly, turning to me and pulling at his beard.

We sat for some time in silence, looking at the great bleak mountains as they changed

colour, and glowed with the warmer tints of approaching evening. It was autumn, and it began to grow chilly. The little boats were soon near the shore, and we could see that they were blue, and had crescents and circles painted on boards that were fixed up all around the sides. At a distance they looked like the shields of Vikings slung over the bulwarks.

"Turks," said my friend the professor. "Let us go down and meet them. Perhaps they come from the war."

Although we were scarcely two days' voyage from Constantinople, our news of the war was poor. The Russian papers that escaped being suppressed by the police made an almost weekly feature of the taking of Adrianople and Constantinople. St. Sophia's was sacked and burnt with regularity, and great sea battles took place in the Dardanelles with terrible Turkish slaughter. News of the battle of Lule Burgas had just reached us, and we were waiting for the *Novoye Vremya* to confirm the fact shorn of the local exaggerations.

So we scrambled down the steep path to hear what news these should bring.

The professor, however, scrambled slowly,

and by the time we had got down the refugees had arrived, and were walking towards some little cabins where some twenty fellow-countrymen lived by the sea-shore.

We stood aside while they passed, the new-comers haggard and miserable, their hosts anxious and plying them with questions.

They sat down in a circle before the huts and prepared food, the new-comers being assailed with inquiries, to which they made no answer. Then one of them seemed to say, "I will tell you all," for every one grew silent and waited for him to begin.

I could not understand a word, and yet I could not tear myself away from that recital of tragedy.

He drew lines with his hands in the dust before him as he squatted on the ground. Then he brought his arm up slowly, relentlessly, wiping the lines away, obliterating them. He seemed to show himself there on the field, helpless, uncomprehending, without ammunition, and finally just swept away. Then I saw him hungry, begging for bread and starving because none could be given him. He stopped, and there came a low murmur of assent from those who had come with him. And then I seemed to see him

resigned to hopelessness, and finally taking the one chance of safety in a little boat on the open sea.

Another took up the tale: he was a proud, defiant-looking man. I had noticed him walking along; he had an air of majesty almost, as he swaggered by in his rags and with pinched, unshaven cheeks. He told of overwhelming misery, and spoke of what he had seen more than of his own sufferings, for he seemed to change his voice and his gestures and strength. Then he finished, and they all bowed their heads and said, "It is Allah's will."

Then it was that the professor and I glanced at each other, and slunk away. "It is not good to see a brave man in tears," said he.

When we turned our heads again the sun had dropped behind the mountains, and there by the sea-shore, with the great cliffs high behind them, stood thin, gaunt figures dotted here and there on the sands. They were looking out over the silent reaches of the sea, calm and mysterious in the evening light, and they were bowing themselves up and down towards Mecca.

"Small specks before the infinite," said my

friend. "If there is a God, surely He will hear those—oh, surely He must!"

Two days later, in a sudden squall, the eleven men who had escaped from Lule Burgas were drowned in their little blue boat just outside the bay.

"It was Allah's will that they should die," said Abdul, who speaks Russian. "Perhaps if they had had faith at Lule Burgas all would have been well. Allah alone knows."

XIV

THE LADY OF THE CABBAGES

The noise broke on us with a crash, echoed down the ravine, and sounded terribly menacing.

"Thunder," said Tania.

"Guns," replied Mishook, who delights in such implements.

"Nonsense!" said Madame, "it's a cart." And she dragged her children into the ditch.

A spur of the mountain hid what was coming from our sight, but on the farther reaches we could see a trail of dust zigzagging down from the pass like a soft white snake against the dark cliff. For a time the noise grew faint, then suddenly, amid a new blast of thunder, there came two horses pulling what seemed against the evening light to be a huge mass of destruction—a Juggernaut gone mad.

High almost as a motor-bus and very solid, it swayed dangerously over the ravine, as it rounded the corner, then plunged on towards us. I stood fascinated, waiting astrain for the crashing terror to be past; but one of the children called out, "See, it's Masha!" and jumped up on to the road to welcome the vehicle, followed by the others, who stood before me on the bank as the mass clattered by in the rolling dust. As it passed, something on its very top—a nob that grew out of the general mass—seemed to move, and waved a stick, and, though I could scarcely believe my ears, shouted, "Hail, good people!" and even said the words most cheerily. In another moment we were standing in a cloud of dust, the cart had vanished, and tumult had ceased.

"And that reminds me," said Madame, "to get some cabbages. Come along, we must go back now."

The children were off at once, dragging us with them down a precipitous by-path. It is no time to ask for explanations when one is trying to make a pair of pavement-bred legs jump with the agility a goat might envy. So I forgot the phantom

car and its mysterious connection with "Masha" and cabbages, and leaped as I was bid.

It was a steep descent, but it saved us miles of road. The day was ending, for it was early October, and the little white cluster of houses below us was already losing that ruddy cheeriness with which all the Crimea seems to glow towards evening. The mountains around, bleak but radiant in the mellow light, were friendly protectors to that little village in its rich valley, and the whole scene and the jaunty tinkle of the church bells seemed altogether too peaceful to endure the possibility of that helter-skelter Juggernaut, whose trail still wreathed about the mountain.

I had often noticed that all things succumbed sooner or later to the influence of that valley, yet, when we rejoined the road and I heard a vehicle rumbling placidly along behind us, I made no effort to recognize it, until again I heard, "Hail, good people!" and saw the nob on the top of the mass wave its stick to us and jerk brawnily at the reins to stop the horses. And then I realized that what on the mountain-side had seemed a hurtling avalanche on wheels was merely

a cart piled high with cabbages, on which, with her skirts spread wide around her, was enthroned a rubicund old peasant woman.

"I travelled quickly back there?" she shouted, as the horses slowed down to a walk.

"Terribly," we answered.

The old woman laughed at our fears, shaking all over. "Well, walk faster and come to the market, and I'll sell you some cabbages, lovely ones, and some of that sour cream. Good? But hurry, hurry, lazy folk." So saying, she beamed down on us and jerked her horses into a trot again.

The market-square was just a bleak clearing, flanked on two sides by the church and a string of houses, on the other by sand-dunes and a road. It was Saturday evening, and most of the marketers were as yet pleasantly drunk; but it was all very simple, only homely necessities being sold, as meat, vegetables, fruit, painted wooden bowls and spoons, and thick woollens, and untanned skins for winter coats. Nor was there much noise, save of the eternal bargaining and plaints of beggars. Two men stood wrangling over some meat.

"To thee I will give it for ninety kopecks. It cost a rouble."

"How thou hast no shame, Vaska!" implying great rascality by that termination "-ka." "It was from thy own cow. I will give forty kopecks."

"Forty kopecks. Nu. What dost thou think! Ha! so poor then or hast thou become a Jew? Eighty-five kopecks, Jew!"

"What, I a Jew! Very well, I will give thee forty-five to show thee that it is thou who art Yidd, altogether Yidd," and he spat to show his disgust.

Then arose a storm of invective against all the Semitic race, of which each represented the other as being a member, and gradually the prices grew nearer to one another until that asked was sixty kopecs and the one offered was fifty-five, and there they stayed.

A beggar, filthy and leering in an ingratiating way, as he slunk through the little groups, came up to them. In all that crowd he was the only man apart. No one touched him, but started and drew back when they turned and saw him near them. Of a truth every country has the Jew it deserves, but in Russia it is the bureaucrat who persecutes,

and the retaliation falls upon the peasant. The Jew in Russia can be a very unpleasant creature, and I stood back from the wrangle over five kopecks to let this beggar pass. But even he could not stop the argument, nor did he lose his smile when he heard the name of his race used as the extreme insult.

"For God's sake, good sirs," he whined, "give me something. I am hungry."

The bargainers at once threw him some kopecks, then plunged again into their argument, and when eventually we left the market they were still wrangling over half the sum they had thrown to the abject Semite.

We found our lady of the cabbages still seated aloft like a figure on a circus-car.

"Lazy ones, shame! Here am I waiting for you to help me down all this time. Come along!"

Used as I was to the Russians, I did expect Madame to disobey this order; but no, the *deus ex machina* insisted, and rising up from her cabbages, began to clamber down, threateningly happily to fall on us if we did not support her more strongly. Once on the ground, she insisted on an introduction to me, and did me the honour of wiping her hand on her dress, supposing the latter to

be the cleaner, before she shook mine. "Well, thou art a good fellow, I think," she said at last; "thou shalt carry the cream."

I forget why the cream was such a feature at that time, but certainly all the marketers came to watch the old woman taking handfuls of the food from her bowl to put into one that our carriage, come to meet us, had brought on chance. The dust and cabbages of its journey had already robbed it of much of its appetizing appearance, nor did the good wife's handling of it make me relish the dish; but the crowd was not so dainty, and counted each handful, as children count cakes in a shop window.

Buying cabbages was a dull business after the cream, and interest in us had subsided when, laden, we turned to say good-bye. The children, racing to the carriage with a vegetable under each arm, shouted their farewells as they ran. I was following, when I saw the filthy old woman brace herself with a mighty effort, then throw her arms round Madame's neck. Horrified, I moved forward to protest.

Then I, too, was embraced.

But I dropped that bowl of cream.

XV

GILDING THE APPLE AND THE ONION

Far below me, at the end of the deep valley, the Black Sea shone indubitably blue and inviting, in contrast with the bleak mountains that uprose on either side, dazzling in the sunlight.

"Thalassa, Thalassa," I whispered to my horse. It must have seemed good to those old Grecian wanderers, that same blue twinkling sea.

But the sun beat down relentlessly, and as I trotted along the winding mountain road, a little fountain that gurgled out in the shade of a rare clump of trees tempted me from my journey. There I found also a little stone table, at which, having tied up my horse, I sat down to eat my lunch.

A long bullock-wagon, piled high with grapes, came labouring and creaking up the road. On it sat a swarthy black-bearded

Tartar, while beside it walked his women-folk, silent, soft-eyed creatures in brilliant caftans and crimson baggy trousers.

They came to the fountain, and while the man slipped down from his seat to unyoke and water his oxen, the women took bunches of grapes and sat down at a distance from me to eat them.

"Seelaam a laykume," I called out in the universal greeting of those parts. The man looked up from the heads of his beasts and smiled, showing his white teeth. "A laykume seelaam," he answered. Then, pinning them back under the yoke, he left his oxen, and came to me bearing a handful of grapes.

We shook hands in Tartar fashion, thumbs upwards, while I explained that I could speak nothing but indifferent Russian, and invited him to share my meal.

"But you are Russian?" he asked.

"No," I replied.

"From where do you come?"

"From England."

He looked at me in bewilderment, stopping for a moment from gnawing a chicken-bone.

I drew a diagram with my crop in the dust. "Here is the Crimea," I said, "where

we are. Here is Constantinople, here Petersburg, and here beyond——"

"No," said Kara Beber with much finality, "there is nothing beyond."

Remembering that this earth is round, I tried to place England far to the east—and failed. Bokhara and a vague China bounded his Orient world. In short, I could never explain the land of my origin, and whether or not I was supposed to be akin to a divinity, at any rate through all my subsequent acquaintance with Kara Beber and his fellow-Tartars I was treated with undoubted awe. And so it fell about that I saw a Tartar wedding.

* * * * *

During the autumn months Kara Beber and I paid frequent visits to each other; he would come down to my little Russian datcha among the dunes by the seashore, and I would climb up to his Tartar town perched on the mountain-side, with flat-roofed mud-houses ranged in uneven terraces one above the other.

I called in to see him one cold evening of November, when the sun had set and left the mountains purple against the last blaze of

day, and scarcely a cloud drifted across the crisp blue heavens. The Tartar town, with its many twinkling points of oil lights gleaming through the dusk till they seemed an army of glowworms, invited me to turn aside and call on Kara Beber. I left my horse in a yard to be looked after, and beat my way to my host's door through a pack of yelping, half-starved pariahs.

Kara Beber welcomed me and bade me enter, while his wife, Gulsiwun, went to prepare coffee. Whether because he is headman of the village and affects gentility, or because of a difficulty in fitting the house against the mountain-side, his guest-room is different from others I have seen. The floor rises on tiers, the far wall is honeycombed with magnificently emblazoned lockers, and on the top tier, with our backs to the bedizened wall, we, the lords and masters, reclined, while the ever-gorgeous womenfolk bore us coffee and cigarettes and a little fruit.

A boy came in and spoke with my host, who nodded and seemed to indicate that I was the cause of something.

"Perhaps you have business of some kind?" I asked.

Kara Beber was over-vehement in his

protestations of complete idleness. I told him that among the mystic English it is polite to be frank even with a guest.

"Well," said Kara, "there is a marriage to-night. I am headman here. I must go some time—but not yet."

I told him strange tales I had heard from Russians of Tartar weddings, and he laughed.

"They do not know," he said. "They never see them. You would find it interesting, perhaps—or strange, as the Russians always say of us."

Having, in true Eastern fashion, delicately circled the question, and gained no direct invitation, I bluntly expressed a wish to go to the ceremony. Kara Beber considered the matter placidly for some time, then sent messages to the mullah. At last he said I might go, but only to one part, the woman's or the man's. I chose the woman's naturally.

Having sold me a scarf to give to the bride, Kara Beber led me down through the village till we came to a small house, before which musicians played on shrill pipes. Children ran across the yard in great excitement at our coming. On the steps a small fat, brown boy, finding his clothes irksome, was trying to return to his summer naked-

ness. When he saw me he slipped back quickly into his shirt and toddled fast away. We went up on to the veranda and entered a little mud kitchen, where the bride's mother met us. Kara Beber spoke with her, I presented my scarf, and she opened a door from which girls' voices had reached me.

My first impression was of an amazing crush of seated women. There seemed to be some eighty of them crowded together on the ground, each brilliantly dressed, and intent on two girls, who alone stood up, and, hardly moving their feet—for there was no room—danced before them.

