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PETER THE GREAT

BY

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AUTHOR OF 'THE ROMANCE OF AN EMPRESS'

'THE STORY OF A THRONE,' ETC.

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I

PETER THE GREAT was the heir and the follower of predecessors whose merit has been too easily forgotten. He

was certainly, and incomparably, their superior, although, in certain respects, he lacked completeness. From these predecessors he inherited a double programme of internal reform, and external expansion. He first turned his attention to the latter.

My readers will readily understand that I have not allowed myself to be wholly swayed, in the arrangement of this book, by a desire for chronological exactness. The greater number of the reforms which changed the whole face of eighteenth century Russia, politically, economically, and socially, belonged to the last years of Peter's reign. This does not alter the fact that their importance, from the historic point of view, far outweighs that of the victory of Poltava and the Conquest of the Baltic. The foremost place in this work is not occupied by the general minutiæ of dates. Quite a different consideration has inspired me. I do not at all believe that the long succession of battles and negotiations, which, until 1721, almost entirely absorbed the Reformer's activity, were the preliminary condition which must necessarily have preceded his reforms. I am, on the contrary, convinced, and I will endeavour to prove it, that they were the indirect, but inevitable, or, as some may prefer to say, the providential, outcome of that struggle. In other words, the existence of the reforms did not depend on the war. But without them, the war could not have been carried on. Thus, all I have done is to put the plough behind the oxen.

From the year 1693, to 1698, Peter, whether in Holland or in England, at Voronèje or Archangel, had turned his first endeavours to becoming a first-rate seaman, a thorough pilot, carpenter, and artillery man. And why? First and foremost because it amused him. This is clear. He played at being a soldier and a sailor, but, by degrees, a more serious idea,—the consciousness of his ancestral traditions and the duties they imposed upon him—was combined with mere amusement, and, in the end, reality won the day. But this reality was actual war. From 1700 to 1709, his one object,—and he had no time to think of any other,—was to vanquish Charles XII., or die fighting him. From 1709 to 1721, his life was one ceaseless struggle, as much to obtain an advantageous peace, as to extricate himself from the fresh difficulties and dangers into which his own presump-

tuousness, and over-confidence, had thrown him. And here we see the result. The Tsar, in the pursuance of the course on which he had so thoughtlessly entered, was driven to call upon his country for an amount of assistance far beyond anything that Russian resources, in their then condition, political, economic, or social, were capable of furnishing. The ancient foundations of the Muscovite edifice snapped and crumbled, weighed down on one side, and undermined on the other, by the huge weight cast on them, and the enormous effort demanded. Thus an abyss opened which had to be instantly filled, no matter how,—for war brooks no delay. So it came about, that, wellnigh unconsciously, and in spite of himself, the warrior grew into an organiser and reformer. His reforms were the makeshift ammunition with which he loaded his cannon, when the contents of his artillery waggons were exhausted.

I shall later dwell more fully on this point of view—an all-important one for the due understanding of the great Tsar's work.

I possess no knowledge of the art of war, and shall not attempt to bring ridicule on myself, by pretending to give a complete picture, or a reasoned criticism, of those campaigns which, between 1700 and 1721, robbed Sweden of her position in Europe, and gave Russia hers. And the intended scope of this work would not, indeed, permit it. My sole endeavour will be to point out the historical bearings of the well-known events which mark this epoch, and so to cast a clearer light on the object of this special study of mine—I mean the personal features of the great man, as I have sketched them in the preceding pages, and those of his reign, which I shall now proceed to consider.

It would appear that it was not till Peter's visit to Vienna, in 1698, that he conceived the idea of attacking Sweden. Up till that time, his warlike impulse had rather been directed southwards, and the Turk had been the sole object of his enmity. But, at Vienna, he perceived that the Emperor, whose help he had counted on, had failed him, and forthwith the mobile mind of the young Tsar turned to the right-about. A war he must have, of some kind, it little mattered where, to give work to his young army. The warlike instincts and the greed of his predecessors, tempted sometimes by the Black Sea, sometimes by the Baltic, and the border provinces of

Poland, had, indeed, always swung and turned back and forward, between the south and the north. These alternate impulses, natural enough in a nation so full of youth and strength, have, since those days, been most unnecessarily idealised, erected into a doctrine, and dignified as a work of unification. It must be acknowledged that every nation has, at one time or the other, thus claimed the right to resume the national patrimony, at the expense of neighbouring peoples, and Peter, by some lucky fate, remained, in this respect, within certain bounds of justice, of logic, and of truth. Absorbed and almost exhausted, as he soon became, by the desperate effort demanded by his war in the North, he forgot or imperilled much that the conquering ambition of his predecessors had left him in the South and West. He clung to the territory already acquired on the Polish side, retired from the Turkish border, and claimed what he had most right, relatively speaking, to claim, in the matter of resumption, on his north-western frontier.

On that frontier, the coast country between the mouth of the Narva, or Narova, and that of the Siestra, watered by the Voksa, the Neva, the Igora, and the Louga, was really an integral part of the original Russian patrimony. It was one of the five districts (*piatiny*) of the Novgorod territory, and was still full of towns, bearing Slavonic names, such as Koréla, Ojéshek, Ladoga, Koporié, Iamy, and Ivangrod. It was not till 1616, that the Tsar Michael Féodorovitch, during his struggle with Gustavus Adolphus, finally abandoned the sea coast, for the sake of keeping his hold on Novgorod. But so strong was the hope of recovering the lost territory, in the hearts of his descendants, that, after the failure of an attempt on Livonia, in Alexis' reign, a Boyard named Ordin-Nashtchokin set to work to build a number of warships at Kokenhausen, on the Dvina, which vessels were intended for the conquest of Riga.[1] Peter had an impression, confused it may be, but yet powerful, of these historic traditions. This is proved by the direction in which he caused his armies to march, after he had thrown down the gauntlet to Sweden. He strayed off the path, swayed, as he often was, by sudden impulses, but he always came back to the traditional aim of his forefathers,—access to the sea, a Baltic port, '*a window open upon Europe*.'

[1] Viessiélago, *Summary of a History of the Russian Fleet*, vol. i. p. 7.

His interview with Augustus II. at Rawa definitely settled his wavering mind. The *pacta conventa*, signed by the King of Poland when he ascended his throne, bound him to claim the territories which had formerly belonged to the Republic, from the King of Sweden. For this end the help of Denmark could be reckoned on. The Treaty of Roeskilde (1658), which had been forced on Frederick III., weighed heavily on his successors, and the eager glances fixed by the neighbouring states on Holstein, after the death of Christian Albert, in 1694, threatened to end in quarrel. There were fair hopes, too, of the help of Brandenburg. When Sweden made alliance with Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon, that country abandoned its historic position in Germany to Prussia. But Sweden still kept some footing, and was looked on as a rival. The Elector had offered his services at the Königsberg meeting. Further, Augustus had a personal charm for Peter, sufficient, in itself, to prove how much simplicity, inexperience, and boyish thoughtlessness still existed, in that half polished mind. The Polish sovereign, tall, strong, and handsome, an adept in all physical exercises, a great hunter, a hard drinker, and an indefatigable admirer of the fair sex, in whose person debauch of every kind took royal proportions, delighted the Tsar, and somewhat overawed him. He was more than inclined to think him a genius, and was quite ready to bind up his fortunes with his friend's. At the end of four days of uninterrupted feasting, they had agreed on the division of the spoils of Sweden, and had made a preliminary exchange of arms and clothing. The Tsar appeared at Moscow, a few weeks later, wearing the King of Poland's waistcoat, and belted with his sword.[1] Yet, so far, there was no actual plan, either of alliance or of campaign. The two friends and future allies had, each of them, too much to do at home to be able to seek adventures abroad. Augustus had more than enough trouble with his ungovernable Poles, and had not yet settled his account with the partisans of the Prince de Conti. There was headsman's work for Peter to do. The *Streltsy* had chosen that moment to break into open revolt.

Neither monarch was to give the final summons to arms. Neither was to have the merit of giving shape to the triple or quadruple coalition, which, for the next two years,

[1] Oustrialof, vol. iii. p. 622.

was to rise up threateningly before the drawn sword of Charles XII. This was to be the work of a Swede, or at all events of a Swedish subject. The Rawa interview took place in August 1698, and, in October, John Reinhold Patkul appeared upon the scene. This Livonian gentleman, who came into the world, in 1660, in a prison cell (his father, in consequence of the cession of Wolmar to the Poles, had been arrested, and, with his mother, imprisoned at Stockholm, on a charge of high treason), would seem to have been marked from birth for some tragic destiny. Bold and ambitious, passionate and eager, he had all the qualities of a tragedy hero. A rivalry in some love affair early set him at variance with the Swedish Governor of his province, Helmersen. Soon afterwards, goaded partly, no doubt, by personal spite, he became the champion of the Livonian aristocracy against Charles XI. He was a man who could dress his passions up, and then deceive himself as to the reality of the disguise. He was prosecuted, condemned to death by default, in 1696, and took refuge at Prangins, in Switzerland, whence Fleming, Augustus' favourite minister, attracted him to Warsaw. There he arrived, with his coalition plan ready drawn up; he proposed that Brandenburg, Denmark, Russia, and Poland should ally themselves against Sweden, and that the price of Poland's adhesion should be the Province of Livonia. Russia was to be rewarded with the possession of other provinces on the coast, and the Livonian had taken good care minutely to circumscribe the allotted territory. Then, and always, he mistrusted Muscovy, and advised that her 'hands should be firmly tied, lest she should devour the morsel we have cooked.' [1]

Augustus was easily enticed. Frederick IV. of Denmark, whose eyes were fixed on Holstein, only needed a little encouragement. The Primate of Poland, Radziejowski, was bought over with the sum of 100,000 ducats; and matters soon began to move. A secret article of the Treaty, signed by Patkul, in the name of the nobles of his country, guaranteed the possession of Livonia to Augustus and his heirs, even in the case of their losing the Polish throne. This article was not communicated to Radziejowski.[2] The Saxon General, Karlowicz, was sent to Moscow, to arrange matters definitely

[1] *Patkuls Berichte* (Berlin, 1802); Bernoulli, Memoranda dated Jan. 1 and Ap. 7, 1699.

[2] Szujski, *History of Poland*, vol. iv. p. 169.

with the Tsar, and Patkul accompanied him, under a feigned name. At Moscow they fell in with the Ambassadors of the new King of Sweden, Charles XII., who had come to obtain confirmation of the Peace of Kardis (1660). They had been well received by Peter, who, however, dropped some complaints, now officially formulated for the first time, as to the ill-treatment of his Ambassadors during their temporary stay at Riga. Clearly he was even then seeking a pretext for a rupture, and was only waiting to secure himself on the Turkish side, before throwing off the mask. The Treaty of Karlovitz, which, in spite of the efforts of the French Envoy, Chateauneuf, had been signed on the 26th of January 1699, and which had reconciled the Porte with the Empire and with Poland, had gained nothing for Russia, beyond a two years' amnesty. The Tsar had sent Oukraïntsof as his plenipotentiary to Constantinople, to endeavour to convert this amnesty into a definite peace. On the 11th November 1699, Peter, confident of the success of this negotiation, called the Polish and Danish Ministers to his little country house at Préobrajenskoïe, and there signed, with them, a secret treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive. In this Treaty, Augustus only figured as the Elector of Saxony. But the Tsar continued to fondle the Swedes, for Oukraïntsof worked but slowly. In the beginning of 1700, Augustus and Frederick, faithful to their engagement, went to war; but Peter, bound though he was to follow their example, neither moved nor stirred. Frederick was beaten, his very Capital was threatened. So much the worse for him! Augustus seized on Dünamünde, but utterly failed before Riga. All the better for the Russians; Riga was left for them! Another Saxon General, Langen, came hurrying to Moscow. The Tsar listened coolly to his reproaches, and replied that he would act as soon as the news from Constantinople permitted it. The negotiations were proceeding satisfactorily, and he hoped shortly to fulfil his promise, and to attack the Swedes in the neighbourhood of Pskof. This was a point on which Patkul had laid great stress, and Peter had studiously avoided contradicting him. It was quite understood between them that the Tsar was not to lay a finger on Livonia.[1] At last,

[1] Oustrialof, vol. iii. pp. 375-377. Van der Hulst, Dutch Resident at Moscow, to the Registrar of the States-General, 3rd Aug., 8th Sept., 1700 (Archives at the Hague).

on the 8th of August 1700, Oukraïntsof's courier arrived with the longed-for despatch. Peace with Turkey was signed at last, and that very day the Russian troops received their marching orders. But they were not sent towards Pskof. They marched on Narva, in the very heart of the Livonian country.

Peter's war manifesto dwells, with superb impudence, on the grievances with which his visit to Riga had armed him. Three weeks later, Matviéief, his Envoy in Holland, who had not yet had time to receive the necessary warning, was still assuring the States General that the Tsar had no idea of taking armed vengeance for the humiliations imposed on his *Ambassadors*.[1] It would now appear that it was the Tsar himself, in spite of his incognito, who had been insulted, and that the Sovereign was going to war to avenge the ill-treatment of Peter Mihaïlof!

The army destined to lay siege to Narva consisted of three divisions of novel formation, under the orders of three Generals, Golovin, Weyde, and Repnin, with 10,500 Cossacks, and some irregular troops,—63,520 men in all. Repnin's division, numbering 10,834 men, and the Little Russian Cossacks, stopped on the way, so that the actual force at disposal was reduced to about 40,000 men.[2] But Charles XII. could not bring more than 5300 infantry, and 3130 cavalry, to the relief of the town. And, being obliged, when he neared Wesemburg, to which point Shérémétief's cavalry had already advanced, to throw himself in flying column across a country which was already completely devastated, and, consequently, to carry all his supplies with him, his troops arrived in presence of an enemy five times as numerous as themselves, worn out, and completely exhausted, by a succession of forced marches.[3]

Peter never dreamt that he would find the King of Sweden in Livonia. He believed his hands were more than full enough, elsewhere, with the King of Denmark; he was quite unaware that the Peace of Travendal, which had been signed on the very day of the departure of the Russian troops, had been already forced upon his ally. He started off gaily at the head of his Bombardier Company, full of expectation of an

[1] Memoranda, Sept. 2, 1700 (Dutch Archives).
[2] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 9.
[3] Hansen, *Geschichte der Stadt Narwa* (Dorpat, 1858), p. 144.

easy victory. When he arrived before the town on the 23rd of September, he was astounded to find any preparations for serious defence. A regular siege had to be undertaken, and when, after a month of preparations, the Russian batteries at last opened fire, they made no impression whatever. The artillery was bad, and yet more badly served. A second month passed, during which Peter waited and hoped for some piece of luck, either for an offer to recapitulate, or for the arrival of Repnin's force. What did happen was, that on the night of the 17th of November, news came that within twenty-four hours the King of Sweden would be at Narva.

That very night, Peter fled from his camp, leaving the command to the Prince de Croy.

None of the arguments brought forward by the Sovereign and his apologists, in justification of this step, appear to me to hold water. The necessity pleaded for an interview with the Duke of Poland,—the Tsar's desire to hasten on Repnin's march,—are mere pitiful excuses. Langen and Hallart, the Generals sent by Augustus to observe the military operations in Livonia, gravely reported that the Tsar had been obliged to go to Moscow to receive a Turkish Envoy,—who was not expected for four months! The Emperor's Envoy, Pleyer, is nearer the mark, when he says the Sovereign obeyed the entreaties of his advisers, who considered the danger too great for him to be permitted to remain.[1] And Hallart himself, speaking of these same counsellors, whether ministers or generals, does not hesitate to declare, in his rough, soldierly language, that 'they have about as much courage as a frog has hair on his belly.'[2] The Russian army, disconcerted by the unexpected resistance of the Swedes, ill-prepared for resistance, ill-commanded, ill-lodged, and ill-fed, was already demoralised to the last extent. The arrival of Charles caused a panic, and from that panic, Peter, the most impressionable of men, was the first to suffer. The orders he left with the Prince de Croy give all-sufficient proof of the disordered condition of his mind. They enjoined him, *in the first place*, to await the arrival of the artillery ammunition, lacking at the moment, before he attempted to assault the town; and, *in the second*, to endeavour to seize the place before the arrival of the King of Sweden, of the imminence of which he must

[1] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 34.
[2] Herrman, *Geschichte Russlands*, vol. iv. p. 116.

have been well aware, since that it was which drove him into flight![1]

Prince Charles Eugène de Croy was far from being a poor commander. He had served fifteen years in the Emperor's armies, had won the grade of Lieutenant Field-Marshal under Charles of Lorraine; had taken part, in 1683, in the relief of Vienna under Sobieski, and thus lacked neither experience nor authority. But he had only just reached the Russian camp with a message from the King of Poland, he knew nothing of the army which was put into his hands, he had no acquaintance with its leaders, and could not even speak their language. The one fault that can be laid to his charge, is that he ever accepted the command, and that fault was expiated by his death at Revel two years later, a prisoner, and stripped of everything he possessed.

The startling rapidity with which Charles had rid himself of the weakest of his three adversaries, under the very walls of Copenhagen, would have been less astonishing to Peter if the young sovereign had better realised the conditions under which he and his allies had begun a struggle in which, at first sight, their superiority appeared so disproportionate. King Frederick had reckoned without the Powers which had guaranteed the recent Treaty of Altona, by which the safety of Holstein was ensured,—without the Hanoverian troops, and those of Lüneburg, which at once brought succour to Toeningen,—without the Anglo-Dutch fleet, which forced his to seek shelter under the walls of Copenhagen, and thus permitted the King of Sweden to cross the Sound unmolested, and land quietly in Zealand; and finally, he reckoned, and for this he may well be excused, without that which was soon to fill all Europe with terror and amazement, —the lucky star, and the military genius, of Charles XII.

This monarch,—born in 1682, ten years after Peter, who had slain bears when he was sixteen, and, at eighteen, was a finished soldier, greedy for glory, and battle, and blood,—was the last representative of that race of men, who, between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, held all Central Europe in their iron grip;—fierce warriors, who steeped Germany and Italy in fire and blood, fought their way from town to town, and hamlet to hamlet, giving no truce, and showing no mercy, who lived for war, and by war,

[1] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 35.

grew old, and died in harness, in a very atmosphere of carnage, with bodies riddled with wounds, with hands stained with abominable crimes, but with spirits calm and unflinching to the last. Standing on the threshold of the new period, he was the superb and colossal incarnation of that former one, which, happily for mankind, was to disappear in his person. Count Guiscard, who, as envoy from the King of France, accompanied him on his first campaign, describes him thus: —'The King of Sweden is of tall stature,—taller than myself by almost a head; he is very handsome, he has fine eyes and a good complexion, his face is long, his speech a little thick. He wears a small wig tied behind in a bag, a plain stock, without cravat, a very tight jerkin of plain cloth, with sleeves as narrow as our waistcoat sleeves, a narrow belt above this jerkin, with a sword of extraordinary length and thickness, and almost perfectly flat-soled shoes —a very strange style of dress for a prince of his age.'[1] This description is too hasty, and only skin-deep. That of the English Envoy, Stepney, written some years later, is more expressive:—'He is a tall and well-built monarch, but somewhat slovenly. His manners are the roughest imaginable, in so young a man. In order that the exterior of his quarters may not belie their interior, he has chosen the dirtiest place, and one of the gloomiest houses, in all Saxony. The cleanest and neatest part of it is the courtyard in front of the house, where every one must get off his horse, and immediately sink up to his knees in mud. In this court are all his own horses, merely fastened with halters, with sacks over them instead of horse-cloths, and without either racks or mangers. They have staring coats, round bellies, heavy hind quarters, and badly kept tails, with the hair all of different lengths. The groom who takes care of them is no better dressed nor fed than his horses; one of these is always kept ready saddled for the monarch, who will constantly jump on its back, and rush off at full gallop before any one can follow him. He will sometimes ride ten or twelve German miles, which equal forty-eight or fifty English, in a day, and this even in the winter, when he comes in as muddy as any postillion. He wears a blue coat with yellow copper buttons, the corners of his jerkin are turned back in front and behind to show his waistcoat and his leather breeches, which

[1] Despatch, Aug. 19, 1699 (French Foreign Office, Sweden).

are frequently very greasy. His cravat is made of a piece of black crape, but the collar of his overcoat buttons up so high that no one can see whether he wears a cravat or not. His shirt and wristbands are generally very dirty, and he never wears cuffs or gloves, except on horseback. His hands are the same colour as his wristbands, so that you can hardly tell one from the other. His hair is light brown, very short and greasy, and he never combs it, except with his fingers. He sits down, without the smallest ceremony, on any chair he finds in the dining-room . . . he eats very quickly, never spends more than a quarter of an hour at table, and never says one word during the meal . . . he never drinks anything but small beer . . . he has no sheets nor canopy to his bed, the mattress beneath him serves also to cover him, he rolls it round him . . . beside his bed, there is a very handsome gilded Bible, the only thing about him that is the least showy.'[1]

This time, the figure stands out clearly enough. Stern, fierce, and wild.

The landing in Zealand was a piece of boyish temerity. Guiscard, imprudent as he thought it, did not dissuade the monarch, and even threw himself into the water with him, so as to reach the shore more quickly. 'Your Majesty would not have me leave your Court on this, its greatest day!'

The descent on Livonia, regardless of the fact that bad weather had prevented the landing of some of the Swedish regiments, was held by the French Diplomat, intrepid though he was, as an act of madness. 'There is great reason to fear the King will not survive it,' he wrote.[2] In order to reach Narva with his 8000 men, Charles, after having crossed a tract of desert country, was obliged, at a place called Pyhaïoggi, to cross a narrow valley, divided by a stream, which, if it had been fortified, must have stopped him short. The idea occurred to Gordon, but Peter would not listen to him, and it was not till the very last moment that he sent Shérémétief, who found the Swedes just debouching into the valley, received several volleys of grape shot, and retired in disorder. The mad venture had succeeded. But Charles's further advance involved the playing of a risky game. His men were worn out, his horses had

[1] Lamberty's *Memoirs* (The Hague, 1724), vol. iv. p. 438.
[2] Nov. 2, 1700, from Revel (French Foreign Office, Sweden).

not been fed for two whole days.[1] Still he went on; he reached Narva, formed his Swedes into several attacking columns, led one himself, and, favoured by a sudden hurricane, which drove showers of blinding snow into his adversaries' faces, threw himself into their camp, and mastered the place in half an hour. The only resistance he met was offered by the two regiments of the Guard. All the rest fled or surrendered. A few Russians were drowned in the Narva. 'If the river had been frozen,' said Charles discontentedly, 'I do not know that we should have contrived to kill a single man.'

It was a total breakdown; the army had disappeared, and the artillery. The very sovereign was gone, and with him, the country's honour. That had sunk out of sight amidst the scornful laughter with which Europe hailed this undignified defeat. The Tsar was in full flight. All Peter's plans of conquest, his dreams of European expansion, and of navigating the Northern Seas, his hopes of glory, his faith in his civilising mission, had utterly faded. And he himself had collapsed upon their heaped-up ruins. Onward he fled, feeling the Swedish soldiers on his heels. He wept, he sued for peace, vowing he would treat at once and submit to any sacrifice, he sent imploring appeals to the States-General of Holland, to England and to the Emperor, praying for mediation.[2]

But swiftly he recovered possession of his faculties. Then, raising his head,—through the golden haze with which his insufficient education, the infatuation inherent to his semi-oriental origin, and his inexperience, had filled his eyes, through the rent of that mighty catastrophe and that cruel lesson,—he saw and touched the truth at last! He realised what he must set himself to do, if he was to become that which he fain would be. There must be no more playing at soldiers and sailors,—no more of that farce of power and glory, in which, till now, he had been the chief actor,—no more aimless adventure, undertaken in utter scorn of time and place. He must toil, now, in downright earnest,—he must go forward, step by step,—measure each day's effort, calculate each morrow's task, let each fruit ripen ere he

[1] Sarauw, *Die Feldzüge Karls XII.* (Leipzig, 1881), p. 551; Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 181.

[2] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 77

essayed to pluck it, learn patience, and dogged perseverance. He did it all. He found means within him, and about him, to carry out his task. The strong, long-enduring, long-suffering race of which he came, endowed him with the necessary qualities, and gave him its own inexhaustible and never-changing devotion, and self-sacrifice.

Ten armies may be destroyed, he will bring up ten others to replace them, no matter what the price. His people will follow him, and die beside him, to the last man, to the last morsel of bread snatched from its starving jaws. A month hence, the fugitive from Narva will belong to a vanished, forgotten, almost improbable past,—the future victor of Poltava will have taken his place.

II

Of the Russian army, as it had originally taken the field, about three and twenty thousand men remained,—a certain number of troops,—the cavalry under Shérémétief's command, and Repnin's division. The Tsar ordered fresh levies. He melted the church bells into cannon.[1] In vain the clergy raised the cry of sacrilege; he never faltered for a moment. He went hither and thither, giving orders, and active help,—rating some, encouraging others, inspiring every one with some of his own energy,—that energy which his misfortunes had spurred and strengthened. Yet, Byzantine as he was by nature, he could not resist the temptation to endeavour to mislead public opinion. Matviéief was given orders to draw up his own special description of the Battle of Narva and its consequences, for the benefit of the readers of the *Gazette de Hollande*, and of the Memoranda which he himself addressed to the States General. The Swedes, according to this account, had been surrounded by a superior force, within the Russian camp, and had there been forced to capitulate; after which event, certain Russian officers, who had desired to pay their respects to the King of Sweden, had been treacherously seized, by his orders.[2] Europe only laughed, but in later years this pretended capitulation, and the supposed Swedish violation of it, was to serve Peter as a pretext for violating others, to which he himself had willingly

[1] Solovief, vol. xiv. p. 327.

[2] Lamberty, vol. i. p. 263.

consented.[1] At Vienna, too, Count Kaunitz listened with a smile, while Prince Galitzin explained that the Tsar 'needed no victories to prove his military glory.' Yet, when the Vice-Chancellor inquired what conditions the Tsar hoped to obtain from his victorious adversary, the Russian Diplomat calmly claimed the greater part of Livonia, with Narva, Ivangrod, Kolyvan, Koporić, and Derpt,[2]—and future events were to prove that he had not asked too much.

Before long, this boldness began to reap its own reward. To begin with, Charles XII. made no immediate attempt to pursue his advantage on Russian soil; Peter had the joy of seeing him plunge into the depths of the Polish plains. The King of Sweden's decision, which, we are told, did not tally with his Generals' opinion, has been severely criticised. Guiscard thought it perfectly justifiable, so long as the king had not rid himself of Augustus, by means of the peace which this prince appeared more than willing to negotiate, through the mediation of Guiscard himself. But Charles turned a deaf ear to the French Diplomat's prayers and remonstrances. He feared, declares Guiscard, 'he might run short of enemies,'[3] and as he could not advance on Russia, and leave the Saxons and Poles in his rear, he desired,—and here doubtless he was right,—first of all to ensure his line of communication, and of possible retreat. Thus, by his own deed, he strengthened and cemented an alliance which had already been shaken by common defeat. Augustus, repulsed by the Swedish king, threw himself into Peter's arms, and in February 1701, the common destinies of the Tsar and the King of Poland were once more bound together. A fresh treaty was signed at the Castle of Birzé, close to Dünaburg.

The Castle, now a mere ruin, then the property of the young wife of the Count Palatine of Neuburg, a Princess Radziwill, was a very magnificent residence. The allies' first care was to renew the delights of their meeting at Rawa. Peter, though beaten in the forenoon as an artillery marksman (see page 81, *ante*), took his revenge at the evening banquet. Augustus drank so much wine that it was impossible, next morning, to rouse him and get him on his feet, in time for Mass. Peter attended it alone, listened

[1] Lamberty, vol. vi. p. 288.
[2] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 84.
[3] Despatch dated June 1, 1701 (French Foreign Office, Sweden).

devoutly to the service (which was Catholic, of course, being in Poland), and manifested his usual curiosity concerning liturgical details. Then, Augustus having slept himself sober, the orgy began again, and lasted three whole days. Yet, even while carrying on the competition of skill and strength inaugurated by their target practice, the sovereigns contrived to give a thought to politics. Augustus, observing the silver plate in front of him was not a clean one, rolled it in his fingers like a piece of paper, and threw it behind him. Peter forthwith followed suit, and the whole service of plate might have been treated in like manner. But the Tsar was the first to hold his hand, with the remark, that the king of Sweden's sword must be treated after the same fashion.[1] On the fourth day, at last, he conferred with the Polish Vice-Chancellor Szczuka on the subject of the co-operation of the Republic in the forthcoming campaign. The conditions were not satisfactorily settled, and the Republic took no final share in this arrangement, but the personal concord of the two monarchs was settled on the 28th of February.

The year 1701 was a hard one for Peter. The junction between the army, which he had contrived, after some fashion, to put on a war footing, and the Saxon troops of Augustus, only resulted in the complete defeat of the allied forces under the walls of Riga, on the 3rd of July. In the month of June, the Moscow Kreml caught fire; the State offices (*Prikaz*) with their archives, the provision stores, and palaces, were all devoured by the flames. The bells fell from the tower of Ivan the Great, and the heaviest, which weighed over a hundred tons, was broken in the fall.[2] But, in midwinter, Shérémétief contrived to surprise Schlippenbach with a superior force, and defeated him at Erestfer (29th December). Peter's delight, and his wild manifestations of triumph, may easily be imagined. He did not content himself with exhibiting the few Swedish prisoners who had fallen into his hands at Moscow, in a sort of imitation Roman triumph; his practical mind incited him to make use of them in another way, and Cornelius Von Bruyn, who had lived long enough in the country to be thoroughly acquainted with its customs, calmly reports that the price of war captives, which had originally

[1] Nartof's *Recollections*, p. 26.
[2] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 99.

been three or four florins a head, rose as high as twenty and thirty florins. Even foreigners now ventured to purchase them, and entered into competition in the open market.[1]

On the 18th of July, 1702, Shérémétief won a fresh victory over Schlippenbach,—30,000 Russians defeated 8000 Swedes. According to Peter's official account of the battle, 5000 of his enemies were left dead on the field, while Shérémétief only lost 400 men.[2] This report made Europe smile, but the Livonians found it no laughing matter. Volmar and Marienburg fell into the hands of the victor, who ravaged the country in the most frightful fashion. The Russians had not, as yet, learnt any other form of warfare, and, as we may suppose, the idea that he might ever possess these territories had not yet occurred to Peter. His mind, indeed, was absorbed elsewhere. His old fancies and whims were strong upon him, and he left Apraxin to rage on the banks of the Neva, in Ingria, on the very spot where his future capital was to stand, while he himself gave all his time and strength to the building of a few wretched ships at Archangel. It was not till September, when the ice had driven him out of the northern port, that he returned to the west and took up his former course. He reached the Lake of Ladoga, sent for Shérémétief, and the end he was to pursue for many a long year seems at last to have taken firm root in his hitherto unstable mind. He laid siege to Noteburg, where he found a garrison of only 450 men, and on the 11th of December 1702 he rechristened the little fortress he had captured, by a new and symbolic name, Schlüsselburg (Key of the Sea).

Next came the capture of Nienschantz, at the very mouth of the Neva, in April 1703, a personal success for the Captain of Bombardiers, Peter Mihaïlof, who there brought his batteries into play. A month later, the artilleryman had become a sailor, and had won Russia's first naval victory. Two regiments of the guard manned thirty boats, surrounded two small Swedish vessels, which, in their ignorance of the capture of Nienschantz, had ventured close to the town, took possession of them, and murdered their crews. The victor's letters to his friends are full of the wildest and most childish delight, and there was, we must admit, some reason

[1] *Travels* (Amsterdam, 1718), vol. i. p. 52.
[2] Solovief, vol. xiv. p. 346.

for this joy.[1] He had reconquered the historic estuary, through which, in the ninth century, the first Varegs had passed southward, towards Grecian skies. On the 16th of the following May, wooden houses began to rise on one of the neighbouring islets. These houses were to multiply, to grow into palaces, and finally to be known as St. Petersburg.

Peter's conquests, and newly-founded cities, disturbed Charles XII. but little. 'Let him build towns; there will be all the more for us to take!' Peter, and his army, had, so far, where Charles was concerned, only had to do with small detachments of troops, scattered apart, and thus foredoomed to destruction. The Russians took advantage of this fact to pursue their advantage, strengthening and entrenching themselves, both in Ingria and Livonia. In July 1704, Peter was present at the taking of Derpt. In August he had his revenge for his disaster at Narva, and carried the town, after a murderous assault. Already, in November 1703, a longed-for guest had appeared in the mouth of the Neva, a foreign trading vessel, laden with brandy and salt. Menshikof, the governor of *Piterburg*, entertained the captain at a banquet, and presented him with 500 florins for himself, and thirty crowns for each of his sailors.[2]

Meanwhile, Charles XII. tarried in Poland, where Augustus' affairs were going from bad to worse. A Diet convened at Warsaw, in February 1704, proclaimed his downfall. After the disappearance of James Sobieski, whose candidature was put a stop to by an ambuscade, into which the dethroned king lured the son of the deliverer of Vienna, Charles, who was all-powerful, put forward that of Stanislaus Leszczynski. Though he gave little thought, just then, to Russia, and to the Russian Sovereign, the Tsar was beginning to be alarmed as to the consequences which the Swedish king's position in Poland, and in Saxony, might entail on himself. Charles was sure to end by retracing his steps, and an encounter between Shérémétief and Loewenhaupt, at Hemauerthorf in Courland (15th July, 1705), clearly proved that the Russian army, unless in the case of disproportionate numerical superiority over the enemy, was not yet capable of resisting well-commanded Swedish troops. On this occasion,

[1] Solovief, vol. xiv. p. 349.
[2] *Moscow Gazette*, Dec. 15, 1703.

Shérémétief lost all his infantry, and was himself severely wounded.[1]

What then was Peter to do? He must work on, increase his resources, and add to his experience. If Shérémétief and his likes proved unequal to their task, he must find foreign generals and instructors, technical and other, he must keep patience, he must avoid all perilous encounters, he must negotiate, and try to obtain peace, even at the price of parting with some of the territory he had conquered. The years between 1705 and 1707 were busy ones for him. Within the borders of his country he was absorbed by his mighty efforts at military and economic organisation. Without them, and even in the farthest corners of Europe, he was carrying on an eager and active diplomatic campaign. I shall refer, later, to the first portion of this strenuous task. A few words as to the second must follow here.

III

The Russian diplomatists of that period found their task a most ungrateful one. The European Cabinets of the day were still in the frame of mind with which the shameful defeat at Narva, in 1700, had inspired them. Prince Peter Galitzin, overwhelmed with mortifications, cried out to be released from his post at Vienna. Matvićief, who was only given 2000 roubles a year, and expected to make a good figure as the Tsar's Ambassador to the Hague, and who, consequently, complained bitterly of his poverty, received orders to negotiate a loan in exchange for a body of troops to be employed against France. He was immediately asked whether the troops he was empowered to offer 'were those that had forced the King of Sweden to capitulate'? Besides, the Dutch,—a practical and far-seeing people,—viewed the establishment of Russia on the Baltic coast with marked disfavour. In 1705, Matvićief ventured on a journey to Paris,—at which place, since the year 1703, the Tsar had only kept a Resident, who carried no particular weight, named Postnikof,—and frankly admitted that he could not induce any one there to

[1] Adlerfeld, *Histoire Militaire de Charles XII.* (Paris, 1741), vol. ii. p. 522; Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 376.

take him seriously.[1] Since 1701, Dimitri Galitzin had been striving to gain the confirmation of the treaty negotiated by Oukraïntsof at Constantinople, and further, demanding the right to free navigation of the Black Sea. But the Turks would not even permit the Russian Envoys to arrive at Constantinople by 'their water.' Yet, and for the first time, they agreed to receive a permanent Russian Minister at Adrianople. But Peter Tolstoï, who was appointed to this post, vainly endeavoured to induce them to make a diversion in the direction of Germany. All that could be said was, that, for the moment, no danger threatened Peter from that side.

Towards the end of 1705, he began to think of acquiring that third ally on whom Patkul had relied for his original plan of combination. And he despatched the Livonian to Berlin. This strange and enigmatic personage has been made the subject of a poet's verse. Gutzkow has turned the Landjunker into the heroic champion of his race, and even history does not appear to me, so far, to have done him full justice.[2] When Patkul first comes upon the scene, he does certainly appear as the defender of the rights of his country, or, at all events, of his caste, against the encroachments of Charles XI. But, even then, he gives us the impression of a man who plays a part, rather than of one who fulfils a mandate. We see no mandatories; he does, indeed, treat with Augustus, in the name of the Livonian nobility, but his powers appear far from regular, and he is left forsaken in his exile. Even at the very summit of his short political career, he keeps all the outward appearances of an adventurer.

And fate was against all his enterprises. An appeal to Poland was part of the national tradition of his country, but, in the present condition of that republic, divided and torn by contrary factions, the only means of reaching the State was

[1] Solovief, vol. xv. pp. 44-69.

[2] Yet see Förster, *Die Höfe u. die Cabinette Europa's*, vol. iii.; and Iarochowski, *Patkul's Ausgang* (*Neues Archiv für Sachsische G.*), which seem to me to approach most nearly to historical accuracy; comp. Bernouilli, *Joh. R. von Patkul's Berichte;* Otto v. Wernich, *Der Livlander, J. R. von Patkul;* C. Shirren, *Livl. Antwort*, 1869; Fr. Bienemann, *Aus baltischer Vorzeit*, vol. vi. 1870; Otto Sjogren, *I. R. Patkul;* C. Schirren, *Ueber F. F. Carlson's Carl XII.* (*Götting. Gel. Anz.*, 1883); E. Bodemann, *Leibnitzen's Plan*, etc., 1883; C. Schirren, *Patkul und Leibnitz*; *Mitth. aus d. Livl. G.*, vol. xiii., 1884); G. Mettig, *J. R. von Patkul* (*Nordische Rundschau*, vol. iii., 1885); H. v. Bruiningk, *Patkuliana* (*Mittheil a. d. Livl. G.*, vol. xiv., 1886).

through its lately chosen chief, and that chief, under the most seductive of appearances, hid what was probably the vilest and most corrupt nature in the whole of Europe. Patkul's moral sense, never of the highest, could not stand against this intercourse, and the result was soon evident in the disfigured and degraded condition of his mission. The patriot dwindled into a mere vulgar intriguer, and the defence of Livonia was lowered, in his hands, to an odious traffic in the most vital interests of the country. The period, alas! was only too favourable to such transmutations. Patkul's story is on a par with those of Goertz and Struensee.

The Livonian adventurer did not even possess the qualities necessary for his undertaking. He could not control his nerves. He was restless and impatient, sarcastic and violent, and, in spite of great intelligence and knowledge, he was both frivolous and superficial. He could not govern his tongue, still less his pen, and thus disobliged the Polish nobility, whom he treated with disdain, and fell out with the Saxon Ministers and Generals, on whom, by means of pamphlets, which he scattered broadcast, he threw the responsibility of faults which, if not absolutely personal to himself, were, at all events, common to him and others. Let me add, for the honour of his memory, that he was incapable of entirely identifying himself with the part he tried to play. Thus, in 1704, he travelled to Berlin, bearing a proposal for the division of the Polish provinces between Prussia and Russia. Yet that very same year, one of his letters, addressed to the Chancellor Golovin, makes a strong appeal to his own national traditions, as against Russia, and for Poland.[1] Consequently, he ended by having no firm standing at all. He was the confidant of Augustus, whose character he professed to despise, and the close adviser of Peter, whose despotism, so he declared, 'infinitely displeased him.' He floundered in an inextricable confusion of machinations, and political attempts, all of them more or less perilous. In 1703, he conspired to ruin the Saxon Chancellor, Count Beichlingen, and all he attained by that Minister's fall was to make more enemies for himself. In 1704, he commanded the auxiliary troops of the Tsar quartered in Saxony, and was well beaten, with them, under the walls of Thorn. He agreed to go to Berlin to negotiate an alliance, and after he had departed

[1] Zaluski, vol. iv. p. 285.

empty-handed, he wrote to the Prussian Ministers, 'that he was weary of the affairs of the King of Poland, and was ready to make his peace with the King of Sweden.'[1] Wearied at last by all these comings and goings, perceiving they had brought him nothing, and only opened an abyss beneath his feet, sick at heart, and threatened on every side, he lingered in Dresden, because he desired to marry a beautiful widow, Sophia Von Rumohr, Countess Von Einsiedel, the richest match in Saxony. It was the second occasion on which a woman was to have a fatal influence upon his destiny, and this time the influence hurried him to his end.

The announcement of his marriage fanned the hatred and jealousy of his enemies. On the 15th of December 1705, in virtue of the powers conferred on him by Peter, and not exceeding, though he may, perhaps, have somewhat strained them, Patkul signed a Convention with Count Stratmann, whereby all the Russian auxilliary troops under his orders were taken into the Emperor's pay. This treaty was by no means against the interests of the King of Poland. The Emperor undertook never to recognise Stanislaus, so long as Augustus lived, and even to support the Saxon party in Poland,—and the troops in question were dying of hunger in Saxony. But the possible pretext furnished by Patkul's interpretation of his powers, was seized forthwith, and within four days of the signature of the treaty, the 'Tsar's commissioner' was arrested.

Peter intervened, but very half-heartedly, in his defence. Menshikof, his chief adviser, had been won over by the Saxon Ministers.[2] Then came long months of discussion; the Tsar's protests were measured and discreet; those of Patkul far more violent, and supported by pamphlets, which, imprisoned though he was, he found means to publish and disseminate. At last Augustus, defeated over and over again, tracked and hunted, reduced to despair, as regards military matters, by Charles XII., beaten on the diplomatic field by a Swedish prisoner named Arved Horn, was induced, on the 24th of September 1706, to sign the ignominious peace of Altranstadt, the 11th Article of which stipulated that Patkul should be given up. The King of Poland has

[1] Dresden Archives, *Documents connected with the arrest of General Patkul*, No. 3516; Copenhagen Archives, *Jessen's Reports*, 1703-5.

[2] Herrmann, *Geschichte Russlands*, vol. iv. p. 201.

been credited with the intention of allowing the prisoner to escape, after the signature of the treaty. There are no grounds for supposing him capable of such generosity, nor the slightest mention of anything of the kind in the Dresden archives. Nothing but a note from the Sovereign, ordering the betrothal ring found on the prisoner's person, to be given to the Countess Von Einsiedel, which evidently proves that, in the king's mind, he was a doomed man. In vain did the Grand Treasurer of Poland, Przebendowski, venture to remind him that, at the Peace of Karlowitz, the Turks themselves refused to deliver up Rakoczy![1]

Augustus' behaviour, on this occasion, was of a piece with his whole life. Peter's casts a blot upon his glory. Patkul was made over to the Swedes during the night of the 5th April 1707; was dragged, for some time, wherever Charles XII. was pleased to go, was finally tried and condemned by a court-martial, and, on the 10th of October, was broken on the wheel at Kazimierz in Poland. He was struck fifteen times with an unshod wheel by a peasant who performed the executioner's office, and all the time he cried, 'Jesus, Jesus!' After four more strokes his groans were silenced, but he still had strength to crawl to the block prepared for another execution, and to murmur, 'Kopf ab!' (Cut off my head!) Colonel Waldow, who was in charge of the execution, granted this final request, but four blows from the axe were requisite to put the poor wretch out of his pain.[2]

Diplomacy, as we have seen, served Peter but ill, and Arvéd Horn's triumph over Patkul, clenched as it was by the defection of Augustus, imperilled the safety of the Russian armies. In the beginning of 1706, when they were shut up in Grodno, where Menshikof and Ogilvy were squabbling for the chief command, they ran the narrowest risk of being captured by Charles. The sudden breaking up of the frozen Niemen, which prevented the King of Sweden from crossing the river, permitted the Russians to beat a precipitate retreat, leaving their artillery and baggage behind them. Peter, who on this occasion, once again, avoided sharing the fortune of his troops, caused cannon to be fired at Kronslot in honour of the victory![3] In the beginning

[1] Dresden Archives, Book 3617.

[2] *Patkul's Berichte*, vol. iii. p. 300; Förster, *Die Höfe*, vol. iii. p. 404; Lundblad, vol. i. p. 408; *Theatrum Europæum* (1707), p. 281.

[3] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 475.

of October, a more genuine triumph had given him some prestige, and would appear to have crowned his alliance with the King of Poland with its first success. With Menshikof, who, like himself, was ignorant of what had happened at Altranstadt five days previously, and carrying his faithless ally, who still carefully concealed his treachery, with him, he had defeated the Swedish troops under Mardefeldt, before the walls of Kalisz. But the news of Augustus' defection shortly transpired, and Peter was left alone to face the formidable adversary, whom Menshikof and his soldiers were quite unable to resist.

Peter's relations with the King of Poland betray an evident lack of foresight in the first instance, and, eventually, an equal absence of tact. For several years the charm which bound these two men, really so unsuited to each other, had ceased to work. Peter had perceived all the meannesses which the Polish monarch concealed under his brilliant exterior, and Augustus had become aware that when he had accepted an annual subsidy, raised, in 1703, to the sum of 300,000 roubles, as the price of his alliance, he had been duped. Two days after the signature of the Treaty which ensured him this remuneration, Charles took possession of Elbing, and raised, from that one city, a contribution of 200,000 crowns. And the Tsar's subsidy, always very irregularly paid, ended by failing altogether; for Peter ran short of money. Hence it came about that, from the year 1702, Augustus, with his usual unreliableness and dishonesty, began to enter into various independent negotiations. In the month of January, his former mistress, Aurora Von Koenigsmark, the mother of the great Maurice de Saxe, appeared in Charles XII.'s camp on the frontiers of Courland; she gained nothing by her journey, for the hero obstinately refused to receive her, and she was driven to console herself by rhyming the following verses:—

> 'D'où vient, jeune Roi, qu'avec tant de mérite
> Vous ayez peu de vrai bonheur,'

following on which sentiment, and still in verse, she proceeded to lavish her consolations on Augustus himself, assuring him that the friendship of so virtuous a monarch as the King of Sweden was worth far more than the throne of Poland.[1]

[1] Lamberty, vol. iv. p. 292.

Peter was well aware of this attempt on Augustus' part, and of several others which followed it, and did not hesitate to take similar measures of his own. After having offered the Polish crown to James Sobieski, he fell back on Rakoczy, with whom his plenipotentiaries signed a formal treaty.[1] Then, through the intervention of the Dutch, and, when they retired, through Great Britain, he endeavoured to make his separate peace with Sweden. Matviéief was sent from the Hague to London, in 1706, with orders to buy over Marlborough and Godolphin. Marlborough refused all pecuniary offers—he may have had doubts as to the Tsar's solvency—and, on his expressing his preference for landed property, he was invited to choose between Kief, Vladimir, or Siberia, with a guaranteed income of 50,000 crowns. This matter fell through, on the conditions of peace insisted on by Peter—the possession of the mouth of the Neva, and the adjacent sea-coast. Then came the turn of France, then that of Austria. Desalliers, an agent employed by France in Transylvania, appeared at Versailles, and offered the services of a whole Russian army, to be used according to the will of the most Christian king. Baron Huissen, a former tutor to the Tsarevitch Alexis, was sent to Vienna, with an offer of a body of Cossacks, to be employed against the Hungarian insurgents. But wheresoever he applied, the Tsar's demands were thought too exacting, and besides, the prospect of any intercourse between the Cossacks and the Servian neighbours of Hungary, was far from pleasing to the Emperor. Two other attempts, made simultaneously —one at Berlin, where Ismaïlof, Peter's envoy, tempted Count Wartemberg with a promise of 100,000 crowns—and the other at Copenhagen, where the same messenger was commissioned to offer Narva and Derpt to the Danes, met with no better success.[2]

But Peter, in spite of all these efforts, and the compromising negotiations in which, like his ally, he indulged, flattered himself he was to keep both his ally and his alliance, and enjoy all the advantages therefrom accruing. The Treaty of Altranstadt took him by surprise, and found him quite unprepared. He soon made good his mistake, took a swift decision, and adopted the course which was

[1] *Kourakin Papers*, vol. v. pp. xviii, 14.
[2] Soloviof, vol. xv. p. 198, etc.

infallibly to bring him final victory. He evacuated Poland, retired backward, and, pushing forward the preparations which Charles's long stay in Saxony had permitted him to carry on with great activity, he resolved that the battle should be fought on his ground, and at his chosen time. He took fresh patience, he resolved to wait, to wear out his adversary, to draw back steadily, and leave nothing but a void behind him. Thus he would force the enemy to advance across the desert plains he had deliberately devastated, and run the terrible risk, which had always driven back the ancient foes of his country, whether Turks, Tartars, or Poles,—a winter sojourn in the heart of Russia. This was to be the final round of the great fight. The Tsar, as he expressed it, was to set ten Russians against every Swede, and time, and space, and cold, and hunger, were to be his backers.

IV

Charles, the most taciturn General who ever lived, never revealed the secret inspiration which drove him to play his adversary's game, by marching afresh on Grodno. During the preceding year, he had seemed to give the law to Europe, from his camp in Saxony. France, which had been vanquished at Hochstädt and Ramillies, turned a pleading glance towards him, and the leader of the victorious allies, Marlborough himself, solicited his help. I see no likelihood that the great leader was actuated by a desire to take advantage of the revolt amongst the Bashkirs, which, at that moment, was giving Peter some trouble. In February 1708, the insurgents were only thirty versts from Kazan. But Kazan was a long way off, and Peter possessed many resources in that quarter. He soon contrived to embroil the rebels with their Kalmuk neighbours. On the Don, where, almost at the same moment, a second Razin made his appearance, the Tsar was equally successful. Prince George Dolgorouki, who had been sent into that country, in 1707, to check the emigration of the local population, which had taken on alarming proportions,—every one moving towards that Eden guarded by the cataracts of the Dnieper, called the Zaporojé,—came into collision with some Cossack troops, commanded by an individual named Boulavin, and perished with all his men. But immediately afterwards, the victors

fell out amongst themselves, were beaten piecemeal, and Boulavin blew out his brains.[1]

Charles may have had an idea of making Grodno his base for a spring attack on the Tsar's new conquests in the North. This supposition would seem to have been the one accepted by Peter, if we may judge by the orders given, just at this time, to ensure the safety of Livónia and Ingria, by completing their devastation; and these very orders may have induced the King of Sweden to abandon his original design, in favour of another, the wisdom of which is still contested by experts, but which, it cannot be denied, was of noble proportions. Charles, too, had found an ally, to set against those natural ones with which Russia had furnished the Tsar, and he had found him within the borders of the Tsar's country. The name of this ally was Mazeppa.

The stormy career of the famous Hetman, so dramatic, both from the historic and domestic point of view,—from that adventure with the *pan* Falbowski, so naïvely related by Pasek, down to the Romance with Matréna Kotchoubey, which coloured the last and tragic incidents of his existence, —is so well known that I will not narrate it here, even in the concisest form. Little Russia was then passing through a painful crisis,—the consequence of Shmielnicki's efforts at emancipation, which had been warped and perverted by Russian intervention. The Polish Lords, who formerly oppressed the country, had been replaced by the Cossacks, who not only ground down the native population, but railed at, and quarreled with, their own chief. The Hetmans and the irregular troops were at open war, the first, striving to increase their authority, and make their power hereditary, the others defending their ancient democratic constitution. The Swedish war increased Mazeppa's difficulties. He found himself taken at a disadvantage between the claims of the Tsar, who would fain have his Cossacks on every battlefield in Poland, Russia, and Livonia, and the resistance of the Cossacks themselves, who desired to remain in their own country. Being himself of noble Polish birth, brought up by the Jesuits, having served King John Casimir of Poland, and sworn allegiance to the Sultan, he saw no reason for sacrificing his interests, much less his life, for Peter's benefit. The approach of Charles XII. made him

[1] Solovief, vol. xv. p. 259.

fear he might, like his predecessor Nalevaïko, be deserted by his own followers, and given up to the Poles. He declined offers made him by Leszczynski, in 1705, not without reminding the Tsar that the temptation, thus honestly resisted, was *the fourth* which had been offered him.[1] Then he began to reflect. His Cossacks' complaints were growing louder and louder. Peter had gone so far as to try to send two of their regiments into Prussia, to learn German drill. Mazeppa, having been invited by Prince Wisniowieçki, a Wolhynian Polish magnate, to stand godfather to his daughter, met the Prince's mother, Princess Dolska, in his house, and formed an intimacy with her. In spite of his age (according to Prokopovitch, he was then 54, while Engel makes him 60, and Nordberg 76), he was still an ardent lover. Madame Falbowska, who, like himself, had been vilely treated by her fiercely jealous husband, had been succeeded by many other mistresses. In the early days of Mazeppa's intercourse with Princess Dolska; she pretended to plead no cause but that of Leszczynski, for whom she greatly desired the Tsar's support. Then she showed her hand,—her real object was that Leszczynski and his victorious protector should be supported through thick and thin, even against Peter himself. Mazeppa's first impulse was one of anger against the '*baba*' (gossip). But she was a clever woman. A few remarks, carelessly dropped, made him prick his ears. She had been at Léopol, where she had met the Russian Generals Shérémétief and Rönne, and had heard them foretell the early deposition of the Hetman, and Menshikof's succession to his position. The idea did not appear altogether improbable to Mazeppa, who knew that Peter's collaborators panted to establish Russian officialism in the Ukraine. The favourite himself had even dropped a hint one day, at Kief, and in his cups, upon the subject, and was already taking upon himself to send the Cossack regiments hither and thither, without reference to Mazeppa. Princess Dolska was backed by Zalenski, a Jesuit, the mouthpiece of Leszczynski and of Charles, and not a word of this fresh temptation was breathed by the Cossack leader to the Russian Tsar.

My readers know the story of the Hetman's final love affair, which brought about Peter's acquaintance with the

[1] Solovief, vol. xv. p. 289.

facts of this negotiation. Mazeppa had seduced the daughter of Kotchoubey, a Cossack Chief, and the father, out of revenge, denounced him to the Tsar. Unhappily for himself, the proofs he furnished were not conclusive. The Tsar,—relying on his own constant kindness to the Hetman, and obstinately regarding him as representing his personal authority, in opposition to the traditional insubordination of the Cossacks,—allowed himself to be deceived by Mazeppa's protestations, and delivered his accuser up to him. Twenty times in the past twenty years, he had been denounced, and had contrived to clear himself. He caused Kotchoubey and his confidant, Iskra, to be beheaded, but still he was uneasy, —on the watch for a possible return of the peril lately past. The appearance of Charles on the Russian frontier forced him to a definite resolution, and, in the spring of 1708, his emissaries appeared at Radoshkovitsé, south-east of Grodno, where Charles had established his head-quarters.[1]

The King of Sweden's idea, at that decisive moment, would seem to have been to take advantage of the Hetman's friendly inclination, to find his way into the heart of Russia, using the rich Southern Provinces as his base, to stir up, with Mazeppa's help, the Don Cossacks, the Astrakhan Tartars, and, it may have been, the Turks themselves, and thus attack the Muscovite Power in the rear. Then Peter would have been forced back upon his last entrenchments, at Moscow or elsewhere, while General Luebecker, who was in Finland with 14,000 men, fell on Ingria and on St. Petersburg, and Leszczynski's Polish partisans, with General Krassow's Swedes, held Poland.[2]

It was a mighty plan, indeed, but, at the very outset, it was sharply checked. Mazeppa insisted on certain conditions, and these conditions Charles thought too heavy. The Hetman agreed that Poland should take the Ukraine and White Russia, and that the Swedes should have the fortresses of Mglin, Starodoub, and Novgorod-Siévierski, but he himself insisted on being apportioned Polotsk, Vitebsk, and the whole of Courland, to be held in fief. Thus the negotiations were delayed. Meanwhile Charles, perceiving that he was not strong enough to make a forward movement, made up his mind to send for Loewenhaupt, who

[1] Moscow Archives, *Little-Russian Affairs*, 1708.
[2] Sarauw, p. 238.

was in Livonia, and who was to bring him 16,000 men and various stores. But the Swedish hero had not reckoned fairly with distance, and with time. Many precious days, the best of the season, fled by, before his orders could be obeyed. And, for the first time, he showed signs of uncertainty and irresolution, which were all too quickly communicated to those under his command. Loewenhaupt grew slower than usual. Luebecker slackened his activity, and Mazeppa began to play his double game again,—prudently preparing his Cossacks to revolt, in the name of the ancient customs, national privileges, and church laws, which Peter's reforms had infringed,—fortifying his own residence at Batourin, and accumulating immense stores there, but still continuing to pay court to the Tsar, wearing the German dress, flattering the Sovereign's despotic taste by suggesting plans which would have annihilated the last vestiges of local independence, and accepting gifts sent him by Menshikof.[1]

And so the summer passed away. A winter campaign became inevitable, and the abyss which Peter's unerring eye had scanned, began to gape.

V

It was not till June that Charles XII. left Radoshkovitsé, and marched eastwards to Borisov, where he crossed the Berezina. Menshikof and Shérémétief made an attempt to stop him, on the 3rd of July, as he was crossing a small river called the Bibitch, near Holovtchin. A night manœuvre, and a wild bayonet charge, led by the king himself, carried him once more to victory. The town of Mohilef opened its gates to the Swedes, but there Charles was forced to stay, and lose more time yet, waiting for Loewenhaupt. He marched again, early in August, in a southerly direction, and his soldiers soon found themselves in the grip of one of Peter's allies. They were driven to support themselves by gathering ears of corn, which they ground between two stones. Sickness began to thin their ranks. Their three doctors, so the fierce troopers said, were 'brandy, garlic, and death'! Loewenhaupt had reached Shklof, and was sepa-

[1] Engel, *Geschichte der Ukraine* (Halle, 1796), p. 303, etc.; Prokopovitch, *History of Peter the Great* (in Russian), p. 178, etc.

rated from the invading army by two streams, the Soja and the Dnieper, between which Peter had taken up his position. The Swedish general, after having successfully passed the Dnieper, was met at Liesna, on the 9th of October, by a force three times as large as his own, and Peter was able, on the following day, to report a complete victory to his friends : '8500 men dead on the field, without mentioning those the Kalmuks have hunted into the forest, and 700 prisoners!' According to this reckoning, Loewenhaupt, who could not have brought more than 11,000 troops into action, should have been left without a man ; as a matter of fact, he reached Charles with 6700, after a flank march which all military experts consider a marvel. But, not being able to find a bridge across the Soja, he was forced to abandon his artillery and all his baggage, and he led his starving troops into a famine-stricken camp.

There was bad news, too, from Ingria, where Luebecker had also been defeated, losing all his baggage and 3000 first-class troops. Charles grew so disconcerted that he is reported to have confessed to Gyllenkrook, his Quarter-master-General that he was all at sea, and no longer had any definite plan.[1] On the 22nd of October, he reached Mokoshin on the Desna, on the borders of the Ukraine, where he had expected to meet Mazeppa. But the old leader broke his appointment. He still desired to temporise, and was loath to take any decisive resolution. He was driven to take one, at last, by the Cossacks about him, who were alarmed at the idea of the Russians following the Swedes into the Ukraine. It would be far better, so they thought, to join the latter against the former. One of these Cossacks, Voïnarovski, who had been sent by the Hetman to Menshikof, had returned with most terrifying news. He had overheard the German officers on the favourite's staff, speaking of Mazeppa and his followers, say, 'God pity those poor wretches ; to-morrow they will all be in chains!' Mazeppa, when he heard this report, 'raged like a whirlwind,' hurried to Batourin to give the alarm, and then crossed the Desna and joined the Swedish army.

It was too late. The popular sentiment, on which both he and Charles had reckoned to promote an insurrectionary movement, confused by the tergiversations and the am-

[1] Lundblad, vol. ii. p. 49.

biguous actions of the Hetman, had quite gone astray, and lost all consistency. All Mazeppa could reckon upon was a body of 2000 faithful troops: not enough even to defend Batourin, which Menshikof snatched from him a few days later,—thus depriving the Swedish army of its last chance of revictualling. When the fortresses of Starodoub and Novgorod-Siévierski closed their gates against him, the whole of the Ukraine slipped from the grasp of the turn-coat chief, and his new allies. His effigy was first hung, and then dragged through the streets of Glouhof, in Peter's presence; another Hetman, Skoropadski, was appointed in his place, and then came winter—a cruel winter, during which the very birds died of cold.

By the beginning of 1709, Charles's effective strength had dwindled to nearly 20,000 men. The Russians did not dare to attack him as yet, but they gathered round him in an ever-narrowing circle. They carried his advanced posts, they cut his lines of communication. The King of Sweden, to get himself mere elbow room, was driven to begin his campaign in the month of January. He lost 1000 men and 48 officers in taking the paltry town of Wespjik (6th January). By this time the game, in Mazeppa's view, was already lost, and he made an attempt to turn his coat again, —offering to betray Charles into Peter's hands, if Peter would restore him his office. The bargain was struck, but a letter from the old traitor, addressed to Leszczynski, chanced to fall into the Tsar's hands, and made him draw back, in the conviction that Mazeppa was utterly unreliable.[1] In the month of March, the near approach of the Swedish army, then advancing on Poltava, induced the Zaporojé Cossacks to join it. But the movement was a very partial one, and Peter soon put it down,—by means of a series of military executions, mercilessly carried out by Menshikof, and of various manifestoes against the foreign heretics, 'who deny the doctrines of the true religion, and spit on the picture of the Blessed Virgin.' The capture of Poltava thus became the last hope of Charles and his army. If they could not seize the town, they must all die of hunger.

The fortifications of the place were weak, but the besieging army was sorely changed from that which had fought under the walls of Narva. It had spent too long a time in fat

[1] Solovief, vol. xv. p. 361.

quarters, in Saxony and Poland, to be fit to endure this terrible campaign. Like the Russian army at Narva, it was sapped by demoralisation, before it was called on to do any serious fighting. Even amongst the Swedish staff, and in the king's intimate circle, all confidence in his genius, and his lucky star, had disappeared. His best Generals, Rehnsköld, and Gyllenkrook, his Chancellor, Piper, and Mazeppa himself, were against any prolongation of the siege, which promised to be a long one. 'If God were to send down one of his angels,' he said, 'to induce me to follow your advice, I would not listen to him!'[1] An ineradicable illusion, the fruit of the too easy victories of his early career, prompted him to undervalue the forces opposed to him. He knew, and would acknowledge, nothing of that new Russia, the mighty upstanding Colossus, which Peter had at last succeeded in raising up in his path. According to some authorities, Mazeppa, in his desire to replace Batourin by Poltava, as his own personal appanage, encouraged him in this fatal resolution.[2] But it may well have been, that retreat had already become impossible.

It was long before Peter made up his mind to intervene; he was still distrustful of himself, desperately eager to increase his own resources, and with them his chances of victory. On his enemy's side, everything contributed to this result. By the end of June, all the Swedish ammunition was exhausted, the invaders could use none of their artillery, and hardly any of their fire-arms, and were reduced to fighting with cold steel. On the very eve of the decisive struggle, they were left without a leader. During a reconnaissance on the banks of the Vorskla, which ran between the hostile armies, Charles, always rash, and apt to expose himself unnecessarily, was struck by a bullet. 'It is only in the foot,' he said, smiling, and continued his examination of the ground. But, when he returned to camp, he fainted, and Peter, reckoning on the moral effect of the accident, at once resolved to cross the river. A report, as a matter of fact, ran through the Swedish camp, that the King, convinced of the hopelessness of the situation, had deliberately sought death.[3]

Yet ten more days passed by, in the expectation of an

[1] Fryxell, vol. ii. 158. [2] Lundblad, vol. ii. p. 104.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

attack which the Russians did not dare to make. It was Charles who took action at last, informing his Generals, on the 26th of June (7th July) that he would give battle on the following morning. He himself was still in a very suffering condition, and made over the command to Rehnsköld, a valiant soldier, but a doubtful leader, for he did not possess the army's confidence, and, according to Lundblad, 'hid his lack of knowledge and strategical powers under gloomy looks and a fierce expression.' After the event, as was so commonly the case with vanquished generals, he was accused of treachery. The truth would seem to be, that Charles's obstinate reserve, and habit of never confiding his plans and military arrangements to any third person, had ended by gradually depriving his lieutenants of all power of independent action. In his presence they were bereft of speech, and almost of ideas. All Rehnsköld did was to rage and swear at every one. Peter, meanwhile, neglected nothing likely to ensure success. He even went so far as to dress the Novgorod regiment—one of his best—in the coarse cloth (*siermiaga*) generally reserved for newly-joined recruits, in the hope of thus deceiving the enemy. This stratagem, however, completely failed. In the very beginning of the battle, Rehnsköld fell on the regiment, and cut it to pieces.[1] The Russian centre was confided to Shérémétief, the right wing to General Rönne, the left to Menshikof. Bruce commanded the artillery, and the Tsar, as usual, retired modestly to the head of a single regiment. But this was a mere disguise; in real fact, he was everywhere, going hither and thither, in the forefront of the battle, and lavishing effort in every direction. A bullet passed through his hat, another is said to have struck him full on the breast. It was miraculously stopped by a golden cross, set with precious stones, given by the monks on Mount Athos to the Tsar Féodor, and which his successor habitually wore. This cross, which certainly bears the mark of some projectile, is still preserved in the Ouspienski Monastery, at Moscow.

The heroism, and sovereign contempt of death, betrayed by Charles, were worthy of himself. Unable to sit a horse, he caused himself to be carried on a litter, which, when it was shattered by bullets, was replaced by another made of crossed lances. But he was nothing but a living standard,

[1] Golikof, vol. xi. p. 202.

useless, though sublime. The once mighty military leader had utterly disappeared. The battle was but a wild conflict, in which the glorious remnants of one of the most splendid armies that had ever been brought together — unable to use its arms, leaderless, hopeless of victory, and soon overwhelmed and crushed by superior numbers — struggled for a space, with the sole object of remaining faithful to its King. At the end of two hours, Charles himself left the field of battle. He had been lifted on to the back of an old horse which his father had formerly ridden, and which was called *Brandklepper* (run to the fire), because he was always saddled when a fire broke out in the city. This charger followed the vanquished hero into Turkey, was taken by the Turks at Bender, sent back to the king, taken again at Stralsund in 1715, returned to its owner once more, and died in 1718—the same year as his master—at the age of forty-two.[1] Poniatowski, the father of the future King of Poland, who was following the campaign as a volunteer (Charles had refused to take any Polish troops with him on account of their want of discipline), rallied one of Colonel Horn's squadrons to escort the King, and received seventeen bullets through his leather kaftan while covering the royal retreat.[2] Field-Marshal Rehnsköld, Piper, the Chancellor, with all his subordinates, over 150 officers, and 2000 soldiers, fell into the victor's hands.

The Russians' joy was so extreme that they forgot to pursue the retreating enemy. Their first impulse was to sit down and banquet. Peter invited the more important prisoners to his own table, and toasted the health of his 'masters in the art of war.' The Swedes, who still numbered 13,000 men, had time to pause for a moment in their own camp, where Charles summoned Loewenhaupt, and, for the first time in his life, was heard to ask for advice, 'What was to be done?' The General counselled him to burn all waggons, mount his infantry soldiers on the draught horses, and beat a retreat towards the Dnieper. On the 30th of June, the Russians came up with the Swedish army, at Pérévolotchna on the banks of the river, and, the soldiers refusing to fight again, Loewenhaupt capitulated; but the king had

[1] Lundblad, vol. ii. p. 137.

[2] Kantecki, *Biography of Stanislas Poniatowski* (Posen, 1880) (in Polish), vol. i. p. 26.

time to cross to the other side. Two boats lashed together carried his carriage, a few officers, and the war-chests which he had filled in Saxony. Mazeppa contrived to find a boat for himself, and loaded it with two barrels of gold.[1]

At Kief, whither Peter proceeded from Poltava, a solemn thanksgiving was offered up in the church of St Sophia, and a Little-Russian monk, Fćofan Prokopovitch, celebrated the recent victory, in a fine flight of eloquence: 'When our neighbours hear of what has happened, they will say, it was not into a foreign country that the Swedish army and the Swedish power ventured, but rather into some mighty sea! They have fallen in, and disappeared, even as lead is swallowed up in water!'

The Sweden of Gustavus Adolphus had indeed disappeared. Charles XII. was, ere long, to be a mere knight-errant at Bender. The Cossack independence, too, was a thing of the past. Its last and all too untrustworthy representative, was to die in Turkey, before many months were out—of despair, according to Russian testimony—of poison voluntarily swallowed, according to Swedish historians. The poison story has a touch of likelihood about it, for Peter certainly proposed to exchange Mazeppa's person for that of the Chancellor Piper.[2] The cause of the Leszczynski, too, was dead. It was to be put forward again by France, but for the benefit of France alone. And with the Leszczynski cause, Poland itself had passed away, and lay a lifeless corpse, on which the vultures were soon to settle. Out of all these ruins rose the Russian power—its Northern hegemony, and its new European position, which henceforward were daily to increase, and reach immense, immoderate proportions. Europe played a special part in the festivities which graced the return of the victors to Moscow, a few months later. European ideas, traditions, and forms, appeared in the triumphal procession, and served as trappings for the trophies of victory. Peter, playing the part of Hercules, and conquering a Swedish Juno, in a *cortège* in which Mars figured, attended by Furies and by Fauns, was a fit symbol of the alliance of Russia with the Greco-Latin civilisation of the West. Old Muscovy—Eastern and Asiatic—was numbered with the dead.

[1] Solovief, vol. xv. p. 378. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. xvi. p. 42.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE BALTIC TO THE CASPIAN

I. The victory of Poltava does not bring peace to Russia—A policy of general expansion—The origin of Panslavism—European alliances—The Tsar's Diplomacy—His awkwardness and blunders—Peter, in his eagerness to reach the West, forgets the South—Diplomatic struggle at Constantinople—Charles XII. wins—Weighty arguments—Declaration of War.

II. Peter's Plan of Campaign—Its weakness—He forgets the lesson of the past—The march on Iassy—He makes the same mistake as Charles—Another Ukraine and another Mazeppa—The Tartars cut the Russian communications—The Tsar and the Russian army hemmed in on the banks of the Pruth—A desperate situation—Peter flinches again—His letter to the Senate—'The throne to the worthiest'—Doubtful authenticity of the document—Catherine's action—The future Tsarina's diamonds—Salvation—The Vizier consents to treat—The influence of *Baksheesh*—Unhoped-for conditions—Azof is given up—Peter soon recovers from his fright, and consoles himself for his losses—'Matchless acquisitions'—The triumph of obstinacy—The skirmish at Bender—Charles XII. a prisoner.

III. The allies prevent Peter from obtaining peace with Sweden—Quarrels and rivalries—The Siege of Stralsund—Attempted understandings with England and Prussia—Peter always succeeds better when he acts independently—The Conquest of Finland—The Tsar's German victories only profit Prussia—The capture of Stettin, and the Treaty of Sequestration—Charles XII. reappears at Stralsund—Goertz appears on the scene—The capture of Wismar—Peter has served the King of Prussia again—Plan for a Russo-Danish Expedition.—Naval demonstration at Copenhagen—Peter in command of the allied squadrons of Denmark, Holland, England and Russia—The expedition fails—Peter is blamed—His intervention in German affairs rouses universal anger—English irritation—Plan to seize the Tsar's person and sink his squadron—Peter's disgust with his allies.