Hanging from the ceiling from many strings were countless scarves and embroideries, and decorated needlework, like stalactites in brilliant cloths. The bride's mother bustled into the room and added my scarf to the collection. Then she told the women that I had come. They looked to see me, and at once, as though a great wind had just swept down upon them, blowing them back, their scarves about their faces, with one motion all the women drew their veils across, and huddled back from where I stood in the doorway. The dancing girls, too, subsided in a flutter to the ground.

In the far corner, almost overwhelmed by the pressure of her companions, sat, so her mother told me, the little bride. I caught sight of dark eyes peeping around a scarf, and hastily hidden again. The face, seen only in occasional glimpses, seemed very young.

But curiosity soon overcame the proper modesty, and scarves were pulled aside for longer and longer periods, until I thought fit to break the ice once and for all by sitting down amongst them. My so doing caused immense titterings and excitement, for we were squeezed tightly against each other, and those girls near me had to bear a wealth of chaff, until I spoke to the mother in Russian and asked her to call for a dance.

Sometimes now I can feel that hot, smelling room, and the warm, soft shoulders pressed against mine, as when I sat crouched in the press of girls; hear their strange chanted song, and the low, resonant tambourine, on which one would play for a verse and then throw it to a friend; see all those bright costumes and dark eyes peeping round scarves that had made pretences of covering them, lying aslant across their faces; and in the middle of that dimly lit,

crowded room I can see the two girls standing, facing each other, swaying upwards from their feet to a lilt and measure, strange but bewitching.

When I came out from that room into the cold, fresh night air, I found Kara Beber waiting for me with news that the mullah would allow me to go also to the man's ceremony. We climbed up the rude streets to the top of the village, where a house stood perched against the mountain-side. We mounted by a rough ladder staircase to the balcony, where we were met by a little group of old men carrying a young man on their shoulders. We followed them into the house, and found ourselves in an ornate room, the far wall as usual embellished with gorgeously painted lockers, while on the floor sat some twenty Tartar men in two rows, facing each other, with their priest, the mullah, sitting at the head of one row. I was quickly put into the other, and I turned to see what had become of the man who had been carried in.

He had been put in the corner on a chair. Two boys with slender torches, on one of which a gilded apple and a gilded onion had been transfixed, stood by his side, while a

man with a red scarf tied about his arm poised a razor above the head of the seated man.

Suddenly the mullah made a gesture, like a conductor collecting his orchestra, then he threw back his head and howled.

The men facing me caught the note and began singing a wailing song—a cheerless epithalamium ; at the same time my neighbours began to sing, and a Tartar next to me in a red Turkish fez rolled into me and then rolled away again. I realized that all my line was swaying from side to side and I perforce joined in. I realized also that they were repeating the same words, and I, too, sat swaying interminably among that uncouth gang and singing "Hay a hay," while the priest began each verse with a howl, sang lustily, and beat time for us, the chorus, with his hand.

Meanwhile, the man in the corner was being shaved and washed, and until this was finished the monotonous singing and the swaying chorus went on inexorably, with only occasional pauses while the mullah drew breath for his ecstatic howls.

When the man was shaved they led him away, and I asked my neighbour in the red

fez what it all meant, especially "Hay a hay."

"Alleluia!" said he, then when I raised my eyebrows at his knowledge, he smiled. "Ah! I know many things. I teach at a school in Constantinople, but now in Turkey there is a war, and I have come home, but I know many things."

I believe "Hay a hay" is really an Easternized "Tra-la-la," for the epithalamium had very little to do with sacred appeals, as far as I could find out, but my companion continued quite happily: "But now they have taken the bridegroom away to clothe him in beautiful new clothes, all the best; he will be very fine. You see, I knew," he added, when the door opened and the bridegroom returned in a tight-fitting suit, like dark green pyjamas. He stood in the centre of the room with his arms outstretched, resting upon the shoulders of two friends, while the best man wound a dark green scarf about his waist. Then they unripped and unrolled a pillow-like object, which turned out to be a long white garment, on which numerous finely embroidered pieces were lightly fastened—one was a purse, another a tobacco-pouch, the rest were richly

ornamented scarves, all the work of the Tartar bride, over which she had laboured to provide a testimonial, as it were, of her handicraft. The best man inspected the needlework and nodded approval.

"You see, we pay the parents for our wives," said my neighbour. "Ah! I know."

They put the purse in one pocket and the pouch in the other, then a thick coat upon him, with a scarf over his shoulders, and a black, gold-ornamented fez upon his head. Then, while this robing ceremony continued, the mullah howled his beginning of a new song; and again in that little, low Eastern room the two lines of men sat and swayed to the time of that strange melody.

Suddenly the bridegroom raised one leg, like a Prussian soldier in the first movement of the goose-step. Not that he reminded me of anything Western at the time; the whole scene was too bizarre to come within any of my recollections; it was Eastern, all of it; even the noises and smells coming up from the flat-roofed town that sloped down the mountain-side below us could be found in no Western State. The men, and music too, with its strange, monotonous insistence, were primitive and Oriental; and

yet, as though to show that the taint of the West was inevitable, upon the outstretched foot of the bridegroom, as a finishing touch, they fixed a brand new shining rubber golosh.

They propped him then against the wall, and we all rose and placed our hands on either side of his right hand and wished him well. When all had done so we sat down again, the bridegroom with his back to the wall, and I sat between him and Kara Beber in the place of honour on his right. The best man and near relations were on his left, and all the others sat facing us in rows. Before him they placed a low table, with tobacco on it and the same torches I had noticed before. I asked the bridegroom what the transfixed onion and the apple meant, but he put his fingers to his lips. All through the ceremony he was but a lay figure condemned to silence.

But Kara Beber told me.

"To-morrow," he said, "the bride and bridegroom go to the mosque, and there they cut the apple and the onion in two halves. They each eat a half of each, for the apple is the sweets of life and the onion is the tears of life, and the gilding of them is

marriage, and they are shared by both together."

For nearly an hour we sat thus, all except the bridegroom, smoking and talking. As the time passed the company grew lively; the jokes were, so far as I could learn, of rudimentary nature, with the silent groom as their perpetual butt. The Tartar is not savage, not wantonly, excitingly so, only he is slightly barbaric and thoroughly Oriental. The sight of those rows of dark, grinning men facing me was more bizarre than chilling. I asked Kara Beber when the actual ceremony should take place. He replied that beyond the one he had just mentioned there was none. The priest either had taken or would soon take an inventory of all the bride was bringing to the new *ménage*—in case of divorce, which was a simple thing, he said, the care of the children being arranged by agreement.

So we sat and talked while others jested, and the poor bridegroom grew more and more uncomfortable, until at last, with a great hubbub, boys arrived bringing big bowls of porridge that the head mullah had just blessed.

It was heavy, tasteless food, but we ate it

all. Then the mullah began to say grace. All sat reverently with their hands just above their laps, palms upwards. As he finished they muttered a few words of prayer, passed their hands over their faces and bodies, then paused and began their jests again.

Small tabs of twisted wool were given us, which we burned with due solemnity. It is the Tartar way of wishing a man good luck. Then, having each lit a candle, we formed up in procession behind the bridegroom, who was himself led by his best man at the end of a red scarf, and so, climbing down the rude stairs, we left the house.

It was a strange sight—the bridegroom being dragged in front, and the dark-visaged men, in their black, close-fitting coats and baggy trousers, marching along to candlelight among the mud-built houses, still singing the marriage song, and myself still chanting, among the melancholy chorus, "Hay a hay."

On the outskirts of the village we came to a little hovel, and somehow the crowd, which had now grown large and noisy, all squeezed in. I found the bridegroom standing at the end of an alley formed through the crowd. On his shoulders was a shawl,

at his feet lay another, on which latter men passing down the alley would throw a money gift before saluting the immobile bridegroom ; at each presentation the crowd would howl and yell. It was like passing through a crowd of fanatics to make an offering before an idol.

When we came out at length and streamed towards the village a strange stillness seemed to have come over all. I was wondering at it when a scream broke out behind me. It was clear and shrill, and seemed to mount higher and higher with despair. I turned round quickly, grasping tight my knobbed stick, when another scream sent that awful chill tremor up my spine. And then, as the second seemed, as it were, to catch up and join the first, a low boom sounded vividly through the clamour and I realized what it was.

Two men in white sheepskin coats, the leather outside and the wool within, with big black ruffs for collars around their heads, had joined us, playing on shrill, screaming pipes.

As the mullah had done, so they began with a yell ; the drum brought them back to earth ; one of them dropped and played

a wild melody, while the other blew stolidly on a single monotonous note. The crowd surged along the mountain-side. The night was very still. Big clouds swam leisurely over the sky, through which the moon sometimes shone, leaving dazzling patches of light on the bleak crags around. Somewhere in the middle of that mob, following the pipers, I was carried along, swept away among that general eagerness for something unknown, but (I felt it) promising excitement.

At last the way broadened out into an open space, inclosed on the farther side by a house and by the steep ground.

Here I found myself beside Kara Beber—he was the first to pluck my arm in the crowd and bid me stand still—and the mullah, the bridegroom, still led by his best man, and the musicians.

Then Kara Beber clapped his hands, the musicians screamed on their pipes and changed their tune, and a new excitement overwhelmed the crowd.

Kara called some names, some men laughed, and then I saw two figures creeping out into the open stealthily, as though they were stalking each other. The music screamed in frenzy; the long, sustained note

of the second piper became maddening, it was so uncanny, while his companion, playing the wildest music, squirmed and twisted, as though he were exorcizing the evil spirit that lay within his pipe, and the low booming of the drum never ceased for a moment.

Like all the others, I became savagely intent on the two shadowy figures ; they were creeping round at each other now, now springing up, back, twisting, swerving, dancing madly, unrestrainedly, almost brutally. There was an intoxication in the air, a wild, joyous savagery, a reversal to a state of brutish exultation, and I was being carried away by it all, unnoticing, uncaring, until . . .

Suddenly into that little cup among the crags, filled with grim shrieks and shadowy figures, there flashed a blaze of light. There was a flicker, then a mass of swarthy faces, straining cruelly with the excitement and glowing red in the light, suddenly sprang out of the darkness. There was a leer on their faces that made me start backwards, and in the motion I seemed to feel the same leer changing into horror on my own face.

"It is only a sack soaked in petroleum they've lit," said Kara, mistaking the cause

of my recoil. "Look, see the women there," he said, pointing to the house behind.

In the blaze of light I could see the veranda, crowded with women. I could even catch the glint of ornaments, that glittered among the rich profusion of their colours. And the crowd—I had almost said "herd"—of silent, dark-eyed women looked on at the men's dancing, uncomprehendingly and, it seemed, resignedly.

Then the music and the dancing grew madder and wilder. Couples supplanted couples. They swung round at each other, threatened, menaced, crept, contorted themselves, danced to step also, and smiled, showing their white teeth. But somehow I was haunted by a strange and sickening uneasiness. The women, herded together on the veranda beyond, to my mind—rightly or wrongly—seemed to be too mute to the savage appeal of the dancing. They completed the picture, and I shuddered. . . . Then the light died down and went out. The music stopped, and the crowd, indistinct again, began to disappear. It did not need sight to tell when they had gone. The air seemed clearer—like the air after a thunderstorm.

A quarter of an hour later I said good-bye

to my host and swung up on to my horse. A figure I seemed to know passed by on the other side of the road.

"Who's that?" I said, for I thought I recognized the dark green pyjama suit.

"Ah! that," said Kara Beber, and he laughed—"that's the bridegroom going to fetch his bride!"

XVI

TOWN LIFE

With the coming of winter datcha life becomes impossible. It was summer until the end of October; many of us were still bathing, while sporting dolphins, coming to the warmer waters near land, would curve out of the blue sea and frighten us to shore. Then, almost without warning, came the rains, and the roads turned to rivers, and the plains into morasses, and the mountain-side into waterfalls. After a few days Nature tired of the rain and suddenly froze the land and all upon it. The water froze in the road-rivers, in the swampy marshes, and on the hillside. From the chill steppes in the north-east the wind swept down into the Crimea, found a valley running through the mountains, and froze up Soudak at the end of the valley. The local inhabitants waddled about, bolstered out against every cold, like Lap-

landers. For a few weeks we stayed, hoping for a prolonged break in the weather, and then went off to Yalta.

There is a sameness about life in all provincial towns—an effort to ape the manners and grandeurs of the capital, a rivalry for social precedence, and all the numberless pettinesses of local ambitions. To a certain extent Yalta escapes these foibles. For five months in the year it is one of the leading towns of Russia, crowded with fashionable folk, who follow the Tsar and his entourage. It is, however, a fair imitation of the Petrograd-Moscow life, and the livers of it serve well for illustration.

First of all, the children. In their hands lies Russia's future—for I am speaking of the children of the Intelligentsia, of the great middle class. In their neat uniforms they seem to be ubiquitous. Russian towns seem chiefly populated with them, and that is why, in conjuring up visions of the Russia I have left, I remember them first.

The end of the Revolution left the students and schoolboys of Russia in a highly excited state, which lasted for some few years. With the optimism of youth, they believed that

those golden promises were really the beginning of a new era—an era of peace, of freedom, and of self-government; with a splendid resolve they toiled to become mentally fitted for the new responsibility, with a noble courage they clung to the last shreds of a hope that those promises had not been given in vain. "When the longed for day of freedom shall come," says Koltzoff, "and Russia erects a monument to her liberators, one of the first places on it will be occupied by the figure of a student in his toujourka covered with blood." It must be remembered that it was not only by blood that these schoolboys and students tried to establish the promised liberty; blood was the last resource, and then, as many realized, a mistaken policy. It was by their faith, their enthusiasm, their demonstrations and persistent indifference to consequences that they hoped and tried to induce their Tsar to become his own youthful ideal—"a Commons' King."

For the moment this spirit seems in abeyance, crushed out of them by disappointment. For years they struggled—how they struggled!—to become capable citizens. It was ludicrous enough to hear boys and girls

from the gymnasia, still in the toils of Latin declensions and French genders, discussing in solemn debate "Maternity and its relation to the State," "The Civic Rights of Male and Female," "Love—free and fettered"—ludicrous, indeed, but at the same time rather splendid, they were so serious and heart-whole. They believed so thoroughly that one day they would be able to play their part in adjusting the problems and perplexities of life, and now in the reaction they have lost even the mere hope of it. But it will return; it is returning.

Bereft of games, the Russian children read, and read far more widely and more deeply than do any of our youngsters or many of our adults. They have a noble heritage of literature, and books that in England stamp their readers as "high-brow" are as common on their schoolroom bookshelves as Marryat or Mrs. Molesworth on ours. The result, I admit, is not always pleasant. Combined with games, this book-freedom would be excellent; but games until the present time have been liable to be taboo. The Government that insists on a most thorough education and rigorous examinations to train the minds of the young Intelligents is for the most part

quite indifferent to the training of their bodies. In a certain town where I was staying I was asked to show the gymnasists how to play some games. I suggested Rugby. "It is," I explained, "a kind of football game, played chiefly with the hands." "That is well," said the headmaster, "for they once learned a kicking game—Association—and before they had played it a month a boy broke his leg, so the Governor stopped it by a special by-law." Wondering what penalty of the law would be inflicted on me for a hard tackle, I quickly dissuaded them from Rugby football.

Left to their own devices, the boys, in their neat black shirts or long grey overcoats, stroll about the gardens or promenades with their sweethearts or light-o'-loves, sighing now for the dissolute possibilities of the last generation, now for the more ambitious possibilities of a citizenship that had so nearly seemed their own.

I was watching a cavalry officer making himself drunk on champagne at a gymnasium dance one evening, when a boy I had met once or twice before came up and began to talk. I was missing nothing by not dancing. They had one waltz during the

night, and that lasted for half an hour, during which one had to change one's partner every few moments, as reversing was forbidden, and the girls confessed to giddiness. Being no Stoic, I did likewise, and sat to watch the couples spinning interminably round. The boy then came up to me, full of disgust with the officer.

"I hate seeing a man who has a job fuddling his wits," he said.

I laughed, for my friend Leonid hardly led the strictest of lives himself.

"Oh, I'm no saint," he caught me up. "I was pretty bad last night. But, then, what is there to do? Can't play games. Can't get keen on politics or learning anything useful to the State. The only encouragement we get is to drink and play with Natasha. I'm sick of Natasha, by the way. If I work hard here and pass my exams like a good boy, and then go to the university and pass all my exams there, like a good student, I may perhaps become a Tchinovnik one day—a noble official of the State—and help the State to become more rotten than it is. Bah! The other day I got up some theatricals; we rehearsed the play, never even suspecting it

would be too strong for any one, then sent a copy, as usual, for the Governor at Sempherople to read, and he forbade it as being liable to pervert the public mind against the Government. It was the gentlest satire ever written. Can't even act, and so—wine and Natasha."

To some the arts come as a great relief, for here, at any rate, is an expression of Russia; and although the present tendency, among composers especially, is to accept foreign influences, yet it is the characteristic Russian that appeals to the majority to-day, especially as a reaction against German culture. Germany has had its day in Russia; the national characters are too utterly opposed for the philosophies and ideals and arts of one to have any real influence on the other.

I went once to the house of a certain noble lady who was giving what she called a Kultur-salon. The culture was of that kind that strains at a camel and swallows a gnat. They were yearning to realize how a barefoot dancer was expressing the essential scheme of things, while unconsciously they were beating time to the "simple" jig-a-jig tune that accompanied the dance. A very

distant relative of Tolstoy, trading on the great name, posed and postured and recited ingenuous fables containing some great hidden truth. The effort to achieve simplicity was overwhelming, and I went into the dining-room for a drink. There I found a number of students holding a meeting. "We don't want it—this wretched German culture; we don't understand it, and it's no use pretending we do. This, of course, is worse than usual; but there's no life in it ever, no personality—no gaiety, no love, no hatred, no sadness, just everlasting thought, cold thought. Down with it!"

That great middle class, the Intelligentsia, is perhaps the most truly cultured bourgeoisie in Europe. To them art really has a meaning. Their knowledge is not so erudite as the German, but their sympathies carry them farther into the lives of others than any amount of information could do, be it never so precise. They have a number of modern painters that even Munich could not hope to rival; they have theatres run on lines that the English call idealistic but unbusinesslike; yet they thrive. Their music and ballets are world famous, and these are not things that occur irrespective of environment and

popular feeling. Art, or even imitations of art, cannot be foisted on a nation that cares for none of these things; for a country's contemporary art is but the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. And so with Russia. In their spheres Gorky, Séroff, Bakst, and Glazounoff are not merely brilliant exceptions to the common herd, prodigies of genius in a barren land: they are the symbols of modern art in Russia, figure-heads reared proudly in front, but part —though forepart—of the great moving vessel.

One feels this more in Moscow than elsewhere. Moscow in winter, a crystallized city of the Arabian Nights, all aglitter in the crisp air, with golden domes and minarets, cupolas and turret-tops, with white walls for palaces, red walls for the enemy to assail, thick snow lying partly on the roofs, sledges breaking trail after a new fall, the black horses and massive driver, dark and gallant against the white streets, plunging along and snorting out their breath in trailing clouds of glory; or Moscow in summer, with the blazing sun to coax the colours out as it coaxes out the lizards in the south, and peasants, too, to sit in little groups beside the Moskva

River, eating red melons to the eternal plaint of the fruit-sellers on the bridge, "Grooshi, sleevi, yabloki, gospoda!" or chewing great handfuls of sunflower-seed in contemplative fashion, spitting out the husks, as some folk clear their throat, before speaking—whichever it is, Moscow in the tremendous, brilliant winter, or in the more human, lazy summer, it is equally beautiful, and the sympathy for beauty in those who live there one feels to be very real. It is, some say, the inspiration of art in Russia, as it is the inspiration of their holy faith.

The difference between Russian and German culture is that the Russian comes from the heart, the German from the brain. Art attracts the Slav by its feeling, the German by its technique. The merits of one characteristic over the other are not for me to discuss; I leave it to the artists. I can only state my impressions of the people among whom I lived.

Town life in Russia was quite as full of surprises as was the datcha life. Guests were always liable to appear and stay indefinitely. Midnight was the favourite hour, and if we did not burst in on the world, the world

most certainly burst in on us for coffee or tea, music, a little dancing, or a game of cards. At balls to which every one went, or at those held in the gymnasium for charity, the dancing was always most rigorous. Until I went to one I had thought it impossible to shock a Russian; but at my first ball I had hardly danced one turn when my partner wrenched herself from me. I had dared to reverse, and so there was "all a history," as some one said, muddling his French and English, until the dancers returned to their old-time waltzes and gallant mazurkas and forgot the scandal.

The joyous dances, joyously begun in the early hours of the morning, knew no formalities. "If the English boston, let's boston; if they dance ragtime, let's dance ragtime." Everything English is "or-right." Some fashionables even speak their own language with an English accent, laboriously acquired. English clothes, English manners, English boots, English appearance are sought and cultivated most assiduously. Ask an Englishman if he is a Russian, and you insult him. Ask a Russian if he is English, and you lift him to the seventh heaven of complacency. He would not be English *au fond*, but he

has achieved the English appearance, and he is, in his own way of saying it, "quite orright."

Of course they are duped again and again. Germans in unfrequented parts pose as Englishmen; German goods, emblazoned with our Royal Arms, pass everywhere for goods of British manufacture.

"But how is it possible?" said a Russian friend once, almost heartbroken. "Everything I wear is English, and yet you say I look like a German."

I explained, and, vowing vengeance against the "English" shop, he raced off to warn his friends, like a clansman with the Fiery Cross.

XVII

"IN GOD'S GOOD TIME"

He waited, razor poised above me, eyes alert and twinkling, his sallow, bearded, high-cheekboned face lit with expectancy for me to finish my sentence.

My Russian words came slow and haltingly, but he seemed to charm them out. He was a gnome, a-tiptoe with excitement to see the result of his educational magic. At last I ended, the tension was broken, he threw up his hands still higher and gasped with ecstasy. "Not a mistake," he said, making no reference to the meaning of my words.

"But I believe it will all end in revolution," I said.

In a moment the merry pedant-gnome had gone, and a horrified Russian barber was gazing at me.

Then he looked cautiously round the room.

It was empty. But still he whispered, "Silence!"

"I will not be silent," I said, irritated out of all caution. "In England I don't know what I am, but here I'm a Liberal, and I will think for myself and speak what I think."

The barber tiptoed away and glanced about the room like a musical comedy conspirator. "I was not listening to what you said," he insisted. "I was waiting for mistakes. I do not talk politics," he said—"never, never, never."

"But you think them," I said.

"May be," he answered.

"And you voted for the Progressive candidate in the elections, though you did not know his name, and he was not allowed to canvass for himself or disclose himself. You must have thought."

"How did you know I voted?" he asked. "Are you a mops?"

I laughed at the simplicity of the question. "Mops" is the slang for a spy, with whom Yalta is crowded. What purpose they serve I cannot tell, for we all knew them, and the scurrilous would greet them with "Hullo, mops!" which was uncompli-

mentary, for "mops," I believe, means a servile little lapdog. I reassured my barber.

"No," I said. "I didn't know, I only guessed." It took no spy to discover that kindly little fellow's ideals. "Anyhow," I continued, "you elected him, all of you, despite the reactionaries."

The bureaucracy, having granted a people's Duma, does all in its power to handicap the people in electing the men of their choice. One method was the one I mentioned, which forbade the Progressive candidate not only to canvass but even to publish his name. Holy Synod, too, working with the Government, helps in the conspiracy, and orders the priests to vote and to influence the people, as best they can, against the Liberals.

"Yes," said the barber, smiling to himself. "Yes, he was elected. You see, it goes well. It will all come right in God's good time."

For the second time he lathered my face and prepared his razor, stropping vigorously. Then he swung round, pointing his finger at me.

"And what good could a revolution do?" he asked. "A successful revolution only paves the way for a tyrant. Besides, Russia

is vast, and has many peoples in it. A revolution might divide us each against each. It is too sudden. A man comes out from a dark prison and the light blinds him. He saw more clearly in the dark. We must come out slowly in God's good time."

"What God?" I asked. "The God of the priests?" I wanted to ask him if he believed in a priesthood that taught them to pray for heaven and to live in hell, in drink and squalor, for which they did reverence and had faith. That God, I felt, was not a God of hope but of long-suffering—an admirable sleeping partner in a bureaucracy. I think he must have guessed the thought which I had not the ability to express, for he laughed at my easy blasphemy.

"No," he said, "the God of our hearts."

Then he was silent, and I felt he had some germ of policy in his head that was obsessing him for the moment, for he made no effort now to cope with my grammatical errors. He put my head to one side as if about to shave me, but he was thinking deeply.

"Yes, we must await God's good time," he said.

"How?" I asked.

"Three friends of mine meet with me sometimes, and we talk, not only of Russia but of other nations. All great nations have revolutions—France, England, Greece, and Rome—but the greatest of all revolutions was England's, because it did not come off. But Russia will be a greater nation than all, perhaps, because it will have the greatest revolution—a revolution that grows and grows, and no one notices it. What is a revolution?"

"A change of power, I suppose."

"And what is happening now? The power of the nobility is waning, and with it the power of the Government. It was not the freeing of the serfs nor the people's Duma that caused the beginning of the end, though each was very splendid for us. What was it, think you?"

Again he stood expectant, the razor held above me, his eyes twinkling, one leg crooked just off the ground, and his eyebrows arched in the suspense.

"Well, what is it?" I asked.

He laughed triumphantly at his immense secret, then, bending down, forefinger against the side of his nose, he whispered, "Commerce, industry, eh?—and education," and he sprang back, smiling vigorously, his head

on one side to regard me better in my new enlightenment.

Then he began to tell me of the real revo-tion—the revolution that is taking place, un-ostentatiously, in distant villages, in slum districts, in occasional spots all over Russia, where the really great reformers are spending their lives teaching and healing the poor. They teach them to read and write, to live cleanly, and to think. They teach them, gaining nothing for themselves except the danger incurred by improving the fortunes of those whom the Government and the Church have no wish to see improved; and through them, he said, will salvation come. He told me of the enthusiasm with which the children and the peasants soon come to be taught. Starved in body as in mind, they try first to satisfy their mental hunger, he said. It seemed incredible that they should have such little opportunity, should have to struggle so hard, so precariously to attain what the usual Board School child takes for granted and then only as a necessary nuisance; incredible, too, that so many young student men and girls should give up their lives "to bring the light," risking imprisonment and

possible exile. But a Russian is invariably thorough; he could never "lift the poor" on Mondays only. He either frankly ignores them or crushes them, or else spends his life, his health, and freedom in bettering their state.

The little barber waxed eloquent. He expressed merely his own opinion, but many, I believe, share it with him. Then he began to speak of commercial Russia, of Russia exploited honestly with the help of England, in whom he had great trust.

"Yes," he said, and his voice rose in prophecy, "I see industry spreading over Russia and creating new energies, new hopes, new powers. The seeds of immense greatness are in this land, and the man who reaps the harvest will not be the noble official, but the merchant, and then the worker. It is the frozen winter that kills the keen spirit. But industry will give all-year employment, and there will be no long months of dull drunkenness. Whose then will be the power in the land?" He laughed at the ease of the answer. "And Russia will be the greatest country in the world. When? I do not know. The change will be gradual, but it is inevitable, and the Slav will be——"

At that moment a customer entered the shop.

The little barber bent to me and whispered, "All in God's good time"; then he lathered my face and began to shave me.

XVIII

THE SOCIABLE JOURNEY

The German looked at his watch and decided that we were due to arrive at Smolensk; so, opening his portmanteau, he put away the "Ullstein Bucher" he had been reading, selected a collar and a made-up tie, put them on, looking immensely uncomfortable, and waited impatiently for his destination.

When at length he left us for the frozen, snow-covered platform, we all sighed with relief.

"He was angry because we were twenty minutes late," said a Russian sitting opposite me.

"I am no longer angry in this country," said a young Belgian, laughing cynically. "I used always to be angry. But it was no good."

"No, it does not matter," said the Russian.