IV. '*Goertz's idea*'—Plan for a separate understanding between Russia and Sweden—French origin of this view—It attracts Peter—His journey to France—Secret interview with Goertz—Treaty of Amsterdam, between Russia, France and Prussia—Acceptance of French mediation—The Congress of Aland—The death of Charles XII. puts an end to the negotiations—The execution of Goertz.

V. Renewal of negotiations at Aland—The Swedes resist—Coercion—Russian descent on Sweden—England intervenes in Sweden's favour—A useless naval demonstration—Diplomatic intervention by France—Campredon—The peace of Nystadt—The joy of triumph—The Imperial title—Admiral, and Emperor of all the Russias—The benefits of peace—War again.

VI. The Eastern frontier—The road to India—Failure of early efforts in this direction—Fresh military and diplomatic action with regard to Persia—Volynski—The great expedition of 1722—Led by Peter in person—The taking of Derbent—A forced retreat—Turkey and England intervene—A temporary agreement—The Armenians claim the Tsar's protection—The Eastern Christians—A fresh attempt to reach the far East—The Madagascar Expedition—The natural direction and limits of Russia's colonising powers.

I

THE victory of Poltava shed a glory on Peter, on his army, and on his subjects, which extended far beyond the great Tsar's reign, and even beyond the eighteenth century itself. Yet it did not give the victor the reward which he may be reasonably supposed to have most desired —peace. Twelve more years—full of extreme effort and fresh sacrifice — were to elapse before this happy result was attained. With this fact Peter himself, his intellectual deficiencies, and the weaknesses of his character, had much to do. At the moment of his Poltava victory, his natural and logical line of conduct lay clear before him, and his personal will should have been humbly submitted to it. In default of any possible agreement with the conquered foe, he should have pursued him, strengthened the advantages already gained, completed the conquest of Livonia, taken up a firm footing in Finland, and, having thus secured all he could hope for from the struggle, he should never have given a thought to anything else, neither to the Saxon ally, who had deceived him, nor the Danish ally, who had been the first to relinquish the conflict. But logic, and the natural procession of things, and the influence of surrounding circumstances, were all overwhelmed, in Peter's case, by one of those instinctive and unreflecting impulses which he was so incompetent to quell. And he cast himself, without any plausible motive, and certainly without any clear and well-thought-out plan, into a career of adventure, and a wild outburst of universal expansion, in which Russia, at that moment, was incapable of following him, and in which his only visible guide was a blind and thoughtless need of activity, and of using, and abusing, his own strength. The Eastern coast of the Baltic no longer sufficed him ; he must lay hands on Mecklenburg. He claimed the right to lord it over Poland, and establish order in that country, by uphold-

ing its anarchical constitution. He gave a foretaste of the Slavophil and Panslavist policy of future years, attracting Servians and Montenegrins beneath the shadow of his Protectorate, and sending them books and professors, who would have been far better employed at Moscow, which lacked both schools, and money to keep them up. He ended by risking all the fruits of his efforts and his former successes, on the banks of the Pruth, and even incurred the danger of casting his own fortunes, and those of his people, into a yet deeper abyss than that which had swallowed up Charles XII. Hardly had he escaped, as by a miracle, from this catastrophe, before he began afresh. Without any necessity,—swayed by the mere desire of attracting attention, making a figure in Europe, having a finger in everything, and being associated with every one,—he plunged into a network of doubtful intrigues, and ambiguous arrangements, negotiating, bargaining, meddling in all directions, running the risk, once more, of being swallowed up in that slough which for ten long years he trampled hopelessly, going up and down, between Berlin, Copenhagen and Amsterdam,—struggling with the rival ambitions and greed, which his blunders had roused.

He lacked everything necessary to enable him to move, and maintain his dignity, on the huge chess-board whereon he thus ventured to expose his own military power, and his newly Europeanised diplomacy. He had no sufficient knowledge, either of the various interests with which he had to do, or of the general routine of business, and he possessed neither tact nor moderation. Everywhere, at almost every step, he stumbled against some obstacle. He was caught in traps, and blundered into dark holes, which he neither perceived nor knew how to avoid. He was astounded that an alliance between himself and the Elector of Hanover should be unwelcome to that sovereign in his quality as King of England, and wondered that Austria was offended, when he had thought to serve German interests, by helping the King of Prussia to square his territory at the expense of the King of Sweden. He celebrated his daughter's wedding at Dantzic, in order to please his Polish friends, levied a contribution of 150,000 crowns on the town for the occasion, and betrayed great astonishment when the city appeared to care more for the money he had taken, than for the honour

he had conferred. He interfered in the quarrels between the Polish Catholics and Uniates, and the Orthodox Catholics, and all he gained was to drive the Orthodox monks themselves into flat rebellion against his Commissioner, Roudakovski, whom they beat, and threw into prison, crying, 'Away with the Muscovites!'[1] At the very moment when he was pestering Holland with requests for a loan, Rear-Admiral Cruys, commanding one of his squadrons, burnt five Dutch merchantmen in the Port of Helsingfors, murdered some of the crews, and carried off the rest. An explanation was demanded, and he declared that all the blame must be laid on the Swedes, who held Helsingfors, and whose artillery was so heavy that the Admiral had not dared to attack them. Wherefore, not choosing to retire without having performed some warlike feat, he had fallen on the Dutch ships![2]

The Tsar's Ministers and Envoys to foreign courts were much like him,—either obsequious or arrogant, but always in extremes. The journal of the Danish Resident, in 1710, contains this passage: 'Victory has so completely turned the heads of the people here, that they are quite beside themselves. They think of nothing but having honour paid to them, and not returning it.'[3] They, too—most of them professional adventurers, drawn, like Menshikof and Iagoujinski, from the stable or the servants' hall, or snatched, like Kourakin, from the delights of patriarchal existence, from the habits of the *domostroï* and of the *terem*,—waded hither and thither in the slough. Their blunders, their awkwardness, and their boorishness were never-ending. In one place they were imprisoned for debt, in another they were turned out of doors like ill-behaved servants; everywhere, they contrived to complicate the business of which they held the threads. The whole political history of the reign, from the triumph of Poltava down to the peace of Nystadt, is one long chaos and confusion. The lucky star of Russia, the heroic patience of the nation, and,—it is only just to admit it,—the vigour and perseverance of the Tsar, carried them through at last, but the process cost very dear, and brought but little profit.

[1] Solovief, vol. xviii. p. 86.

[2] Kourakin's Memoranda to the States-General, Aug. 7, 1713, and Jan. 31, 1714; De Bie's Despatch to Fagel, Oct. 14, 1713; Dutch Archives.

[3] State Papers, Copenhagen.

From Kief, whither Peter had gone from Poltava, he proceeded to Poland, where the nobles of the country, headed by the Hetman Sieniawski, welcomed him triumphantly, as the victorious champion of Polish liberty! In October he met Augustus,—who had long since repented him of his secession,—at Thorn. The faithless king had not waited for Charles's final defeat, to seek a reconciliation with his adversary. After a very undignified freak, during which he and his son Maurice appeared under the walls of Lille as mercenaries, attached to a body of 9000 men, hired by the allies against France, he had thought better of it; sent General Goltz to St Petersburg; induced King Frederick IV. of Denmark to visit him at Dresden; travelled himself to Berlin; and so, by the beginning of July 1709, found himself once more possessed of three allies. His defensive and offensive treaty with Russia, against Sweden, secured him the Polish throne, and a decree from the Pope released him from the obligations contracted at Altranstadt, including that of obedience to Leszczynski.[1] Leszczynski himself had been forced to follow the fortunes of the Swedish army, and eventually retired into Pomerania with Krassow's troops.

Thus the quadruple coalition, which had been Patkul's dream, took shape at last. It had gathered together to divide the spoil, and Peter was its natural head. While he was at Thorn, Denmark sent him an envoy extraordinary, Count Rantzau, with proposals of direct alliance. This same alliance had formerly been eagerly solicited by the Tsar's Minister at Copenhagen, Dolgorouki, who had offered considerable subsidies to obtain it—300,000 crowns at the outset, 100,000 every following year, besides materials for the fleet, sailors, and other advantages. But that moment was quite gone by. The friendship of Russia had risen in the European market. 'I have given nothing, not a man, nor a copper coin,' writes Dolgorouki, in October, when he forwards the announcement that the treaty is signed.[2]

As regards military operations also, Peter was, at first, eminently successful. Riga, which he besieged in person, in the month of November,—throwing the first three bombs with his own hands,—did, indeed, hold out. But the follow-

[1] Herrmann, *Geschichte Russlands*, vol. iv. p. 247; Boettiger, *Geschichte Saxens* (Hamburg, 1830), vol. ii. p. 250.

[2] Solovief, vol. xv. p. 391.

ing year, in the month of June, Wiborg was simultaneously attacked by sea and land,—the Tsar this time performing the duties of rear-admiral,—and was forced to capitulate. In July, Riga surrendered, at last, to Shérémétief. One after the other, Kexholm, Pernau, Arensberg, and Revel, opened their gates, or were carried by assault. Carelia, Livonia, and Esthonia were conquered, and Courland voluntarily surrendered to the victors,—the reigning duke, Frederick William, suing for the hand of one of the Tsar's nieces, Anna Ivanovna.

But suddenly, alarming news came from the south. Charles's diplomacy in Turkey, armed with the most weighty of arguments, had defeated Tolstoï's. After Mazeppa's death, the Swedish king had grown rich. Voïnarowski had lent him 80,000 ducats, drawn from the well-filled barrels which the Hetman had carried with him in his flight. 100,000 crowns had been sent to him from Holstein; he had raised 200,000 more by a loan granted by the Brothers Cook, of the British Levant Company, and 400,000 came from the Grand Vizier Numan Kuprioli. He had thus been able to strengthen the hands of his two agents, Poniatowski and Neugebauer. This last, a turncoat, a former tutor of the Tsarevitch Alexis, had been driven, by ill-treatment, into desertion. The Tsar's Minister, who claimed the surrender, or demanded, at all events, the arrest, of the King of Sweden, could only lay his hand on 20,000 ducats and a few sable furs, wherewith to tempt the Turkish Mufti! Tolstoï ventured, at last, to deliver an ultimatum, and on the 20th November 1710, at a solemn meeting of the Divan, war was formally declared, and the Russian Minister was imprisoned in the Seven Towers.

To Peter,—absorbed with his great political combinations in Central Europe,—this blow was utterly unexpected, and he was ill-prepared to meet it. The allies he had secured could be of no service to him. The Danes had been already disabled by a complete defeat, which had cost them 6000 men (February, 1710), and England had taken advantage of this fact, to renew her previous attempts to bring about an agreement between Denmark and Sweden. Peter had no Minister in London at that moment, for Matviéief had been driven away by his creditors, after a most discreditable disturbance, in July 1708. Prince Kourakin had indeed succeeded, in the spring of 1710, in making arrangements

for a defensive alliance with the Elector George Louis of Hanover, but this treaty, by which the Tsar bound himself not to attack the Swedes in Germany, unless they attacked his allies, was looked on as treason of a kind.[1] The Polish subjects of Augustus were no better pleased with their king's new understanding with the Tsar, and, early in 1711, Wollowicz appeared at Moscow, to complain of the exactions and the violence inflicted by the Russian armies on the Poles. He demanded, in their name, the immediate evacuation of the country, by the Tsar's troops; the payment of an indemnity for the excesses committed; and the restitution of Livonia, and of all the Polish territories on the right bank of the Dnieper, both in the Ukraine and in Lithuania.[2]

All this constituted a perilous state of things, and on this most threatening horizon, to the north and west of Europe, the Tsar was forced to turn his back, when he faced southwards. Slow as he was to foresee events, Peter realised them very clearly when they were close upon him, and once again, under these dark clouds, his soul was darkened, and his mind distressed. Before leaving St Petersburg, in April 1711, he took measures to ensure the future of Catherine and the children she had borne him, and when Apraxin, who was on the Don, wrote for instructions, he replied (24th April 1711) that 'ill and *despairing* as he was, he had no orders to give him.'[3] In this frame of mind he entered on his Moldavian campaign, where he was to learn, in his turn, what is entailed by offensive warfare, carried on in an unknown country, with insufficient resources, and against an enemy whose strength has been undervalued.

II

The Tsar's plan of campaign, on this occasion, seems to have been entirely of his own conception. Its chief flaw is evidently clear even to a non-professional observer. The great man's predecessors did wisely, when, after having undertaken to make common cause with the Poles and the Imperial forces against the Turks, they invariably concentrated their attention on the Tartars. The Khanate

[1] Solovief, vol. xvi. p. 62.
[2] Moscow State Papers, *Poland*, 1711.
[3] Solovief, vol. xvi. p. 71.

of the Crimea,—the last remnant, and a formidable one, of the mighty Mongol power,—then constituted the advanced guard of the Ottoman army. It was so placed as to bar all access to Constantinople, eastward. Firmly established, and half hidden, as it were, in its natural fortress of Pérékop, it was certain to take any invader, who attempted to move through the Danubian provinces, by the western road, in the rear, cutting all communications, and removing all possibility of retreat. The realisation of this fact accounts for the great Catherine's desperate efforts to destroy the Khanate, and that Peter himself understood it is proved by the circumstance that his original attack on Turkey was made by way of Azof, whence he could always retreat up the river. But a fresh attack on Azof was impossible without a fleet, and the fleet which had been built for this object at Voronéje was useless, for the water was so shallow that it could not be moved. Peter therefore marched by Iassy, reckoning on the Hospodars of Moldavia and Wallachia, Kantémir and Brancovan, and on the resources of their provinces, just as Charles had counted on those of Mazeppa and the Ukraine. He had an army of 45,000 men, and a huge camp-following, with numberless useless mouths. Catherine accompanied him, with a numerous suite of ladies, and most of his officers, especially the foreigners, had brought their wives and children with them. There were to be daily gatherings of these ladies about the future Tsarina, in which the cares of war were to be swiftly forgotten.[1]

But they were not forgotten for long. Kantémir received his guests with open arms, but he had no food to give them. Brancovan began by hesitating, and ended by siding with the Turks. The stores of provisions which Peter had ordered to be collected, had been overlooked in the haste of departure, and there was no chance, now, of repairing the error, for the Tartars had appeared on the Russian rear, and all communication with the north was completely cut. The Tsar learnt that the Turks had formed a depôt of supplies at Braïla on the Séret, and, more concerned already about feeding his troops, than giving battle, he detached General Rönne and a corps of cavalry, with orders to seize it, and meet him on the banks of the Pruth, the course of which river he him-

[1] Brasey de Lyon's *Memoirs* (Amsterdam, 1716), vol. i. p. 33.

self was to follow in the same direction. But another encounter awaited him: an unavoidable meeting this, foreseen by every one but himself,—for his staff is said to have realised, and warned him, of its likelihood. On the evening of the 7th (18th) of July 1711, his army, reduced by Rönne's departure to about 38,000 men, was surrounded by the Turks and Tartars, whose troops, five or six times as numerous as Peter's, held the two banks of the river, while a strong force of artillery guarded the neighbouring heights. No retreat was possible. The only apparent issue was captivity, or death.

According to one writer, Peter's first thought, on this occasion again, was to save his own person, and he summoned a Cossack, Ivan Nekulcze, who, so he thought, might be able to pass him, with Catherine, through the enemy's lines.[1] Others,—and these, though contradicted in more than one particular, are numerous, and in complete agreement,—describe him as having given way to despair, and utter moral prostration. He shut himself up in his tent, refused to give any order, or listen to any advice, and left Catherine to make a final effort for the common weal.[2] The famous letter which the sovereign is said to have addressed, at this tragic moment, to the Senate, is doubtless known to many of my readers: 'I give you notice, that without any fault on our part, and simply in consequence of the false information supplied to us, I have been hemmed in, with my whole army, by a Turkish army seven times as strong as our own,—so that all means of bringing up supplies are cut off, and that unless God bestows some special help upon us, I can foresee nothing but a complete defeat, or that I shall fall into the hands of the Turks. If this last should happen, you are not to consider me as your Tsar and Master, nor to execute any commands I may give you, even written with my own hand, so long as I am not amongst you in person. But if I should perish, and you should receive certain news of my death, you will choose one of your own number, more worthy than myself, to succeed me.' Although this document was, at a later

[1] Kotchoubinski, *Selections from the Moldo-Wallachian Archives*, p. 64.

[2] Coxe's *Travels*, vol. i. p. 499; Bruce's *Memoirs*, p. 44; Rousset's (Nestesouranoy) *Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 161; Zinkeisen, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reichs*, vol. v. p. 424; La Motraye, *Voyages*, vol. ii. p. 19; Marais, *Journal*, vol. iii. p. 157. Marais refers to the *Chronique Contemporaine*. See also Baron Korff's letter in the *Bulletin du Bibliophile*, Jan. 15, 1861.

period, placed amongst the official records, its authenticity is more than doubtful.[1] The original is not in existence. How can it have disappeared? The first known edition of the text is to be found in Staehlin's anecdotes, and he quotes it as having been verbally given him by Shérémétief. It is well known that the 'Collected Laws' (*Polnoïe Sobranié Zakonov*, iv., 712), which include this letter, were drawn up from information obtained from the same source. The style is Peter's style, and so too is the radical fashion in which he solves the numerous questions his captivity, or death, might be expected to raise. But how are we to account for his forgetfulness of his natural heir, at a period when his quarrel with Alexis was so far from being complete, that he was looking about for a wife for him, so as to secure the succession to the throne? How are we to account for the choice of a person 'more worthy than himself' from the Senatorial ranks, to which the Tsar's favourite collaborators, Apraxin, Golovkin, and Menshikof, did not belong? Not to speak of other points of improbability, as, for instance, that in several other letters, written in the course of the next few days, and the authenticity of which is undeniable, Peter makes no reference to this all-important communication, while, in one of them, he frankly refers to the faults which have placed him and his army in such desperate straits.[2]

As to Catherine's supposed share in these events, we are forced to choose between Peter's own testimony, which is not altogether reliable, and that of certain secondary actors in the drama. Most of these do not seem to be aware of her having played any active part. Poniatowski merely says that Peter ventured to send a flag of truce to the Turkish camp.[3] Brasey de Lyon, who was serving as a brigadier in the Russian army, and whose wife, who was much appreciated and admired in the Tsar's circle, was, according to Weber, at that time very intimate with the future Tsarina, gives the following details,—'His Majesty, General Janus, Lieutenant General Baron Von Osten, and the Field-Marshal (Shérémé-

[1] See Bielof's paper in *Russia, Old and New* (1876) vol. iii. p. 404; Solovief, vol. xvi. p. 89, etc., argues on both sides, but does not come to any decision.

[2] Oustrialof's paper in the *Annual of the Académie des Sciences*, 1859; Witberg's paper in *Russia, Old and New* (1875), vol. iii. p. 256, etc.

[3] Report addressed to Leszczynski. French Foreign Office, *Mémoires et Documents* (Russia), vol. ii. p. 121.

tief), had a long secret conference. They gathered round General Von Hallart, who was obliged to remain in his coach on account of his wounds, and there—between the General's carriage and that of the Baroness Von Osten, in which the wife of Major-General Bouche was seated—it was arranged that the Field-Marshal should write a letter to the Grand Vizier, and ask for a truce.'[1] Hallart's journal, which is confirmed by that of the Danish minister, Juel, who had the story from the General's own lips, is explicit in the same sense.[2] According to Juel, there was no truth even in the story that Catherine had stripped herself of her jewels, in order to increase the bribe offered to the Grand Vizier. All she did was to distribute them amongst the officers of the Guard, with the idea of placing them in safety, and they were ultimately returned to her.

Somehow or other, the catastrophe was averted. The Vizier, after sending back the first flag of truce without an answer, finally agreed to treat, and Shafirof was sent by the Tsar, to propose conditions quite in keeping with the respective positions of the two armies, viz.:—The surrender of all the strong places taken from Turkey in preceding wars, the restitution of Livonia, and even of the other coast territories, except Ingria and St Petersburg, to Sweden; (Peter was willing, if that was necessary, to give Pskof, and even other towns in the very heart of Russia, for the sake of keeping St Petersburg), the re-establishment of Leszczynski: a war indemnity, and gifts to the Sultan. He returned bringing peace, and at an almost infinitesimal price. Azof was to be evacuated: some small fortresses in the neighbourhood were to be razed: Peter was to engage not to meddle more in Polish affairs, and the King of Sweden was to be granted a free return to his own country. According to Hammer, who has consulted the Turkish records, the *backsheesh* received on this occasion, by the Vizier, and divided by him with the Kiaïa, did not exceed the sum of 200,000 roubles.[3] The German historian accepts the story of Catherine's intervention, and of the effect produced by her diamonds; for a ring which had belonged to the future Tsarina was found, in later years, amongst the belongings of the Kiaïa: But

[1] *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 79, etc.
[2] Juel's *Travels* (Copenhagen, 1893) p. 422.
[3] *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reichs* (Pesth, 1828) vol. vii. p. 157.

surely the Vizier and the Kiaïa might have taken everything, —the persons of Peter and his wife, and his whole army!

The explanation of this event must be sought in the general history of Turkish warfare. The Ottomans always betrayed great eagerness to return to their own country, and gladly accepted a trifling advantage, so as to escape the necessity of further effort. Their best troops, and the Janissaries in particular, were capricious and undisciplined. In the circumstances we are now considering, they probably thought that the victor of Poltava would sell his life and liberty very dearly, and Shafirof's attitude and language would confirm that conviction. Russia was an adept in the traditional arts of deception, which had originated in Byzantium, and which a long apprenticeship to misfortune had taught her to develop. The Turkish troops, caring little, at that moment, for any more complete triumph than the easy one lying within their grasp, and utterly indifferent to the fate either of Leszczynski or of Charles XII., showed small inclination for fighting. The Vizier, knowing what it would cost him to disoblige them, bowed to their will, and peace was signed.[1]

On this, as on every other occasion, Peter recovered from his past terrors, and took fresh heart for the future, with the most extraordinary swiftness. Writing to Apraxin, that very day, he does indeed acknowledge that he had never been in such a distressing position, 'since he had begun to serve,' but he hastens to add that 'the losses we have endured on one hand will serve to strengthen the *matchless acquisitions* we have preserved elsewhere!' At the same time, he took good care not to relinquish any opportunity, dishonest or not, which offered, to counterbalance the severity of fortune. When he gives orders to raze the fortifications of Taganrog, he insists that the foundations should not be touched, 'as circumstances may change,' and he refuses to hear of surrendering Azof, or evacuating Poland before Charles XII. has left Turkey. In vain it was pointed out to him that the Porte was under no obligation as to this last point! Shafirof, and young Shérémétief, whom he had sent to Constantinople as hostages, went in peril of their lives; but the Tsar cared not a jot, and in October 1712, he allowed them to be imprisoned in the Seven Towers, with Tolstoï himself. He did not give in, and then only partly,

[1] Solovief, vol. xvi. p. 104.

until the Turks directly threatened a renewal of hostilities. He then surrendered Azof, and consented to a fresh rectification of the frontier, demanded by the Porte. But he continued to deceive it by false reports as to the number of troops he had kept in the neighbourhood of Warsaw, and finally, he gained the point he had most at heart.

When Charles, after that wild and legendary freak of his, [que l'on soit] refused to depart from Bender, he was seized and imprisoned in the Castle of Timourtach, a property of the Sultan's, in the neighbourhood of Demotica. His adventure had cost the heroic warrior four fingers, the tip of his ear, the end of his nose, and all possibility of stirring up warlike feeling in Turkey.

III

Peter now believed himself to be in a position which would enable him to bring the war with Sweden to a speedy close. The exhausted condition of his country, and the disorder reigning in his own finances, imperiously called for such a step. But he had reckoned without the allies he himself had chosen. The Siege of Stralsund, undertaken in common with them, in September 1712, brought forth nothing but European indignation. Russians, Danes and Saxons spent their whole time quarrelling amongst themselves, and devastating the neighbouring country. The War of the Spanish Succession was drawing to a close, and there was reason to fear that Great Britain, Holland and Austria might intervene in the North. Peter sent Prince Kourakin to the Hague, with orders to ask a guarantee for his Swedish conquests, in return for his assistance against France. The Ambassador was coldly received. The conduct of the allies in Pomerania had not been of a nature to tempt other countries to make common cause with them. The year closed with a complete defeat of the Saxo-Danish army, which had followed Stenbock's troops,—the only Swedish corps still able to keep the field,—into Mecklenburg.

The following year was no more prosperous. Peter, noticing the disposition of France and England to draw together, at the Congress of Utrecht, went into Hanover, to win over the Elector to his own interests, but got nothing but fair words. He fell back on Prussia, where the King,

Frederick I., had lately died. Prussia, up to this point, had worked on a system which may be summed up in the following manner: she never did anything, of any sort, without trying to gain something, however small; she left others to fight, and took advantage of the confusion to snatch some part of the booty. Thus, when Elbing was offered her, she gave nothing in exchange, beyond the vaguest promises. Her ultimate object was no less than an anticipation of the great Frederick's work—the immediate partition of Poland.[1] Peter's visit to the new king, Frederick William, soon convinced him that the change of ruler had by no means modified the national policy.

He returned to St. Petersburg in March 1713, and resolved to strike a great blow with his own hand. He would attack Finland, which he called 'the nursing mother' of Sweden.[2] The event proved that he always succeeded best when he did his own work. The chief town of the country, Abo, opened its gates, almost without resistance, in August. In October, Apraxin and Michael Galitzin defeated the Swedes at Tammerfors. But in Germany, on the other hand, the campaign of 1713 brought no good fortune to any one but Prussia; and Prussia's greed was the only force she expended in it. Stenbock, who had been shut up in Tönningen, was forced to capitulate to Menshikof and the allies, on the 4th of May, and the surrender of Stettin soon followed. But the victors fell to quarrelling over the spoils, Prussia, who had refused to send artillery to help the besiegers to take the town, generously agreed to reconcile them by placing a Prussian garrison in the fortress, and the Treaty of Sequestration, which brought this windfall to Frederick William, included Rügen, Stralsund, Wismar and the whole of Pomerania! The king, in return, was good enough to declare himself ready to 'shed his blood for the Tsar and his heirs!'[3]

Denmark, ill-pleased with this compensation, protested loudly, claimed to be protected against the ambition of Prussia, Russia, and Holstein, and proved her ill-temper by refusing to take part in an arrangement with Hanover, according to which Peter had hoped,—when Queen Anne

[1] Droysen, *Geschichte des Preussischen Politik*, Part IV. Sect. i. p. 340.
[2] Letter to Apraxin, Oct. 30, 1712. Cabinet Papers, Sect. i. 14.
[3] Solovief, vol. xvii. p. 24.

was dead, and the Elector George had succeeded to the British throne,—to have secured the support of the latter Power.

During 1714, the Tsar made war alone, both by sea and land, and fortune continued to smile upon him. After the taking of Neuschlot, which completed the conquest of Finland, he personally defeated the Swedish fleet, between Helsingfors and Abo, on the 25th of July, took Rear-Admiral Ercnsköld prisoner, seized on the island of Aland, and returning to his 'Paradise' in full triumphal progress, was rewarded by the grade of Vice-Admiral, duly conferred on him by the Senate.

But in the month of November, Charles XII. unexpectedly appeared at Stralsund. Here he was joined by the Administrator of Lubeck, who ruled the Duchy of Holstein, during the minority of Duke Charles Frederick. This prince, who was Charles XII.'s sister's son, was accepted, at that time, as presumptive heir to the crown of Sweden. But the Danes had taken possession of his Holstein inheritance, and gave no sign of yielding it up. Charles XII. was the only person who seemed likely to force them to do so. His sudden appearance at Stralsund was a fresh complication in the long-drawn-out and seemingly interminable Northern crisis. In the company of the Administrator came his Minister, who soon became the Swedish hero's counsellor and favourite. The how and why of this is not easy to explain,—for the man himself was far from attractive. His exterior appearance was gloomy and threatening, and he was generally believed to be guilty, or capable at all events, of the most abominable crimes. When, just a little later, we shall find him mixed up in the great negotiations which were to bring peace to Europe, we shall hear the French Minister at the Hague, Chateauneuf, bewailing the fact that he is forced to treat with a man 'whose loyalty may be more than fairly suspected.' Stanhope declared he was 'a rascal,' and openly accused him of having sold himself to the Emperor. The Baron Von Goertz, disliked and suspected by every one about him, roused distrust and alarm wherever he went.

Early in 1715, the affairs of the allied Powers seemed, for a moment, to be taking a favourable turn. Denmark agreed to make over Bremen and Verden to Hanover, and King George, seeing that Prussia was inclined to accept the media-

tion of France between herself and Sweden, had been induced (as Elector of Hanover) to declare war against the Swedes. But soon fresh complications arose, and everything went wrong. Denmark claimed the co-operation of the English fleet, which the Elector neither could nor would promise, and, as the English vessels stayed in port, the Danish army remained in quarters. In May, Prussia joined the alliance, with the sole object of laying hands on Stralsund, from which place Charles XII. slipped away before the capitulation, on the 12th of September. Peter, who had been detained in Poland, and had not taken part in the siege, was sorely displeased. He endeavoured to retrieve matters by settling his niece, Catherine Ivanovna, in Germany. He married her to Charles Leopold, Duke of Mecklenburg, promising, as her dowry, the Mecklenburg towns of Wismar and Warnemünde, which he proposed to take from the Swedes. Wismar did indeed capitulate to the allies in April 1716. But they refused to allow Repnine, who commanded the Russian troops, to take possession of the town; yet once again, Peter had worked for the benefit of the Prussian King!

In the course of the following summer, his vanity was salved in a very flattering manner. In the month of August, and from the deck of a ship of his own building, the '*Ingermanland*,' he reviewed the Russian, Danish, Dutch and English squadrons lying in the roads of Copenhagen, under his own command. The appearance of England and Holland on this occasion was purely formal, but an agreement had been come to for common action in Scania by the Russian and Danish fleets, and the mere presence of the two other squadrons, as a matter of demonstration, was valuable in the sense of its giving a powerful moral support to the allies. The understanding fell through, unfortunately, just at the very moment when active co-operation became necessary. Suspicions rose on both sides, and there were mutual accusations of designs far removed from the projected enterprise. In vain did Peter lavish activity and energy,—hurrying to Stralsund, to hasten the arrival of the Danish transports, which were lacking, and venturing on the most dangerous reconnoitring expeditions, under the fire of the hostile batteries. A shot actually passed through his boat, the *Princess*. But the month of September came, and

no advance had been made. Then the Russian staff unanimously declared the expedition should be put off, till the following year. A general outcry immediately arose amongst the allies. Peter, they declared, had cast aside the mask,—he had agreed with the Swedes on the division of Pomerania and of Mecklenburg,—he had come from Germany on purpose,—he might even have designs on Copenhagen! The Danish capital was forthwith placed in a state of defence, and arms were distributed to all the burghers. Hanover,—which had looked with such a jealous eye on the establishment of a Russian Princess on German ground, as to offer the Tsar the friendship of England, and the active co-operation of the English fleet, in return for his renunciation of the Mecklenburg marriage,—was the bitterest of all. King George, we are told, went so far as to give Admiral Norris, who commanded his ships in Danish waters, orders to seize the person of the Russian sovereign, and sink his squadron.[1] Stanhope, to whom the message was confided, gave the angry king time to cool down, under pretext of the necessity of referring it to his Ministerial colleagues. But Peter was disgusted with all his allies. He ordered his troops to evacuate Denmark, and retire to Rostock. Shérémétief established himself in Mecklenburg, with the bulk of the Russian army, and the Tsar betook himself to Amsterdam, attracted thither by Goertz, and by the fresh horizons he unfolded before his gaze.

IV

Baron Von Goertz had been the Duke of Holstein's Minister before he had served Charles XII., and had endeavoured to save his first master's interests, at a moment when these seemed likely to be engulfed in the misfortunes of the Swedish king. He had entered into negotiations with Russia, Prussia, and the King of Poland, to gain some share of the spoils snatched from the vanquished warrior,—and with the Tsar, to obtain the Duke of Holstein's marriage with a Russian princess, and his subsequent accession to the throne of Sweden. Thus he had betrayed his future master beforehand, and gained nothing, beyond the worst diplomatic

[1] Mahon's *History of England*, vol. i. p. 338; Droysen, *Geschichte des Preussischen Politik*, p. 174; Solovief, vol. xvii. p. 64.

reputation in Europe. Yet he was perfectly sincere, when, after the allies had curtly dismissed him, and the Danes had occupied Holstein without a shade of opposition, he turned his eyes on the Swedish hero, then just returned from Turkey. He had conceived a fresh plan,—that of finding Holstein's salvation in the triumph of Charles XII., and with this object, he desired to lessen the number of Sweden's enemies, to isolate Denmark, to get George of Hanover into difficulties with the Pretender, and then to treat directly with the Tsar, or even, if that were possible, with Prussia, through French mediation.

When Peter reached Holland, where Goertz had been established since the month of May, 1716, he was already well inclined to give ear to his suggestions. Erskine, a Scotch doctor, and partisan of the Pretender's, whom Goertz had contrived to place about the Tsar, had already influenced him in that direction. The assistance of France seemed quite assured ; the plan Goertz favoured was indeed no more than the formulation of the leading idea of the last Franco-Swedish treaty, signed on the 13th of April 1715. France had undertaken, by its provisions, to support Charles XII. in his efforts to recover his trans-Baltic dominions, and to push the claims of the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp. As may have been observed, Goertz's idea bore a French brand, and a good one,—that of Louis XIV. and Torcy.[1] The great King and his Minister had desired to avert the complete ruin of that system of alliances, which had, for centuries, established the position of France in Central Europe, as opposed to that of the Emperor. The gradual weakening of Poland and Turkey, and the blows struck by Russia at Sweden, had sapped the foundations of this edifice. The idea of reconstructing it with other materials, to be supplied by Russia itself, was not ripe, and a long period was to elapse before the spirit of routine, and a more legitimate attachment to old and venerable traditions, could be overcome. In the meanwhile Goertz's plan offered a fairly suitable expedient.

From the month of July to that of November, 1716, the Hague became the scene of busy negotiations. Goertz himself, the Swedish Minister in Paris, Baron Sparre, General Ranck, another Swede, in the Hessian service, and Poniatowski, Charles XII.'s devoted follower and friend, opened

[1] Syveton, as already quoted (1895), p. 418.

communications with Kourakin, with Dubois,—whom the Regent had sent from Paris,—and with Pensionary Heinsius.[1] Petter was less and less well inclined towards his German allies. Catherine, who was to have followed him to Amsterdam, had been obliged to stop at Wesel, where, on the 2nd of January 1717, she bore a child, the Tsarevitch Paul, who only lived a few days. This unfortunate event was attributed by her husband to the manner in which she had been treated, during her journey through Hanover. Her coachman had actually been beaten! But Dubois had come to Holland for a very different purpose from that of supporting Goertz. Louis XIV. was dead. The direction of French policy had slipped from Torcy's grasp, and the Regent had sent Dubois to meet Stanhope, and come to an understanding with Great Britain, on a subject which, for some years, was to take precedence of all other considerations and political combinations—the coveted succession to the throne of the 'Grand Monarque.'