"They say," he said, turning to me, "that in your country the trains travel fast and are seldom late at all."

"That is true—compared with Russia," I replied. "Our trains travel at eighty versts an hour. But, still, I prefer Russia for travel."

"How so?" My companions stared in astonishment.

"I've travelled four hundred miles, from Edinburgh to London, with eight other people in the compartment—and our compartments are smaller than yours, by the by, and for over eight hours no one spoke to the other, except about the window. We arrived to the moment—tired out. In Russia you either get a corner seat or you cannot travel. Every one is friendly, and——"

"And the train is late," interposed the Belgian.

"And what does it matter?" said the Russian. "You people rush and rush, and are always trying to be in time. And for what good? Are you happier because you are there in time? No; you do not even stop to consider the feat. You rush on, and are in time somewhere else. Where is the end of it? Something occurs. You are

stopped. You are late—and then you can do nothing. You have no philosophy."

"We are reliable," said the Belgian.

"And that means, because you believe in being in time, you force all the others to your doctrine. You cannot say, 'It doesn't matter,' and you laugh at us Russians because we always say it. Nothing matters, if we are happy. We look at life, we enjoy life, we do not torment ourselves with the stress of living. Gentlemen, my wife!"

A pretty little girl came into the compartment and sat down by her husband's side, taking his hand. "The girl in my carriage," she said, "is also married. She is going to Warsaw to her husband; he is an officer. Her father has a property near Tula. He was a member of the Duma, but he gave it up because—oh, I forget—anyhow there was a political scandal. What are you talking about?"

"The philosophy of life," said the Belgian.

"Oh," she replied, "I heard such a funny story about the philosophy of life. There was once a man who lived——"

At that moment her husband thought fit to introduce me formally. "He is English," he added to the girl in a significant aside.

"O-oh!" said the girl, opening her eyes wide and pursing up her mouth. "I want to go to England," she said.

"I want to hear that story," I replied.

"My father used to live there," she continued. "He loves the English—though you are cold—so cold."

In vain I pleaded that I was really Irish, which, I said, made all the difference. The story remained untold, though we all begged for it. "Not before an Englishman," she answered, and was adamant, preferring to chatter of her own life.

In a few minutes I learnt that she was but lately married; had never left Moscow before; that her husband was combining business with pleasure in taking her to Berlin, being anxious to see about some new plant for his firm; that her sister had just divorced her husband, and was it true that in England it was harder for a woman to get a divorce than a man? If so, she did not think much of England.

"But you like Russia?" she asked.

"Now that I'm leaving it, I find I love it," I replied.

Her husband chuckled. "You can't escape it, you can't escape it," he crowed with pride.

"Russia gets every one sooner or later. Long ago I heard two Englishmen, just arrived, grumbling at this country. They had had trouble with the police, with their passports, with their place-tickets on the trains, with everything. They had seen some revolutionaries on their way to Siberia, and some Poles ill-treated in Warsaw, and, oh! how they swore at Russia, while as to their staying here their full six months, the idea was preposterous. That was more than six years ago, and they are grumbling still—in Moscow. They are quite well off, but they've even given up going home for their holidays. Russia gets every one sooner or later."

I looked out on to the frozen waters. The red barbaric splendour of evening had passed, warm lights from the carriages glowed in faint reflection on the snow, and all around the sky and earth seemed leaden in the grey twilight. Here and there against the western sky I saw little trains of sledges, forlorn little black dots, plodding slowly homewards.

"Grim, isn't it?" said the Russian, "but it has its fascination. Now, what is England like?"

So then they set me describing my life, as

they had told me theirs, pestering me with questions, and demanding all manner of details. I say "pestering" from force of habit, but somehow I liked their inquisitiveness. They were trying to get into touch with me, and for no other reason than out of pure friendliness. Yet even so I was never told the story.

The train, after miles and miles of barren, snow-crusted land, passed through a straggling village. The moon had risen over the steppes, and in the clear light the lines of homesteads, all alike with the big gateway leading into the yard beside the house, the timber walls, the low thatch, and the all-pervading filth of dirt and trodden snow, showed up strongly against the white surroundings. At intervals on higher ground rose pure white churches, with now golden, now blue domes, seeming most callously aloof among those mean surroundings.

The train drew up in a little station, and we climbed down to stretch our legs and to breathe the cold, refreshing air.

"Your peasants are not like those?" said the girl-wife, pointing to a group of dull-looking men clad in yellow-brown sheepskin coats, their padded legs cross-gartered

with string. "They are even now half-drunk. It is all they can do—drink—in the winter. Poor children! you like them, too?"

"One likes all children," I answered, "and those peasants are good, kind-hearted, simple children. Of course I like them. When they are drunk it is only themselves that suffer, and at all times they are more than hospitable—they are one's friends."

The girl laughed happily. "I am glad you like my people, but I wonder why more than others. Every nation is the same at bottom."

A lady in rich furs was being helped into her carriage by a man-servant, who followed with her bags and wraps.

"Good-bye, Afanasi," she said; "keep well and see that all goes right."

"Good-bye, Maria Fedorovna; a pleasant journey," he replied; "and remember the stoves for the outhouses."

"All right; good-bye." And the train started at the third bell.

"It's no use discussing it," said the Belgian, using the old gambit for an argument. "Russia is all wrong. It's a fact." And that, of course, started us.

We chatted till late into the night. A student, with a restless, expectant look in his eyes, had taken the German's place. He dwelt long on the wrongs of his country and extolled England. "We are little better than slaves," he said—"slaves to our Government, slaves to inertia, slaves to our dependence on each other. We say that it is beautiful, our family life, the fortunate helping the unfortunate, and the unfortunate always sure of his richer brother's or cousin's help. But it destroys the man. We are inefficient. But you English, you live in liberty—liberty of speech, of soul, and of impulse."

"So I found when I came to Russia," I said. "I never knew it before, but when I see my own land I shall see what Russia has that is lacking in England."

"And that is?"

"I must wait till I return," I said. But there was no need to wait so long.

Two days later I realized that the Germany I used to love, irritated me. My train arrived at Berlin to the minute. I saw the crowds of workers streaming out of the stations to their daily toil, no one apparently late, no one swerving from his path to talk or to look at things, but each one mechanically

fulfilling his dull routine. The shops opened at their appointed times. The traffic was regulated precisely in accordance with its careful administration, and I went back to the station to continue my journey direct to England.

On the way I met my Russian friend and his wife. She was delighted with that wonderfully well-ordered city.

"And yet you will come back to Russia?" she asked. "Why?"

"As the Belgian said," I replied, "'Russia is all wrong'; but it is infinitely human. And nothing in the world can replace that quality."

XIX

THE WIELDER OF STORMS

To the Russians we were just foreigners, and therefore equally strange, though he was Swedish and I an Irishman. We were *inostransi*, people of another country, where all things might be possible, and they shrugged their shoulders at our doings, thinking us mad. Nevertheless, they did their best to dissuade us from attempting to climb Ai Petree, the highest mountain of the neighbourhood, to get the view on a mid-winter's day.

In summer-time it is a favourite drive for the Russians up the wonderful road engineered against the cliff for the Tsar's pleasure to the little restaurant on the summit. To us by the sea it seemed almost summer still, though snow held the mountains, and so the morning after Christmas

Day we mounted our Tartar ponies early and rode off towards our goal.

It was one of those crisp, fresh mornings which moved even the Swede to song as we trotted up through the woods on the lower slopes, passing by great tapering cascades, whose spray seemed to hang about like delicate mist, or clearings where we saw Yalta shining clean in the sunlight, and the mountains behind growing whiter and whiter till at the top they were just beacons of snow against the vivid blue sky. Below us, in rich parks and gardens, lay Livadia, the Tsar's palace, and beyond it grand-ducal mansions, deserted in winter-time for the duties and gaieties of Petrograd.

At last we came to the actual ridge, where we had meant to leave our horses at a rest-house and clamber to the top on foot, but the rest-house lay empty under a bank of snow, so we had to dismount and pull our beasts up the long, winding road that had been cut into the very side of the cliff, and now lay half buried by a recent fall. It was hard work, breaking the crust of snow, sinking to the knees at each step, dragging the miserable horses, and unable to stop for the cold. However, the exercise kept us

warm until we were staggered by the shock of a tearing wind at the top. The summit of this mountain is a plateau, and at a little distance we saw a few houses huddled together, seemingly lifeless beneath their thick white covering. Then the clouds surged round, blotting all view and blinding us with heavy flakes. It was the hardest part of all, those last few hundred yards, the bitter wind stiffening our faces and the snow beating crisp against our eyes. However, we arrived, and battered unavailingly against the several doors.

At last we tried to force an entrance into what appeared the most habitable of the houses, and, succeeding, were discovered by a peasant stabling our horses in a kind of scullery. Our arrival seemed to cause him no surprise; it was as though we had broken into his long winter sleep, and he was not yet awake. Then a woman, half dressed, for the air was hot and heavy, came out, and, having ordered tea and food, we strolled into the next room.

With his back to us stood an immense blond man, clad in leather, and peering at some little instrument. "Thirty-one metres!" he exclaimed excitedly.

We coughed, and he looked up.

"The wind is going at thirty-one metres a second," he said, taking our sudden presence for granted and the fury of the storm for a marvel. So we, speaking like a pair of intermittent firing cylinders (for our Russian dovetails nicely), tried to explain our difficulty in arriving there at all. In that warm house, buried under the snow, it was hard to realize the terrific weather outside. But our struggles—or perhaps our Russian—meant nothing to the blond giant. "Pah!" he said, "last year the wind did thirty-four here, and now—ugh!—this one is beginning to die down."

He lost interest in his machine, and at last became really aware of us. At once he changed into a timid, shy man, hiding behind his spectacles, and at the same time delighted to see us. He was like a boy, awkward and diffident at first, but he grew accustomed to us and burbled joyously of excessive heat and cold, frost and snow, rain and storm. He only really lived in extremes, for we had stumbled across the Observatory and he was the observer, to whom a nice pleasant day meant nothing.

He reminded me of Olympian Zeus, who

revelled in thunderbolts and wielded the storm from the top of Olympus, taking a proprietary interest in the elements.

When, in an attempt to impress him with a fact more cogent than the mere number "thirty-one," I said that the wind had nearly hurled me over the side of the cliff, he looked at me as a child does when told some improbable story. But taking stock of me physically, not morally, and seeing that I am slight, he nodded gravely, and apologized for the weather, saying that visitors seldom came that way in winter, and so the wind was often terrific. "But it will be better when you go down," he ended, and for the life of me I could not help thanking him.

So we sat and listened to his gossip. For eleven months he had not been to Yalta, and once a month provisions were brought to him. But he would have none of our pity. He was like a blind man showing how well he kept in touch with the world, and reeled off epics of the world's news, battles, murders, sickness, and divorce, grinning at his own cleverness. He showed us a Christmas-tree that he and his two servants and an infant son had enjoyed the day before, keeping festival among the snow-clouds.

"And now," he said, when we two strangers had lent each other all the Russian words and sentences we knew, "the snow-storm is past, the wind has died down to twenty-nine, and you must hurry before it gets too dark. A peaceful night to you."

It was no lack of hospitality that prompted him to send us forth. He really believed that the wind, no longer abnormal, was now negligible, and he looked more benignant and Zeus-like than ever, standing golden in the lamplight, beaming through his spectacles, and patting his anemometer, the wind controller, as we turned to go out into that bitter storm.

XX

MEMORIES AND A CONTRAST

Odessa in London! In a flash Piccadilly faded away, and in my mind's eye I saw again the great harbour below me, untidy and listless in the heat, sat on the promenade under the trees, lost in a babel of strange languages, impotent and tongue-tied, and wondered again how I should get food. The glare of day changed to night, and as the world strolled along the Naberejnaya where I sat, so also did the lower town of Odessa seem to regain consciousness and life, casting off apathy, and twinkling lights began to prick through the haze.

Straw-hatted and in spats, I felt so very out of the picture. Mitya, in a red blouse, drew his Olienka closer to put the nut that he had cracked for her between her little white teeth; Doonia and Paul flirted noisily on the other side; two droshky-drivers, in

voluminous blue robes and squat top-hats, argued as to who should fetch a drink, then went off together.

Some young workmen came past, and, seeing a table near by that seemed to have strayed from the open-air café, sat down to it. Their peaked caps made me think them students, and again I summoned up courage and repeated my sentence: "Parlez-vous français, sprechen Sie Deutsch, or do you by any chance speak English?"

For a moment they all stared at me, until I was just preparing to back out of the uneasy scene I had created when a face, thin and sallow, lit up with understanding, and a friendly voice said, "Deutsch?"

Never was a stranger more happily entertained in a foreign land. The sallow man could only say a few words of German, but to me they were the most important words in any tongue. They made me sit among them, drew pictures on the table of foods they thought I might desire, laughed politely at my pantomime, and insisted on giving up their evening for my amusement.

We watched the gay world go by, and it was a gay world, gay from within, bubbling outwards. In front of us girls with black

hair swathed in red scarves flashed past, smiling merrily. Officers in khaki tunics and flat epaulettes swaggered by, smiling despite themselves; students and schoolboys, in uniform also, added to the festive appearance of the promenade.

As the night went on we descended from our fashionable height into that Odessa that lies about the docks. It was poor and mean, and I wondered why they had brought me there, until I remembered that they were but returning to their own milieu. In a slatternly street, lit by one battered lamp, a woman clutching a baby entreated us for money. My companions gave her some kopecks as a matter of course, chatted to her, and we passed on.

We turned aside up a short courtyard, dirty and noisome, into a room, once whitewashed, but now browned with the smoke of countless pipes. Two or three long tables ran across the room, over which men in rough blouses sat and chattered. In one corner was a fireplace raised some three feet from the ground, and a Turk was busied making coffee over the charcoal fire.

As we entered, a fat, cheery-faced woman bade us welcome. Her smile of greeting

seemed to ripple all over her body, and the name of Mátoushka nicely expressed her overflowing motherliness. She welcomed me too, and gurgled pleasurably when I told her I could understand nothing.