This fatal coincidence brought about the ruin of Goertz's plan. When France failed him, Peter endeavoured to come to an understanding with England. But, in February 1717, Gyllenborg, the Swedish Minister in London, was arrested on suspicion of having a secret understanding with the Pretender, and the Russian Resident, Viesselovski, was implicated with him. He contrived to exculpate himself, and the Tsar despatched Kourakin to the rescue, with orders to propose a very favourable commercial treaty, as a preliminary to a political alliance. But another preliminary, the evacuation of Mecklenburg, was at once demanded, on the British side. Peter was forced to acknowledge that he need expect nothing from that quarter,—the King of England and the Elector of Hanover being evidently agreed to drive him away from Germany and the Baltic! Once more he fell back on France, and in March 1717, he resolved to try his fortune there in person. He had received favourable news from Berlin; Prussia seemed inclined to act as mediator, and even to share in any agreement arrived at. I shall speak, in a later chapter, and in some detail, of the Tsar's residence on the banks of the Seine, and of the partial

[1] Uhlenberg, *Researches among the Russian State Papers, for the History of the Relations between Russia and the Low Countries* (The Hague, 1891), p. 192; Scheltema, *Russia and the Low Countries*, vol. iii. p. 323, etc.

success which crowned his personal attempts at diplomacy, partial though they were. But when his Ministers, Golovkin, Shafirof, and Kourakin, returned to Amsterdam from Paris, whither they had accompanied their master, they signed a treaty,—with Chateauneuf for France, and Cnyphausen for Prussia,—the essential condition of which was the acceptance of French mediation to put an end to the Northern War. Thus Goertz's scheme won the day.

The unattractive diplomatist had won the Tsar's personal favour. Peter agreed to meet him privately at the Castle of Loo, and at once entered into his plans. He charged him with proposals for a separate peace with Charles, himself undertaking to remain quiescent for a period of three months, and Goertz proceeded, with Russian passports, to Revel, whence he was to rejoin his master in Sweden. The results of this new diplomatic complication soon became evident. Early in January 1718, attention was roused in the political world of St Petersburg by the sudden departure of General Bruce, Master of the Ordnance, and of Ostermann. Whither were they bound? The Dutch Resident, De Bie, observed that Bruce had taken 'new and rich clothes and silver plate' away with him. As he was known to be very stingy, these preparations looked suspicious, and the rough words and angry outbursts with which Ostermann replied to certain discreet questions put by Weber, the Hanoverian Resident, —asserting that he was merely going on a tour of inspection, —were considered far from reassuring.[1] In the month of May, the whole of Europe knew what it meant. Bruce and Ostermann, as representing Russia, with Goertz and Gyllenborg for Sweden, had met at Aland, to treat for peace. To cut short all quarrels as to precedence, the partition between two rooms was thrown down, and the conference table was set in the middle, half in one room and half in the other. The real object of the meeting was more difficult of attainment. Goertz demanded the *statu quo ante*, and the surrender of everything which had been taken from Sweden. Peter would only agree to evacuate Finland. The Tsar, it must be said, showed himself disposed, in other matters, to be more than liberal. He offered Sweden any equivalent her King chose to take, amongst the King of England's German possessions. He expected Charles XII. to keep whatever he

[1] De Bie to Heinsius, Jan. 21, 1718. Dutch State Papers.

might lay his hands on without help from him, but he was willing to assist him in his conquest, and would even, if necessary, support the Pretender in England with that object. As the Swedes appeared to see little attraction about these proposals, the Tsar desired his plenipotentiaries to try what corruption would do. Gyllenborg, he opined, was not likely to despise a gift of rich lands in Russia. But the Hanoverians, he was informed, had already bought over the Swedish Minister, Miller, and the ingenuous Sovereign was very much annoyed.[1] Yet more serious obstacles,—reports as to a popular insurrection in Russia, resulting from the trial of the Tsarevitch Alexis, which roused Charles XII.'s hopes and made him stubborn,—the difficulty of recovering Stettin, which the Swedish King refused to cede to Prussia,—arose, and prevented a final arrangement. At last the catastrophe of Frederickshald, where Charles was killed, on the 7th September 1718, cut the negotiations short. Goertz, accused by Ulrica-Eleonora, Princess Frederick of Hesse-Cassel, who succeeded her brother, of conniving with Russia against Swedish interests, was imprisoned, condemned, and sent to the scaffold. Thus the mighty Northern crisis entered on yet another phase.

V

The Aland negotiations were re-opened. Goertz was replaced by Baron Lilienstädt, and Peter sent Iagoujinski, with more tempting proposals, including the cession of Livonia. But even these did not suffice, and the Tsar betook himself to strong coercive measures. In July 1719, a huge Russian fleet, numbering 30 warships, 130 galleys, and 100 smaller craft, descended on the Swedish coast, and Major-general Lascy marched into the country, and burnt 130 villages, besides mills, stores, and factories, without number. A troop of Cossacks actually advanced within a league and a half of the Capital. But the shadow of the heroic king still hovered over his country. The Swedish Government and people came gallantly through the trial. When Ostermann made his appearance at Stockholm, with the object of parleying, the Prince of Hesse-Cassel, and Kronhelm, President of the Senate, told him they were

[1] Letter to Kourakin, dated Sept. 27, 1718. *Kourakin Papers*, vol. i. p. 4.

ready to give every facility for the disembarkation of the Russian troops in Sweden, so as to bring about such a decisive battle as would finally settle the matter. Meanwhile Ulrica-Eleanora, by ceding Bremen and Werden to Hanover, had won the support of Great Britain, and the Court of Vienna—already on bad terms with that of St. Petersburg, on account of the trial of Alexis, and jealous of Prussia,—showed a still stronger inclination to support Sweden. In June 1720, the London Cabinet brought about a reconciliation between Sweden and Denmark; the former paying an indemnity of 600,000 ducats, and surrendering the right of collecting tolls on the Sound, while the latter ceded all the places taken from Sweden, both in Pomerania and in Norway. Kourakin, at the Hague, was reduced to seeking the help of Spain, and the French Resident, La Vie, writes from St. Petersburg: 'The Tsar's uneasy movements and fits of rage betray the violence of the passions which disturb him . . . The natural functions are interrupted by constant sleeplessness, and the people about him, in their desire to conceal the real subject of his anxiety, which is all too visible, declare he is haunted by ghosts.'[1] The subject of anxiety referred to, was the result of twenty years of effort, which Peter now saw imperilled by the defection of allies he himself had imprudently associated with his victorious arms, whose sole object was, to snatch the prize of his own exertions from his grasp. The bodies and souls of his people, worn out and exhausted by this endless war, cried out to the Sovereign, in the horror of his sleepless nights. To this his alliances with the great European Powers, his attempts at playing a bold political game, and all the showy diplomacy he had borrowed from the tradition and practice of other nations, had brought him at last!

Happily for him, the Great Powers, though they would gladly have made him pay dear for his imprudence and presumption, lacked the means of forcing him to it. A British Squadron, commanded by Norris, threatened Revel in May 1720. The English Admiral successfully joined the Swedish fleet, but, after some attempts at intimidation, all that was done was to burn an *isba* and a *bania* (bath) built by some labourers on a neighbouring islet. While this was going on, a Russian Detachment led by Mengden had made

[1] June 6, 1719 (French Foreign Office).

a fresh descent on Sweden, and burnt 1026 peasants' houses. 'The loss inflicted on your Majesty by the allied fleets in the Isle of Nargin,' writes Menshikof, 'is a very serious one; but on the whole we must make up our minds to it, and leave the *isba* to the Swedish fleet, and the *bania* to the British!'

France now appeared upon the scene, but this far more successful intervention was purely pacific, and equally salutary to both countries, which ardently desired peace. It resulted in a fresh meeting of Russian and Swedish plenipotentiaries, at Nystadt, in April 1721. The way had been prepared by Campredon, who shortly before, and with the Tsar's consent, had travelled from St Petersburg to Stockholm. The only point on which Sweden now insisted was that the Duke of Holstein, with whom Peter had again made rash engagements, should be entirely put out of the question. This prince had, by the death of his uncle, really become the legitimate heir to the Swedish throne, and Peter desired to support and make use of his rights, for the benefit of the Russian policy. He had invited Charles Frederick to St. Petersburg in June 1720, had received him in the most flattering manner, and had promised, and almost offered, him, the hand of his daughter, the Tsarevna Anna; while Catherine, we are told, had publicly assured him 'that she should be happy to become the mother-in-law of a Prince, whose subject she might have been, if fortune had not played Sweden false.'[1]

The Russian sovereign, we know, held himself little fettered by any promise, and he finally, without a tinge of scruple, threw the unlucky Duke overboard, with all his rights, and ambitions, and hopes. On the 3rd of September 1721, a courier from Wiborg brought the Tsar news that peace was signed. Russia was to pay an indemnity of 2,000,000 crowns, and definitely acquired possession of Livonia, Esthonia, Ingria, part of Carelia, the town of Wiborg, and a portion of Finland. Great Britain and Poland were both parties to the treaty, the former on Sweden's side, the latter on that of Peter,—but the Duke of Holstein's name did not appear at all.

The great evolution of the Muscovite power, the end of the Oriental and Continental period of Russian history, the

[1] Solovief, vol. xvii. p. 269.

commencement of its western and maritime phase, were thus accomplished. A new factor, and one of constantly increasing importance, had taken its place in European politics. The end of Peter's rough toil and terrible apprenticeship had come at last. He was free, now, to listen to the delighted acclamations of his subjects, who, worn-out, exhausted, and terrified as they had finally been, had, in spite of all, followed him to the bitter end, and now shared his overflowing joy and intense relief. Back he went, straightway, to St. Petersburg, sailing up the Neva, with flourishes of trumpets and salvoes from the three cannons of his yacht. The populace rushed to the landing-stage of the Troïtsa. The Tsar appeared in the distance, standing on the poop, waving a handkerchief, and shouting 'Mir! mir!' (peace); he bounded ashore, as active and eager as in his youthful days, and hurried to the Church of the Trinity, where a thanksgiving service was celebrated. Meanwhile a wooden stage was hastily built on the square before the sacred edifice. Barrels of beer and brandy were piled upon it: Peter, when he had rendered thanks to God, mounted the platform, spoke in heartfelt terms of the great event, and then, emptying a glass of brandy, gave the signal for the triumphal libations.[1] The officers of his navy came to congratulate him, and requested him to accept the rank of full admiral—a consecration this, of the new position conquered by the country on the Baltic, and the new part its ruler was, in consequence, to play. The Tsar consented willingly. Then the Senate proffered him three new titles, 'Father of his Country—Peter the Great—Emperor.' This time he hesitated. Both he himself, and his predecessors, had been tempted in this quarter. The pretension to claim that the word *Tsar* was equivalent to *Cæsar*, or *Kaiser*, had arisen, in Russia, in the seventeenth century, simultaneously with the tendency,—natural in a power which inclined to European forms,—to repudiate its Asiatic origin. The word, which was originally used to describe the Tartar Princes of Kazan, corresponds to the Persian *Sar*, the English *Sir*, and the French *Sire*. In a treaty between the Emperor Maximilian, and the Grand Duke Vassili Ivanovitch, the Imperial title had been somewhat carelessly bestowed on the Muscovite Prince, and on that equivocal recognition, the dignity had hitherto rested. But,

[1] Choubinski, *Historical Descriptions*, p. 31, etc.

in 1711, Kourakin had thought himself obliged to erase the word *Tsarian* added to the title of Majesty, in the letter sent by Queen Anne to his lord and master. Peter himself had appeared indifferent, and almost hostile, to the idea of claiming such dignity, and explained his personal repugnance by a phrase at once energetic and picturesque. 'It smells musty!' In 1721, he waived his objections, but imposed one change. He would call himself Emperor *of all the Russias*, not Emperor *of the East*, as the senators had proposed. He clearly recognised the difficulty with which Europe would be brought to acknowledge this change of title. As a matter of fact, France and Holland were at first the only countries which would recognise him. Sweden did not consent to do so till 1723; Turkey ten years later; Great Britain and Austria in 1742; France again, and Spain, in 1745; and Poland, the most interested of all, not until 1764, at the accession of Poniatowski, and on the eve of the first partition.

Thus the Russia of 'all the Russias,' including the provinces which the Polish hegemony had carried over, five centuries before, to European civilisation, made a final and definite entrance into history.

The Emperor himself lighted the fireworks at the festivities held in honour of the proclamation of this new title—the person who had been specially trusted with this duty being discovered to be dead drunk. The sovereign, too, drank freely, and amused himself, in fact, more than all his subjects put together. But on the morrow, he was afoot early, as usual, and back at his work. Peace was not to mean idleness for him; beside, and even beyond, its immediate benefit, he desired to endow his people with a moral one, of much larger, nay, of indefinite scope. Those twenty years of struggle were, so he held, to be above all things a *school*, 'with lessons of triple and most cruel length,' as he himself says, in one of the letters written to his friends, to announce the happy event. Knowledge in itself counted for nothing. They must profit, and at once, from what they had learnt. What was to be done? Make war again? Why not? He felt no weariness himself, and soon forgot the weariness of those about him. Yet another military enterprise tempted his fancy: one with yet wider horizons than those which 'the window open upon Europe,' on the

Baltic side, had spread before his eyes. The very historian who essays to follow the Tsar through this mighty undertaking, feels his breath fail him.

VI

Even during his struggle to increase his empire, and his influence towards the West, Peter did not lose sight of his eastern frontier. As early as 1691, the Burgomaster of Amsterdam, Nicholas Witsen, had drawn his attention, through the Dutch Resident at Moscow, to the important commercial relations which might be established between Russia and Persia. The journey of Isbrand, a Danish traveller, into China, in 1692, brought about some acquaintance with that country. One of Peter's most devoted assistants in the building of ships and the making of canals, John Perry, had studied the Caspian coast, where, after the middle of the seventeenth century, Astrakhan had grown into an important mart of commerce between Armenia and Persia. Repeated attempts to gain possession of the markets of Pekin, where a Russian Church was actually built, met with no success. Colonel Ismaïlof, sent there as Ambassador, in 1719, found himself forestalled by the Jesuits, who were already firmly established.[1] The only result of this disappointment was to strengthen Peter's determination to open himself some other road towards the far East. If China failed him, he would try India. The idea of meeting England there, and checking her, certainly never entered his head. His only object was to secure a share in that great mine of wealth, which had enriched almost every European Power. He first turned his eyes on Khiva and Bokhara, the earliest stages on the Oxus route, by which he hoped to reach Delhi, whence the English had not yet dislodged the Great Mogul. This road had already been explored by Russian merchants. After the unlucky campaign of 1711, the temptation to make up eastward, on the Caspian, for what had been lost on the south, towards the Black Sea, became more urgent. In 1713, the reports brought to Moscow by a Turcoman Hodja, roused the Tsar's covetous-

[1] Baer, *Peters Verdienste um die Erweiterung des Geographischen Kentnisse Beiträge zur Kentniss des Russischen Reichs* (St. Petersburg, 1872), vol. xvi. pp. 12-32.

ness. There was gold, this man said, for the finding, on the banks of the Amu-Daria (Oxus), and this river, which had formerly fallen into the Caspian, and which the Khivans, in their fear of the Russians, had turned aside into the Sea of Aral, might easily be brought back to its original bed. The Swedish war prevented the despatch of any important expedition, but Peter's longing was too strong for him, and he began a system of small detachments, which has since been fatal to other conquerors in distant lands, and which served him little better. The first detachment, a very weak one, which took the field in 1714, under the command of Bergholz, a German officer, moved towards Siberia, found its way barred by the Kalmuks, and beat a retreat. In 1717, Prince Alexander Bekovitch Tcherkaski, with a stronger body, numbering 4000 infantry, and 2000 Cossacks, pushed as far as Khiva, sometimes negotiating, and sometimes fighting. But he was finally massacred with all his followers.[1]

Other attempts simultaneously made, in the direction of Persia, met with more success. In 1715, Artémi Pétrovitch Volynski was sent to the Shah's Court, and returned with a treaty of commerce, and a project for an expedition on a grand scale. In 1720, he was appointed Governor of Astrakhan, and never ceased to preach, and prepare for, this Persian Campaign. This project it was, which, on the morrow of the Peace of Nystadt, once more roused Peter's warlike activity, and snatched him from the delights of his 'Paradise.' The condition of things in Persia at that moment seemed to call loudly for armed intervention. After the incursions of the Lesgians and the Kazykoumyks, which ruined the Russian factories,—costing one merchant alone, named Iévreïnof, 170,000 roubles during the course of the year 1721,—the Afghans found their way as far as Ispahan. If the Tsar did not hurry himself, there was every fear of his being outstripped by Turkey, whose intention to re-establish order in the Shah's dominions was openly declared. Peter, then, decided to take advantage of these propitious circumstances, and, in response to the Governor of Astrakhan's eager call, to take the field with a whole army, and personally command it.

He started from Moscow on the 13th of May 1722, with

[1] H. Sutherland Edwards, *Russian Projects against India* (London, 1885), pp. 1-30.

Tolstoï, Apraxin, and his inseparable companion, Catherine. On the 18th of July he sailed from Astrakhan, with 23,000 infantry. His cavalry, numbering some 9000 men, was to travel by land, followed by a cloud of irregular troops,—20,000 Cossacks, 20,000 Kalmuks, and 20,000 Tartars,—and to meet him on the road to Derbent. What was the Tsar's object in marshalling this body of 100,000 men? His plans have never been made clear. More than probably, he allowed himself to be carried away by a desire to counterbalance the excessive weakness of his former demonstrations. And once more, on this occasion, we notice the strange lack of seriousness which accompanied the more solid qualities of his mind and character. On the 23rd of August, after a trifling skirmish with the troops of the Sultan of Outemich, he made a triumphal entry into Derbent, and there received the congratulations of the Russian Senate, which urged him to 'press forward in the footsteps of Alexander.' But this new Alexander was soon obliged to stop short. His soldiers, like his army in Moldavia, ten years before, were in serious danger of starving to death. The transports which were to have carried them supplies had been wrecked while crossing the Caspian. Within a very few days, his cavalry was dismounted,—there was no forage, and the horses died in thousands. He left a small garrison in Derbent, laid the first stone of a Fort, to be called the Holy Cross, at the confluence of the Soulak and the Agrahan, and retired, in pitiful pomp, to Astrakhan.[1]

But yet, once again, the guiding quality of his nature, his stubbornness, was to atone for his faults. He went back to the system of small detachments, sent Colonel Shipof, during the course of the following year, with a small body of troops, to occupy the Persian town of Riashtchi, while Major-General Matioushkine, at the head of another, took possession of Baku, which the Russian staff held to be the key of the position in those localities. At the same time, he had recourse to diplomacy. Colonel Abramof was ordered to use all his powers to explain to the Persians at Ispahan, that the Tsar's only desire was to come to their assistance against the insurgent tribes, and, on the 12th of September 1723, a Treaty was signed at St. Petersburg, by Isman Bey, for the Shah, whereby the whole of the longed-for coastline of the Caspian,

[1] Solovief, vol. xviii. pp. 40-50.

with Derbent, Baku and the Provinces of Gilian, Mazanderan, and Astrabat, were ceded to Russia, in exchange for a vague promise of help against the insurgents. In the month of May, in the following year, Peter was already betraying his anxiety to make the most of these new acquisitions, and drew up detailed instructions to Matioushkine, to despatch the local products,—such as petroleum, sugar, dried fruits, and lemons,—to St. Petersburg.

But this was somewhat premature. Prince Boris Meshtcherski, who went to Ispahan in April 1724, to ratify the Treaty, was actually fired upon! The Turks, on their side, egged on by England, protested loudly, demanded immediate evacuation of the territory occupied by Russia, claimed part, at least, for themselves, and requested the French Envoy, the Marquis de Bonac, to arrange the partition. De Bonac, in the course of his efforts to arrange matters, fell out with the Russian Minister, Nićplouief, who accused him of betraying Russian interests, after having accepted 2000 ducats to defend them. The insolent Russian was forthwith turned out of the Frenchman's doors; but stubbornness was again to win the day.[1] In June 1724, a Treaty of Partition was signed at Constantinople, and though the limits thus determined were both precarious and illusory, Russia set her foot firmly in those countries, and in the long run, by hook or by crook, she was to make her influence felt there.

Alexander Roumiantsof, who was sent to Constantinople to exchange the ratification of this arrangement, met an Armenian deputation on its way to St. Petersburg, to solicit the Tsar's support against the Turks.

The movement then begun was to be an unceasing one, and the problem thus set, was to threaten the future of Europe, even at the close of the following century.

These first Armenian Deputies were, as may readily be imagined, received with open arms. Peter, with most remarkable political insight, at once made up his mind to use the protection of the Christian populations, whether Armenians, or Georgians, as the basis of his action in the countries he disposed to dispute with the Turks and Persians. But he was never able to carry out his programme. Already

[1] Solovief, vol. xviii. p. 58, etc. De Bonac does not refer to this incident in his reports.

his days were numbered, and those who came after him imperilled the work he had designed, by losing sight, for a time, of that road to India which he had sketched out. But the landmarks he had set up, remained. The Eastern Question was opened in the direction he had given it; his seal was on it.

He never ceased, during all the rest of his life, to give his attention to the Oriental Christians. At the same time,—impatient as he always was, and incapable of any quiet waiting,—he endeavoured, groping somewhat in the dark, to find some other road, by which he might reach the distant and mysterious East.

In the course of the year 1723, the Port of Rogerwick was all astir. Two frigates were being prepared, in greatest haste, and the profoundest secrecy, to start for some unknown destination. They set sail on the 12th (24th) of December, were overtaken by a tempest, and obliged to take refuge in the Port of Revel. A report spread, that they were bound for Madagascar, and were to take possession of that island,—destined, for two centuries yet, to tempt the colonising ambition of the European Powers. This idea, like many of Peter's, was drawn from a Swedish source. Charles XII., a short time before his death, had entered into relations with an adventurer named Morgan, the son, probably, of that famous British buccaneer, Henry John Morgan (1637-1690), who died in Jamaica, after a stormy career, in the course of which he took possession of the Isthmus of Panama, and ruled it, for some time, with despotic authority. Morgan boasted his power of ensuring the Swedes a footing in Madagascar, where, he averred, immense treasure was to be had, with very little trouble. Queen Ulrica-Eleonora reopened negotiations with him in 1719, and had even begun preparations to send an expedition. Then it was that Peter, warned by his agents in Stockholm, determined to outstrip his neighbours. But Madagascar, to his ardent imagination, was, like Baku, to be a mere stage. The Commandant of his expedition, Admiral Wilster, after having occupied the island, and established a Russian Protectorate over it, was to pursue his course eastward, to the fabled country ruled by the great Mogul.

It was only a dream. Peter, with his usual eagerness and overhaste, had not even given himself time to acquire the

most elementary information as to the country he proposed to conquer. He did not take the trouble to read the documents which had been abstracted, for his benefit, from the Stockholm Chancery, and he drew up a letter, quite at haphazard, to the King (whom he supposed to reign over the distant Island) pointing out that at that moment a Russian Protectorate would be far more advantageous to him than a Swedish one! The Swedes were far better informed. He had pitched on the two first frigates he could lay his hands on, without any consideration as to whether they were fit to face such a long voyage, and fell into a fury when he heard how useless the two frail vessels had proved. He flew at Wilster and his officers, he stormed and threatened, he would not hear of the plan being given up. He suggested a sheathing of felt and boards, to be placed over the submerged timbers, and compensate for their inferior quality, and he commanded the Admiral to lie low at Rogerwick, under a feigned name, and to start as soon as possible. It was all in vain; the frigates were useless, no felt sheathing was to be had at Revel, and, early in 1724, the expedition was formally deferred to a later date.[1] It was never attempted again during the great Tsar's life. After his death, his country, once it had shaken off the fumes of his maritime intoxication, came to a better understanding of the resources, direction, and natural limits, of the Russian colonising power. The part thus played has been brilliant enough!

[1] Golikof, vol. ix. p. 300, etc.; vol. x. p. 370, etc.; *Russian Naval Review*, March 1894.

CHAPTER III

THE APOGEE—FRANCE

I. Peter's first plan for a journey into France, and its failure—The Tsar's displeasure—Attempted agreement—France takes the initiative—Du Héron—Baluze—Matviéief's journey to Paris—Rupture of diplomatic relations—A non-political agreement—Frenchmen in Russia, and Russians in France—Two currents of emigration—The French colony in St. Petersburg—A strange parish—Father Cailleau—Fresh negotiations—Lefort—Comte de la Marck—Peter's unsatisfactory position in Germany induces him to seek fresh support—He resolves to go to Paris.

II. Arrival at Dunkirk—The Tsar's incognito—A suite of 85 persons—An exacting Sovereign—The sorrows of Monsieur de Liboy—The Comte de Mailly-Nesle—The Cabriolet—A strange mode of transport—The Tsar's supper at Beauvais—His arrival in Paris—Apartment in the Louvre—A billet on the French Academy—The Hotel Lesdiguières—Three days imprisonment—The Tsar insists on receiving the King's visit before he goes out—Ceremonious reception—Etiquette forgotten—In the Tsar's arms—Peter recovers his liberty—A tourist—His curiosity—His huffiness and stinginess—An evening at the opera—The Regent waits on the Tsar—Displeasure of the princes and princesses—The Duchesse de Rohan's mishap—The Tsar softens—A visit to St. Cyr—History and legend—A letter from Madame de Maintenon—Visits to scientific institutions—Serious occupations and amusements—The reverse of the medal—Orgies at the Trianon—The return from Fontainebleau—Departure—Final generosity—The Tsar pays his reckoning—On the way to Spa.

III. Political results—Non-existent at first—Performances on the diplomatic slack-rope—No one but the Tsar has any serious desire to negotiate—The Congress of the Hague—A Platonic treaty—The diplomats representing both sides are not worthy—Baron von Schleinitz, and Cellamare—Fresh advances from the Tsar—Their secret reason—He desires to marry his daughter to a French prince—The Tsarevna Elizabeth—Louis XV. or the Duc de Chartres—These overtures coldly received in France—Dubois' silence—His reasons—Secret differences—France desires a political, and Russia a family alliance—No room for an understanding—The alliance of the future.

I

PETER'S journey into France, following as it did on his brilliant appearance at the head of the four squadrons united under his command, in the roads of Copenhagen, marks the most glorious point in his reign. In spite of his triumph at

Nystadt, subsequent events, his political disappointments and domestic troubles, his rupture with the allies he had bought too dearly, the trial of the Tsarevitch, and the Mons affair, strike us as reverses of fortune,—his star had begun to decline.

Since 1701, not a year had passed during which the Tsar had failed to cross the frontiers of his empire. He had travelled, incessantly, up and down Europe, now to visit his chosen allies in their various capitals, and then to seek the re-establishment of his steadily failing health at Carlsbad or at Pyrmont. In 1698, during his first great journey, he had turned longing eyes towards Paris. He had expected, and even tried to obtain, an invitation, but had failed.[1] He soon consoled himself. 'The Russians,' so he was heard to say, 'need the Dutchmen on the sea, and the Germans on land, but they have no need of Frenchmen anywhere.' Yet relations between the two countries, undeveloped as they were, suffered from the wound inflicted on the Russian Sovereign's vanity, and the interests of Frenchmen in the north were equally affected. But this fact was treated in France with an indifference which certainly equalled the Tsar's openly expressed scorn. The war of the Spanish Succession absorbed the French mind. To the most Christian king, as to the majority of his subjects, Russia was a very distant object, of very doubtful interest. And her ruler, in their eyes, was an exotic, whimsical, obscure, and,—taking him all in all,—a far from attractive figure. Until 1716, the name of the victor of Poltava was not even included in the list of European Sovereigns printed yearly in Paris!

Yet Peter had talked,—at Birzé, in 1701,—with the French Envoy to the King of Poland, and the intercourse thus begun, through Du Héron, was continued through the Russian Envoy to the Court of Augustus, through Patkul, and other intermediaries. Unfortunately a cardinal misunderstanding at once arose. The French King considered himself to be dealing with a second-rate power, who was greatly honoured by his notice, and was therefore likely to be far from exacting—a second Poland, in fact, more distant, less civilised, and yet more likely to be easily secured to his service, by a modest salary, and a few smooth words. The Russian Tsar expected to treat with France as her equal.

[1] Oustrialof, *History of Peter the Great*, vol. iii. pp. 135 and 489.

One of the most essential forces of modern Russia—I refer to that high opinion of her importance and power, which she never failed to assert, even before it was evidently justified—was splendidly exemplified on this occasion. When Du Héron spoke of an agreement between the two countries, his Russian interlocutor replied, that 'a union and intimate alliance between the two heroes of the century (Louis XIV. and Peter) would assuredly rouse the highest admiration throughout the whole of Europe!'[1] This compliment, coming, as it did, on the very morrow of the defeat of Narva, must have been doubtfully welcome to France!

In 1703, Baluze, Du Héron's successor in Poland, journeyed to Moscow, and returned somewhat crestfallen. He had expected to receive overtures from Peter, and all he had received was a dry request to make overtures himself. Up to the year 1705, the Russian agent in Paris was an unimportant individual, named Postnikof, whose chief occupation appears to have been to translate and publish the official reports of the more, or less, authentic victories, won by his master over the Swedes. If the truth must be told, former Muscovite Embassies had left far from pleasant memories behind them on the banks of the Seine. The Embassy, headed by the Princes Dolgorouki and Meshtcherski, in 1667, had very nearly caused a sanguinary scuffle. These gentlemen had claimed the right to introduce a whole cargo of saleable merchandise into the French dominions, without paying duty, and had even offered armed resistance to the Custom House officials.[2]

In 1705, Matviéief went from the Hague to Paris, and was obliged at once to struggle with public prejudice, with regard to the Russians and their Sovereign. 'Is it true?' he was asked, 'that during the Tsar's visit to Holland, he broke his glass when he saw it had been filled with French wine?' 'His Majesty delights in champagne!' 'And is it true that he ordered Menshikof one day to hang his own son?' 'Why, that is a story of Ivan the Terrible's days!'[3] But these apologetic remarks bore little fruit, and the poor diplomat, to enhance his discomfort, was charged with a far from

[1] Golovin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to du Héron, Dec. 27, 1701 (French Foreign Office).

[2] French Foreign Office, *Mémoires et Documents*, Russia, vol. iii. p. 21, etc.

[3] Solovief, vol. xv. p. 72.

agreeable mission, relating to two Russian ships, which had been seized by the Dunkirk Corsairs. He could get no satisfaction. His remonstrances, like his historical rectifications, were politely received,—but the ships were not returned.

A new attempt at an understanding took place after the victory at Poltava, and this time Peter took his revenge. The position was changed; the advances now came from the French side, and it was the Tsar's turn to look scornful. Baluze, who had sore difficulty in catching him up, during his constant journeys hither and thither, and who could not get speech with him till May 1711,—on the very eve of the campaign of the Pruth,—offered him the mediation of France between himself and Sweden. He was given an ironical reply. The Tsar, he was told, was quite willing to accept French mediation, but only in so far as to arrange matters between himself and the Turks! He was made to feel he was looked on as a bore, and systematically kept out of the Sovereign's presence. He was reduced to seeking the Tsar secretly, in the gardens at Iaworow; and, when, after Peter's unlucky campaign, he returned to the charge, the Tsar simply refused to listen to him.[1]

Events had altered circumstances. The Powers allied with Peter against Sweden were those the war of the Spanish Succession had marshalled against France; and the desire to snatch 'the most powerful weapon she possesses in Germany'—the support of Sweden—from that country, was a natural bond between the Tsar and his allies.

Kourakin, personally, was anything but anti-French. His high-born instincts, and his quickly acquired habits as a man of the world, had given him too strong a taste for Paris, and especially for Versailles. He privately entered into an obscure and somewhat shady negotiation with Rakoczy, the head of the Hungarian insurgents, which was concealed from the Tsar, and carried on in a special cypher. The object of this negotiation was to put an end to the War of the Spanish succession, at the expense of Austria, Russia playing the part—conceived even in those early days, —of the 'honest broker,' for the benefit of France. Rakoczy himself appeared at Utrecht in April 1712, in the hope of carrying this matter through, but he was met by a courier

[1] Baluze to the King, Warsaw, Sept. 11, 1711 (French Foreign Office).

from Shafirof, who brought news of the conclusion of an advantageous peace with Constantinople, which peace 'he had succeeded in obtaining, in spite of the intrigues of the French Envoy, who had behaved worse to Russia than any Swedes, or Polish or Cossack traitors.' This cut the ground from under Kourakin's feet, and he made no further attempt to carry out his project.[1]

Yet, insensibly, and by the mere force of circumstances, the gulf between the two countries narrowed, year by year. Russia, when she entered the European family, unconsciously made a great step towards this end. A current of natural and inevitable relations was slowly established, and developed, between the two peoples, even while their Governments remained apart. Russians went to France and settled there, Frenchmen, in still greater numbers, established themselves in Russia. Postnikof had already been desired to engage artists, architects, engineers and surgeons, in Paris, and at first he found it very difficult. 'The French,' he said, 'ask a thousand crowns a year, and think that to go to Moscow, is to go to the other end of the world.' Yet, little by little, the tide of emigration swelled. Guillemotte de Villebois, a Breton whose services Peter had personally engaged, during his visit to Holland, in 1698, and Balthazar de l'Osière, a Gascon, who had fought, in 1695, under the walls of Azof, in the ranks of the Muscovite army, formed the centre of a budding French colony in Russia. And I note the name of an engineer-officer, Joseph Gustave Lambert de Guérin, who took an active part in the sieges of Noteburg and Nienschantz, and who, in later years, advised the Tsar as to the choice of the site on which St. Petersburg was built.[2]

After the battle of Poltava the tide rose yet higher. Two French architects, Merault and De la Squire, were employed, in 1712, in building the new capital. In 1715, Peter took advantage of the death of Louis XIV. to secure, and at a cheap rate, the services of a whole flight of artists, who had been thrown out of work,—such as Rastrelli, Legendre, Leblanc, Davalet, and Louis Caravaque. In the following year, the direction of the ship-building establishments on the Neva was intrusted to the Baron de St. Hilaire. A certain

[1] *Kourakin Papers*, vol. v. pp. 1, etc., 171, etc., 178, 184, 197, 209.
[2] Barilich-Kamenski, *Historical Selections* (Moscow, 1814), pp. 66, 67.

Comte de Launay was made one of the gentlemen of the Tsar's bed-chamber, and his wife was chief Lady of Honour to the young daughters of the Sovereign. A French Chapel was founded on the Island of St. Basil at St. Petersburg, and the chaplain, Father Cailleau, a Franciscan, assumed the title of 'Almoner to the French nation.' It must be admitted that neither the chaplain, nor his parish, reflected great credit on themselves. He was an ill-conducted priest, who, before leaving France, had contrived to get himself appointed Chaplain to Marsillac's regiment, and had been discharged for misconduct. He was perpetually quarrelling with his St. Petersburg flock; he tried to force his way into the house of François Vasson, a smelter in the Tsar's service, and, when the way was barred, he called his wife a 'thief,' and 'an ill-conducted woman,' and treated her so roughly that she was forced to take to her bed. He thundered public excommunication against the painter Caravaque, and declared his marriage null, because the banns had been published elsewhere than in the Vassili-Ostrow Chapel. He ordered the bride to separate from her husband, and, when she refused, he persecuted her with a variety of coarse and defamatory songs, which formed the subject of an action brought against him, under the auspices of the French Consulate. In his defence, the Franciscan boasted openly, that he could speak with full knowledge of the private failings of the lady, 'having had an intimate acquaintance with them, prior to her illegal marriage.'[1]

Independently of all this internal disorder, the condition of the colony was, in many respects, far from enviable. Lambert de Guérin, after serving three years and receiving no reward, pecuniary or otherwise, beyond the Cross of St. Andrew, was forced to sell everything he possessed, to save himself from starvation, and pay his way back to France. He wrote to the Duke of Orleans, in 1717, 'I think myself very happy to have escaped safe and sound from the States of that Prince (Peter I.), and to find myself back in the most flourishing kingdom in all the world; it is better to have bread and water here, than to own the whole of Muscovy.' And this was no isolated case, for, in a despatch sent to Dubois, in 1718, by the commercial agent, La Vie, I

[1] Records of the French Consulate at St. Petersburg, July 1720 (French Foreign Office).

find the following lines:—'The condition of a great number of Frenchmen who settle in this country (Russia) seems to me so sad, that I feel it my duty to inform your Eminence of it. Twenty-five, who were formerly in the Tsar's pay, have been discharged, in spite of the agreements made with them in Paris by the Sieur Lefort, the Prince's agent. . . . A still larger number who were not formally engaged, and who had been promised funds, to be sent from Paris, to help them to establish themselves, are in a state of the greatest poverty, owing to the agent's failure to execute this promise.'[1] One officer, named De la Motte, even went so far, when he returned to his own country, as to publish a warning to the public on this subject, which made a very great stir.[2]

Yet the impulse had been given, and, from year to year, the number of French immigrants into the new Northern capital increased, at such a rate as to arouse the alarm of the diplomatic agents of other Powers. The Dutch Resident, De Bie, made a perfect outcry.[3] Meanwhile, in Paris, Lefort, a nephew of Peter's early friend, endeavoured, with the help of the Chancellor, Pontchartrain, to form a Franco-Russian Trading Company, but, just as it seemed on the eve of success, this business fell through,—Lefort was arrested for debt. A sort of fate seemed to hang over the modest beginnings of the understanding which was destined to such a brilliant future. Lefort's successor was a certain Hugueton, who called himself Baron von Odik, and whom the French Ministry recognised as a malefactor, 'a London bankrupt whom the King would have hanged, and justly, if the King of England would have paid attention to the requests made for the possession of the wretch, who had taken refuge in London.' Then came an unsuccessful attempt on the French side. The Duc d'Orléans sent the Comte de la Marck on a secret mission to the Tsar, at the springs of Pyrmont, in 1716, with directions to test the strength of the engagements which bound him to the King's enemies.[4] This fresh messenger of peace made great diplomatic preparations, drew up memoranda and preliminary plans, and, by the time he was ready, Peter had left Pyrmont.