Her explanation excited a general interest in me. My companions seemed to tell as much about me as they knew or could invent, and I became the centre of a genial, smiling crowd. They all offered me drinks, holding up glasses of tea or vodka with a questioning invitation, but my friends would have none of it. I was their property, and I believe they paid more on my behalf than they would let me pay on theirs.

Then they sang, some danced, and one played on his balalaika; and all the time Mátoushka, catching one of our eyes, would ripple with smiles or join every now and then in the talk.

So the hours went by, and group by group we dissolved, all shaking hands in friendly fashion before we parted; and I grew sorrier, sorrier even than before, that I could not understand their language, but I caught the spirit of their farewells, which could have borne no translation.

And so I went back again to the higher

town, guided always by the pale-faced workman, to the steps of that grandiose hotel where no one could or cared to understand my needs. He slipped quickly away, forestalling my gratitude; but it was his face, strange and unreal, among the fopperies of Piccadilly, that in a moment carried me back across Europe, and for a moment conjured up these memories of an evening in Odessa's slums.

How much I actually remembered in that brief glimpse I cannot tell; probably it was merely nuts, and Mátoushka, and the back of the Turk who made coffee. In another moment we were standing at the corner of Albemarle Street, staring at each other and groping each for the other's hand; then he threw back his head and laughed merrily.

"Thou!" he said; "thou!" He laughed again, then began making signs. "London, Odessa. Ha! ha!" he said, spreading his hands far apart.

I explained that I had since learned a little Russian.

"Good!" he said. "Now at last we can talk."

He was leaving for America that night, and was at that moment on his way to see

the Houses of Parliament. I took him down Regent Street, showed him the Mall, the Horse Guards, and Whitehall; we looked casually at the Abbey and the Houses, and sat down in the gardens beyond them facing across the river.

Some children were playing, querulously, complainingly, about the paths. A man, sucking at a broken clay, swore at them only when they came too near him, and looked listlessly at the grey tide, despite all their clamour. But somehow I remembered Whitehall and disregarded this.

"Well," I said, "and London—is it as you expected?"

"Not a bit," he answered.

"Finer?" I said confidently.

"Well, you don't always grope through fogs, as I thought."

"But the city?" I asked.

"The English," he said, "are very polite, very kind."

I saw that he was evading my point and pressed him for an answer.

"Then," he replied, "I will tell you." The labourer from the slums of Odessa paused for a moment, unwilling to spoil my pride in this city. In the distance a woman's voice,

calling her child, sounded shrill and macabre. "Oh," he cried, "the people, your poor people, they are so terribly poor! I have never seen anything like it. It is awful!"

And I, remembering Mátoushka and the workmen in that hovel in Odessa, agreed with him.

THE RUSSIANS IN WAR

I

THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE

I

We met the fat man as we were returning from the regatta. He dropped his eyeglass and said: "Ho! do you know there's going to be a war?"

It was the first most of us had heard of it, being engaged during our waking hours in lying in our bathing suits by day and our flannels by night on the beach, reading no papers, talking no politics, but merely enjoying ourselves.

"Neroes, you miserable Neroes!" he said dramatically. "You go to regattas when Russia goes to war—and England, too, probably," he added to me.

We asked him what it was all about, and he told us gladly. Of course, Russia had to help the Serbs—though he personally hated

them—if Austria attacked them, and Germany would then attack Russia, and France and England would attack Germany; and it would all be very fine, though the Bourse was going down and he would have to go to Petersburg at once. Someone began arguing with him. The talk became rather wild and excited, the fat man screwing in his eyeglass whenever any one began to speak and dropping it out to mark his own retort.

"But don't you see how splendid it will be? Nonsense! the Poles hate the Germans more than us; it will make them patriotic. Tea? Yes, please, with lemon. And we will crush Germany—or be crushed. Yes, possibly. But our honour is at stake. No, the people won't mind; they are very Pan-Slav; they hate the Germans. So do I. It will be a most popular war. There will not be a revolution this time. In any case, it is a question of honour. Now I must go to Petersburg." He ran away, but came back to say that the people wanted the war—most assuredly. All the strikes and riots were stopping. Russia was all concord. He spoke as though it were the Millennium. It was all very vague and confused and

exhilarating. We all felt inspired and vigorous.

"There's just time for a good game of tennis before supper," said our hostess. "Come along!" And along we went with alacrity.

II

A few days later I was waiting my turn to take my seat ticket to Moscow in a queue that wound round the room like a snake tied in complicated knots. Suddenly every one in front of me became indignant and those behind me querulous. The queue began to dissolve. There was no waiting at the ticket-office, and when I got there I learned that all the places on the train had gone.

We went off in a mass to interview the stationmaster and to ask for more carriages. He received us civilly, but shook his head. We grew pathetic and explained how each of us was faced with the crisis of an existence, which only the journey could avert. He seemed to think our crisis of no account. We subscribed to a substantial bribe, but with a shrug he refused it. "At any other time," he said—"well, perhaps; but now—

impossible." And we went away, amazed and marvelling.

Eventually, however, I managed to get into a third-class carriage, and there I heard that war, which hitherto had seemed to us a mere phantasy, was a real possibility. I confess it chilled me. The carriage itself, divided into compartments by wooden seats, but by no partitions, with a corridor running through it, was stark and dirty, a place in which any news would seem cheerless. As a rule one seldom hears politics in Russian third-class carriages. They talk, as our farmers talk, about the land and not about the rulers of it. To the Russians the land has a personality. The spell of Russia is not to be found in the cities, but in the rolling, lonely steppes. The fascination takes one slowly but very surely. Despising it at first, one finds that the land, so dreary and macabre, has a feeling in it which the Swiss or Swedish landscape has rejected for the glamour of a scenic *tour de force*, and the peasant Slav is instinct with the feeling of his soil. For countless years he has tended it and tried it and ploughed it and sown it, and except where politics affect his care of it he has no interest in them.

On that evening, however, we could talk of nothing else, although, as one peasant said, "What is the use of talking? They have decided for us." At this the schoolmaster bristled up, and asked the peasant if he did not wish to know why he was going to fight. "But I am not going to fight—not yet. Nothing is decided. Besides, I did not know why I fought in Manchuria, yet I killed two Japs," and he drew himself up and smiled at us; then, seeing that I was silent, as a sign of good-fellowship he winked at me and gave me a handful of sunflower-seed to eat.

The others were more interested and listened to the schoolmaster, who spoke authoritatively, and tapped a newspaper with his finger as though that paper would back up his statements if we questioned them. He said, and voiced a very common opinion, that Russia would be ruined if she went to war. The barricades were across the streets of Petrograd, or Petersburg as it then was, there was yet more discontent in Finland since the new corn tax, trouble was expected in the Caucasus, Poland would certainly revolt—besides, there were always the Yidds, and he jerked his thumb at a Jew who was occupying the far seat. The Jew at once

thrust into the conversation, and talked incisively to maintain his position in it. His contribution was a tale of the rascality of a certain Tchinovnik and of the wickedness of officials in general. War, he said, would give the Tchinovniks more power, and red-tape was strangling Russia as it was. The stories he told us were revolting and probably quite true, but even the peasant who had killed the two Japs would hear no more and bade him be silent. His denunciation, however, roused a long, thin student to an outcry against officialdom. He was a ridiculous figure until he became excited; then he looked almost dignified, and certainly most apostolic. Russia, he said, was too prosperous and complacent; but even so, the official pinpricks were rousing the people, and he pointed to a girl and her father who, heedless of him, were boiling a kettle for tea. "Even they will feel the pricks, as will every one, and the will of the people always wins in the end. The Government will not dare declare war, it is too unpopular."

We had pulled out our shelves and, despite the hard boards, were almost asleep on them when the train stopped at a station and a

crowd of peasants were pushed in. To make room for them those who were sleeping on the lowest shelves were told to sit up and give them place. At this there arose a growling and a murmuring. They had bought their seats. Why should not the first and second-class likewise be disturbed? But the ticket-collector and the sub-ticket-collector, uncouth, with a bristly beard and long coat and top-boots, pulled them off the shelves and forced them to sit. The girl's old father was the last to be disturbed. When they pulled him off he rose and tottered a little and fell back weakly into his place. The girl, on a higher bench, woke just in time to see this happening. With a scream she jumped down, rushed at the officials, and, backed by the crowd, hustled the two uniformed men out of the carriage. "There'll be the devil to pay for this!" said the cheery peasant as he threw his bundle at one of their heads. I expected pandemonium, but instead there was silence, absolute silence, broken only by wild cheering. We heard some one on the platform shout, "Down with Austria!" and the voices booed. I left the officials and ran to see what it was. When I returned I found the student stand-

ing on a bench, addressing the carriage-load. "Austria has declared war on our brothers the Serbs!" he shouted. "We must defend them to the last drop of our blood. Hurrah for Servia! Hurrah for Russia! God save the Tsar!" and we all, peasants, officials, and every one, joined in the hymn together.

III

After that it did not matter how many came in. Crowds came in all night; we were packed tightly from station to station, unpacked, freed for a few minutes, and packed again. Except for the student and myself, none in our carriage were doing the whole journey. Many were peasants, with their wives and children, going only short distances. Rumours of war had already started the great general post. The backs of each seat turn up and make a wooden berth, and from mine I looked down on a carriage full of men with shaggy heads and tousled beards, some golden in the lamp-light; of women, their hair swathed in bright red or yellow scarves, and bending anxiously over babies at their breasts; of faces, lined and sallow, prematurely old, or young with

a childishness that had outlived their youth, some round and squat with snub noses, high cheek-bones, and almond eyes, others fair and majestic and framed in masses of tawny hair; but all were vivacious.

I had never before seen a crowd of vivacious Russians. Only an hour earlier these had been their usual indolent, resigned selves. A drunkard at the far end had provided the only noise until the fracas with the officials, but now he had either departed or was eclipsed. I heard no more of him above the din of argument. We all argued, all of us except the women, who were frightened at this new zest that so inspired their menfolk. The scene grew more and more animated and picturesque. Every one was sitting—even my upper shelf held three of us; and so we sat, legs a-dangling, bodies bent double to avoid the bundles on the racks, yet talking, talking, talking. We might have been adventurers *en route* for Eldorado. The war to them was a glorious enterprise, the crusade of Holy Russia. I do not mean that each peasant burst into the carriage with cheers for the Slav and a yearning to do or die for his traditions. As a rule each entered dazedly, clutching his bundles and looking

round uneasily at all of us before he put down his bulging packages, speaking in a whisper to his wife, and glancing mistrustfully at those who were already in possession of seats as though we were in a great confederacy to oust him. Coming to the stations singly or in forlorn little batches, they looked on the uprooter War as a return of that "Disaster" which had taken them off their familiar homesteads, mobilized them in unwilling crowds, and sent them across the great reaches of Siberia into the unknown to fight uncomprehendingly against a people of whom they had never even heard. So each stood there in the passage, blinking at the light and wondering at this new conspiracy against his happiness, only to be greeted with—

"Nu, sit down then, and tell us what thou thinkest of this war."

Then he would sit down and listen to, and perhaps join in, the great discussion. He knew and disliked the Germans; he knew, too, that the Slavs were his brothers and that his brothers were attacked. To him the Germans and Austrians were all the same, and so he joined the crusade with zest and in his turn encouraged the next new-comer.

So the night passed, and a pearl-grey dawn broke over the steppes, grim, bleak, but infinitely lovely to those who feel the appeal of a great expanse.

"Now for a lovely view," said the Feldsher. "Come!" And we struggled through the bundles and packages that littered the carriage and went to an unoccupied window.

The Feldsher was a round little man who took life cheerily. A scar on his face where he had cauterized himself could not disfigure his kindliness, though it twisted his smile awry and made him look like a benignant demon.

The view was certainly lovely. The steppes were sloping down to a rich watershed, and the train burst out from the eternal firs and silver beech forests to rattle down an incline, past broad sweeps of land that, furrowed and ploughed, gave the fantastic lines we know in Russian decorative pictures; past broken ground and watercourses, where herds of cows and sheep and horses fed together in the broad fissures; past patches of little wooden villages, gaunt in the driving rain, until we came to a small town, out of which the tall white church stood as a clear landmark.

On the platform we could see a large crowd of men and women waiting for us. As we drew near we heard a moaning noise, coming, it seemed, from them. One woman, indeed, in rough, grotesque clothes, stepped forward and shook her fist at the approaching train, then, as it came nearer, fell back on a man and clung tightly to him.

"They are like cows moaning, aren't they?" said the Feldsher.

It was the sorriest of crowds. They stood there in the rain, looking at us as though we were their despoilers. The women—rough, ugly, coarse-favoured creatures—sobbed as though their hearts were new to sorrow; the children howled because their mothers cried, and the men stood silent, looking blankly at the train that was to take them away. Nobody moved, neither we nor they. Then the three bells sounded; the men, suddenly waking from their stupor, tore themselves away and clambered on to the train.

"Losia, say good-bye!" shouted a rough-bearded peasant to his little son, but the boy only cried, and as it were a signal his cry was taken up and swelled into a moan and a wailing that will live with those who heard it till they die.

We had long ago folded up our berths, thinking that with the night the chief crush had passed. Some of the new-comers found seats, the others stood, staring dully at their hands or their bundles, not knowing what to do.

A peasant next to me began to talk, more to himself than to any one. "We were married two days ago. They might have waited, or begun sooner. I do not understand." The woman by his side sobbed. She was only eighteen, but she looked far older. She was going back to her parents, her husband told me. "It is hard. We love one another, you see."

"But who will gather in the harvest?" said another. "If we are not killed in the war, we will starve when we return."

"Why are we doing this thing?" one asked me.

But the Feldsher answered. "It is politics," he said briskly.

Then the old harangues began again, but the girl looked more frightened than ever, wondering at her man's new eagerness to go. She was very ugly, but we forgot that in the piteousness of her glances.

"Now tell me," said the Feldsher, tapping

the man on the knee, as though asking him to divulge an important secret, "where did your beautiful wife get that beautiful scarf?"

The couple looked at each other and smiled. "Ah!" said the husband, "now that is a whole story," and he told it, munching handfuls of sunflower-seed and spitting out the husks to punctuate the crises of his narrative. Unfortunately for me, he told the story in dialect, and though we all laughed consumedly, I hardly caught a word.

IV

The next night in Moscow I found a huge crowd standing in the big square before the Governor's palace. Demonstrations, I was told, had been going on for days. Crowds, waving banners and singing patriotic songs, had paraded all Moscow, stopping at times to pray for Servia and the Slav welfare, then passing on with renewed shouting.

Standing on the plinth of Skobeloff's statue a student was talking of noble deeds to the crowd. Sallow-skinned, dark-haired, he was a typical Slav; his eyes gave the only sign of life to his face, but these were flashing bravely, and redeemed his ugliness. He

seemed not to see us as he spoke. Though he talked to a crowd of Moscow boys and artisans, he was addressing the spirit of Holy Russia; and the crowd was forgetting it was merely a collection of Moscow boys and artisans, and saw in themselves the saviours of their Holy Russia.

To the boy on the plinth it seemed that Russia was entering a religious war, and he was standing on Skobeloff's statue from a sense of its fitness. "It is not a passing excitement," he said, "that drives us out into the streets to cheer and to sing, and to pray to God for Servia's freedom. Was it merely a passing excitement that urged on our fathers against the Turks? Was it merely in passing gratitude that this statue was raised to the victor of Plevna? If so, why do we still honour it? No. It is the spirit of Holy Russia within us that inspires us to forget our own interests in her service, to abandon all differences so as to unite bravely against all oppression, and give free vent to the great Slav power and instinct. The spirit of Holy Russia is our beloved mistress, and by God's help we will serve her truly."

There was no argument. Two years ago he might have been addressing a revolu-

tionary gathering, and he would have spoken in exactly the same spirit. He felt the impulse, and that was argument enough. But before he had finished his speech there came a roar of "War! War!" and boys rushed into the square from the offices of the *Russkoye Slovo* near by, with the latest news-slips.

One was handed to the boy on the plinth. "Germany declares war!" he read. "God be against those who have begun it!"

V

"I was here when the Japanese War was declared," said a little man, who was too excited to keep his thoughts to himself, "but what a difference! Then it was the Government who sent us to war. Now we go gladly, eh?"

We were standing an hour after the declaration of war on a balcony overlooking the Theatre Square. Below us was passing an immense crowd of men and boys, shouting, singing, and waving flags, while the inscription "Down with Austria!" jerked and swayed above the heads of its bearers. From every street they debouched into the square,

some singing the National Anthem, others a religious chant, while a few broke into the Marseillaise, forgetting that they had learnt it—and sung it perhaps—only two or three years ago in revolutionary processions.

"Do you hear them? Do you hear them?" he gasped, clutching my arm. He spoke entirely in gasps, and sucked in his breath between each sentence, giving the effect (somewhat modified) of an exhaust pipe. "They are not wild, not at all, these people. They believe this war is right. They are fighting for the Slavs, for Holy Russia. Bravo, Russia! Bravo, France! Bravo, England!" he shouted down to the crowd directly below us, who for the moment had stopped singing. They caught up his cheers and passed on. "No," he said, "this is not a war for the Empire, or else they would be all drunk and wild. They are not wild. They are following their hearts now. It is almost sacred. Come, come, they are all going to the Voskresenskiya Gate."

We went down into the square and immediately lost each other in the swirl of people. The whole crowd went bareheaded. An old man, looking on, had his hat knocked off. He caught the offender—a boy—by the ear

and dragged him to a policeman. "He knocked my hat off!" he spluttered. "It should not have been on," said the policeman. "They were singing 'God Save the Tsar.' I am no musician, but I know what is sacred, thank God!"

There is a big shrine in front of the Sunday Gate, which is one of many gates in the Kremlin walls, and this shrine was gleaming with an array of candles by the time I arrived there. The road leading up to it forms a square immediately under the walls, and there, in the insufficient light of two lamps, stood ten thousand people waiting for something to happen, something mystic, the expression of that strange feeling they possessed. Behind towered the big walls and the gateway, while the golden dome of the cathedral, reflecting a faint light, just peeped over the horizon of roofs, like a half-obscured moon.

The night was heavy with coming rain, and in the dim light the crowd of rough peasants, hushed by the expectation of Divine blessing, some shock-headed, with legs cross-gartered like twelfth-century villeins, seemed under the old gateway, lit by guttering candles, more likely to be praying for help from their

mediæval suzerain than beseeching the blessing of God on modern warfare. The bishop, too, coming out from the shrine, helped the illusion with the fantastic emblazonry of his robes. He bade some students fetch out the great ikon of the Blessed Mother, and on the arrival of the Governor—prosaic figure in the old-time setting—began a prayer for the safety of the Russian arms.

On the hard, uneven cobbles they all knelt there while he prayed, then slowly and quietly they began a chant, "Save, O God, Thy People," and, beginning it on their knees, slowly they rose, and on their rising the chant swelled and thundered out till the walls around cast back the rich echoes. There are times when that chant might easily sound colourless and monotonous; it hangs for bars on one note, and like all old chants is solemn and restrained; but on that night it was the cry of a simple people, and in its stark simplicity achieved an effect that no chorus in any opera could ever hope to produce. There was an insistence in its very monotony, an appeal that was compelling by reason of its extreme humility, that knew none of the bombast and self-laudations by which so many suppliants hope to obtain

mercy. Once some one tried to start "God Save the Tsar," but the effort was disregarded. The nation was there incognito; it was not a meeting of Imperial Russians gathered together to remind God of their greatness, but of simple folk in need.

The long chant boomed and echoed round the gate, till in the pauses it was hard to tell which was the echo and which the distant thunder. The lights flickered and grew dim, but the deep bass voices rolled out the heavy notes in sonorous entreaty, ending each appeal with a hushed "*O Gospode pomilin!*" ("O Lord have mercy!"). Towering in front of me stood a peasant, a blond, shaggy giant. He looked much as his fathers must have looked who laboured to build that ancient gate. He wore the old skirted coat and leggings of straw. The light, which he obscured, shone through his hair and turned it into an aureole about his head. When he lifted up his voice every one took their time from him. Yet he noticed nobody, but stood holding his hat in one hand and his bundle and his staff before him in the other, and gazing for something beyond the lights, beyond the shrine and the great gate behind it. At length the bishop blessed

us, and the crowd began to move away. The giant took a deep breath and crossed himself. "Now I can fight," he said. Then he looked at me. "They call me Dmitri," he said, holding out his hand in friendliness.

There is in Moscow an eating-house below ground, where the peasants go and eat and drink and smoke. When I went the next day I found chiefly soldiers there, looking strangely at each other in their new uniforms. I had hardly sat down when I felt a crash on my shoulder, and turned to see an enormous young fellow, shaven and shorn, in brand new khaki, grinning down at me.

"What do you think of me?" he asked, holding himself at attention.

"Very fine," I said from motives of policy.

"I am splendid, eh?" he said.

"Splendid," I said, wishing to rub my shoulder.

"And my boots?" he asked.

"Must have cost a fortune."

"Seven roubles," he answered, one finger against his nose. Then he lowered his hand, as though to stroke his beard, and paused aghast, for he had no beard. "Oh," he said, with a choke. "They have taken everything from me—my wife, my home, my beard. I

should have fought better in a beard. However, what does it matter? It's all for Holy Russia. It will grow again when I return. I shall return—I felt it last night. Do you remember?"

"What!" I gasped. "They call you——"

"Why, Dmitri, of course," he said, laughing at my astonishment.

II

THE RUSSIAN MIRACLE

An old Russian general once said to me, "Russia first declares war and then prepares for it."

He said that years ago, when Europe was on the brink of a war that did not come off, and we were watching the tardy preparations. Luckily they proved to be unnecessary, but when this summer in Moscow I saw great masses of people greeting the declaration of war with shouts and demonstrations, the saying of the old general recurred to me, so that I felt I was looking on at a tragedy, like a man in the audience who has been told the plot of the drama, and that the people rejoicing in their thousands knew little of what lay in store for them.

The scene, too, at the Kremlin was

mediæval, ages remote from modern armaments and shrapnel and Taube aeroplanes, and although it was stupendous in human faith and resolve, one felt that nothing but a miracle could save those simple folk.

The next morning I woke to find that a miracle had occurred.

When I went out to get my morning coffee I found that Moscow was transformed. From everywhere came arms and transport-wagons and soldiers and horses. The day before there had been no sign to make the most suspicious foe uneasy. I met a man who for some reason or other makes it his business to know where everything is kept, and of what pattern everything is made. We were watching a number of ordnance carts go by, and my companion chuckled. "Fancy!" he said. "And I didn't even know they had them! I don't mind telling you now," he said, "that I've been looking out for their carts for months. Wily devils! I thought they had only the old '05 type. That's one for me. But, offer me fifty roubles or the name of the place where they've been keeping those carts, and, well, sir, your fifty roubles would go safely enough into your pocket again, I guess."

It was the universal question: "Where is everything coming from?"

Under the trees, between the Kremlin walls and the river, were thousands of horses. Recruits were being hoisted on to their backs, a whack from the sergeant, and off would go the horse, clattering on the cobbles, or, if the recruit could guide him, spattering up sand and dust in the soft byway. It was a test for both horse and rider, and a great amusement for all of us idlers who sat on the embankment, smoking or chewing seed in the pleasant sunshine. Mobilization went on all round and about and in the Kremlin. A most careful list of the numbers required of mechanics, smiths, wheelwrights, electricians, and others, had been made. The levying of troops was complete and systematic. Everything had been assessed, everything was paid for. The vodka-shops were closed to prevent the soldiers from being tempted to spend their kit allowances in drink. The railway system was reorganized to suit the emergency, and the country went tranquilly into a state of martial law. Everything had been prepared, and Russia had achieved a miracle.

For two days reservists had been collecting

in their various depots, some dazedly, ignorant of whys and wherefores, recognizing necessity perforce, and wondering why they should leave their farms so soon after harvest; others left their burnt-up lands with a shrug; in many districts there would have been no harvest in any case, and they bore the new caprice of Fate with indifference. Shaggy, uncouth peasants, they herded miserably into the big depots, and were there transformed into genial, swaggering soldiers, a little shy of their trim appearance, easily abashed by personal remarks, but restored to the verge of boastfulness by a hint as to the prowess they would doubtless show against the Germans. They seemed to be getting together remarkably quickly when I left. There is an easy, free swing in Russian infantry to be found in no other army; it seems mental as well as physical, a product of the race. It certainly carries every one with it, and recruits and reservists swing along with ease in the great battalions.

But though the Russian armies were soon mobilized in their various centres, the great difficulty of transport still remained. Most aptly is Moscow known as the heart of Russia; the name fits it equally well from

the sentimental or geographical point of view. All the long arteries of railway that spread throughout the Empire have their base in the holy city. It is like the centre of a spider's web, though connecting lines are few. Nearly every troop train, coming thousands of miles from distant centres, had to pass through Moscow, and they move slowly, those broad-gauge, easy-going trains. Much of the railway is a single line, and congestion seemed inevitable. Even now, on looking back, one feels that, despite those careful plans, there must have been a period of chaos. Yet the careful plans scarcely miscarried in any particular. Directly war broke out the public were told by what trains they might travel through Moscow, and for how long those trains would be available. In a few days the ceaseless procession of troop trains began to pass through, to deal destruction on a contemptuous enemy by their all-unexpected appearance. It is incredible, when one thinks of the enormous distances to be crossed, a miracle when one remembers the dilatoriness of Russia from time immemorial, but Russia, for the first time in her history, was ready.

The last ten years have seen a revolution in

the Russian Army, for, like the English and the French, it has been brought into line by defeat. From the purely military point of view Russia owes as much to the Japanese War as England owes to the South African. The Turkish War produced in Russia the same complacency that 1870 produced in Germany, but Russia had a rude awakening, followed by an interval of nearly ten years in which to make good. The dissolute officer of Tolstoy's day has gone, and is replaced by a hard-worked, well-trained soldier, encouraged to take a personal interest in his work and his men. A few days before war broke out an officer of the old school, seated at my table in a restaurant, told me at great length of the hardships of his life. He left me to talk to a "little lady," and immediately his place was taken by another officer, a young man, spruce, smart, and with an air of keenness about him. He asked me in excellent English if my friend were coming back, laying stress on the word "friend." I explained that I hardly knew the man at all.

"That is all right," said the young fellow, "because I do not want you to take him for a type of the modern Russian officer. He

is not a success ; although a charming man in society, he is not a soldier. You see, we love our work nowadays ; it's not his fault that he doesn't, or our virtue that we do. It was not the fashion in his days to take the Army seriously. Now it is the fashion."

Except for the Guards and the crack cavalry regiments, the officers come for the most part from the Intelligentsia, the mainspring of the Army as of all else, while the troops, cheery, rough and faithful, will do anything in the world—except think ; they will obey, they will follow, they will die, and die gamely. They will march with a swing though their only food is rice ; they will laugh working in the hottest sun, though they have only a pocketful of sunflower-seed to gladden them ; and, fatalists, they will attack grimly over the bodies of their own dead, though they have only the blessing of a long-haired priest to hearten them with dim assurances.

With the closing of the vodka-shops Russia has become sober. True, it is a sobriety enforced, and drunkenness is too inherent a trait of the Russian for this temporary abstinence to be taken as anything but a break in the usual pastime, yet even if it is regarded

as nothing better, it is certainly a sign of miraculous times. But the greatest miracle of all is united Russia. The Russian is thorough, not so much in what he does but in what he is ; he is a thorough reactionary or a thorough Liberal, a thorough pessimist or a thorough optimist. Before the war it seemed as if nothing could reconcile the utter bureaucrat with the utter revolutionary. When the common folk went zealously to war, the world in ignorance said it was but the usual lust of the population driving them, under the guise of religious fanaticism. England saw nothing very remarkable in their zeal ; it seemed merely very fortunate. There still, however, remained that menace to united action in Russia—the revolutionary party, composed chiefly of earnest, kindly men in various European centres, men who are ready to give their lives, their fortunes, their peace of mind, their all to benefit humanity ; men who, seeing an ideal, will accept no compromise and no defeat. Socialists, anti-militarists, loathing war for the most part, they seemed compelled by their old actions and utterances to protest most vehemently against the slaughter of thousands of those very people for whose

welfare they have sacrificed their own existence.