[1] St. Petersburg, Jan. 3, 1718 (French Foreign Office).
[2] Cologne, 1704. This pamphlet gave rise to a prolonged discussion in print.
[3] Despatches, dated Aug. 3 and 6, 1714 (Dutch State Papers).
[4] 'Instructions,' dated June 18, 1716 (French Foreign Office).

The hope of any understanding seemed as far off as ever, but the logic of events ended by bringing the two countries into regular intercourse, and triumphed over the inconsistency and weaknesses of their various diplomats. While, in France, the Government began to recognise the insufficient value it had set on the new factor in European politics, Peter too, began to realise, more clearly, the inconveniences and dangers which the enterprises he had so thoughtlessly undertaken had raised about him, in the heart of Germany. Early in 1717, Prussia, whose interests he had specially served, threatened to abandon the over-venturous Sovereign. Alarmed at the attitude taken up by a coalition which she had joined, at the outset, under prudent reservations,—startled by the Tsar's conferences with Goertz, which had come to her ears, she thought it prudent to ensure her own safety, by means of a Secret Convention with France, signed on the 14th of September 1716. She accepted the mediation of the latter Power, and undertook to break off hostilities, in return for the surrender of Stettin. Peter had no resource left him but to follow this example, and his journey to France was forthwith decided. His arrival there was preceded, in February 1717, by that of twenty gentlemen, belonging to the best Russian families,—Jérebtsof, Volkonski, Rimski-Korssakof, Ioussoupof, Saltykof, Poushkin, Bézobrazof, Bariatinski, Biélossielski,—who had received permission to enter the King's Garde Marine. The hour had come for Russia and her Sovereign to make a fresh stride,—the greatest of all,—in that intercourse with the European world, which had become a law of their destiny.

Catherine did not take part in this journey, and that fact, in itself, indicates its nature and scope. Peter very seldom parted from this beloved companion. She had appeared beside him in every Court in Germany, and he had never given a thought to the effect her presence might produce. He did not think fit to try the experiment in Paris. Clearly, he felt that the new elements of culture and refinement he was there to meet, authoritatively demanded a greater display of decency, and propriety.

II

More than one difficulty cropped up during the journey. Peter reached Dunkirk on the 21st of April 1717, attended by fifty-seven persons. This numerous suite was, at first, a somewhat unpleasing surprise to his entertainers. The Tsar had given out that he was travelling in the strictest incognito, and the arrangements and outlay for his reception had been calculated on this basis. Fate willed that the earliest discussions between the august traveller's ministers and Monsieur de Liboy—the gentleman of the king's household who had been sent to receive him—should turn on a pitiful question of money. Would not his Imperial Majesty, it was inquired, agree to receive a fixed sum for his maintenance, during whatever time he elected to remain in France? The French Government was ready to give as much as 1500 *livres* a day. The expenses of hospitality were, at that period, always defrayed in this manner, in the case of foreign envoys to Russia, so the proposal in itself was not unbecoming. Yet Kourakin made a great outcry, which reduced de Liboy to silence, and likewise to despair—for his credit was strictly limited, and he perceived the waste in the Tsar's household to be something enormous. 'The chief cook, under pretext of the two or three dishes sent up to his master, every day, filches the value of a table that would suffice for eight people, both in food and wine.' De Liboy tried to economise, by cutting off the suppers, but this aroused a general outcry among the Russian gentlemen and their servants. And the suite steadily increased in number—soon there were eighty of them. Fortunately, the authorities at Versailles changed their minds, and the Regent sent fresh instructions, which gave his agent more elbow-room. Expense was not to be considered, so long as the Tsar was pleased. But it was not very easy to please the Tsar. De Liboy declared his nature 'betrayed some seeds of virtue,' but 'of the wildest.' He rose very early, dined towards ten o'clock, took only a very light supper, when he had dined heartily, and went to bed at nine o'clock at night. But, between dinner and supper time, he consumed an extraordinary quantity of brandy flavoured with aniseed, beer, wine, fruit, and every kind of food. 'He always has two or three dishes, prepared by his own cook,

standing ready to his hand. He will leave a magnificently-ordered table, and go and eat in his own room, has his beer brewed by one of his own men, considers the beer we give him detestably bad, and complains of everything.' He was a Gargantua, and a sulky one! The gentlemen of his suite were just as difficult to please, 'they like all good things, and thoroughly understand good cheer,' from which we may conclude that they had left a good deal of their savagery behind them.

But the table arrangements were a mere trifle, compared to the trouble of the transport service. The Tsar insisted on reaching Paris in four days, which seemed an impossible matter, with the relays at de Liboy's disposal. Kourakin glanced scornfully at the coaches offered him, and said, 'No gentleman had ever been seen driving about in a hearse'; he demanded *berlines*. As for the Tsar, he suddenly declared that nothing should induce him to travel either in a *berline* or a coach — he would have a two-wheeled cabriolet, like those he was accustomed to use at St. Petersburg. No cabriolet was to be had, either at Dunkirk or at Calais, and when, at last, the officials had utterly worn themselves out, to provide what he wanted, he changed his mind, so that de Liboy was driven to acknowledge, with bitterness, that 'this little Court is very changeable and irresolute, and, from the throne to the stables, greatly addicted to fits of bad temper.' The Tsar's will, and his plans, varied perpetually, from one hour to the other. There was no possibility of laying out a programme or arranging the smallest thing beforehand.

At Calais, where a stay of several days was made, the Sovereign grew a little more reasonable. He reviewed a regiment, inspected a fort, went so far as to be present at a hunting party given in his honour, and ended by becoming so gracious, that de Liboy appears to have felt some alarm for the virtue of *Madame La Presidente*, to whom the duty of doing the honours of the town to the travellers had been allotted. But the question of transport came to the front again, and grew so bitter, that de Liboy thought the journey would have been broken off. At one time, nobody knew how long the Tsar intended to stay at Calais, nor whether he would decide to go any farther. At that moment—it already was the 2nd of May—de Liboy was reinforced by a

notable coadjutor, the Marquis de Mailly-Nesle. A story was current in Paris, at the time, that this young nobleman had gone to meet the Muscovite Sovereign, without any formal commission from the authorities, under pretext of 'an ancient prerogative, which gave his family the right to meet all foreign kings who might enter France through Picardy.' And it was further declared, that, ruined as he was, he had contrived to borrow 1000 *pistoles* so as to carry on the tradition. A correspondent of the Duc de Lorraine's, who repeats these stories, adds certain details which give curious proof of the ideas then current in Paris concerning the expected guest. De Mailly, he declares, endeavoured to enter the Tsar's coach, wherepon Peter 'fell on him with his fists, and threw him out.' And on another occasion, the Muscovite Sovereign's sole reply to some casual observation was a hearty box on the ear.[1]

The Marquis, as a matter of fact, had been duly and formally commissioned by the Regent, and all the public entertainment at the young man's expense, was pure and gratuitous spite. But the part he was called upon to play proved most ungrateful. He made a bad beginning, for he arrived during the Russian Easter, and the Tsar's suite, being all of them dead drunk, were quite unable to offer him a suitable reception. The only person able to keep his feet, and in something like his normal condition, was the Sovereign himself. 'Although,' as de Liboy tells us, 'he had gone out, at eight o'clock in the evening, incognito, to drink with his musicians, who were living in a tavern.' But the tavern and the company he found there had left him little inclination to accept the Marquis' complimentary remarks. Even on the following days, when he was sober, he found fault with him for being too elegant. Though he may not have actually fallen on him with his fists, he certainly launched epigrams at his head, and openly expressed his astonishment at seeing a man change his clothes every day. 'Cannot that young man find any tailor to dress him to his fancy?' The Tsar's temper had changed again, and for the worse. He had indeed given some sign, at last, of desiring to continue his journey, but he had pitched on a new style of locomotion. He would have a sort of litter, on which the body of an old phaeton,

[1] Sergent's *Letters*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lorraine Collection, vol. 574 (56 s. s.).

found amongst some disused carriages, was to be fixed. And this was to be carried by horses. In vain it was pointed out that he would endanger his own neck by travelling in this strange fashion, to which the horses must necessarily be quite unaccustomed. 'Most men,' writes de Mailly, 'are led by reason, but these—if indeed the name of man can be given to persons who have nothing human about them—never listen to it.' The litter was arranged as best it could be managed,—the great point was to get away. De Mailly speaks more strongly even than de Liboy on the subject, adding, 'I do not know, as yet, whether the Tsar will lie at Boulogne or at Montreuil, but it is a great thing that he should start at all. I would with all my heart he were safe in Paris, and even that he had left it. When his Royal Highness has seen him, and he has spent several days in the city, I am persuaded, if I may dare say it, that he will not be sorry to be rid of him. None of the ministers, except Prince Kourakin, whom I have not seen to-day, can speak French . . . no commentary is possible on the strange antics of the others, who are truly a strange set.'[1]

The start was made on the 4th of May. The Tsar left his litter before entering the different towns, drove through them in his coach, and then returned to his chosen mode of progression. This enabled him to get a good view of the country he passed through. Like another traveller, fifty years later, Arthur Young, he was struck by the wretched appearance of the country people he met. Matviéief's impression, twelve years earlier, had been very different; but the last years of a ruinous reign had done their work.[2]

The night was spent at Boulogne, and a start was made the next day, with the idea of sleeping at Amiens. But half way thither, the Tsar changed his mind, and insisted on going as far as Beauvais. It was pointed out to him that there were no horses ready. He replied with a volley of abuse. The *Intendant* of Beauvais, M. de Bernage, who was hastily warned, made desperate efforts, and collected the sixty horses necessary. He and the Bishop prepared a supper,

[1] This letter, dated May 3, 1717, did not appear in the 'Collected Documents,' relative to Peter's visit to France, included in the thirty-fourth volume of the great work published by the Imperial Russian Historical Society, which had access to the Records of the French Foreign Office: and this omission is not the only one.

[2] Solovief, vol. xvii. p. 88; compare vol. xv. p. 71.

and a concert, in the Episcopal Palace, with illuminations and fireworks. He adorned the Palace with the Tsar's arms, and his bedroom with portraits,—hardly, I should imagine, very like the originals,—of former Grand Dukes of Muscovy. Suddenly he learnt that the Tsar had entered the zealous *Intendant's* coach, hurried across the town, climbed back into his litter, and settled himself some quarter of a league off, in a sorry tavern, 'where all he spent was eighteen francs for his own food and that of thirty of his people,—drawing a napkin from his own pocket, and using it as a tablecloth.' Poor de Bernage was reduced to making his wife give a ball in the Bishop's Palace, at which the guests were consoled for the Tsar's absence, by the thought that the preparations made for his reception had not been utterly wasted.[1]

At last, on the evening of the 10th of May, Peter entered Paris, escorted by 300 mounted Grenadiers. He had been offered, and had accepted, the Queen-Mother's lodging in the Louvre, and there, till the very last moment, he was expected. Coypel had received orders to clean the paint and gilding. Sergent tells us that the beautiful bed-hangings which 'Madame de Maintenon had caused to be made for the king, and which were the richest and most magnificent in the world, had been put up.' In the great hall of the Palace, two tables, each for sixty persons, had been prepared, in the most magnificent style. As the Louvre did not seem sufficiently spacious to accommodate the whole of the Sovereign's suite, the Hall of Assembly, belonging to the French Academy, had been requisitioned by the authorities. This illustrious body, in answer to the formal notification of this fact, sent by the Duc d'Antin, who had charge of all buildings belonging to the Crown, thanked him for his 'politeness,' and lost no time in removing itself into the neighbouring apartment, the Hall of the Académie des Sciences, where it remained till the 24th of May.[2]

Nevertheless, advised by Count Tolstoï, who had preceded his master, the Regent had taken the precaution of preparing another, and less sumptuous lodging, in the Hotel Lesdiguières. This fine house in the Rue de la Cerisaie, had been

[1] Correspondence between the Bishop of Beauvais and the Agents of the Duc d'Orléans, French Foreign Office, May 1717. See also, for this part of Peter's Journey, Lemontey, *Histoire de la Régence* (Paris, 1832), vol. i. p. 113.

[2] *Records of the French Academy*, 1895, vol. ii. pp. 26-29.

built by Sebastian Zamet, and bought from the heirs of the celebrated financier by Francois de Bonne, Duc de Lesdiguières. It belonged, in 1717, to the Marshal de Villeroi, who himself had rooms in the Tuileries, and therefore was willing and able to lend his private residence. Here too great preparations were made; the Royal tapestries were brought under contribution, and all the other houses in the street were taken up, to provide additional accommodation.[1] Peter, with his unfailing knack of foiling every expectation, went first to the Louvre, entered the apartment in which he was expected to sup, glanced carelessly at the sumptuous preparations made for his special behoof, called for some radishes and a piece of bread, tasted six varieties of wine, swallowed two glasses of beer, caused the numerous candles, —the profusion of which offended his sense of economy,—to be put out, and departed. He had made up his mind to stay at the Hotel Lesdiguières.[2]

Even here, the apartment prepared for him was too fine, and, above all, too spacious, for his taste, and he had his camp bed placed in a closet. Fresh tribulations awaited the persons appointed to replace de Liboy and de Mailly about the Sovereign's person. St. Simon asserts that he suggested Marshal de Tessé to the Regent for this office, 'as being a man who had nothing else to do, who had all the habits and speech of good society, whose journeys and negotiations had accustomed him to deal with foreigners. . . . It was just the work for him.' But the Tsar's preference was at once bestowed on the person associated with the Marshal, a certain Comte de Verton, *Maître d'Hôtel* to the King of France, 'a sensible fellow, fairly well born, fond of good cheer and high play.' The Tsar gave worry and trouble to both these functionaries.

To begin with, he shut himself up for three whole days like a prisoner within the hotel. My readers will imagine his curiosity as to the wonderful sights of the French Capital, and the impatience natural to such an extraordinarily turbulent and constantly eager nature. Yet he contained himself, and did violence to his own feelings, because he insisted that the King should begin by coming to him.

[1] Buvat, *Journal de la Régence* (Paris, 1865), p. 269. A commemorative tablet has been recently affixed to No. 10 Rue de la Cerisaie.

[2] Sergent, Letter, dated May 10, 1717.

This pretension was quite unforeseen. On former occasions he had always been more accommodating, or perhaps more careless, and little inclined to stand on ceremony. At Berlin, in 1712, he had gone straight to the Royal Castle, and found the King in his bed. At Copenhagen, in 1716, he had literally forced his way into Charles IV.'s chamber, through the double row of courtiers who had opposed his entrance, on account of the late hour selected by him for this irruption. But his behaviour in both these Capitals had all been of a piece,—familiar, cavalier, and, occasionally, even somewhat improper and uncouth.[1] He would appear to have taken it into his head that the widest difference existed between the Courts he already knew so well, and that he now approached for the first time. And he himself was quite different,—very much on his guard, apt to take offence, and rigidly and fastidiously observant of an etiquette, the laws of which he himself claimed the right to dictate.

The morning after his arrival, the Regent came to greet him. He took a few steps forward to meet his visitor, embraced him, according to St. Simon, 'with a great air of superiority,' pointed to the door of his cabinet, entered it first, 'without further civility,' and seated himself 'at the upper end.'

This interview, which lasted an hour, and during which Kourakin acted as interpreter, took place on the Saturday. It was not till the following Monday that the Regent made up his mind to respond to his Russian Majesty's demand, and send the little King to visit him. This time Peter went as far as the courtyard, received the Royal child at the door of his coach, and walked on his left hand, to his own apartment, where two State chairs had been prepared, that on the right for the King. Compliments were exchanged for a quarter of an hour, Kourakin still acting as interpreter, and the King took his leave. Then, with one of those sudden impulses which swept away all thought of etiquette, and brought back his natural simplicity, the Tsar took hold of the child, lifted him up in his strong arms, and kissed him as he held him. According to St. Simon, 'The King was not at all frightened, and got through the business very well.' Peter wrote to his wife, 'I give you notice that, last

[1] Sbornik, vol. xx. pp. 57-63.

Monday, I received a visit from the little King of this country, who is a very little taller than our Lucas' (a favourite dwarf); 'the child is exceedingly charming, both in face and figure, and fairly intelligent for his age.'

The visit was returned the next day, with the same ceremonies, all of which had been minutely discussed and arranged beforehand. Then the Tsar felt free to go and come. He took full advantage of his freedom, and forthwith began to go about the town as a private tourist, and in the simplest dress. He wore, according to Buvat, 'a quite plain overcoat of rather coarse grey barracan, a waistcoat of grey woollen stuff with diamond buttons, no cravat, no cuffs, and no lace on the wristbands of his shirt.' To this was added 'a black wig in the Spanish fashion, the back of which he had caused to be clipped, because he thought it too long, and without any powder . . . His overcoat had a small cape, like that of any ordinary traveller . . . and round his waist, outside the overcoat, was a silver laced belt, on which hung a cutlass, after the manner of the East.' This style of dress was the fashion in Paris, for a time, after the Sovereign's departure, and was called 'habit du Tsar,' or du Farouche.' Peter inspected public institutions, and went about in the shops, striking every one who had to do with him by the familiarity of his manners, which, nevertheless, had a certain touch of grandeur about them,—the suddenness of his movements,—his insatiable curiosity,—his uncertain temper,—his complete absence of shyness,—and his extreme stinginess. He frequently went out without informing anybody about him, would get into the first coach he came across, and have himself driven whithersoever his fancy listed. Thus one day, when Madame de Matignon had driven up close to the Hotel Lesdiguières, 'to gape,' as St. Simon puts it, he carried off her coach to Boulogne, and she was obliged to go home on foot. De Tessé, poor man, spent his life running after the Sovereign, and never knew where to find him.

On the 14th of May, Peter went to the Opera, where the Regent did him the honours of the Royal box. During the course of the performance he asked for some beer, and appeared to think it quite natural that the Regent should offer it to him, standing, with the salver in his hand. He took his time about emptying the glass, asked for a napkin

when he had drunk, and received it with 'a civil smile and a slight inclination of his head.' The public, according to St. Simon, was more than a little astonished at the sight. The next day, the Tsar climbed into a hack coach, inspected various workshops, went to the Gobelins, plied the workmen with questions, and left a single crown amongst them when he went away. On the 19th of May, he gave 25 sols. to the turncock at the Ménagerie; he paid ready money to the tradesmen who crowded his house, but he was a hard bargainer, and after having, as we have seen, maltreated a splendid wig, made by the greatest hairdresser in Paris, he gave the artist 7 livres and 10 sols., for what was worth at least five-and-twenty crowns![1]

He showed not the slightest regard for the rank and precedence of other people: took no more notice, as St. Simon says again, of the Prince and Princesses of the Blood, than of the chief nobles of the Court, and paid the former no more respect than the latter. When the Princes refused to wait on him, until they were sure he would return the civility to the Princesses, he sent them word they might stay at home. The Duchesses de Berry and d'Orléans sent their equerries to pay him their compliments, and he condescended to visit these two ladies at the Luxembourg and the Palais Royal, but still 'with an air of great superiority.' The other Princesses only saw him as sightseers, and from a distance. The Comte de Toulouse was the only one of the Princes who was presented to him, and this only when he received him at Fontainebleau as Master of the Royal Hounds. The Duc du Maine appeared at the head of the Swiss Guard, and the Prince de Soubise commanded the Gendarmes, at a Review to which the Tsar was invited, and at which 3000 coaches, filled with sightseers, male and female, surrounded the parade ground. But he did not offer the slightest civility, either to them or to any of the officers present.

On the 21st of May, he went to see Pajot d'Onsen Bray, the Director of the Posts, at Grand Bercy, and spent his day inspecting his curious collections, accompanied by the celebrated Pere Sébastien, a gifted physician and mechanic, whose real name was Jean Truchet. He showed all kinds of attentions to Carme, a Savant, but when the Duchesse de

[1] Sergent, Letter of 19th June 1717.

Rohan, who happened to be at her house at Petit Bercy, waited upon him, she retired utterly discomfited, and complained to her husband that the Tsar had not treated her with the slightest civility. 'And why, Madame,' replied the Duke—(loud enough to be heard by one of the Russian gentlemen, who happened to understand French, and retorted very sharply)—'Did you dream of expecting any civility from that brute?'[1]

St. Simon saw the Sovereign in the house of the Duc d'Antin, and watched him at his leisure, having specially requested not to be presented to him. He struck him as being 'rather talkative, but with the air of considering himself the master everywhere.' He remarked the nervous convulsion which suddenly contracted his features, completely altering their expression. De Tessé told him that this would happen several times a day. The Duchesse d'Antin and her daughters were present at the festivity, but the Tsar 'walked past them proudly,' with a mere bend of his head. An excellent picture of the Tsarina, which d'Antin had contrived to procure, and which he had hung over one of the chimney-pieces, pleased Peter greatly. He spoke very politely on the subject, and his lack of courtesy would really appear to have been some remnant of timidity and shyness, for he certainly improved, by degrees, in this respect. Towards the end of his stay, he went from house to house, accepting all invitations, and ended by behaving delightfully even to the ladies. At St. Ouen, where he went to visit the Duc de Tresmes, and where a great number of fair sightseers were assembled, he forgot his pride, and took pains to make himself pleasant. One of the lady guests, his host's daughter, the Marquise de Béthune, was presented to him, and he invited her to sit at table with him. Paris had ended by civilising the Tsar.

Whatever may be said to the contrary, he was fairly well behaved, if not over-gallant, when he went to see Madame de Maintenon at St. Cyr. St. Simon's description of this visit, which has been so frequently repeated, is universally known. According to him, the Tsar burst unexpectedly into the lady's apartment, and subjected her to a silent and even brutal scrutiny. Auger, in the biography which he has added to Madame de Maintenon's letters, published by

[1] Sergent, Letter, dated May 29, 1717.

Santreau de Marsy, confirms these details, and even declares that the Tsar's unseemly curiosity extended to the niece of the lady who had been the great King's wife. 'He noticed her (Madame de Caylus) one day at a festive gathering, and, learning who she was, he went straight to her, took her by the hand, and looked at her long and intently.'[1] The most unlikely legends need not surprise any historian, but it is somewhat astonishing that Auger does not appear to have read the following letter from Madame de Maintenon, which is included in the collection to which his biography of her is affixed. The letter in question is addressed to Madame de Caylus. 'M. Gabriel has just come in, and told me that M. Bellegarde gives me notice that he (that is to say, the Tsar) desires to come here after dinner, if I will permit it. I dare not refuse, and shall await him in my bed. I have been told nothing more. I do not know whether I am to give him a ceremonious reception, whether he desires to see the house and the young ladies, whether he will go into the choir. I am leaving everything to chance. . . . The Tsar arrived at seven o'clock in the evening, he seated himself beside my bed, and asked me if I was ill. I replied that I was. He then caused me to be asked what was the matter with me. I answered, "great age, and a somewhat weak constitution." He did not know what to say to me, and his interpreter did not appear to hear what I said to him. His visit was very short. He is still in the house, but where, I know not. He caused the curtains at the foot of my bed to be opened, so that he might look at me; you may imagine I gave him his way!'[2]

On the 11th of June, the date of this interview, and after a month in Paris, Peter was no longer the extraordinary person he has been described as having been on this occasion. But he still felt more at ease, when far from the elegance and ceremony of Courts and drawing-rooms. He was quite happy, for instance, at the Invalides, where he treated the pensioners in the most friendly manner, tasted their soup, and patted them familiarly on the back. At the Mint,

[1] I. ccxxxvi.

[2] June 11, 1717, vol. v. p. 205. See also, for confirmation, the *Memoirs of Mame. de Créquy*, niece of Marshal de Tessé (vol. ii. p. 9). But these memoirs are of somewhat doubtful authenticity. Dangeau (vol. xviii. pp. 101 and 104) declares every detail of the Tsar's visit to St. Cyr was discussed and arranged beforehand.

where he saw a medal struck to commemorate his stay in France; at the Royal Printing works; at the College des Quatre Nations; at the Sorbonne—where advantage was taken of his presence to discuss the reunion of the Greek and Latin Churches;—at the Observatory;—at the house of Delisle, the geographer, and that of the great English oculist, Woolhouse, who performed an operation for cataract in his presence, he struck observers as being too nervously and strangely curious, perhaps, but full of intelligence, greedy of knowledge, and not altogether discourteous. He replied politely and modestly to the doctors of the Sorbonne, that he knew too little about the matter they discussed to speak of it, being more than occupied with the task of ruling his Empire, and bringing his war with Sweden to a close. But that he should be glad to see them enter into correspondence with the bishops of his Church. He graciously received the memorandum finally remitted to him on the subject, to which, some three years later, the Russian clergy sent a curious reply, beginning with a panegyric on the Sorbonne, and ending with an acknowledgment of their own impotence. The Russian Church, maimed by the suppression of the Patriarchate (one of Peter's reforms), was quite incapable of taking part in such a discussion.[1]

Art was less attractive to the Russian Sovereign. When he was shown the Crown jewels in the Louvre, valued at 30,000,000, he pulled a wry face; the money, in his opinion, might have been better spent. When Marshal de Villeroi, who superintended this exhibition, suggested that a visit should be paid to 'the greatest treasure in France,' the Tsar had some difficulty in realising that the treasure referred to was the little king.[2]

It was not till the 19th of June, on the eve of his departure, that he went to the Institute. No warning having been sent to the Academy of France, only two or three of the members were present to receive him. They showed him nothing but their Hall of Assembly, which had been prepared as a dormitory for some of his own officers, explained the

[1] This reply, which was drawn up by the head of the old ecclesiastical party in Russia, Iavorski, reached its destination through an indirect channel. Peter had already forwarded other objections, put into official shape by Prokopovitch, who had assisted the Tsar's reforming work in Church matters. See P. Pierling, *The Sorboune and Russia* (1863), p. 50, *etc.*

[2] Sergent, May 29th, 1717.

nature of their deliberations, and exhibited their picture of the King. He was better treated at the Académie des Sciences, where all the members were assembled, not, I suspect, without some complicity on Peter's part. The curiosities of the Dictionary of the Academy cannot have had much charm for him, but at the Académie des Sciences, he saw M. la Faye's machine for raising water; M. Lemery's 'Arbre de Mars,' the screw-jack invented by M. Delesse; and M. Le Camus' coach,—and thanked the company for his reception, in a letter written in Russian.[1]

He was present on the same day, in a private gallery, at a sitting of the Parliament, held in full-dress, and great ceremony. The Duc de Maine and the Comte de Toulouse were prevented by his presence from bringing forward their protest against the decision of the Regency, as to the rights they claimed.[2]

It was a full, almost an overwhelming programme, but Peter,—though he took every advantage of it, observing everything, putting endless questions, and cramming his note-book, which he opened perpetually and unconcernedly wherever he might chance to be, at the Louvre, at church, or in the street,—did not deny himself any of the pleasures, extravagances, and excesses to which he was addicted. And here the worst side of his visit to Paris appears. At the Trianon he astonished French society by turning the water of the fountains on to the onlookers for his own amusement. But at Marly he did not content himself with such undignified pranks. This was the place chosen by him, so a contemporary relates, 'to shut himself up with a mistress whom he has taken here, and with whom . . . in Madame de Maintenon's apartment.' He then dismissed the girl with a couple of crowns, and boasted of his performance in presence of the Duc d'Orleans in terms which the above-mentioned contemporary only ventures to reproduce in Latin. *Dixit ei se salutavisse quemdam meretricem decies nocte in una, et, huic datis pro tanto labore tantum duobus nummis, tunc illam exclamavisse: Sane, Domine, ut vir magnifice, sed parcissime ut imperator mecum egisti.*[3] The news of the orgies with which he disgraced the royal residences reached Madame de Maintenon's

[1] *Bulletin du Bibliophile* (1859), p. 611, etc.
[2] Marais' *Memoirs* (Paris, 1863), vol. i. p. 207.
[3] Louville's *Memoirs* (Paris, 1818), vol. ii. p. 241.

ears in her retreat, and she wrote of them to her niece: 'I have just heard that the Tsar takes a low mistress about with him, to the great scandal of Versailles, of the Trianon, and of Marly.'[1] At the Trianon he had to be attended by the Paris doctors; at Fontainebleau he seems to have shown little interest in the coursing, but he supped so freely that the Duc d'Antin thought it prudent, on the return journey, to slip away from him, and get into another carriage, which action, according to St. Simon, was justified by the event, for at Petit Bourg, where the Tsar stopped for the night, two country women were sent for, to clean up his Majesty!

The general impression, influenced by incidents of this nature,—exaggerated, doubtless, in the telling,—was somewhat doubtful, but rather unfavourable than otherwise. 'I remember hearing from Cardinal Dubois,' writes Voltaire, 'that the Tsar was nothing but a wild fellow, born to be boatswain of a Dutch ship.'[2] This was much the same opinion as that of Burnet, twenty years previously, during Peter's visit to London. St. Simon himself,—so decided otherwise in praise or blame,—seems doubtful on the subject. The famous 'Memoirs' contradict the 'Additions to Dangeau's Journal.' The 'Memoirs,' being the more spontaneous, strike me as being also more sincere, and they are certainly far from laudatory. Even in the 'Additions,' which are more conventional and affected, I find mention of 'indecent orgies' and of 'a strong tinge of ancient barbarism.'[3]

When Peter took leave of the King, he would accept no gift but two splendid Gobelins hangings. He refused, for some reason of etiquette, 'a sword splendidly mounted with diamonds,' and he gave the lie, in the most unexpected fashion, to those stingy habits which had so largely contributed to make him unpopular in the capital. I read in a letter from Sergent, 'The Tsar, who has been so much reproached, during his stay here, for his lack of generosity, gave most brilliant proof of it on the day of his departure. He left 50,000 *livres* to be distributed amongst the officers who have served his table since he entered France; 30,000 *livres* for his guard; 30,000 *livres* to be divided among the Royal manufactories and workshops which he went to see; his por-

[1] Letter quoted above.
[2] Letter to Chauvelin, Oct. 3, 1760, *General Correspondence*, vol. xii. p. 123.
[3] Dangeau, vol. xvii. p. 81.

trait, set in diamonds, for the King, another for Marshal de Tessé, another for the Duc d'Antin, another for Marshal d'Estrées, another for M. de Livry, and another, worth 6000 *livres*, to the King's *Maître d'Hôtel* who attended him. He has also distributed a great number of gold and silver medals, bearing the principal actions of his life, and incidents of his battles.'

Thus, having never lost an occasion of showing off his whims and freaks of temper, he ended by paying his score right royally. The shabby gratuities distributed during his stay were bestowed by the private individual he professed to be, even though, from time to time, the incognito was cast aside. At the moment of departure, the Sovereign allowed his true personality to appear.

In Paris, as we have seen, his incognito was never taken seriously, and, from first to last, he was given Royal honours. All along the road to Spa, where Catherine awaited him, the Provinces vied with the Capital in gorgeous hospitality. At Rheims, where Peter only spent a couple of hours, and looked at nothing but the famous 'shaking pillar' in the Church of St. Nicaise, the Municipality spent 455 *livres* and 13 *sols* on the collation offered to him. It cost the town of Charleville 4327 *livres* to entertain the Sovereign for one night. There a richly-decorated barge, adorned with his colours, waited to carry him by the Meuse to Liége, and a whole cargo of provisions was shipped—170 lbs. of meat at 5 *sols* a lb., 1 roe deer, 35 chickens or capons, 6 large turkeys at 30 *sols* each, 83 lbs. of Mayence ham at 10 *sols*, 200 cray-fish, 200 eggs at 30 *sols* a 100, 1 fifteen-pound salmon at 25 *sols*, 2 large trout, and 3 casks of beer.[1]

The Regent, on his part, pushed his courtesy so far as to desire Rigaud and Nattier to paint him two portraits of the Russian Sovereign.

Let us now proceed to examine the practical results of this first and last appearance of the victor of Poltava, amidst the declining splendours of the French Monarchy.

III

Two stumbling-blocks stood in the way of the political and commercial alliance which Peter had hoped to secure by

[1] Archives of the town of Châlons. See *Revue Contemporaine*, 1865 (Barthélemy).

his visit to Paris;—the Treaty, signed in April 1715, which bound France to Sweden until 1718, and ensured the latter country a quarterly subsidy of 150,000 crowns; and the personal ties existing between the Regent and the King of England. Negotiations were opened as soon as the Tsar arrived, but Marshal de Tessé,—to whom they were confided, in conjunction with Marshal d'Uxelles,—soon perceived that the only object of his own Government was 'to dance on the slack rope,' thus amusing the Russian Sovereign until his departure;[1] while, at the same time, English Statesmen being kept on the alert, the friendship of England was to be secured, and Sweden, tamed by the prospect of a French understanding with the Tsar, was to be rendered yet more manageable. In vain did Peter boldly and frankly take the initiative. He straightforwardly offered to replace Sweden in that system of alliances which had, hitherto, guaranteed the balance of power in Europe. He would follow that country's example, make 'diversions,' and accept subsidies. So far, so good. But figures had to be discussed, and on this preliminary point the agreement dragged for weeks. When that was settled, Prussia demanded, through Baron de Cnyphausen, her Minister in Paris, to be included in the Treaty. This again was very welcome. France and Russia undertook to guarantee her the possession of Stettin, but it became necessary to alter the prearranged form of the projected alliance. Peter stirred up his plenipotentiaries and his secretaries, and the Regent, having private information from Berlin which set his mind completely at rest regarding this vast expenditure of ink, let him work his will. When the Treaty had been duly drawn up, and only awaited signature, it became evident that the whole labour had been in vain, for Cnyphausen had no powers from his Government. And the Tsar was forced to depart empty-handed.