All Russia waited anxiously to know what they would do. The splendid loyalty of the Liberals and the Liberal papers was hailed with delight. The Radical *Retch* was the most quoted paper in Russia during those days of doubt; but the doubt of the revolutionaries still remained.

"It would be the most magnificent *volte face* in history," said an official. "It is the great opportunity." It was the great opportunity, and it was taken. Bourtzeff, the denouncer of Azeff and editor of *Boudoustcheie* (*Le Futur*), without changing his policy one iota, declared his approval of the war, and even left his sanctuary in Paris to return to serve his country, though prison awaited him, and many have followed him. For the world has realized that this war is a cloud that has come to us from beyond the old horizon of our lives, at first no bigger than a man's hand, the hand of the assassin in Sarajevo, but now covering the habitable globe with its profundity, blotting out the occasional fogs and glooms of our existence in one all-devastating blackness.

III

THE ATTACK ON THE EMBASSY

We were sitting in the correspondent's flat in Petrograd, waiting, as ever, for news. But instead of news we heard only rumours—rumours that the Germans had landed at Libau and were concentrating on Petrograd, that Poland was in the enemy's hands, that England had declared war and sunk the German fleet, that England had backed out of her promises, and that we in Russia would have to bear the brunt of our country's secession.

Rafferty, the Petrograd correspondent, has a way of jerking out his sentences like news paragraphs; his wife screams the big-type headlines; and as Rafferty is one of the most reliable sources of information in Russia, their conversation almost "reads" like an inspired announcement.

"Cost of living increases daily," said his wife.

"Although war has only been declared three days," said Rafferty, "the price of food has gone up 25 per cent. The sale of vodka is entirely prohibited, while it is difficult to obtain any form of intoxicant."

"There's the telephone!" said his wife, running to it.

"Mob attacks German Embassy!" His wife burst in with the news. In a minute or two we had jumped into droshkies and were jolting over the rough, cobbled streets towards St. Isaac's Square.

When we arrived we found the entire square fronting the cathedral filled with an immense crowd, all staring so intently at the German Embassy that "even a blind man would know which way they're looking," some one said. We arrived during a silence, but soon, as a breaker booms down an oblique shore, a huge roar rose in the distance and thundered through the crowd. The roar did us good; it was the only definite thing we had heard for days, and coming from such a crowd of Slavs, who can give their homes, their peace, their lives, and joyously, for a cause, we were caught

in the swirl of excitement and roared too.

Then we looked to see what had occasioned the outburst. Facing us, in emblematical contrast to the crowd of methodless, exuberant Russians, stood the Embassy, a huge building after the new Buckingham Palace style, but simpler and more severe, crested with a group of enormous statuary, representing two horses with two men standing by them—massive, imposing, and exceedingly ugly. "These figures represent the strength of our Fatherland," the Germans had said, and now the Russians, roaring their applause, were all straining atiptoe towards that statuary, howling, mocking, yelling "like wolves," said a disapprover—Slavs, Jews, Poles, Finns, all united and jubilant because some students had climbed up to the roof, and, mere pigmies in comparison, were hacking at these bronze emblems of Germany's strength.

The news had just come that the Germans had torn down the Russian eagle at Berlin, and this, coupled with the rumours concerning the ill-treatment of Russians in Germany, succeeded in rousing the mob. Some of them managed to get into the

upper rooms, and while their friends above hacked at the statuary, they smashed the windows and threw out all the clothes and furniture, no matter how intimate, that they could find in the bedrooms.

A huge Russian with the voice of a bull began singing "God Save the Tsar." Every one took it up. The great volume of sound roused them all to greater excitement. Entering by the back, more students broke in, and lights appeared at all the upper windows. Then we saw chairs lifted and hurled against the panes; the breaking woodwork and glass roused more howls from the mob; they were getting savage.

"Gad!" said Rafferty, "but this is something like. Say—total wreck—what? Crowd break into Embassy and pillage—pillage, eh? —the rooms. Sabotage! Yes, yes, Frank, take that down. Slav sabotage. Attempt to pull down statuary. Say, you fellows, how tall d'you think each figure is? Twenty feet? Yes? Thirty? No, no, can't really be thirty. Whew! that one's going. Cheer, you fellows, cheer like sin! Encourage 'em! I want to say, 'Statuary demolished. German strength overthrown. Is it an omen?' That's an idea. Hurrah! The other one's swaying. Cheer,

you fellows! Make a note of it, Frank: they're singing 'Bozhe Tsaria Khrani.' Jove! this is copy. But I've got it exclusive, yah! Look, look, that's going—going! 'Statuary demolished. Russian reprisals.' Frank, Frank, 'Russian reprisals'—headline, what! Going—gone—ah!"

While the great bronze giant tottered we were all dancing from foot to foot in excitement—even Rafferty became colloquial. The whole crowd surged forward a pace or two, and then stood still. The figure was heeling right over, for a moment it hesitated, then quietly plunged down into the square beneath. As it fell, falling interminably it seemed, the crowd kept perfect silence. Then the crash came, and, peering over a policeman, I could see it battered, lying quivering on the ground. There was a gasp, a pause, and pandemonium. . . .

The other figure had been dislodged, but was caught by some fastening, and lay half over the edge, "like a seal ready to slip into the water," I heard some one say, but before the wreckers had time to throw it down, and while the mob were recovering their breath, the police considered it time to close the incident by clearing the building.

But the crowd eventually recovered from their outburst.

It came suddenly. As though at some signal, the crowd gathered itself and burst through the cordon of police, left it weak and scattered, and rushed against the Embassy. For a minute it stopped to complete the wreckage of all that had been thrown from the upper windows, gathering souvenirs, piling up the tables and chairs to burn, and dividing the linens. Then before the police could combine against them, they burst into the Embassy, swarming over the iron gates till the hinges collapsed beneath the weight, and entrance became easy. The doors were smashed in, and in a moment the whole building blazed with light. Standing in the dark square, we looked into ornate and stately rooms, flooded with light from immense chandeliers, spacious and imposing, and saved from bareness by richly brocaded chairs and sofas.

Through these salons, savage with the exultation of smashing things, there raced a crowd of students. Figures alert and boisterous appeared black against the lighted rooms, pulling down pictures, smashing chairs and tables, and hurling the luxurious

furniture down into the square, with proud gestures and "Hurrah, Russia's!"

The crowd was in ecstasy and triumphant, and cried for more. I felt that I should have enjoyed the French Revolution. The scene had been immense, vivid, and compelling. Among thousands worked up to fanaticism by the scene, what chance had one to remain unmoved?

When the police appeared within the Embassy and tried to clear the rooms to prevent a fire, the mob always reappeared, until there was nothing left to destroy, and only great shapeless masses of furniture lay in piles beneath the windows to point whatever moral one might care to draw. When nothing remained inside, they set fire to the wreckage in the square, and stood shouting and dancing round the blaze, while the flames roared and the woodwork cracked and snapped.

At the windows of a hotel facing the Embassy there stood a number of Germans watching the reprisals.

"Damned Russian savages," said one. But the "damned Russian savages" continued to vent their anger on mere tokens of their foemen's culture, paying no heed to aught

beside, hurting no one, ill-treating no one, indifferent only.

* * * * *

The only record of that evening that I ever chanced to read ran as follows :—

> An attack was made last Tuesday night on the German Embassy at St. Petersburg by an excited mob. The group of statuary on the roof was partially wrecked, and a certain amount of damage was done to the Embassy itself.

That is all the description it gives ; and, reading it a week later in Stockholm, I was inclined to agree with it. But I wonder if Rafferty, who wrote it, still thinks with a thrill of that night when our blood ran hot and we stood and cheered as we had never cheered since Cambridge "rags," or if he has consigned it already with a shrug into the limbo of recorded "copy."

IV

A TOUR ENFORCED

The outbreak of war seemed to strike the British Consulates with mental paralysis. Wherever one went the same answer, "Husband your resources" was the only advice our Consuls could give us. To the hundreds of English who applied for information at Petrograd the same barren advice was offered. When I suggested that the way through Finland still lay open they shrugged their shoulders. The Germans alone were well informed, and they boarded the train to Torneo in their hundreds.

It was a three-day journey to the frontier; three days of weary travelling, of long halts to let the troop-trains pass, nights spent on wayside platforms, chance meals at station buffets, here sandwiches, there coffee, or perhaps a bowl of porridge for those who had the money. Sometimes we

were able to pay two shillings and eat to our hearts' content, but this was rare, and so in the common comfort we made friends, and forgot the international quarrel. Not that any of our foes were jovial. The order had gone out that they must leave Russia. War, for all its suddenness, seemed to hem in every land with mines and armies and hostile fleets. There was no security, no escape, no information to be had. "We only know that we must return," said a German engineer. "But how—oh no, we cannot tell. They say we have captured Helsingfors. Good! But what will happen to me and my wife and children? Gott in Himmel! it is like going through a London fog with your hand outstretched ready to hit against a wall; one never knows what will happen. I hope my country will restrain itself until I am out of this country. Then it may proceed to conquer the world. Otherwise, if it is too victorious now, I may be caught by savage folk and killed, I and my wife and my children. I have three children. They were doing very well at the gymnasium—very well. I was quite satisfied. And now when they return they must accustom themselves to new teachers. Schade!"

We never knew how far we would go each day, and if we would not be turned back. Every one believed that Helsingfors was either being besieged or had actually been taken. At Viborg we waited for hours, never daring to leave the train, which was always just going to start. I spoke to a Finn in Russian and asked him what the trouble was. He shrugged his shoulders and would not answer. I turned to my companion, who in Moscow had assured me he spoke Finnish, and asked him to interpret for me. He failed utterly, but the Finn seemed to wake up from a stupor. "Ho!" he said in the Russian he had only a moment before failed to understand, "you are English. Then I will tell you. They have just arrested here—here on this spot where you stand—a German spy. They are afraid the Germans will attack Finland, and they are digging trenches. They do not think these Germans ought to pass. I hate Germans and I hate Russians," he added, "and I thought you were either one or the other." He then handed me some tobacco seeds to smoke, to show his friendship for an Englishman; but before I had properly lit my pipe, I felt thoroughly ill and had to retire.

Before we left Viborg a guard was mounted over each compartment and soldiers were put on the little platforms of each carriage, while the blinds were pulled down to prevent our seeing what entrenchments were being made. They did not, however, shut the windows, with the result that, when the train started, the wind blew the curtains about and we could observe whatever we wished.

It was a severe land—or, as it seemed to us, a land of lines. At first hills were few and very slight, so that even the grey furrows seldom curved over a hillside, but cut straight lines through the level earth. Perfectly straight pines were the universal background—or rather they formed the backcloth to whatever *scena* was shown—sometimes nearer, sometimes farther, but always pine-trees, and always severely perpendicular. When cut down their straight trunks formed the sides of the log huts, and their straight branches made hedges stiff and unyielding.

Stiff and unyielding, too, was the attitude of the Finns during those days of stress, and it was only by prefixing my Russian remarks with the assertion that I was English that I could induce them to understand me; but

the farther we went from Russia the more beautiful the country became, and the more easily were the Finns induced to smile. We passed through large forests of firs, by beautiful lakes and rivers with logs floating down them, by little wooden villages, the houses painted dull red, their windows and door-posts clean and white; a very pleasant country with its deep green trees, black pools and shadows, little hills and small fields.

After the first day we scrambled for our food with more geniality. Being three Englishmen together, we could achieve some variety in our meals, each specializing in the acquisition of one dish and sharing the spoil, but even so the Germans invariably obtained the best meals.

It was hard to imagine that the Germans were travelling through a hostile country. They refused to rail at the cruelty of it all, the enforced desertion of their homes at a moment's notice, the wearying journey for their wives and children, who cried themselves to sleep and then slept fitfully. They were travelling with a purpose and were imperturbable. Once a Finnish conductor bustled a Teuton. The man flung out with, "When we are your masters——" then

stopped and shrugged his shoulders at the immediate necessity. But the half-spoken threat showed with what thoughts they were consoling themselves. Some, indeed—the poorer ones—had lived long enough in Russia to acquiesce without questioning and without hope. Some had forgotten their native language, had married Russian wives, and had long considered themselves subjects of the Tsar; but the majority were well-to-do sons of the Fatherland, steeling themselves to the present, seizing the best of everything that offered, and patiently biding their time. At Uleaborg seven of them were arrested for travelling without passports. Not one of them protested. They saluted their companions, and said, expressing their belief, and in no spirit of bravado: "We must stay here. Auf wiedersehen," and their friends answered confidently: "We will return. Auf wiedersehen."

At three o'clock one morning, when the sun had already risen, we left the train and were ferried across the river to the frontier. The frontier consists of a dried-up river crossed by a long, narrow wooden bridge. The Russians stamp the passports at one end, the Swedes inspect them at the other,

and a girl in the middle takes toll. When the Swedes had inspected my passport, I turned to watch the long stream of refugees hurrying with their bundles over the bridge, but at what point the transformation had occurred I cannot tell. Transformation there certainly was, for they marched across with a swing, surprising in the cheerless early morning, and seemed to find those knotted bundles—all they had saved of their household gods — mere bagatelles to carry. "Sweden, Sweden!" they said; "now our troubles are over."

They spoke too soon, for there is a break in the railway of some forty miles, and this distance can only be covered by boat. On ridiculously small vessels, that made us all seem disproportionately large, we threaded our way in and out of the myriad islands that form a little archipelago at the north of the Gulf of Bothnia. The boats were crowded to overfilling; there was no food on board except for very few; the voyage lasted for eight hours, while some vessels, fogbound among reefs that are difficult to avoid on a clear day, stayed twenty-four hours in that encumbered sea, with the fog lifting just enough to show them their danger but not the course to take.