The Regent laughed at the Muscovite Sovereign, but De Tessé was not free from anxiety as to the possible and more distant result of Peter's discomfiture. Might not the Tsar, mortified and discouraged, be driven to throw himself into the Emperor's arms, or to treat directly with Sweden? But no! Prussia, the only strong footing left him in all Germany, held him firmly. A meeting at Amsterdam, to recommence negotiations, was brought about the following month, at the

[1] De Tessé's *Memoirs* (Paris, 1806), vol. ii. p. 319.

pressing instance of the Tsar. The Regent agreed, but his resolution not to take any serious action was unshaken, and all he did was to change his tactics. Cnyphausen had been provided, by this time, with full powers, but the pretensions of France had suddenly altered. When, on the 2nd of September, and largely owing to the eagerness of the Tsar, a new Treaty was drawn up, duly provided with 'public' and with 'secret' articles—as was only proper in the case of a diplomatic document fresh from the hands of the representatives of three great Powers—another matter was arranged —a platonic hope and *desideratum*. According to the public articles, the mediation of the King of France for peace in the North was accepted, but subject to the definite rupture of the engagements absolutely binding his Most Christian Majesty to Sweden. The secret articles stipulated for a defensive alliance, on the basis of the Treaties of Baden and Utrecht; but any definition of the reciprocal duties of the allied Powers, resulting from it, was deferred to some future negotiation. France did indeed undertake not to renew her Treaty of Subsidies with Sweden, at its expiration, but this undertaking was merely verbal. The King's plenipotentiaries had so insisted on this point that Peter mistrusted them: and the event proved him right.

Nothing was done, in fact. There was not even a beginning of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The individuals selected to represent each side were, moreover, most unfortunately chosen. Peter had expressed a desire to see M. de Verton, whose character and qualities pleased him, as French Envoy at St. Petersburg. M. de Verton was duly appointed, received his instructions, and was on the point of starting, when he was arrested and thrown into prison by his creditors. The representation of French interests on the banks of the Neva remained in the hands of La Vie, who could hardly pay the postage of his letters. Russia, too, was represented in Paris by Baron von Schleinitz, whose experiences were no less unpleasant.

The emptiness of the Treaty of the 2nd of September soon became apparent. In the following year, 1718,—while Schleinitz was conferring with Cellamare,—France, with England, Holland and the Emperor, entered into quadruple alliance against Spain, and the four allies vowed each other mutual support until the end of the Northern war. The Comte de

Rotembourg, French Envoy at Berlin, was labouring to conclude a Treaty between Prussia and England, which was to end in a separate peace between Prussia and Sweden, in return for the surrender of Stettin. Meanwhile, at Stockholm, Campredon was quietly negotiating for the renewal of the Treaty of 1715!

Thus Russia and France were in open opposition. Both countries, it is true, shrank from any idea of declared hostilities. Each acted cautiously, and there was even a certain exchange of civilities. Peter's eyes were turned on Constantinople, where the Emperor's Envoy was soliciting the Turk's alliance against Russia, and the Regent, on his side, aware of the possibility that Goertz's plan might be realised independently of France, authorised De Bonac, who had great influence at the Porte, to stand by Prince Dashkof. The Tsar begged the King to stand godfather to his daughter Nathalia, and the Regent replied to this courtesy by assuring Schleinitz that Campredon should be disowned. But the discovery of Cellamare's conspiracy, and of the letters of Schleinitz, amongst the imprudent Minister's papers, threw more cold water on the Russo-French relations. And the Regent's indignation at the complicity of the Russian Minister—offensive enough, in all good truth—was likely to be increased by the fact that all fear of Goertz was now a thing of the past. The headsman had settled his account. But the Tsar's conciliatory attitude, and an early peace with Spain, gradually brought things back to their former condition. Peter had set his heart on emerging from his state of isolation, and, in January 1720, Schleinitz was again at work, bombarding the Regent with requests for French mediation. All he claimed was a written declaration that the King was bound by no engagement incompatible with the impartiality indispensable to a mediator. But the Duc d'Orléans took a high stand: declaring he had already said Campredon was disowned, and that his word was worth all the documents in the world. The Tsar gave in at last, on every point, even on the association of England with France in the matter of mediation, although he had considerable grievances against the former country.[1]

This prompt agreement and obsequiousness had their real

[1] Letter from the Tsar to the Duc d'Orléans, May 29, 1720 (Paris Foreign Office).

foundation in another reason—a secret one, which was to sway the policy of the Russian ruler in all his future negotiations with the Regent and with France. In July 1719, poor La Vie made a heroic effort to send a special despatch to Paris, with a sensational piece of intelligence. The Tsar had taken it into his head to marry his second daughter—'very handsome and well proportioned, and who would be taken to be a perfect beauty, if the colour of her hair were not a little too fiery'—to the young King of France. The Lady in question was the Princess Elizabeth. Peter at first thought of finding her a husband in the person of the King of England's grandson.[1] When this request was denied, he turned, with all his usual swiftness and eagerness, to the idea of a French alliance. But, once again, his Diplomatic representative in Paris failed him. Hardly had Schleinitz emerged from the unpleasant predicament into which his intercourse with Cellamare had brought him, before he found himself accused, by the Regent, of having betrayed the secret of the negotiations in which he had taken part. The French Government refused to treat with him. He was recalled, but was unable to return, being detained, like de Verton, by his creditors, and all his fortune having disappeared in Law's speculations, he was soon reduced 'to the last extremity of misery.'[2] Peter was obliged to fall back on La Vie's good offices, but the wretched commercial agent's communications were but coldly received at Versailles. The Tsar, it was replied, would have to begin by making his peace with Sweden. The Tsar was willing enough, and, to that end, accepted the assistance of Campredon, who spent the Spring of 1721 travelling backwards and forwards between Stockholm and St. Petersburg. But, when that clever diplomatist had successfully concluded his pacific mission, after having lavished all his skill, showered compliments on the Tsar, and whispered promises of ducats to his Ministers, Dubois,[3] who then held the reins of French politics, as soon as the Treaty of Nystadt was safely signed, put forward fresh demands. Before France went any further, her mediation between Russia and England must be accepted. This was the Regent's great

[1] *Kourakin Papers*, vol. ii. p. 121.
[2] Villeroi to Dubois, Aug. 13, 1721 (French Foreign Office).
[3] Campredon's Despatch, dated March 23rd, 1721 (French Foreign Office).

object, and his Minister's. The Tsar agreed to discuss the proposal, but he, too, was longing to introduce another subject, and hardly knew how to set about it. His plans had undergone a change. Dolgorouki, who had replaced Schleinitz in Paris, had heard the King was affianced to a Spanish Princess. But France was so richly endowed with Princes that a suitable husband for the Tsarevna might yet be found within its borders. In November 1721, Tolstoï flattered himself he had at last found means of broaching the subject. With an innocent air, he showed Campredon a copy of the *Gazette de Hollande*, which announced the nomination of the Marquis de Belle-Isle as the King's Ambassador Extraordinary to St. Petersburg, charged to request the hand of the Tsar's eldest daughter, for the Duc de Chartres.[1] Campredon knew his business too well to be deceived as to the origin of this false news. But he was somewhat taken aback at the extent of the political combinations which the Tsar desired to attach to this new plan. Russia was to guarantee the *status quo*; the King of Spain was to renounce his claim to the French Crown, in favour of the Regent; there was to be a mutual guarantee between Russia and France, ensuring the Russian succession to the future Duchesse de Chartres, and, meanwhile, the Duke de Chartres was to be elected King of Poland. All these points, and many others, were contained in a memorandum drawn up in January 1722, which the luckless Schleinitz, lifted temporarily out of his beggary, by means of a few thousand roubles, was charged to present to the Versailles Cabinet,—Dolgorouki's official intervention appearing both inadvisable and risky to the Tsar.[2] Campredon, too, was requested to bring forward these proposals and requests, and to solicit instructions to reply to them.

These instructions were long in coming, but I am inclined to think Dubois has been unjustly blamed for the prolonged silence in which he is said to have taken refuge. The Cardinal Minister, and his Representative at the Russian Court, are described as having been in complete conflict over the matter. The Diplomat, half distracted by a delay which compromised the success of his negotiation, and

[1] Campredon's Despatch, Nov. 24, 1721.

[2] Memorandum presented by Schleinitz, Feb. 10, 1722. Secret instructions addressed to him, Dec. 1721, French Foreign Office (*Russia*, vol. xi. p. 420).

imperilled the interests of his country;—the Cardinal, absorbed by personal anxieties, which rendered him indifferent to any other. Many picturesque details have been grouped about the incident. We hear of fifteen couriers hurrying one after the other from St. Petersburg to Paris, and vainly awaiting orders in the Versailles ante-chamber; —of Campredon himself, shut up in his house, and counterfeiting sickness, and of de Bonac, at Constantinople, intervening, on his own responsibility, in the disputes between Russia and Turkey, with the object of saving this invaluable alliance from the failure which threatened it.[1] French historical authorities are perpetually at war with the Government of the Regency, and a foreign writer can scarcely dare to contradict historians who are his own masters in his art, but he may, perhaps, venture to set forth actual facts. Campredon *never* sent fifteen couriers to Cardinal Dubois,—he would have found that more than difficult. No courier could travel, in those days, from St. Petersburg to Versailles, for less than five or six thousand *livres*, and, at that particular moment, the French Diplomat, whose salary was more than a year in arrear, had probably shut himself up in his house for reasons of economy. During the whole duration of his mission, *two couriers*, who travelled in company, for safety, carried all the extraordinary despatches between the two Capitals. And the Marquis de Bonac had no need, when he made up for the weakness of French Diplomacy on the banks of the Neva, by his personal efforts at Constantinople, to take counsel with his own patriotism and clear-headedness; all he did was to follow very clear, and by no means fresh instructions, which were constantly renewed up till January 1723.[2] Finally, the Cardinal, who, *at the close of* 1723, sent Campredon orders which set French foreign policy on a new path, bristling with difficulties, could not, *in* 1724, have been so absorbed by the anxieties of Home Government and of his own personal position, as to leave his agent, for almost twelve months, without any fresh instructions; and for this simple reason,—he was dead!

[1] See, amongst other authorities, Vandal, *Louis XV. et Elisabeth* (Paris, 1882), pp. 64, 65.

[2] De Bonac's Instructions, Jan. 6, 1723. His despatch to Dubois, Jan. 5, 1723, French Foreign Office (*Turkey*, vol. lxv.).

The Cardinal did indeed leave Campredon's despatches and Baron de Schleinitz' and Prince Dolgorouki's memoranda unanswered, *for just six months*. But this long silence did not *follow*, as has been generally supposed, on the despatch of his *first* instructions, as to the extraordinary Diplomatic overtures which had reached him through various channels from the Russian Court. The silence *preceded* the instructions, and was, *at that moment*, perfectly justified. The whole of the incident took place between the Spring and Autumn of 1722. Peter, having made peace with Sweden, had suddenly changed his views as to his French Alliance. Up to this point, he had only considered it as a warlike expedient; he now regarded it as the basis of a whole political edifice, which was to include the two farthest extremities of Europe — Poland and Spain—which edifice he desired to crown by a family contract and a brilliant marriage. This marriage was, as a matter of fact, the end and aim of the whole undertaking. The bomb once fired, he left his capital, and undertook a somewhat adventurous expedition, more than problematic in its results. I allude to his Persian campaign. His absence lasted six months; the Cardinal's silence covered the same period of time. I am inclined to think that Dubois did the wisest thing possible under the circumstances, and to affirm, that Campredon fully agreed with him. He made no attempt to multiply his couriers, and never lost patience, except as regarded the fact that he was left without money. Nothing really suffered, save and except his own strong taste for expense and luxury.

In the month of October 1722, news reached Versailles of the relative success of the Persian expedition, of the likelihood of a fresh conflict between Russia and Turkey, and of the departure of Iagoujinski for Vienna, on a, probably, important mission. Dubois forthwith concluded it was time to speak, and, pre-occupied as he may hitherto have been, by the crisis through which the Regent's Government was passing, in consequence of his own struggle with Villeroy, it was not too late. The two couriers already referred to, Massip and Puylaurent, left Versailles on the 25th of October 1722, and arrived at Moscow on the 5th of December—before Iagoujinski's departure. Campredon, who was warned of their approach, ventured, before their arrival,

to joke the departing Diplomat. Iagoujinski had just rid himself of his wife, and forced her to take the veil. Was he, the French Minister inquired, going to Vienna in search of a new partner? 'I would rather have sought one in Paris,' replied the Russian, 'but you have kept us waiting too long.' 'Pray wait a few days longer,' answered the Frenchman.

Massip and Puylaurent brought the French Envoy everything his heart could desire—clear and definite orders in the same sense as those De Bonac had received, money to set him on his feet again, and more money, to distribute to those about him. The sums bestowed on him were very liberal, and his orders, on the whole, were very reasonable. The Versailles authorities would not hear of mixing up the two affairs. The Franco-Russian alliance was one thing, the idea of marrying the Duc de Chartres to the Tsarevna was another. The first question depended on the subsidies to be paid by France, and the services to be rendered by Russia. 'France was willing to give as many as 400,000 crowns a year; would Russia absolutely promise the assistance of an army, in the case of a war with Germany?' The second question was a matter of expediency. If the Princess Elizabeth's dowry was to consist of the Crown of Poland, she must bring that dowry in her hand. All accessory conditions would be easily arranged. The Regent would even consent to recognise the Tsar's lately assumed Imperial title, though not, of course, without claiming a considerable price in return for this concession.

The negotiation seemed in a fair way to success. Why then did it fail? How came it to be delayed again, and for a considerable time? Through no fault of the Cardinal's, certainly. The first difficulties arose out of the nature and diplomatic habits of the Russian Government, to which I have already referred. Muscovite Diplomacy always worked secretly, groping its way. Every conference was hedged in with an amount of precaution which sorely hindered progress. The Ministers, full of suspicion and constantly on the *qui vive*, were inapproachable in their own offices. Secret interviews were held,—sometimes even in such places as the Café of the 'Four Frigates,' a favourite resort of common sailors. The Tsar, as distrustful and secretive as his Ministers, always made some public pretext for conferring with a foreign Diplomat, to mask the real

object of the interview. In February 1723, he took advantage of Campredon's request for an audience, to announce the death of *Madame*, to send for him to his house at Préobrajenskoïé, where, behind carefully closed doors, and assisted by Catherine, who acted as interpreter, he opened his heart;—and then it became evident that the two Powers were once more utterly at variance. Campredon held to his instructions, which had not changed, and were not to change, even after Dubois and the Regent were dead, and the Duc de Bourbon was at the head of affairs. The Russian Sovereign's ideas had altered. He still desired to marry his daughter to a French Prince, and to give her Poland for her portion, declaring that the reigning king of that country would 'be easily persuaded, through the medium of some new mistress, witty and attractive, to vacate the throne.' But he seemed opposed, both in word and deed, to any political alliance between the two countries. He hinted at a possible rupture with Turkey, from which Power he desired to retake the town of Azof. He seemed to meditate an expedition into Sweden, with the object of placing the Duke of Holstein on the throne, aided by a popular insurrection. He even spoke of joining the Pretender, and sending Russian troops to make a descent on the shores of Great Britain.[1] In August 1723, just after the death of Dubois, the new Secretary of State, De Morville, then taking up the direction of foreign affairs, was fain to write to Campredon in the following terms: 'Your despatches have proved more clearly than ever the utter impossibility of treating with the Tsar, until he has settled his plans and ideas . . . we must wait till time and opportunity permit us to judge whether the King may safely make engagements with this Prince, and carry them out.' They waited thus, and vainly, until Peter died. No progress whatever was made. Campredon may, at one moment, have thought success was within his grasp. Early in August 1724, the Tsar was filled with joy at the news of a pacific arrangement, to which De Bonac had powerfully contributed, of his differences with Turkey. As he was leaving the Church, in which a Te Deum had just been sung, he embraced the French Envoy, and spoke these words, big with promise—'You have always been an angel of peace to me! I am not ungrateful, as you

[1] Solovief, vol. xviii. p. 131.

will soon perceive.' A few days later, the Russian Ministers appeared at the French Legation, their faces wreathed in smiles. Their master had given in on every point, even on that which had hitherto formed one of the principal difficulties of the negotiation—the admission of England into the arrangement to be made with France. The alliance seemed a settled thing. But all these rejoicings were premature. There was another long pause, and the signing of the Treaty was still deferred. Peter and all his circle were so completely absorbed by the Mons business, that, until the end of November, it was impossible to get speech with them. And besides, every time Campredon met Ostermann, he was obliged to risk his life in crossing the Neva. There was no bridge, and great blocks of ice came whirling down the stream. When, at last, communications were re-opened and a conference arranged, matters once more came to a full standstill: the Tsar had changed his mind, and would not hear of England being included in the alliance. What had happened? It was a very simple matter. Kourakin, who had been sent to Paris, to replace Dolgorouki, finding his new post a pleasant one, and desiring to remain there, had sent home accounts of certain imaginary diplomatic triumphs, of which the Russian Sovereign's friendly expressions to Campredon, and his conciliatory inclinations, had been the outcome. Kourakin had even gone so far as to give his master hopes of a possible marriage between the Tsarevna and Louis XV. himself, —whom he described as being tired of his Spanish fiancée.[1] But he had been forced, finally, to acknowledge the truth, and even to admit that the marriage of the Russian Princess with any one of the Princes of the Blood, was considered by the French Ministers 'too remote a possibility to be mixed up in the present negotiation.'

From that moment, the fate of that negotiation was sealed. It did indeed seem to return to some life and hope, after Catherine I.'s accession, but it soon fell back into oblivion. The Treaty lay unsigned, and the Tsarevna Elizabeth remained unmarried. The alliance thus prematurely projected was not to become a reality for another century and a half, and its way was yet to be prepared, amidst trials and convulsions which shook the whole European continent.

[1] Solovief, vol. xviii. p. 126.

The failure of the attempt, made on the threshold of the 18th century, may, I think, be explained and justified without necessarily casting blame on the Governments either of France or of Russia. No agreement was come to, because, in the first place, the separation between the two countries was too great, and in the second, because, while apparently desiring the arrangement, they were, in reality, marching, from the beginning to the end of the negotiation, in diametrically opposite directions. The very wish for any understanding was, in the first instance, quite one-sided. Peter was for some time the only person who seriously felt it. Then, when his desire was shared by both countries, one Government claimed to realise it in one fashion, and the other in another. France desired a political, and Peter a domestic alliance,—each of which only suited the purpose of the nation which put it forward. We cannot wonder, nor find fault, if the French King felt little inclination to espouse the natural daughter of a *ci-devant* laundress (to say no worse), whose birth had been legitimized by a tardy and secret marriage; nor that Russia was scarcely disposed to assume the ill-paid political yoke which had already galled the necks of Poland and Sweden. There was no clearly marked ground for the union of the two nations, and of their interests. That meeting-point was to be prepared in later days, by a recent cataclysm, which has affected the whole scheme of European politics.

BOOK II—THE INTERNAL STRUGGLE—THE REFORMS

CHAPTER I

THE NEW RÉGIME—THE END OF THE STRELTSY—ST. PETERSBURG

I. The new Régime—Preliminary question—The Reforms and the customs of ancient Muscovy—Slavophiles, and Lovers of the West—Origin of the Reforming movement—From *evolution* to *revolution*—General characteristics of the work—The order in which its results may be studied—Typical features.

II. The end of the *Streltsy*—Its causes—The new army and the old armed bands—Discontent of the latter—Mutiny—Peter makes it a pretext for extermination—A huge inquiry—Fourteen torture-chambers—Lack of results—The Tsarevna Sophia—Her complicity not proved—She is sentenced to take the veil—Wholesale executions—Peter's share in them—The Judge—The Moscow Place de la Grève—The *Lobnoié miesto*.

III. St. Petersburg—Before and after Poltava—Fortress or Capital?—Peter's reasons for making it his seat of Government—Criticism and justification—The National traditions.

I

My Russian readers would not forgive me, if I began this section of my work without touching on a prefatory problem, which,—apart from historical criticism, properly so called,—is the inexhaustible subject of a most passionate national discussion. Did not Peter, when he cast Russia into the arms of European civilisation, do violence to the history of his country, and despise and overlook native elements of original culture, susceptible of a development which would, perhaps, have been superior to, and, at all events, more in conformity with, the spirit of his people? This is the great bone of contention between the *Slavophiles* and the *lovers of the West*.

The question of ethnical origin, which seems, nowadays, to be fairly settled, and cast into oblivion, may be put on one side. Physiologically speaking, Russia, whether she wills it or not, holds a clearly marked place in the great Indo-European family. Morally speaking, her civilisation is founded and built up with Indo-European materials. Certain of these materials, by their geographical and historical conditions, have been endowed with special characteristics, giving birth to customs and ideas, conceptions and habits, quite apart from those of other nations:—as, for example, in matters of property, of family life, and of the sovereign power. Did Peter make 'a clean sweep' of all this? And that being granted, did he act wisely in so doing? The whole discussion now lies in these questions.

The inquiry I am now about to make will, I hope, if it does not decide, at all events throw some light upon, the subject. It will lead us at once to the recognition, on one side, of the inconsistency, the rudimentary, embryonic, and inorganic condition, of the greater part of those elements upon which the great Reformer was called to work; and, on the other, of the persistency of certain features, some of which remained intact, under a factitious appearance of modification, while others completely escaped the action of the Reform.

The 'clean sweep' was not so complete as some have imagined. The old *régime* had, in many respects, become unworkable before Peter's time. It was essentially founded on two principles—orthodoxy and the absolute power (*samodierjavié*),—and these, for more than a quarter of a century, had been tottering to their fall; the first, ruined by the inward faults of its original organisation, and the second, by an exaggeration of its fundamental idea, due, in part, to that political competition, from which Peter himself only escaped by means of a *coup d'état*. After the Muscovite hegemony rose on the ruins of the ancient independent and rival States, the Sovereign's personal power took on an Oriental form, based on his private right. All idea of feudal suzerainty was past and gone; the ruler held by a title of ownership, which affected both the persons of his subjects, and their property. No other title was acknowledged, save and except in the case of the Church. There

was no passage by legal inheritance from one subject to another,—nothing but a division, occasionally hereditary (*vottchina*), oftener a mere life interest (*pomiestié*), but invariably arbitrary, of lands, granted by the Sovereign, in exchange for service paid. There was no private commerce or industry, or hardly any,—for commerce and industry, like everything else, were the Tsar's property, and his monopoly, which was well-nigh universal, only brooked the existence of the middleman. The Sovereign even bought food of every kind,—meat, fruit, and vegetables,—wholesale, and sold it retail.[1] The independent Dukes of former times, the Rurikovitch of Tver, Iaroslav, Smolensk, Tchernihof, Riazan, Viasma, and Rostov, had ended by being no more than a mere aristocracy, among the servants of the common master. They balanced the peasantry,—all of them, except a few free peasants in the South, serfs, since the year 1600, —and avenged their own abasement upon it. There was no other social class, no trading corporations, no social existence. The Merchant Corporation of Novgorod, which had originally brought prosperity to the old city, had disappeared, with every other trace of Norman organisation and culture. Moscow, in her struggle with the Mongol power, had borrowed Mongol principles and forms of government, and, to ensure her supremacy over the neighbouring towns, had carried the application of those principles and methods to their furthest consequences.

The Tsar then was not only the *master*, he was, in the most absolute sense of the term, the *proprietor*, of his country and of his people. But his right and his might, soaring as they were, lacked firm support. Beneath them was an empty void, filled with the dust of slavery. There were no social groups, there was no hierarchy, there was no organic bond, of any kind, between these incoherent monads. They all came and went at random, driven hither and thither by elementary instincts, swarming in a wild confusion of unbridled passion and brutal appetite; falling on the nearest prey, passing from Peter to Sophia, and back again from Sophia to Peter, with all the unconscious indifference peculiar to untaught masses. The present was chaos, the future was black darkness.

The Church, when it reached Kief from Byzantium, was

[1] Kotoshihin, *Memoirs*, ch. x.

already worn out and degraded. All moral strength had been lost in the decadence of the Greek Empire; the spirit of the faith had been overlaid with forms; religion was swaddled in the bonds of a complicated devotion, stifled under relics, images, special prayers, fasts, and an utterly incomprehensible liturgy. The priests, thanks to the huge number of monasteries which sprang up all over the country, soon grew rich and influential. But these advantages were only used,—as the Catholic priests used theirs, in the worst periods of the Papal power,—for the intellectual debasement of the people, without any attempt to follow the example of the best Popes, by striving after the moral and economic improvement of the masses. When, under the Tsar Alexis, the Russian Church desired to introduce a simple reform in her ritual, her weakness instantly became apparent. Mutiny and schism raised their heads—and the *Raskol* broke out.

Peter reached power by a *coup d'état*. The *Streltsy*, influenced by Sophia, attempted to overthrow him by another. Thus, at a very early age, he became aware of the void on which his omnipotence rested. When,—Chief of a great Empire as he was,—he essayed, prior to the defeat of Narva, and under the walls of Azof, to employ the strength he believed himself to possess, everything gave way beneath his feet. Within a few hours, his armies were dispersed,—within a few days, his treasury was empty,—and his whole administration broken down.

The great Reformer's predecessors were fully conscious of this condition of things, and did what they could to remedy it. Their ideas, their attempts, and even their desires, may, in some cases, have been somewhat vague and undecided, but in other matters, they took active steps, and they sketched out a whole programme of reforms, with the object, not indeed of radically modifying, but of improving the existing *régime*, and fitting it for the new demands of a political position which was constantly increasing in importance, and ambitious possibilities. Their programme included the reorganisation of the armed forces, and, as an inevitable consequence, the improvement of the finances,—the development of the economic resources of the country,—and the encouragement of foreign commerce. They admitted the necessity of more direct intercourse and co-operation with

foreign countries. They looked to a commencement of social reforms, by the emancipation of the urban classes. and even of the serfs, and finally, under the auspices of Nicone, they laid a finger on the Church, and, consequently, on the National education,—the Church being the only vehicle of education in existence.

Then we come to Peter. What *other*, what *new* thing did he do? Nothing, or, at most, very little indeed. The programme above referred to was *his* programme; he enlarged it a little, added the Reform of the national customs; he modified the nature of the intercourse already in existence with the Western world; but he, too, left the foundations of the political edifice he had inherited, intact, and he even failed, from the social point of view, to carry out the plans his predecessors had conceived or prepared. In spite of the apparent universality of his efforts, his work—and this has not been sufficiently noted—is, generally speaking, somewhat limited, and exceedingly superficial, even within those limits. It is, as I have previously said, a sort of *re-plastering* and *patch-work* business, with nothing absolutely new about it. It was begun before his time,—what he did was to change the conditions under which it was to be carried on in future. The new factor was, in the first place, the endless war, which, for twenty long years, was to inspire, direct and drive him forward, and which resulted, on one hand, in hurrying the work of evolution already commenced, and, on the other, of inverting the natural order of the political and social modifications consequent upon it, to suit temporary requirements, not necessarily corresponding to the most urgent needs of the national life. In the second place, we have the tastes, habits of mind, manias and fancies, which the gifted but whimsical ruler owed to his education, his visits to the *Sloboda*, and his intercourse with Europe. These he erected into principles, giving them a place in his great scheme, quite out of proportion with their intrinsic value. These *innovations* of his were just the points which were most offensive to his subjects. Finally, the Reformer's personal temperament, which endued all his measures with qualities of violence, excess and hastiness, both painful and disconcerting to every one they affected, must be taken into account. What had been a peaceful *evolution* became, in consequence of these peculiarities, a *revolution*. Those very

tendencies and attempts which, in the reigns of Alexis and Féodor, roused but the slightest resistance, now provoked an insurrection, which, in its earlier days, was almost general, and necessitated strong and vigorous measures of repression. The reforms, promulgated at the will of the Sovereign, in sharp and sudden jerks, without any apparent order or consecutiveness, fell on his subjects like storms of hail, or thunderbolts. Peter himself, harried by his long war, carried away by his own eagerness, fascinated by what he had seen in Germany, in England, and in Holland, could neither clearly arrange his plans, nor prepare them thoughtfully, nor show patience in their execution. He swept over his country and his people like a whirlwind, extemporising and inventing expedients, and terrorising all around him.

But this peculiarity, as I should not dream of denying, gave the renovating movement, out of which modern Russia sprang, a fulness and a swiftness, which the timid attempts of Alexis and Féodor could never have imparted. Peter, in a few years, had performed the work of several centuries. It may be doubted whether this sudden bound across time and space was an unmixed benefit. That is another point, the study of which must, in my opinion, be preceded by that of accomplished facts,—in other words, of the results obtained.

The work of tracing these results, as they successively appear, in the history of the great reign, would be a most ungrateful task, and could only inspire a general sensation of chaos. The order of their appearance was determined, up to a certain point, by the great originating element to which I have referred. The war made military reforms a first necessity, and these called forth financial measures, which, in their turn, made economic enterprises indispensable. But this procession of things is not an absolute rule, as the attempt at municipal re-organisation, at the very beginning of Peter's reign, will prove. I shall be guided, in my inquiry, by the relative importance of the various points. But to clear the way, and cast some light upon the wide and crowded field I have to consider, I will first mention certain features, which,—though their relation to the Reformer's work is in itself merely accessory, and very secondary,—have been considered by the public to represent its essence, and its whole scope. And the public, elementary as its conception of matters naturally is, has not been alto-

gether in the wrong. Insignificant in themselves as these features may be, they are most invaluable as the expression and the apparent symbol of the new *régime*. And for this reason, doubtless, they have appealed to the imagination of the masses. I refer to the 'clipping of the beards,' the suppression of the *Streltsy*, and the building of St. Petersburg.

II

When the young Tsar returned from his first European journey, he appeared before his subjects in the cast-off garments of Augustus of Poland, — a Western costume, which, hitherto, he had never worn in their sight. A few hours later, at a banquet given by General Shein, he laid hands on a pair of scissors, and began to clip the guests' beards. His jester, Tourguénief, followed his example. The witnesses of this scene may have thought it a mere despot's whim. Peter himself was naturally hairless, his beard was sparse, and his moustache grew thinly. He had been drinking freely, and his behaviour may have been taken for a mere outburst of gaiety. But no! a few days later, the clipping was sanctioned by a ukase. A huge reform, moral, intellectual, and economic, had been initiated by an absurd festive incident, which took place between the drinking of two glasses of wine. I shall later refer to the more serious side of the matter.

Close upon this came the suppression of the *Streltsy*. This was an unexpected but a very natural consequence,—the first,—of the warlike projects which had haunted the young Tsar ever since he had made acquaintance with his Saxon-Polish friend, Augustus. He had learnt, under the walls of Azof, the true value of his armed bands, and had realised that the military strength he had believed himself to possess had no real existence. He had then openly declared his intention of training his new levies on the European system, — of the relative superiority of which he had already seen proof, — and of making his two 'pleasure regiments' the nucleus of the new organisation. And one of his apparent reasons for crossing the frontier, was to study the principles to be applied to this work. Thus the old Muscovite army,—the *Streltsy*, — saw itself

doomed to disappear. For some time past the most ungrateful tasks had been allotted to it. During the war games which had taken place before the campaign of Azof, the *Streltsy* were always ordered to represent the vanquished side. After the capture of Azof, the 'pleasure regiments' went to Moscow, where they made a triumphal entry, received an ovation, and were loaded with rewards,—while the *Streltsy* were left behind to rebuild the fortifications of the conquered town. Humiliated and ill-treated, even before they were absolutely destroyed, they broke out into mutiny. In March 1698, while Peter was in England, they sent a deputation to Moscow from Azof, to explain their grievances. It returned without having obtained satisfaction and bearing exciting news. Peter had gone over to the foreigners, body and soul, and his sister, the Tsarevna Sophia, who was shut up in the *Diévitchyī Monastyr*, appealed to her former partisans, to defend the Church and Throne against a revolutionary and impious Sovereign. Letters from the ex-Regent (whether false or genuine, no one knew) were circulated in the regiments. A body of *Streltsy*, numbering some 2000 men, was detached from the Azof garrison, and sent to Viélikié-Louki to guard the Polish frontier. The men were furious at being separated from their comrades, and forced to march from one end of the Empire to the other. The *Streltsy* had always been left at home in time of peace. They mutinied, and marched on Moscow. General Shein marched against them with superior forces and artillery, met them on the 17th of June, within sight of the Monastery of the Resurrection, killed some, took the rest, hung several of his prisoners, after having put them to the question,—and the incident appeared closed.[1]

But it was far from being closed. Peter, when he learnt the news, hastened his return, resolved to take advantage of the circumstances, and strike a decisive blow. Ever since his childhood, the *Streltsy* had stood in his way. They had put his relations and friends to the sword; they had supported a usurper's power against his own, and on this last occasion, when parleying with Shein, before the skirmish in which they were routed, they had used the most violent language with respect to Lefort, and the other foreigners who surrounded him. He was weary of it all; he was

[1] Moscow State Papers, *The Streltsy*; Solovief, vol. xiv. p. 254.

determined to make an end, to clear his native soil of these seeds of perpetual revolt, and drown the visions which had haunted him, from his cradle, in a sea of blood. A few blows with the knout, and half a dozen executions, would not suffice him; the work, this time, was to be done on a large scale, and satisfy him wholly. The inquiry, which Shein and Romodanovski had hastily conducted and closed, was reopened, and took proportions unprecedented, as I would fain believe, in the history of the human race. Fourteen torture-chambers (*zastiénok*) were opened in the village of Préobrajenskoïe, and their hellish apparatus,—even to gridirons on which the flesh of the prisoners was left to grill,—worked day and night. One man was put to the question seven times over, and received ninety-nine blows from the knout. Fifteen such blows generally resulted in death. Lieutenant-Colonel Korpakof stuck a knife into his throat to put an end to his own anguish; but the wound was not fatal, and the torture went on. Many women,—wives, sisters, or relations of the *Streltsy*, and servants, or ladies, in attendance on Sophia,—were treated in the same manner. One of them bore a child in the midst of her torments. The inquiry was principally concerned with the part taken by the Tsarevna and her sisters in leading up to the insurrectionary movement. Peter was certain of their guilt. But he desired proof,—and proof was what the inquiry failed to elicit. 'They may very well die for us,' writes one of the princesses, coolly, about some waiting-women, who were to be put to the torture, and on whose silence she reckoned. One *Streletz* endured all the anguish of the strappado, received thirty lashes with the knout, and was slowly burnt, but not a word would he utter. Some half admission, some vague indication, was occasionally wrung from him; as soon as he recovered breath, he would contradict himself, or relapse, again, into stubborn silence. Sophia herself, whom Peter, it is said, examined, and put to the torture with his own hands, never wavered. All her younger sister Marfa would admit, was, that she had informed the ex-Regent of the approach of the *Streltsy*, and of their desire to see her rule re-established.

So far as this point was concerned, the inquiry was an utter failure. A most compromising letter from Sophia to the *Streltsy*, published by Oustrialof, is acknowledged, by

that generally well-informed historian,[1] to be made up of stray and incoherent scraps of depositions, gathered in the torture-chamber, and retracted most probably by those who made them. The Tsarevna was closely watched in her prison in the *Novodiévitchyï Monastyr*, a detachment of 100 soldiers mounted guard before the convent; but she still had means of corresponding with the outer world, and of keeping up daily intercourse with the Court, with the other Princesses, and with her own friends. She was even able to continue to exercise a most liberal hospitality. The Court officials daily furnished her with 10 sterlets, 2 pike, 2 barrels of caviare, 2 barrels of herrings, pastry of various kinds, and 'hazel-nut butter,' 1 viedro (about 12 quarts) of hydromel, another of March beer, and 4 of ordinary beer,—every sort of food and drink in fact, and extra provisions on feast days; barrels of aniseed brandy, and casks of the more ordinary species. Romodanovski allowed his sisters to send her extra dainties, and this, so it was thought, facilitated an exchange of secret messages. The partisans of the ex-Regent had always gained easy access to the monastery, amongst the crowd of beggars, of both sexes, who formed a privileged class at Moscow. At certain seasons of the year, hundreds of these mendicants were daily received and entertained in the great *Obitiels;* this floating population, full, generally, of malcontents, numbered many of the *Streltsy* widows.[2] A movement in favour of the ex-Regent certainly existed, and received co-operation in this quarter. One *Streltchiha*, named Ofimka Kondratiéva, the widow of three fierce warriors, was actively engaged in it; but no plot, properly so called, was ever revealed.

The investigation proved nothing, but it exasperated the young Tsar's instinctive violence, and hardened him yet more. He was present at the examinations, and in the torture-chambers. Is it true, as some writers have declared, that he enjoyed it,—delighting in the sight of the panting bodies, the long-drawn anguish, and all the bitter incidents of suffering and death?[3] I cannot believe it. He may have watched it all, I will admit, with curiosity,—with the zest of a man thirsting for new sensations, and inexorably resolved

[1] Oustrialof, vol. iii. p. 159.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 157.
[3] Kostomarof, *History of Russia*, vol. ii. p. 516.

to see and touch everything himself,—his heart growing yet more hard, and his imagination running wild, amidst the bloody orgy of sovereign justice. When the trial was over, nothing would suffice him but wholesale executions, heads falling in heaps under the executioner's axe, forests of gallows, hecatombs of human life.

On the 30th of September 1698, the first procession, numbering 200 condemned men, took its way to the spot chosen for the final scene. Five of these were beheaded on the road, in front of the Tsar's house at Préobrajenskoïé, and Peter himself was their executioner. This fact is attested by numerous witnesses, adopted by contemporary opinion, and accepted by the majority of historians.[1] Leibnitz himself, in spite of his weakness for the Reforming Sovereign, expresses horror and indignation at the incident.[2] And Peter was not content with wielding the axe himself, he insisted that those about him should follow his example. Galitzin bungled at the work, and caused his victims terrible suffering. Menshikof and Romodanovski were more skilful. Two foreigners only, Lefort, and Blomberg, Colonel of the Préobrajenskoïé regiment, refused to perform their abominable task. When the doomed men reached the Red Square at Moscow, whither they were taken in sledges, two in each, holding lighted tapers in their hands, they were placed in rows of fifty along a tree trunk which served for a block.

There were 144 fresh executions on the 11th October, 205 on the 12th, 141 on the 13th, 109 on the 17th, 65 on the 18th, and 106 on the 19th. Two hundred *Streltsy*, three of them holding copies of a petition to the Tsarevna, were hung before the windows of Sophia's apartments in the *Novodiévitchyï Monastyr*. She herself escaped pretty easily. She lost the rank which she had hitherto retained, was

[1] Korb, p. 84. Guarient, in Oustrialof, vol. iii. p. 407; Vockerodt (Herrmann) p. 29; Villebois, *Unpublished Memoirs*; Solovief, vol. xiv. p. 286; Kostomarof, vol. ii. p. 517. The first edition of Korb's book, the earliest work which drew European attention to these atrocities, was suppressed in consequence of a request addressed by the Tsar to the Viennese Court. Only twelve copies were left in existence. An English translation of a copy preserved in the Frascati Library was published. I have had the good fortune of consulting one of the very rare copies of the original edition, which I owe to the kindness of M. Onéguine, a learned Russian Bibliophile, resident in Paris, whom I hereby gratefully thank.

[2] Guerrier, p. 20.

confined in a narrow cell, and thenceforth was only known as the Nun Susanna. Her sister Marfa was condemned to the same fate, in the Convent of the Assumption (*Ouspienski*), in the present Government of Vladimir, where she took the name of Margaret. Both sisters died in their cloisters, the elder in 1704, and the younger in 1707.

Other inquiries, followed by wholesale executions, took place at Azof, and in various parts of the Empire. The unhappy *Streltsy* were hunted hither and thither. It was a war of extermination. At Moscow, in January 1699, there were more inquiries and more executions. Peter's absence, during November and December, at Voronèje, had necessitated a pause of some weeks. The corpses which strewed the Square, were carried off in thousands, and thrown on to the neighbouring fields, where they rotted unburied,—and still the axe worked busily. The enclosure in the centre of the Red Square,—the Moscow 'Place de la Gréve,'—which was generally devoted to the executioner's purpose, was all too small for the occasion. All round the *Lobnoié miesto*,—a sort of brick-built platform surrounded by a wooden palisade,—pikes bearing heads, and gallows, laden with their human fruit, stood in ghastly array, until the year 1727.

That blood-stained spot, the *Lobnoié miesto*, has a character of its own, and a strange history, well worth knowing, which explains (I dare not say, it justifies) both the sanguinary scenes in which Peter insisted on playing so active a part, and that part itself, inexcusable as it appears. The origin of the name is quite uncertain. Some authorities derive it from the Latin word *lobium*, 'a high or raised place'; others ascribe it to the Russian word *lob*—'head'—the place where the heads of criminals are placed. There is a legend, too, that Adam's head was buried on the spot, and here my readers will begin to perceive the strange and whimsical mixture of ideas and feelings, with which popular tradition has invested this ghastly enclosure. A place of execution indeed, but a holy spot as well! It stood, like the *Lithostrote* at Jerusalem, before one of the six principal gates leading into the Kreml, and had a religious and national significance of its own. Here the relics and holy images brought to Moscow were first deposited; here, even yet, on solemn occasions, religious ceremonies were performed; here it was, that the Patriarch

gave his blessing to the Faithful; and here too, the most important Ukases were promulgated, and changes of ruler announced to the people. Here, in 1550, Ivan the Terrible came to confess his crimes, and publicly ask pardon of his subjects. Here too the mock Dimitri proclaimed his accession, and here, a few weeks later, his corpse was exposed to the mob, with a mask on the face, and a musical instrument in the dead hand.[1]

Thus the executioner's tools, and his victims' corpses, and all the hideous paraphernalia of criminal punishment, did not here produce the impression which would elsewhere have made them objects of horror and repugnance. For they were associated with the most august incidents in the public life, and when Peter appeared on the scaffold, axe in hand, he neither derogated from his high dignity, nor made himself odious in the eyes of his subjects. All he did was to carry out his functions as their supreme judge. Any man, at that period, might turn executioner, if the occasion arose. When the work was heavy, supplementary assistance in the bloody business was sought for in the open streets, and the supply never failed. Peter, without ceasing to be Tsar, could still be the Tsar's headsman, just as he had been his drummer and his sailor. He turned his hand to the executioner's duty, just as he had previously turned it to the rigging of his ships. No one was shocked by his action nor blamed him for it. He was much more likely to be praised!

A knowledge of these facts is essential to a thorough understanding of men and things in this period of Russian history, which cannot, as a rule, be interpreted or judged according to our knowledge of a corresponding period in the West. Peter had made up his mind to suppress the *Streltsy*, and did what was necessary to ensure that object. The means he employed were terrible, but, in his country, terror had long been a recognised method of procedure. So the *Streltsy* disappeared. All those on whom he laid hands in Moscow, either lost their lives, or were sent into the most distant parts of Siberia; their wives and children were driven out of the capital, and no one was allowed to give them either food or work.[2] 'What!' we cry, 'were they doomed to die of hunger?' More than probably. The very name

[1] Pylaief, *Old Moscow*, pp. 72, 412, etc.
[2] Gordon's *Journal*, English edition, p. 193.

of the hated corps was proscribed. The provincial war-bands, whose docility had disarmed the Tsar's anger, were reduced to the rank of private soldiery. Thus the way was cleared in every quarter, and the creation of the new army, which was to be the opening effort of Peter's fresh start, and one of a distinctly European character, was not only rendered possible, but became urgent and indispensable. The *Streltsy* had disappeared, but with them the army had vanished. And before three months were out, Peter became aware that he had gone too far and too fast, and was fain to call some of his dead back into life. At the Battle of Narva, in 1700, several *Streltsy* Regiments fought in the Russian army. These were the provincial bands whose organisation and title had been taken from them by a ukase, dated 11th September 1698, and reconferred by another, dated 20th January 1699.[1] In 1702, the Tsar himself ordered the formation, on the old system, of four regiments of Muscovite *Streltsy*, at Dorogoboujé, and a similar order was given in 1704. These were concessions to the necessities of the Swedish war. But in 1705, after the revolt at Astrakhan, in which the remnants of the old undisciplined war-bands were involved, their final and complete destruction was resolved on. Once more, long files of prisoners moved along the Moscow road, and hundreds of fresh executions, on the Red Square, completed the work of extermination.

III

It was the prospect of the great Northern war which induced Peter to strew the Red Square with the corpses of his soldiery. The chances of that same war led him to St. Petersburg. When he first threw down the gauntlet to Sweden, he turned his eyes on Livonia — on Narva and Riga. But Livonia was so well defended that he was driven northwards, towards Ingria. He moved thither grudgingly, sending, in the first instance, Apraxin, who turned the easily-conquered province into a desert. It was not for some time, and gropingly, as it were, that the young Sovereign began to see his way, and finally turned his attention, and his longings, to the mouth of the Neva. In former years, Gustavus Adolphus had realised the strategical im-

[1] Milioukof, *Peter the Great's Reform* (St. Petersburg, 1892), p. 141.

portance of a position which his successor, Charles XII., did not deem worthy of consideration, and had himself studied all its approaches. Peter not only took it to be valuable from the military and commercial point of view: he also found it most attractive, and would fain have never left it. He was more at home there than anywhere else, and the historical legends, according to which it was true Russian ground, filled him with emotion. No one knows what inspired this fondness on his part. It may have been the vague resemblance of the marshy flats to the lowlands of Holland; it may have been the stirring of some ancestral instinct. According to a legend, accepted by Nestor, it was by the mouth of the Neva that the earliest Norman Conquerors of the country passed on their journeys across the Varegian Sea—*their own sea*—and so to Rome! Peter would seem to have desired to take up the thread of that tradition, nine centuries old; and the story of his own foundation of the town has become legendary and epic. One popular description represents him as snatching a halbert from one of his soldiers, cutting two strips of turf, and laying them crosswise with the words, 'Here there shall be a town!' Foundation stones were evidently lacking, and sods had to take their place! Then, dropping the halbert, he seized a spade, and began the first embankment. At that moment an eagle appeared, hovering over the Tsar's head. It was struck by a shot from a musket. Peter took the wounded bird, set it on his wrist, and departed in a boat to inspect the neighbourhood.[1] This occurred on the 16th of May 1703.

History adds, that the Swedish prisoners employed on the work died in thousands. The most indispensable tools were lacking. There were no wheelbarrows, and the earth was carried in the corners of men's clothing. A wooden fort was first built, on the island bearing the Finnish name of Ianni-Saari (Hare Island). This was the future citadel of St. Peter and St. Paul. Then came a wooden church, and the modest cottage which was to be Peter's first palace. Near these, the following year, there rose a Lutheran Church, ultimately removed to the left bank of the river, into the Liteïnaïa quarter, and also a tavern, the famous inn of the Four Frigates, which did duty as a Town Hall for a long time before it became a place of diplomatic meeting. Then the cluster of modest

[1] Pylaief, *Old St. Petersburg*, p. 16, etc.

buildings was augmented by the erection of a bazaar. The Tsar's collaborators gathered round him, in cottages much like his own, and the existence of St. Petersburg became an accomplished fact.

But, up to the time of the Battle of Poltava, Peter never thought of making St. Petersburg his capital. It was enough for him to feel he had a fortress and a port. He was not sufficiently sure of his mastery over the neighbouring countries, not certain enough of being able to retain his conquest, to desire to make it the centre of his Government and his own permanent residence. This idea was not definitely accepted till after his great victory.[1] His final decision has been bitterly criticised, especially by foreign historians; it has been severely judged and remorselessly condemned. Before expressing any opinion of my own on the subject, I should like to sum up the considerations which have been put forward to support this unfavourable verdict.

The great victory, we are told, diminished the strategic importance of St. Petersburg, and almost entirely extinguished its value as a port; while its erection into the capital city of the Empire was never anything but madness. Peter, being now the indisputable master of the Baltic shores, had nothing to fear from any Swedish attack in the Gulf of Finland. Before any attempt in that direction, the Swedes were certain to try to recover Narva or Riga. If, in later years, they turned their eyes to St. Petersburg, it was only because that town had acquired undue and unmerited political importance. It was easy of attack, and difficult to defend. There was no possibility of concentrating any large number of troops there, for the whole country, forty leagues round, was a barren desert. In 1788, Catherine II. complained that her capital was too near the Swedish frontier, and too much exposed to sudden movements, such as that which Gustavus III. very nearly succeeded in carrying out. Here we have the military side of the question.

From the commercial point of view, St. Petersburg, we are assured, did command a valuable system of river communication,—but that commanded by Riga was far superior. The Livonian, Esthonian, and Courland ports of Riga, Libau, and Revel, all at an equal distance from St Petersburg and Moscow,

[1] See the Tsar's letter to Apraxin (July 9, 1709), Cabinet No. i. Book 28.

and far less removed from the great German commercial centres, enjoyed a superior climate, and were, subsequent to the conquest of the above-mentioned Provinces, the natural points of contact between Russia and the West. An eloquent proof of this fact may be observed, nowadays, in the constant increase of their commerce, and the corresponding decrease of that of St. Petersburg, which has been artificially developed and fostered.

Besides this, the Port of St. Petersburg, during the lifetime of its founder, never was anything but a mere project. Peter's ships were moved from Kronslot to Kronstadt. Between St. Petersburg and Kronstadt, the Neva was not, in those days, more than eight feet deep, and Manstein tells us that all ships built at Petersburg had to be dragged by means of machines fitted with cables to Kronstadt, where they received their guns. Once these had been taken on board, the vessels could not get up stream again. The Port of Kronstadt was closed by ice for six months out of the twelve, and lay in such a position that no sailing ship could leave it unless the wind blew from the east. There was so little salt in its waters, that the ship timbers rotted in a very short time, and besides, there were no oaks in the surrounding forests, and all such timber had to brought from Kasan. Peter was so well aware of all these drawbacks, that he sought, and found, a more convenient spot for his shipbuilding yards, at Rogerwick, in Esthonia, four leagues from Revel. But here he found difficulty in protecting the anchorage from the effects of hurricanes, and from the insults of his enemies. He hoped to ensure this by means of two piers, built on wooden caissons filled with stones. He thinned the forests of Livonia and Esthonia, to construct it, and finally, the winds and the waves having carried everything away twice over, the work was utterly abandoned. On the other hand, and from the very outset, the commercial activity of St. Petersburg was hampered, by the fact that it was the Tsar's Capital. The presence of the Court made living dear, and the consequent expense of labour was a heavy drawback to the export trade, which, by its nature, called for a good deal of manual exertion. According to a Dutch Resident of that period, a wooden cottage, very inferior to that inhabited by a peasant in the Low Countries, cost from 800 to 1000 florins a year at St. Petersburg. A shopkeeper at Archangel

could live comfortably on a quarter of that sum. The cost of transport, which amounted to between nine and ten kopecks a pood, between Moscow and Archangel, five to six between Iaroslav and Archangel, and three or four between Vologda and Archangel, came to eighteen, twenty, and thirty kopecks a pood in the case of merchandise sent from any of these places to St. Petersburg. This accounts for the opposition of the foreign merchants at Archangel, to the request that they should remove to St. Petersburg. Peter settled the matter in characteristic fashion, by forbidding any trade in hemp, flax, leather, or corn, to pass through Archangel. This rule, though somewhat slackened, in 1714, at the request of the States-General of Holland, remained in force during the great Tsar's reign. In 1718, hemp, and some other articles of commerce, were allowed free entrance into the Port of Archangel, but only on condition that two-thirds of all exports should be sent to St. Petersburg. This puts the case from the maritime and commercial point of view.

As a capital city, St. Petersburg, we are told again, was ill-placed on the banks of the Neva, not only for the reasons already given, but for others, geographical, ethnical and climatic, which exist even in the present day, and which make its selection an outrage on common sense. Was it not, we are asked, a most extraordinary whim which induced a Russian to found the capital of his Slavonic Empire among the Finns, against the Swedes,[1]—to centralise the administration of a huge extent of country in its remotest corner,—to retire from Poland and Germany on the plea of drawing nearer to Europe, and to force every one about him, officials, Court, and Diplomatic Corps, to inhabit one of the most inhospitable spots, under one of the least clement skies, he could possibly have discovered? The whole place was a marsh,—the Finnish word *Neva* means 'mud'; the sole inhabitants of the neighbouring forests were packs of wolves. In 1714, during a winter night, two sentries, posted before the cannon foundry, were devoured. Even nowadays, the traveller, once outside the town, plunges into a desert. Far away in every direction the great plain stretches; not a steeple, not a tree, not a head of cattle, not a sign of life, whether human or animal. There is no pasturage, no pos-

[1] Custine, *La Russie* (Paris, 1843), vol. i. p. 204.

sibility of cultivation,—fruit, vegetables, and even corn, are all brought from a distance. The ground is in a sort of intermediate condition between the sea and *terra firma*. Up to Catherine's reign inundations were chronic in their occurrence. On the 11th of September 1706, Peter drew from his pocket the measure he always carried about him, and convinced himself that there were twenty-one inches of water above the floors of his cottage. In all directions he saw men, women, and children clinging to the wreckage of buildings, which was being carried down the river. He described his impressions in a letter to Menshikof, dated from 'Paradise,'[1] and declared it was 'extremely amusing.' It may be doubted whether he found many persons to share his delight. Communications with the town, now rendered easy by railways, were, in those days, not only difficult, but dangerous. Campredon, when he went from Moscow to St. Petersburg, in April 1723, spent 1200 roubles. He lost part of his luggage, eight of his horses were drowned, and, after having travelled for four weeks, he reached his destination, very ill. Peter himself, who arrived before the French Diplomat, had been obliged to ride part of the way, and to swim his horse across the rivers!

But in spite of all these considerations, the importance of which I am far from denying, I am inclined to think Peter's choice a wise one. Nobody can wonder that the idea of retaining Moscow as his capital was most repugnant to him. The existence of his work in those hostile surroundings,—in a place which, to this day, has remained obstinately reactionary,—could never have been anything but precarious and uncertain. It must, after his death at least, if not during his life, have been at the mercy of those popular insurrections before which the sovereign power, as established in the Kreml, had, already, so frequently bowed. When Peter carried Muscovy out of her former existence, and beyond her ancient frontiers, he was logically forced to treat the seat of his Government in the same manner. His new undertaking resembled, both in aspect and character, a marching and fighting formation, directed towards the West. The leader's place, and that of his chief residence, was naturally indicated, at the head of his column. This once granted, and the principle of the translation of the

[1] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 273.

capital to the Western extremity of the Tsar's newly acquired possessions, admitted, the advantages offered by Ingria would appear to me to outweigh all the drawbacks previously referred to. The province was, at that period, virgin soil, sparsely inhabited by a Finnish population, possessing neither cohesion nor historical consistency, and, consequently, docile and easily assimilated. Everywhere else, —all along the Baltic coast, in Esthonia, in Carelia, and in Courland,—though the Swedes might be driven out, the Germans still remained, firmly settled,—the neighbourhood of their native country, and of the springs of Teutonic culture, enduing them with an invincible power of resistance. Riga, in the present day, after nearly two centuries of Russian government, is a thoroughly German town. In St. Petersburg, Russia, as a country, became European and cosmopolitan,—but the city itself is essentially Russian, and the Finnish element in its neighbourhood counts for nothing.

In this matter, though Peter may not have clearly felt and thought it out, he was actuated by the mighty and unerring instinct of his genius. I am willing to admit that here, as in everything else, there was a certain amount of whim, and perhaps some childish desire to ape Amsterdam. I will even go further, and acknowledge that the manner in which he carried out his plan was anything but reasonable. 200,000 labourers, we are told, died during the construction of the new city, and the Russian nobles ruined themselves to build palaces which soon fell out of occupation. But an abyss was opened, between the past the Reformer had doomed, and the future on which he had set his heart, and the national life, thus violently forced into a new channel, was stamped, superficially at first, but more and more deeply, by degrees, with the Western and European character he desired to impart.

Moscow, down to the present day, has preserved a religious, almost a monastic air; at every street corner, chapels attract the passers-by, and the local population, even at its busiest, crosses itself, and bends, as it passes before the sacred pictures which rouse its devotion at every turn. St. Petersburg, from the very earliest days, presented a different, and quite a secular appearance. At Moscow, no public performance of profane music was permitted. At St.

Petersburg the Tsar's German musicians played every day, on the balcony of his tavern. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the new city boasted a French Theatre, and an Italian Opera, and Schlözer noted that Divine Service was performed in fourteen languages! Modern Russia, governed, educated, to a certain extent, intellectually speaking, emancipated, and relatively liberal, could not have come into existence, nor grown in stature, elsewhere.

And, to conclude, Peter was able to effect this singular change without doing too great violence to the historical traditions of his country. From the earliest days of Russian history, the capital had been removed from place to place, —from Novgorod to Kief, from Kief to Vladimir, from Vladimir to Moscow. This phenomenon was the consequence of the immense area of the national territory, and the want of consistency in the elements of the national life. From the beginning to the end of an evolution which lasted centuries, the centre of gravity of the disjointed, scattered, and floating forces of ancient Russia, perpetually changed its place. Thus the creation of St. Petersburg was nothing but the working out of a problem in dynamics. The struggle with Sweden, the conquest of the Baltic provinces, and the yet more important conquest of a position in the European world, naturally turned the whole current of the national energies and life in that direction. Peter desired to perpetuate this course. I am inclined to think he acted wisely.

CHAPTER II

MORALS—HABITS AND CUSTOMS

I. *Morals* — The Slavophile Theory of the morals of Ancient Russia — The reality — Coarseness and savagery — Brigandage — Brutal vulgarity of domestic habits — Drunkenness — Sanguinary scuffles — Absence of any moral ideal—Peter's work—The moral foundation ready to his hand—Inconsistency and paltriness of his first attempts—Dress reform—Ulterior progress—The Reform of the Calendar—Liberal tendencies of the new *régime*—The great domestic Reform—The suppression of the Terem—Whither the women were to go—Peter creates society by Ukase—'Assemblies'—Failure, as far as sociability was concerned—Causes of this failure—Peter himself too little of a man of the world—No Court to give tone to society—The tone of the Sovereign's surroundings very different from that of Versailles—Coarse Habits—Official entertainments—Balls in the Summer Garden—The Diplomatic Corps received at Peterhof—Filthy and dissolute habits—Superficiality of the change—A great moral revolution—The school of example.

II. *Education*—Scholastic establishments—Bold and far-stretching theories—Weakness and poverty of their practical application—General and professional education—Primary and high-class schools—Lack of pupils—Young men sent abroad—Indifferent results—Russia still dependent on Europe—The Academy of Sciences—The real teaching of the great reign—Example again.

III. *Intellectual beginnings*—The new language — Books — Archives and a Library—Museums — Free entrance—A School of Fine Arts — The Theatre—The Press—General view.

I

THE Slavophile writers of the present day are fond of painting the habits and customs of Ancient Russia in the most brilliant colours, heightened by their gloomy description of contemporary existence amongst Western nations. This is the last refuge of a theory which finds it hard to hold its own in every other field. It has grown more and more difficult, in course of time, to claim all the elements of original culture,—letters, arts, and sciences,—with which, according to her adorers' ideal, the Russia of the 16th and

17th centuries should have been endowed. But, these zealots say, though her inhabitants could not read, their morals were beyond all reproach. Despite the triple corruption of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Modern Period, they had remained pure, and even holy. We shall see.

It is a singular fact that none of the witnesses of this idyllic condition of existence, nor even the actors in it, seem to have been conscious of its charm. Foreign testimony, such as that of Olearius, Margeret, and Fletcher, may be doubted. But what are we to think of that passage in the Memoirs of Jeliaboujski, to which I have already alluded, and which describes the current incidents of the day as a mere calendar of criminal procedure.

In November 1699, Prince Feodor Hotétovski was knouted, in one of the Moscow Squares, for having sold a single landed property to several purchasers. In December, two judges at Vladimir, Dimitri Divof, and Iakovlef Kolytchef, were flogged for breach of trust. Kolytchef had been corrupted by means of a sum of twenty roubles, and a barrel of brandy! That same year, a gentleman named Zoubof was prosecuted for highway robbery. A Voïvoide of Tsaritsine, named Ivan Barténief, accepted bribes, and carried off married women and young girls to be his mistresses. Prince Ivan Sheïdiakof was convicted of robbery and murder.[1]

Armed brigandage was such an ingrained custom, at that period, that all Peter's energy was powerless to suppress it. In 1710, troops had to be called out to protect the immediate neighbourhood of the Capital. In 1719, the judicial body was warned of the presence of well-armed bands numbering from 100 to 200 robbers, in the districts of Novgorod and of Mojaïsk.[2] The Saxon Resident writes, in 1723: 'A body of 9000 robbers, led by a Russian half-pay Colonel, had planned to burn the Admiralty and other buildings in St. Petersburg, and to massacre the foreigners. 36 of these have been taken prisoners, and impaled, or hung by the ribs . . . We are on the brink of some unpleasant

[1] Jeliaboujski, pp. 129-130; Korb, pp. 77, 78. Compare Kostomarof, *Picture of Russian Domestic Life and Habits in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, pp. 99-128; Bielaief, *Lessons on Russian Law*, p. 464, etc.; Goltsef, *Russian Laws and Customs in the 18th Century*, p. 17.

[2] Solovief, vol. xvi. p. 251.

outbreak; the popular misery is daily increasing, the streets are full of people trying to sell their children; orders have been issued that nothing should be given to beggars. What can they do but become highway robbers?'[1]

These robbers, who had taken up arms against the foreigners, were the authentic representatives of Old Russia, and I cannot perceive anything idyllic about them, nor about the principal and most characteristic features of past times—the savagery and coarseness—presented in their persons. Neugebauer, German tutor to the young Tsarevitch Alexis, was discharged, in 1702, because he ventured to object to his pupil's habit of emptying his own plate into the dishes intended for other guests. There was no sociability in the nature of a people so swayed by Byzantine asceticism as to reckon knowledge heresy, art a scandal, and music, singing, and dancing, an offence to the Almighty. Love itself, even hallowed by religious ties, was looked on with doubt and scruple. Possoshkof, in the true spirit of the Domostroï, advises all newly married couples to spend their two first nights in prayer,—the first to drive away the demons, and the second to do honour to the Patriarchs! Women of the aristocratic class wasted their existences within the padlocked doors of the *terem*. The men entertained themselves with their masculine surroundings, consisting of needy gentlemen, whom they sometimes petted, and often thrashed,—jesters, whose jokes were generally of the vilest description,—*bahars* or *scazotchniks*, who told ridiculous stories,—*domratcheïs*, who played on a sort of guitar, called the *domra*, and droned out religious chants,—and sometimes, but much less often, *skomorohi*, or jugglers, already looked at askance, and even prosecuted,—the civil power backing the attempts of the ecclesiastical authority to repress profane delights. The real pleasure of every man, from the Boyard to the peasant, was drink. Every festive gathering was a scene of drunkenness, which too often culminated in rough, and often bloody scuffles.[2]

On every rung of the social ladder, there was the same utter absence of morality, of any sentiment of self-respect, honour, or duty. Free men, according to Korb, cared little

[1] Sbornik, vol. iii. pp. 354, 360.

[2] Zabielin, *Domestic History of the Tsarinas*, p. 397, etc.; Dibiatine, *Contributions to the History of Russian Law*, p. 560, etc.

for their liberty, and willingly accepted serfdom. Informers swarmed in every class, and everywhere there was the same dead level of idleness, indifference, and meanness. When, in 1705, Shérémétief, the best of Peter's Russian Generals, was sent to Astrakhan to suppress a revolt, the growth of which threatened the living forces of the country, he stopped at Kasan, and turned his whole mind to getting leave to return to Moscow, and there spend the winter and the Easter festivities. Nothing but the Emperor's threats induced him to resume his journey.[1] Honour, duty, ambition, and even courage, were novelties, the knowledge of which Peter, as he himself boasted, was forced to propagate amongst his subjects.[2] He had to tear the degrading lesson of their national proverb, 'Flight is not a very noble thing, but it is a very safe one,' out of their hearts and minds. His methods of terror and of summary justice,—as when he hung a whole company of flying soldiers under the walls of Noteburg, in 1703,—would certainly not have succeeded, alone, as they did, to a certain extent, succeed. But he found a moral foundation, long buried in those darkened and degraded souls,—their fanatical love of home, their power of endurance, their limitless docility, and immense self-sacrifice. The work, apart from these, was all his own.

It was by no means a perfect work. It bore traces of all the faults and weaknesses inherent in the Workman. When the Reformer turned his first attention to clipping his subjects' beards, and reforming their costume, he overlooked far more pressing and serious matters. The dress worn in Russia, at the end of the 17th century, was, indeed, both inconvenient and ungraceful. But its distinctive features, and the fulness and number of the garments placed one above the other, were justified by the conditions of the climate. Over his embroidered shirt and wide trousers, tucked into his boots, the Russian gentleman wore a *joupan*, or waistcoat, of coloured silk, and a closely fitting *kaftan*, reaching to the knees, with a straight collar of velvet, satin or brocade. The sleeves, which were long and wide, were fastened at the wrist with buttons, made of precious stones of more or less value. This was his indoor garb. When he

[1] Oustrialof, vol. iv. p. 493.

[2] See his conversation with the Duke of Holstein in 1722, reported by Bergholz, *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. xx. p. 387.

went out, he added a belt of some Persian material, and over his *kaftan*, he wore a *feriaz*,—a long, wide velvet garment, straight cut and collarless, buttoned down the front from the top to the bottom, and always with long and wide sleeves. Over the *feriaz* he wore, in summer, the *opachen* or *ohaben*, a wide mantle of precious stuff, falling to his heels, with long sleeves, and a square collar; or, in the autumn, the *odnoriadka*, a warmer garment of hairwoven material or cloth; while, in winter, he was robed in the *shouba*,—a fur-lined pelisse. A full and thick beard was the natural complement of this dress, and was equally well suited to the needs of the Russian climate. The æsthetic point of view need not come into this discussion. Fashion, in all times, and every country, has always disregarded it, and to this day the St. Petersburg coachmen thicken their waists by means of cushions, which they consider a most desirable addition to their personal appearance.

This reform, like most of those to which Peter's name has been attached, grew out of the general evolution which had carried Russia westward, ever since the days of Boris Godunof. Under Tsar Alexis, Shérémétief's father refused to give his son his blessing, because he appeared before him with his chin shaved, and the Patriarch Joachim had only stopped the movement, by thundering excommunications against it. The question was complicated by religious sentiment. In all orthodox Icons, the Eternal Father and His Son are represented with beards, and in long robes; and the popular belief, supported by ecclesiastical teaching, held that man, being made in God's image, committed sacrilege when he did anything to alter that sacred resemblance.[1] The civil power was forced to take these elements into account, and to adopt a policy of compromise. Alexis published a Ukase supporting the Patriarchal view on the subject of beards, but, in 1681, the Tsar Feodor Alexiéiévitch ordered all male members of his Court, and officials, to shorten the skirts of their clothing.

These controversies may provoke a smile, but my French readers will recollect that, even in France, a passionate controversy raged over the beard brought into fashion by Francis I., who grew his, to conceal a wound on his face.[2]

[1] Bouslaief, *Historical Sketches*, vol. ii. p. 216.

[2] Franklin, *Journal of the Siege of Paris in* 1590, pp. 108, 109.

Peter settled the question in his usual radical fashion. He would have no more beards, and everybody must wear European costume, either French or Hungarian. His Ukase on the subject was published on the 29th of August 1699, and patterns of the regulation garments were exposed in the streets. The poorer classes were granted a temporary delay, so that they might wear out their old clothes, but, after 1705, every soul was to appear in the new uniform, under pain of fines, and even of severer penalties.

The reform, thus violently imposed, met with desperate opposition, especially among the lower classes. The Boyards were easily managed,—they had worn Polish costume ever since Dimitri's time, and the elegance of the French style of dress distinctly attracted them; in March 1705, Whitworth did not notice a single well-born person wearing the old-fashioned dress. But the poorer classes hung back, and not without good reason. In such a climate, short-skirted garments, and uncovered stockings, were anything but rational. The old-fashioned Russian costume has been said to be only fit for idlers, but the Northern climate, with its long periods of enforced hibernation, had taught men idleness. Their limbs might be freer when they cast off their long pelisses, but they ran grievous risk of being frost-bitten; Peter himself died of a chill. The poor *Moujik*, forcibly deprived of the beard which had kept his cheeks warm in 40 degrees of cold, begged it might be laid with him in his coffin, so that, after his death, he might appear decently in the presence of St. Nicholas. This popular superstition was, like many others, the outcome of a thoroughly well-founded utilitarian instinct.

But all this was nothing to Peter. In 1704, at an inspection of officials of all classes, held as he was passing through Moscow, he caused Ivan Naoumof, who had failed to use his razors, to be flogged.[1] In 1706, soldiers were posted at all the church doors in Astrakhan, with orders to fall upon recalcitrant worshippers, and pull out their beards by main force. The Tsar also took upon himself to shorten the women's garments, and any skirts which exceeded the regulation length were publicly torn up, without the slightest regard for decency.[2] Peter had a special, and a

[1] Golikof, vol. ii. p. 513.
[2] Whitworth's Despatch, Feb. 20, 1706; Sbornik, vol. xxxix. p. 249.

kind of personal hatred, for all beards. To him they typified all the ideas, traditions and prejudices, he was resolved to overcome. In the admonitions addressed, in his Manifesto of 1718, to his unfortunate and rebellious son Alexis, the expression '*great beards*' is frequently repeated, and would appear to be his synonym for the whole reactionary party, on which he showers the most violent abuse. 'This is easily understood, in the case of such people as these, whose morals are corrupt, *quorum Deus venter est!*'—his Latin quotations were somewhat haphazard! Though, as time went on, he did, on condition of a heavy tax, tolerate the preservation of these hirsute appendages, it was only because his financial embarrassments pressed so heavily upon him. The *Raskolniks* paid as much as 100 roubles, yearly, for the privilege, and were obliged to wear medals, given them on receipt of the annual sum, engraved with the following inscription: '*Boroda lishnaia tiagota*' ('a beard is a useless inconvenience').

Thus we see Russia shaved, and dressed in European garments. The Reformer's next step was to put a pipe into every one's mouth. Even before his travels abroad in 1697, he had authorised the free sale of tobacco, which had hitherto been prohibited, without the smallest consideration for the offence thus given to the national prejudices. As we have already seen, he negotiated with Lord Caermarthen, during his stay in England, for a tobacco monopoly. A smoker himself, he was determined every one else should smoke. All this strikes us as being rather foolish, and even as denoting a somewhat unhealthy imagination. Yet this, so far as manners and customs were concerned, was the commencement of the great man's civilising work. He did better as he went on, but his beginnings, it must be acknowledged, were not over brilliant.

On the 20th December 1699, a Ukase appeared, ordering a reform in the National Calendar. The Russian Calendar was the outcome of Byzantine tradition; the year began on the 1st of September, the hypothetical date of the Creation, 5508 years B.C. It was to open, in future, like the European year, on the 1st of January. The whole world was commanded to be present at the services to be celebrated in the churches on that day, and, thereafter, to exchange the traditional congratulations and good wishes.

The Reformer would fain have gone a step further, and adopted the Gregorian Calendar, but this, with its Roman and Papal characteristics, was, in those days, strongly objected to, even in England, where it was not adopted till 1752. Moderate as it was, this Reform caused a great deal of ill-feeling. 'Could God have really created the world in winter?' it was inquired. Peter cared not a jot, and he was wise; for, this time, he was on the right track. He pushed steadily forward. In the year 1700, he published a Ukase ordering the first apothecary's shops,—eight of them,—to be opened in Moscow. Another Ukase, bearing the same date, forbade the carrying of knives,—which too frequently played a terrible part in the daily street quarrels in the city,—on pain of flogging and deportation. In the following year, the liberal spirit of the new *régime* was proved by a series of orders, doing away with the necessity for kneeling when the Sovereign passed, and of passing his palace with uncovered head, during the winter season. Then, in 1702, came the great domestic Reform. The doors of the *terem* were opened, and the married state was surrounded by moral guarantees. Peter stretched a merciful and protecting hand over Russian family life. In 1704, he did battle with an odious feature of the national habits,—the habitual doing away with deformed children, and infants born out of wedlock. He favoured the creation of an Asylum for foundlings, opened by Job, the Patriarch of Novgorod, in 1706, and, in 1715, he took more decided personal steps in this most painful matter, and ordered the foundation of similar establishments, in all the great towns in his Empire.