There was a Tchek woman on board, trying vainly to soothe her children, who were crying from hunger. As she said, "Directly the fog lifted all our troubles went." To her dying day I believe she will look on the Swedes as angels, imagining they came in answer to a certain prayer of hers; for when the fog lifted we came to Louleo, and there we first met with the Swedish care.

In their scores they came to meet us, and gave up their food, their beds, and houses to the refugees. Next morning, by half-past six, girls had erected stalls and were giving away tea and rolls to all who needed them; and few refused, for it was heartless work beginning another long journey, hungry, in the early morning. Thence for thirty hours we travelled, and at every station the train was besieged by girls with packets of food and bottles of harvesters' beer. "Take it, take it!" they shouted, and if one showed them a packet already received they would answer, "But you will need this to-night. Take it." From miles around provisions for the refugees were brought in by villagers, and they gave joyously, cheering us to the echo as we left. There was a jubilant fresh-

ness in the air, in the country, and in the people themselves, making strong contrast with the growing arrogance of the Germans.

"To Germany's allies, the Swedes," said one, drinking the toast in the beer they had given him. As he gulped it down a train drew up, coming from the opposite direction, and packed so full of Russians that many were sitting, as we had done in Finland, on the platforms of each carriage. For a moment I felt extremely uncomfortable, being myself on the pampered train and expecting to see the Russians treated with indifference, if not with insults, but before the train had slowed down it, too, was besieged by girls, springing up from everywhere and bombarding the Slavs with food.

Of all those who at various times have needed help in strange countries, none have ever needed it more than did these Russians. Hungry, tired, overcrowded, and battered, they made a sorry company. Some Polish girls told me of their mishaps. They had gone to stay with friends who lived but two hours' journey over the German frontier. Without any warning they were detained, managing with difficulty to keep their

jewellery until they were able to exchange it for tickets and food, and so start on their two-thousand-mile journey home. Some women—fifteen of them—had been kept in one compartment, with doors locked and foodless, for eleven hours. The men were bruised and battered and horribly kicked. I heard of three men who had been thrown from the train. One was still alive, they said. Of the others they knew nothing. One man was sitting on the step of his carriage, singing the song of the "Merry Merchant," and playing on an imaginary balalaika. "He has sung that for three days now; you see, they kicked his head," they said, tapping their foreheads.

Train after train of these poor refugees we met, each with the same brutal tale of the journey through Germany. "And people always think that we Russians are so savage," said one. "But what is happening there at home?" I told them the situation as well as I knew it, and assured them that I had seen no German person ill-treated, though the Embassy had been sacked. This pleased them, for the Russians are treating this as a holy war and are anxious to accumulate all the humanity and justice on their side.

At each station where we met a Russian train they came crowding round for all the news I could give them, and it was hard indeed to induce them to speak of their own privations. "What does it matter now?" they said. "We have arrived in Sweden." They spoke of that country as of a haven, forgetting that Sweden is Russia's traditional foe. It was hard, certainly, to believe that those healthy-faced, healthy-hearted persons could be any one's foe. The country seemed too beautiful to nurture any feelings of enmity in its inhabitants, with its mountains and sudden gorges, where the rivers tumble splashing and foaming over rocks, and the logs go careering down the channels or jam against boulders, then burst on again, and the hills on either side rise massive with forests. There the traditions of centuries are more easily forgotten, and foe and friend alike were given of the country's best.

V

A GLIMMER IN THE SKY

It was the plump Arina who asserted that the English were a wild race, and when I remonstrated with her she shrugged her shoulders and said, "In the unknown there always lurks a savage."

I told them at dinner about her opinion of my land, whereat every one laughed—politely, for fear that unless they laughed it would seem that they agreed with her. The laughter trailed away, and after a little silence some one spoke.

"I agree with Arina," he said. "Of course she only speaks from a mistrust of the unknown, but all Western Europe is rather bloodthirsty, I think. I used to learn your history, and it was nothing but one war after another. Civilization could not stop it; you only got worse, because civili-

zation gave you better opportunities for fighting. You never stopped. Think of it, you had a war that lasted for a hundred years! Western Europe has hardly ever been without a war somewhere. Yes, Arina is right; you are a wild people, you English, very bellicose in comparison with us, the sleepy Russians."

I remember being very shocked at the idea that any of the countless wars that England had waged had ever been of her own making. I liked to think of England as a peace-loving country, as I had been taught to think of her; but, alas! I read a French history, and found that France also was a peace-loving country. Their hypocrisy was thinly veiled, for their battles were almost as gloriously announced as they are in our English histories. In short, war for both countries is a thing of tradition.

Sitting on the jetty at Happoranda, the most northern port of the Gulf of Bothnia, I first heard how England was taking the present war. A Russian returning from London told us what England was thinking of it all. "At least," he said, "England is not thinking of it. She is thinking of the next war which must be made quite im-

possible. Every one is saying, 'Never again.' Oh, you wonderful English!"

By the time I had returned England had found another catch-phrase. Out of the unknown there had come a mighty Army—an Army of enthusiastic soldiers, eager, splendid, invincible. For the first time in the minds of many Russia assumed a definite shape, the shape of an immensurable army, swarming up out of vague steppes, filled with an enthusiasm for war that seemed a frenzied bloodthirstiness, and creating a field for every rumour among allies and pale fear in the hearts of enemies.

Their zest for battle seemed almost indecent, their preparations shocked the mind brought up to believe that "the Russian is clever, but always too late." The land of the Tsar sprang out of the mist of the picturesque and the mediæval to show itself a vital Power. "They've only to taste blood and they'll turn into the savages they really are," said our alarmists. "Under their beastly bureaucracy they're just as full of militarism as the Germans. Look at the way they've gone to war! They are a positive menace to the peace of Europe. After Germany—Russia."

If there were a concerted movement to gag every alarmist, the world would be an infinitely more peaceful place. The alarmists are the real menace to the peace of Europe. Every man who admits the possibility of a war is adding to the cause of it, for the cause is fear. Every man who says, "After Germany—Russia," is but voicing the maxim of Arina, the plump servant, "In the unknown there always lurks a savage." That is the whole gospel of fear, and it is an easy one to preach.

The conclusion that Russia will threaten our peace is based on several rather important assumptions: firstly, that the Slavs are a bellicose race; secondly, that victory will send them into a fine frenzy of war fever, that they will go military mad in the fashion of all victorious Western States; and, lastly, that their bureaucracy has the same command over their souls as over their bodies, in the tyrannous Russian fashion.

It has been argued that as the German victories in 1870 produced in Germany an intolerably strong military tyranny, so will Russia, if now victorious, increase the prestige of her bureaucracy and give added power into their hands. In the first place,

it was not Prussia's victories that drove the Germans military mad, but rather their seizure of Alsace-Lorraine forced them to maintain an immense army to protect themselves against the inevitable French retaliation. Even supposing that the Russian bureaucrats become inspired with dreams of Imperial aggrandizement, they realize, if we do not, the impossibility of forcing the Russian people into a war that does not appeal to them. The Japanese War taught that lesson, for the Slav is the least aggressive of all nations. The Russian bureaucrat, like the Tsar, is by no means a pure Slav, if a Slav at all ; but the real Slav through centuries has been content to live his own life, playing almost no part in European politics, playing less and less as he grows more civilized—an idealist, indolent, improvident, the champion of lost causes, faithful as a child, and eternally the protector of his brother Slav. No nation might have had so large an influence in the perpetual wranglings of Europe as Russia. No nation has been more indifferent to the world's doings outside her borders, and unless civilization has the effect of turning a peaceful people into a warlike race, there is no reason

why the Russians should change their national trait and threaten the peace of Europe.

The bear, they say, is only dangerous when her cubs are attacked, and the bear is the symbol of Russia. The Russian Government may be waging war on Austria and Germany, as they waged it in '77 against Turkey, but the Russian people care nothing for these political names; they are fighting fanatically, as they fought then, against the oppressors of the Slavs, for the call of the Slav is their vital instinct. They are fighting, not for the Russia that is bounded on the east by the China Sea and on the west by the Baltic, but for that Russia which is boundless, the Russia that "can exist without any of us, but without which we cannot exist," the mystic, intangible Kathleen na Houlihan of the Slavs, Holy Russia.

I have tried to give a picture of Russia in wartime. I had come back and found it a country simmering with discontent. The apathy had gone; people spoke freely of revolution; the barricades of Petrograd seemed to portend that at last the poor would rise and shake off their encumbrances and be free. On the journey from Riga to

Moscow I jotted down notes of the conversation, feeling that I was among the Jacques and Defarges of a Russian revolution. And then came war—war, obliterating everything, obsessing men with the ideal of their freemasonry, compelling them to leave all and fight; war, grim, devastating war, and yet, if such a thing be possible, holy war, the war of brotherhood against oppression—for once men, and fighting by a higher instinct, the instinct not of brute nature but of human nature. A defensive feeling is the driving force — the defence, not of traditions but of ideals. That is the main difference between the Russian soldier and the German. The Slav ideals were bound to come one day into conflict with Prussian traditions. It is the war of the hopes of to-morrow against the teaching of yesterday, of mysticism against the rule of thumb.

Nor is it that alone. Patriotism is too universal and too intimate for words. "I have a feeling——" said a Russian to me once, on his return, and stopped for lack of expression. It is a feeling, a mystery of blood, an ideal, the religion of those people to whom the earth is a holy mother, and the smell of it, and the shape of it, and the yield

of it, and the changeless comfort of it, mould and hold the hearts of generations. Though the past inspires man, it is the future that beckons him into the lists. We were children, all of us, playing with theories, deluding ourselves with pretended aims and strivings, forcing our growth by small ideals, secure and puerile; then suddenly our security was shattered and we grew up. Though we guessed it not, we are idealists through and through. We have seen, as in a mirror, darkly; but now we see face to face. Our ideals stand clear before us.

And Russia? Those say, who study that land from a distance, that Russia will follow in the footsteps of Germany and be a greater menace than ever the Prussian has become. They assume that the bureaucracy will bend the people to its will, and inspire them with dreams of noble Empire, bidding them call upon the world to stand and deliver. They assume that the bureaucracy has servitors of Prussian fibre, and that the people, having found themselves and the power of their unity, will yet submit again to their old subservience. They assume that the ideal of Holy Russia that has flamed up and kindled the hearts of millions will turn into a selfish

creed that actually has no meaning for them. They discount the eternal strivings of the Slav to unite against oppression.

Throughout the ages this has been their way of warring, and it is well that now the Cossacks have returned to their old state of free men fighting for their fellows' freedom. In olden times, when Russia was harassed by Tartars from the east and Poles from the west and Turks from the south, and little tyrannies were manifold, and princes were capricious autocrats, there gathered together a rabble of men—outlaws, robbers, patriots, refugees, murderers, adventurers, jacks-of-all-trades, rebels—in short, all those who by fault, misfortune, or temperament had to find themselves a haven from their particular spheres of life. So, gathering together, they formed themselves into two groups, some of the village, the others roamers, the latter being as strict and chivalrous a body of men as have ever roamed the world in search of wrongs to right. The Tartars called them *kasaki* (free men), and so they remained, drunken in peace, teetotalers in war, boisterous, honourable, honest, celibates, courteous to women, merry knight-errants, ever seeking a joust with

tyranny in no matter what cause. But that splendid confederacy for long has lost its old glory. The Cossacks, since Peter the Great, have been enlisted in the ranks of their people's oppressors.

Free men still, they pay for their freedom from taxation by lifelong military service to the Tsar. They no longer choose their own foes; their high traditions have long lain dormant, until now the cry that of old struck terror into the heart of misrule is heard again, echoed, not with dismay by crowds of peasants and students demanding their rights, but by a people who have sought to subdue Europe to a callous Imperialism—"The Cossacks are coming—the Cossacks!"

To-day the old *Kazachestvo* (the Cossack spirit) is the spirit of United Russia. It is the impulse of the race—eternal, obliterating all the smaller factions.

If Russians have found themselves now in time of war, it seems an idle prophecy to say that they will lose themselves again in peace. They find that their will is irresistible, when they but know their will and act as one man. Before them now lie two courses—to relapse into their old indolence

or to mass together and strike for liberty. It is argued by many that Russia stands no greater chance of gaining her freedom now than in 1905, attributing the failure of that revolution to the ramifications and power of officialdom. But the officials are only Russians, after all; they are not a distinct people as the Prussians are in Germany. The Poles preferred the severe Russian rule to the no more severe German rule because the Russians were far less capable of carrying out their severity. These indolent, inefficient officials serve a partially foreign bureaucracy for their bread-and-butter, and serve it badly, despite their immense organization. Even the bureaucracy has no cohesion: the bureaux are ever at variance with each other. The reason that the last revolution failed was because the people did not know what they wanted; moreover, it only failed inasmuch as it did not sweep away the bureaucracy and establish its own rule, and so provide every opportunity for reaction. The results were, indeed, small in comparison with the hopes men held of it; yet a revolution is often only successful when it fails, and the great result of the upheaval in 1905 was that it set men talking, and has

left them talking for nearly ten years, so that at last the Russian people are beginning to know what they want.

I do not pretend to know how far these small unrests and desires have grown into real yearnings for a better state. One can only judge from here a little scene and there a fragment of a man's ideals guessed at in a wayside conversation. Yet all the Russia that I know, or of which I hear, seems eager with new hopes and new ambitions. The result of the war will probably affect the progress and evolution of Russia more than that of any other country. For centuries it has lain dormant, its greatness has been deferred, and by the world forgotten. A darkness has lain over the land, like the darkness of its numbing winter ; but now there seems to be a glimmer in the sky—a glimmer of hope, after all these years of patience, a spark of that idealism that lit the motley Cossacks to their crusades against oppression, and in later years fired the student crowds to fresh endeavours and self-sacrifice in their eternal quest to find the talisman for a Lighter Russia.

Many of these sketches have already appeared in the following publications, to the courtesy of whose Editors I am indebted for permission to reprint: The Morning Post, The Westminster Gazette, Nash's Magazine, and The Daily News, in which last the majority have been published.

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