This part of his work, fragmentary and incomplete as it was, was excellent in its way. To make it more harmonious, the Reformer would have needed far greater leisure; but his mind was taken up, and distracted, by his great war. He called the Russian women forth from their *terems*—a good thing as far as it went—but what was to become of them now? He desired they should go into society, like their sisters in France and Germany;—but no Russian society existed, and Peter did not find time to remedy this defect until the year 1718. Then, during a pause in the war, he settled the question, as usual, by means of a Ukase. This fact, I imagine, has no parallel in history. He

ordered periodical receptions, which he called 'Assemblies,' to be held in a certain number of private houses, and issued precise regulations as to the arrangements, the order in which they were to be held, and all other details, even to the smallest. He had just returned, it must be remembered, from France, and was evidently guided and inspired by what he had seen in the Paris salons. But he added details of his own invention. These Assemblies were to last from four o'clock in the afternoon till ten at night. The hosts were forbidden, on pain of fine, to go forward to receive their guests, or to accompany them to the door when they departed. All they were to do was to prepare a more or less luxurious reception, lights, refreshments, and games. The invitations were not of a personal nature; a general list of admission was drawn up, and published, with a notification of the day of each reception, by the Chief of the Police in St. Petersburg, and by the Commandant of the city of Moscow. No games of chance were allowed, and, by a special Ukase, dated 28th June 1718, card and dice playing were punished by the knout.[1] A room was set apart for chess-players, and was also to be used as a smoking-room, but, as a matter of fact, and following Peter's own example, smoking went on everywhere. Leather tobacco-bags lay on every table, and Dutch merchants moved about, pipe in mouth, amongst smart gentlemen, dressed in the last Parisian fashions.[2] Dancing held a foremost place in the programme of these entertainments, and as his subjects, male and female, had no knowledge of that accomplishment, Peter himself undertook to instruct them. Bergholz describes him as a first-rate performer; he executed all kinds of steps before the gentlemen, who were expected to use their legs in exactly the same fashion as he used his. The memories of the drill ground, thus conjured up, were not likely to be displeasing to the Sovereign. The regulations provide that the servants, always so numerous in Russian households, should remain in the ante-chambers,—access to the reception rooms was utterly forbidden them: except in this respect, the most absolute equality reigned.

[1] Golikof, vol. iii. p. 44.

[2] See the picturesque description of one of these gatherings in a fragment of an historical novel by Poushkin: *Collected Works*, vol. iv. (1887 edition), *Peter the Great's Negro*.

Any gentleman might invite the Empress herself to dance with him.[1]

As in the case of most of Peter's undertakings, the early days of this reform bristled with difficulties, more especially at Moscow, where, on Peter's arrival to celebrate the Peace of Nystadt in 1722, a special Ukase convoked an Assembly, at which all ladies 'above ten years of age,' were ordered to appear under threat of 'terrible punishment.' Only seventy put in an appearance. At St. Petersburg, on the other hand, the institution appears, by the end of the third year of its existence, to have taken firm root. Let us now consider the benefit accruing from it. Peter had three principal aims: the initiation of Russian women into the ordinary intercourse between the sexes, as it existed in Western countries; the initiation of the upper classes of Russian society, into the social habits general in those countries; and, finally, the fusion of the native classes, and their mixture with the foreign element in Russia. This last object, the most important, possibly, from his point of view, of all the three, was not attained, as is proved by the great mass of contemporary testimony. The Russian ladies stubbornly refused to choose their partners outside the ranks of their own fellow-countrymen, and their action, in this respect, was based on a deliberate and common understanding. Peter lacked the qualities necessary for the attainment of the two other points. He should have had more of the man of the world, and less of the sailor and carpenter, in his own person. His manners, like his dancing steps, were aped by his subjects, and his manners, from the social point of view, were neither polite nor pleasing. In the intervals between the dances, the partners, male and female, being devoid of conversation, sat apart in dreary silence. The Sovereign could think of no better plan to break the ice, than the introduction of a dance during the figures of which the gentlemen kissed the ladies *on their lips*.[2] And these poor ladies had hard work to appear at all like their fair models in the Parisian salons. They wore hoops, indeed, at the Tsar's Assemblies, but they still blackened their teeth![3]

The Court in St. Petersburg, like the Court in Paris, gave

[1] Shoubinski, *Historical Selections*, p. 39; Kamovitch, *Selections*, p. 240.
[2] Kamovitch, p. 242.
[3] Hymrof, *The Countess Golovkin and her Times*, p. 89.

the tone to society, and the tone of the circle surrounding Peter and his wife had nothing in common with that of Versailles. At a banquet given in the Imperial Palace, in honour of the baptism of Catherine's son, the centre of each of the two tables, devoted, one to the gentlemen, and another to the ladies, was adorned with a huge pasty, and, at a given moment, a male dwarf emerged from the first, and a female from the second, both of them *in puris naturalibus!*[1] On the 14th of November 1724, the Empress's fête-day, their Majesties dined in the Senate-house with a numerous company, including the Duchess of Mecklenburg and the Tsarina Prascovia. A Senator climbed on the table, and walked from one end to the other, putting his feet in all the dishes![2] An important part was played, at all Court festivities, by six Grenadiers of the Guard, who carried in a huge tub of strongly spiced corn brandy, which Peter distributed, with a wooden spoon, to every one present, ladies included. In one of Campredon's despatches, dated 8th December 1721, I find the following words: 'The last banquet given in honour of the Tsarina's name-day, was very splendid, after the manner of this country. *The ladies all drank a great deal.*'

But indeed, Peter, as we know, had no Court, properly so called. One of the first acts of his reign had been to make over the sums formerly devoted to the Sovereign and his household, for the general benefit of the State. The various departments of the Tsar's household had entirely disappeared, and with them, the whole army of palace officials and servants. The 3000 saddle-horses, and the 40,000 draught horses, which had filled the stables, the 300 cooks and kitchen boys, who had sent up 3000 dishes daily from their kitchen, were nothing but a memory.[3] Towards the end of the reign, some new Court officials were created after the European pattern, but they only did duty a few times each year, on days of great ceremony. On ordinary *fête* days, when the Tsar came back to dinner, after church, he was accompanied by his Ministers and by a host of military officers. But sixteen places only were laid at his table; for these there was a general scuffle, and the sole notice Peter took of the many who were left out in

[1] Pylaief, *The Forgotten Past*, p. 308.
[2] Siémievski, *The Tsarina Prascovia*, p. 169.
[3] Polevoï, *History of Peter the Great*, vol. i. p. 340, etc.

the cold, was to say, 'Go home, and delight your wives by dining with them.' No great receptions were ever held in the Tsar's palace, even when he came to possess one. Towards the end of his reign, the Post-Office was used for this purpose, instead of Menshikof's palace, and the scene, when Peter's guests were gathered there, was worthy of the vilest tavern. Bergholz has left a description of a banquet given in May 1721, in honour of the launching of a vessel. Before the middle of the meal, the guests, male and female, were all drunk, the wine having been mixed with brandy. Old Admiral Apraxin burst into a flood of tears, Prince Menshikof fell under the table, and his wife and sister endeavoured to restore him to consciousness. Then the company began to quarrel, blows were exchanged, and a general, who had come to fisticuffs with a lieutenant, had to be arrested.[1] It should be added, that during these orgies, which generally lasted six hours, and often longer, all doors were rigorously closed; the disgusting and deliberately courted consequences may be better conceived than described. They are an evident proof of Peter's utter and undisguised scorn of decency and propriety.

In January 1723, a Court mourning was ordered for the Regent of France, but at the next Assembly, most of the ladies appeared in colours, and declared they possessed no other dresses. Peter had them all turned out, but very shortly afterwards, having drunk several glasses of wine, he himself gave the signal for dancing to begin.[2]

During the summer season, the receptions and banquets were held in the Summer Garden which was turned into something like a noisy Fair ground. The smell of spiced brandy spread into the neighbouring streets, and thousands of spectators were entertained by the coarse laughter of the drinkers, the screams of the women whom they forced, willy nilly, to swallow their ration of brandy, and the burlesque songs of the mock cardinals. Dancing went on in the open air, in an uncovered gallery overlooking the Neva. In the Imperial summer residences, near Moscow and St. Petersburg, the coarse habits and vulgar tastes of the Sovereign and his immediate circle, were still more freely displayed!

[1] *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. xix. pp. 94-96; one of Campredon's despatches, dated March 14, 1721, contains similar details.

[2] *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. xxi. p. 191.

Here is a description of a visit to Peterhof, which the Diplomatic Corps was commanded to make in May, 1715 :—

'On the 9th, the Tsar went to Kronslot, whither we followed him in a galley, but a sudden tempest kept us there at anchor, for two days and three nights, in an open boat, without fire, or bed, or provisions. When we reached Peterhof at last, we were entertained in the usual manner, for we had to drink so much Tokay wine at dinner, that, when it was time to separate, we could hardly stand on our legs. Notwithstandlng this, the Tsarina presented each of us with a glass of brandy, containing about a pint, which we were obliged to swallow. This completely deprived us of our reason, and we gave ourselves up to slumber, some of us in the gardens, some in the woods, and the rest on the ground, in all directions. At four o'clock in the afternoon, we were roused, and led to the castle, where the Tsar gave each of us a hatchet, with orders to follow him. He conducted us to a wood, and marked out an alley about 100 paces long, close by the sea, the trees of which we were to fell. He set to work before us, and although we were little accustomed to such hard labour, we contrived—there were seven of us besides his Majesty—in about three hours, to finish our task. The fumes of wine were by that time mostly dissipated, and no accident occurred, except that a certain Minister, who was working a little too vigorously, was slightly wounded by the fall of a tree. The Tsar having thanked us for our trouble, entertained us in the evening, in the ordinary fashion, and we were once more given so much liquor that we were unconscious by the time we were sent to bed. Before we had slept an hour and a half, we were woke by one of the Tsar's favourites, and conducted, in spite of ourselves, into the presence of the Prince of Circassia, who was in bed with his wife. We were obliged to remain beside their bed till four o'clock in the morning, drinking wine and brandy, so that we hardly knew how to get back to our own lodging. About eight o'clock in the morning we were called to breakfast at the castle, but, instead of the tea or coffee we expected, we were given large glasses of brandy, after which we were sent to take the fresh air on a high hill, at the foot of which we found a peasant with eight miserable nags having neither saddles nor bridles, which cannot have been worth more than three crowns altogether. Each of us mounted one,

and we then passed, in comical array, before their Majesties, who were looking out of the window.'[1]

It should further be pointed out that this kind of savagery was united with a dissoluteness and barefaced immorality of which Peter himself was a prominent exponent. When the Duke of Holstein, who was on the point of marrying the Sovereign's daughter, publicly appeared in St. Petersburg, with a mistress whose husband he openly protected, his future father-in-law never dreamt of finding fault with him.

In many respects, Peter only piled corruption on corruption, and in this particular matter the Slavophile theory is partly justified. All he gained, as regards external forms, was a sort of disguise, which flattered his own taste for travesty. His Russians might be dressed like Frenchmen, but few of them had lost any of their native coarseness, and they had grown ridiculous into the bargain. In 1720, a French Capuchin monk, residing at Moscow, thus summed up his observations:—'We are beginning to have some understanding of the spirit of the Muscovite nation. His Majesty, the Tsar, is said to have worked a great change in the course of the last twenty years. The people are so subtle-minded, it is true, that they may yet be humanised, but their obstinacy is so extreme, that the greater number of them would rather remain brutes, than become men. Besides this, they are distrustful of all foreigners, rogues, and thievish, to the last degree. There have, it is true, been terrible executions, but even that has not sufficed to terrify them. They would kill a man for a few copper coins, and consequently it is not safe to be in the streets at all late at night.'[2]

The change was very superficial. Any sudden paroxysm, physical or mental, the excitement of wine, or the heat of anger, caused the mask to fall. On the day of Peter's triumphal entry into Moscow, after the Persian Campaign, in December 1722, Prince Gregory Dolgorouki, a senator and diplomat, and the *Prince Caesar*, Ivan Romodanovski, flew at each other, before numerous witnesses, and fought

[1] *Memoirs* of Weber (then representative of the Hanoverian Court in Russia), v. p. 148 (Paris).

[2] Letter from Father Romain de Pourrentray to the French Envoy in Poland (French Foreign Office).

with their fists for a good half hour, without any attempt being made to separate them. The foreigners about the Sovereign were surrounded, in his presence, with every respect and flattery. The moment his back was turned, the Russians would pull off their wigs. Even the Duke of Holstein had some difficulty in keeping his on his head.[1] Those ideas of honour, probity, and duty, of which,—and herein lies his greatest historical merit,—Peter was the constant and energetic propagator, failed to penetrate the national heart, and slid over its refractory soul like an ill-fitting garment. Tatishtchef himself, when he was recalled from the Ural, where his peculations had been denounced by Demidof, rested his defence on a conception of morality anything but European in its character. 'Why should a judge be reprehended, on principle, because he takes money for his services to his clients? The reward is honest, so long as he judges honestly!'[2] In 1750, an investigation was opened into a huge system of fraud and embezzlement in the system of army supply. The accused persons were Menshikof, Admiral Apraxin, Korssakof, Vice-Governor of St. Petersburg, Kikin, the head of the Admiralty, Sićniavin, the Chief Commissioner of the same department, Bruce, the Master of the Ordnance, and Volkonski and Lapouhin, senators!

Peter, busy toiler as he was, could not altogether overcome the inveterate idleness, and physical and moral inertia of his subjects. Thousands of able-bodied men begged in the streets, in preference to working with their hands: some put irons on their legs, and passed as prisoners, —sent out, according to the habit in the jails of that period, to beg their food from public charity. In all the country districts, reckless idleness went hand in hand with frightful poverty. 'Once the peasant is asleep,' writes Possoshkof, 'his house must be in flames before he will leave his bed, and he will never take the trouble to disturb himself, to put out his neighbour's fire.' Conflagrations which devoured whole villages frequently occurred, and the bands of robbers who carried off what the fire spared, had an easy task, for the inhabitants never dreamt of combining to repulse the (malefactors) These would make their way into a hut, force the

[1] Bergholz, *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. xx p. 589, vol. xxi. p. 231.
[2] Solovief, vol. xviii. p. 189.

Moujik and his wife to tell where their money was hidden, lay hands on the furniture, pile it on carts, and quietly depart. The neighbours looked on and never lifted a finger. Many young men went into monasteries, to escape military service, others obtained admission to the schools founded by Peter, and, once admitted, idled their time away.

But in spite of all that, a great moral revolution was accomplished. The seed Peter cast over his native soil, at random somewhat, irregularly, and sometimes capriciously, was to germinate and bear fruit. And, above all things, he set his people the example of a life in which the most deplorable vices,—arising from his original hereditary stain, —were mingled with the manliest and noblest virtues. History has proved to which side the balance inclined. A force, the elements of which are certainly not material, only, has been developed before the eyes of astonished and startled Europe, in a population of 100,000,000 souls. This force is rooted in the soul of the hero of modern Russia.

To him, too, his country owes her intellectual progress, although the scholastic establishments of the great reign are considered, and not unjustly, to have failed.

II

The Slavophile party has ideas, and somewhat presumptuous ones, of its own, as to Russian education, previous to the days of Peter the Great. According to these the great Reformer rather put his country back, by substituting for the system of *universal* education carried on, in a very satisfactory manner, in primary and secondary schools, and in the Slavo-Greco-Latin Academy at Moscow, that of education by professors, already discredited in Western Europe. Let us first consider the nature of these schools, and to what the universality of their teaching really amounted.

The only schools in existence were those attached to a few monasteries. The *universal* education consisted in the perusal of the Sacred Books, and some very bare and elementary notions of geography and history. After Peter was dead, Feofan Prokopovitch, who cannot be suspected of undue spite against the ecclesiastical system of education, called attention to the fact, that, when no other system

existed in the country, it would not have been easy to find such a thing as a *compass* within the borders of Russia. The elementary text-books of the period are drawn up in the form of conversations, which give curious proof of the intellectual level of the times. (Q.) What are the elevation of the sky, the extent of the earth, and the depth of the sea? (A.) The elevation of the sky is the Father, the extent of the earth is the Son, and the depth of the sea is the Holy Ghost. (Q.) To whom was Christ's first writing given? (A.) To the Apostle Caiaphas (*sic*)!

No real period of education existed in those days for Russian men. There was no clearly marked point of transition from childhood into adult years, and the Russian mind, even in maturity, kept something of the freshness, but at the same time some of the gullibility of childhood. It was filled with a sort of uncertain dawning light, peopled with dim shapes, and confused forms—a mixture of pagan superstition and oddly disfigured Christian legend. *Peroun*, the God of Thunder, was replaced by the Prophet Elijah, in his chariot, riding the clouds. Moral and physical phenomena were accepted as the result of terrible and mysterious forces, in the face of which man stood defenceless, and miserably impotent.[1]

This chimerical conception of the realities of life, so favourable to all cowardly instincts, Peter especially desired to overthrow, by means of education. His personal views on the subject were far-reaching; they even extended to the system of compulsory and gratuitous teaching advocated by Possoshkof. This principle was confirmed by a Ukase, dated 28th February 1714. But its application was confined to a single class of of pupils, the only one attainable,—the children of the *Diaks* (persons employed in the Administrative Offices) and of the popes. The Senate refused to go a step further, holding that commerce and industry must come to ruin, if the supply of apprentices was entirely cut off. The Reformer yielded, and applied his system, in its restricted form, with all his wonted vigour and severity. The son of a *Diak*, named Peter Ijorin, refused to study in a mathematical school at Olonets, and was sent back to St.

[1] Zabielin, *Russian Society before the Time of Peter the Great: Historical Essays* (Moscow, 1872), p. 90, etc.; Solovief, *History of Russia*, vol. xiii. p. 184, etc.

Petersburg with irons on his legs.[1] Schools there must be everywhere, and schools of every kind. This was Peter's watchword.

But what schools? It was long, unfortunately, before Peter came to any decision on this point. In the earlier days he seemed to lean towards that pseudo-universal type of literary tendency, which Polish and Little Russian influence had hitherto supported. Even on his return from his first foreign journey, his view was simply to extend the programme of the old Muscovite Academies, but his meeting with Glück inspired him with a different idea, though somewhat in the same direction. Catherine Troubatshof's former employer was suddenly nominated Director of an establishment, the curriculum of which was to include geography, ethics, politics, Latin rhetoric, Cartesian philosophy, the Greek, Hebrew, Syrian, Chaldean, French and English languages, riding and dancing![2] Glück soon lost the few wits he possessed;—and then, with his usual swiftness, the Reformer turned him about. He knew his mind at last. He would have schools for special professional instruction, like those he had seen in Germany, Holland, and England. But he did not give himself time to prepare a general plan, and to begin at the beginning,—by establishing primary and secondary schools. He passed at a bound, to the higher subjects: Engineering, Navigation, and High Mathematics. His principal idea was not so much to diffuse knowledge, as to prepare the officers necessary for his army and navy, and this utilitarian view long continued to sway all his efforts. A Naval Academy was established at St. Petersburg, while Moscow was given a School of Military Surgery, in which richly endowed Professorships were held by German and English teachers. Pupils were the only thing lacking. The sons of the *Diaks* and popes, the only learners at the Tsar's disposal, could not well attempt to study High Mathematics, until they knew how to read and write! Peter's hasty stride brought him to the top of the ladder, but he had never given a thought to the lower rungs. A Ukase was indeed published, in 1714, containing a plan for establishing Provincial Schools, both Primary and Secondary, in connection with the Bishoprics and Monasteries. But in 1719, the

[1] Popof, *Tatishtchef and his Times*, p. 38.
[2] Piekarski, *Literature and Science in Russia*, vol. i. p. 128.

Director of these establishments, Gregory Skorniakof-Pissaref, informed the Sovereign that it had only been found possible to open one school, containing six-and-twenty pupils, at Jaroslav. Forty-seven schoolmasters were sent from St. Petersburg and Moscow into the Provinces during the year 1723; eighteen found nothing to do, and returned to the two cities. During that same year the question of fusing these projected Provincial schools with the Church schools, which a recently published edict had called into being, was raised. The Synod informed the Tsar that only one such Church school, that of Novgorod, was in existence.[1] Up to 1713, there were only three-and-twenty pupils in the Engineering School. Peter, in that year, forcibly caused seventy-seven youths, taken from the families of the Palace servants, to enter it, and their learned teachers were driven to begin by teaching them their alphabet!

The Reformer was not unaware of the poor results obtained, and endeavoured to supply the want by sending a great many young men into educational establishments abroad. But here again difficulties arose. England protested against this foreign invasion. The necessary funds, too, were not forthcoming. Two young men sent to Paris in 1716 and 1717,—one of them the negro, Abraham,—complained that they were starved; they had not a crown a day between them. Idleness and misconduct, too, played their part. In 1717, Prince Repnin besought the Sovereign to allow his two sons to return from Germany, where, instead of learning to be good soldiers, they were doing nothing but running into debt. The authorities at Toulon were obliged, at the same period, to take strong measures with the young Russian gentlemen who had been allowed to enlist in the *Gardes Marine*. Zotof, the Tsar's Agent, reported that they quarrelled amongst themselves, swore at each other 'as no one here, even of the lowest condition, would do,' and even killed each other, 'otherwise than in open duel.' It was found necessary to deprive them of their swords.[2]

Russia, take it all in all, was still dependent on Europe for her military, scientific, artistic and industrial staff, and though, by some means or other, the barracks were filled, all other services betrayed a distressing void. Yet Peter did not lose courage. He pushed steadily forward. After his

[1] Piekarski, vol. i. p. 125. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 163.

stay in Paris, he was haunted by the desire of possessing an 'Académie des Sciences' at St. Petersburg.

He had endless plans drawn up; he collected information from every quarter; he superadded ideas of his own, and ended by attempting something at once ambitious and ill-defined. His hope had been to fill up, by this means, all the disappointing gaps of the scholastic organisation he had endeavoured to create, and of the intellectual life he had hoped to arouse. He was well aware, up to a certain point at least, of the inadequacy of the materials at his command, and therefore, contrary to his usual habit, he moved slowly, as though groping his way, until several years had gone by. It was not till 1724, just twelve months before his death, that he settled the question, in his characteristic fashion, with one stroke of his pen. Below Fick's report on the necessity of finding capable men for the various Russian staffs, he wrote the words, '*Sdiélat akadémiou*' (Found an academy).

In small provincial towns, and in some of the remoter quarters of Paris, general establishments are to be seen—half shops, half '*bureaux de tabac*'—where stamps, groceries, cigars, household utensils, newspapers, and even books, are retailed. They are the typical remnant of the ancient bazaars, a form to which the huge general emporiums of our period seem, by a process not unfrequent in the history of civilisation, to be returning. The difference between the two resides in the confusion apparent in the first, and the methodical arrangement so remarkable in the second. The Academy, as created by Peter the Great's ukase, was like a primitive bazaar. The three classical forms—the German Gymnasium, the Teutonic University, and the French Academy, were mingled and confounded in whimsical juxtaposition. It was to be a school, but, at the same time, it was to be a learned society, and an artistic côterie. This strange idea is easily explained. It corresponds with an inferior degree of specific development, just as in the case of those general shops, where packets of candles lie on the same counter with yellow-backed novels. The Moscow Academy, founded before the Reformer's accession, was half ecclesiastic and half secular.

This work has been severely and not unjustly criticised.[1]

[1] The unfavourable verdict of Pleyer and Vockerodt, contemporary diplomatists, as published by Herrmann, roused a somewhat lively discussion (in which the

As a teaching centre, it never accomplished anything serious, for it had no pupils capable of following the lectures of such men as Hermann, Delisle, and Bernoulli, on the highest problems of speculative science, abstruse mathematical questions, and Greek and Latin antiquities. But as a learned society, it certainly did good service, both to scientific interests in general, and to those of Russia in particular. There can be no doubt as to the practical value of Delisle's work in Russian cartography, nor as to Bayer's studies of Greek and Roman antiquities. It may be disputed whether the 24,912 roubles, assigned for the support of the institution, and charged on the revenues of Narva, Derpt, and Pernau, might not have been better employed, in a country where intellectual luxury may fairly have appeared ill-placed, and at a period when, before providing highly scientific books, it was not easy to find readers able to digest far more elementary works.

But the real teaching of the great reign, and the only one which did not fall short of the Tsar's hope and endeavour, is that which Peter himself bestowed for thirty years—the teaching of his great example, to which I have already referred: his universal curiosity, his feverish love of learning, contagious in their essence, and which, to a certain extent, he succeeded in communicating to his subjects. And apart from this, no one can reproach him with having neglected the elements and rudiments of that intellectual initiation which he so earnestly desired to bestow.

III

Peter did more, to begin with, than teach his subjects to read—he gave them a new language, which, like the rest, was almost wholly his creation. When he was at Amsterdam in 1700, he ordered a Dutchman, John Tessing, assisted by a Pole, named Kopiewski, or Kopiewicz,[1] to set up a

eminent French Slavist, M. Léger, shared), during 1874. Herr Brückner defended Peter and his Academicians in the *Journal du Ministère de l'Instruction Publique* (Jan. 1874), and in the *Revue Russe*. An article published by M. Léger in the *Revue critique* (1874, No. 14), attracted Herr Herrmann's attention to this argument, to which he replied in a very aggressive pamphlet (*F. G. Vockerodt und der Professor fur Russische Geschichte zu Dorpat*, A. Brückner, 1874), which elicited a somewhat sharp rejoinder in the *Revue Russe*, 1875, vol. vi. p. 113.

[1] He himself spelt his name in two different fashions.

Russian printing-press in that town. A batch of works on the most varied subjects, history, geography, languages, arithmetic, the art of war, and the art of navigation, was here published: most of these were translations, or adaptations, without any scientific value, but useful for popularising purposes. In 1707, this printing-hive sent off a swarm, and a compositor, a printer, and a typefounder arrived at Moscow, with a Russian alphabet of a novel kind,—the *grajdanski shrift*, or 'civil alphabet,' thus named to distinguish it from the ancient Slavo-Servian alphabet, to which the Church still adhered. This was at once adopted by Peter for two new publications; a Treaty on Geometry, and a Manual of Complimentary Phrases, translated from the German. These were followed by translations of military works, the proofs of which the Tsar himself corrected. But this new alphabet did not satisfy the eager creative spirit of the Reformer. The faithful subjects of Queen Victoria are fond of calling their language 'the Queen's English'; 'the Tsar's Russian,' is, historically speaking, a far more veracious phrase. In 1721, Peter desired the Holy Synod, then recently called into existence, to undertake the translation of part of Puffendorf's works. A contention arose amongst the members of the Assembly. Should the contemplated work appear in the ancient Slavonic language of the Church, or in the current form, which, in course of time, had undergone great alteration? The Sovereign settled the question in most unexpected fashion, decreeing the employment of a special language, which, up to this moment, had only been used in the Tsar's Diplomatic Chancery, and which clearly betrayed its cosmopolitan origin, crammed as it was with foreign words, or existing ones used in a novel sense,—a lisping of barbarians striving to spell out European civilisation. This was, in future, to be the official tongue. At the present moment, it is written and spoken by one hundred millions of men.

The very idea of having Puffendorf translated by a body of ecclesiastics, seems droll enough, but Peter, as we know, was apt to use any means he found to his hand. He wanted books, and after having desired the manager of his printing press, Polycarpof, to supply him with a history of Russia, and found his work far from satisfactory, he confided the duty to the officials in his Diplomatic Chancery, the lan-

guage of which he had lately adopted. When he wanted a Museum, he appealed to the zeal of all his subjects, and accepted, without inquiry, any curiosities they offered him,—even two-headed calves and deformed children,—endeavouring, all the while, to convince the givers that these 'monsters' did not come from the Devil, as they were inclined to think. There is something touching after all, in his perpetual struggle, ill-calculated often, clumsy, missing its object, but ceaseless and unwearying, always straining towards that point, bathed in the light of progress, on which his eyes were fixed. And in the end he generally won. Two officers of his fleet, Ivan Iévreinof and Féodor Loujin started, in 1719, on an exploring voyage to the coast of Kamschatka, with orders to seek for the solution of a problem suggested by Leibnitz,—Were Asia and America united on that side, or did the sea lie between them? The only result of this first expedition was a map of the Kurile Islands, but Peter returned to the charge, and in 1725, the Straits which still bear the name of the bold explorer, were discovered by Behring.

In the Records of the Paris Academy, we find mention made, by the elder Delisle, of a map of the Caspian Sea, and the surrounding Provinces, which Peter had shown him in 1717, and which, though not absolutely correct, did much to rectify the contemporary Western idea of those countries. In 1721, thirty cartographers were already working independently in different Provinces in Russia. The instructions given them by Peter were characteristically scanty. 'The latitude of each town will be taken by the sun-dial, and you will then work in a straight line to every point of the compass, up to the frontier of each district.' Yet some work was done. Special explorers were also sent out, Lieutenant Gerber, to the Northern Caspian, Dr. Messerschmidt, and Tabbert, a Swedish prisoner, better known under the name of Strahlenberg, to Siberia. Florio Beneveni, an Italian, travelled into Persia and Bokhara, and to Khiva, while Lieutenant Buchholz and Major Liharef followed the course of the Irtich. The Secretary of the Senate, Ivan Kirillof, was ordered to use the information thus collected, for the compilation of a general Atlas, on which he laboured till 1734, and which is a work of considerable value.[1]

[1] Struwe, *Russische Revue*, vol. viii., 1876.

In 1720, the innumerable monasteries in the Empire were commanded to give up their stores of ancient charters, manuscripts, and books.[1] This was the beginning of the Russian Archives. The foundations of a Library, the direct result of Peter's Conquest, were laid with books, carried off from Mittau, in the course of the Northern War, and stored, in the first instance, in the Summer Palace at St. Petersburg. But a Museum of Art was still lacking, and Peter gave commissions, in 1717, to several Florentine artists, amongst others to Bonacci, from whom he ordered two statues, representing Adam and Eve. In 1713, he began to make purchases at Rome, and his Agent, Kologrivof, wrote him that he had acquired a Venus 'more beautiful than that at Florence, and in better preservation.' For this he paid only 196 ducats. A School of Fine Arts was added to the Museum, and attached, oddly enough, to the offices of the Arsenal. The entrance to all Museums was free. In vain did Peter's counsellors open a question which frequently attracts attention in the present day, and endeavour to enrich the National collections by means of a moderate entrance fee. He took a step in the opposite direction, and gave orders for the gratuitous distribution of refreshments to the visitors. This habit was continued till the reign of Anna Ivanovna, and cost about 400 roubles a year.[2] Sixty groups of figures, which adorned the fountains in the gardens of the Summer Palace, taught the St. Petersburg public the story of Æsop's Fables. The text of each fable was affixed to the group representing it. These gilded leaden figures possessed no beauty, but the intention with which they were placed in the gardens was excellent.

Peter did not overlook the value of the Theatre, as a means of intellectual instruction. Very little is known of theatrical history in Russia before the great reign. Periodical representations, on the model of those given in the Jesuit Educational Establishments, did certainly take place in the Monasteries at Kief and Moscow, and at the Hospital in the ancient Capital. The subjects of these plays were always religious, and the actors were seminarists and students. The scenery was of the roughest, and the general style extremely coarse. Jokes upon the subject were current in the German quarter. There was a story, that, in a piece

[1] *Collected Laws*, 3693. [2] Golikof, vol. x. p. 42.

representing the Annunciation, the Blessed Virgin answered the Angel, 'Dost thou take me for a . . .?'[1] In 1672, the year of Peter's birth, actors first appeared at Court. Alexis' first wife, the Miloslavska, ruled by Byzantine asceticism and the laws of the Domostroï, had opposed all such representations, but his second consort, who was cheerful in temperament, and altogether more open-minded, welcomed them to the Kreml. The company was a German one, but it was expected to make Russian actors out of the pupils belonging to the State offices (*poddiatchyié*) who were confided to it as apprentices. These actors performed, before Racine's time, a version of the story of Esther and Ahasuerus, which was considered to recall that of Nathalia and Alexis. The Tsar's death, and the troubled years that ensued, put a stop to these entertainments. There is, indeed, a story that Sophia caused plays of her own, amongst others a translation of Molière's '*Médecin malgré lui*,' to be performed within the *terem* about 1680. She is even said to have taken a part herself. But the Regent's well-known character, and the disturbed history of her Regency, render this a very unlikely supposition. She may have been confused with Peter's elder sister, the Tsarevna Nathalia, then about seventeen years of age, who was later to give proof of real theatrical talent.

All these performances were private in their character, and this quality Peter caused to disappear. He installed the theatre on the Red Square, and summoned the general public to the performances. He set his heart on having a Russian company, playing Russian pieces, and his desire was accomplished. In 1714, the Tsarevna Nathalia lodged a company of native actors, who played both tragedy and comedy, in a huge house at St. Petersburg, which had been lately built, and hastily abandoned. She herself superintended the staging and machinery, sketched scenery, and wrote plays full of political allusions, of a moral tendency. The orchestra was composed of Russian musicians;—the conductor's baton, so Weber tells us, was not unfrequently replaced by a cudgel. Peter was a great lover of music, especially of religious music; he had a fair choir of church choristers, in whose performances he was fond of joining, and he also had horn

[1] Haigold, *Beilagen zum neuveränderten Russland* (Leipzig, 1770), vol. i. p. 399.

players, and performers on the Polish bag-pipes. After the year 1720, the Duke of Holstein's orchestra frequently played at the Russian Court, and there introduced the sonatas, solos, trios and concertos of such famous German and Italian masters as Telemann, Kayser, Haynischen, Schultz, Fuchs, Corelli, Tartini, and Porpora.

Finally, the usefulness and the power of the periodical press did not escape the great man's watchful eye. In the year 1702, Baron von Huissen was charged with the duty of keeping up good relations between the Tsar and European opinion, and was granted financial means for the purpose. He translated, published and disseminated the Sovereign's decisions as to the military organisation of his Empire; he encouraged learned men, in every country, to dedicate their works to the Tsar, and even to write books in his honour; he inundated Holland and Germany with pamphlets, according to which Charles XII. had been beaten, and altogether worsted, long before the Battle of Poltava. A Leipsic newspaper, '*Europæische Fama*,' was in his pay, and conscientiously flattered and toadied the Tsar, in return for his money. In 1703, the first Russian Gazette appeared at Moscow—yet another 'window' opened to admit Western air and light. Until that time, the Tsar had been the only, or almost the only, person in Russia who knew what was happening abroad. The extracts from the foreign Gazettes (*Kouranty*), made in the Office of Foreign Affairs, were only intended for the Sovereign and his immediate circle. All the domestic news of the country was transmitted from mouth to mouth, and so disfigured in the process, that error sprang up, in every direction, amongst the simple-minded populace. This first number of the new Gazette gives information as to the number of cannon recently cast at Moscow, and the number of pupils in the newly-founded schools.

Even in the present day, the Russian press is very far from having reached the level of its Western forerunners, and if, generally speaking, Peter's work in this matter were to be judged by its apparent and immediate results, the benefit would appear but small. The only literary efforts we can find are a few very faulty translations; a memorandum by Shafirof, the Secretary of State, on the

motives of the Tsar's war against Sweden, written in Russian, but full of French words; an historical compilation by Peter Krekshin; another by Prince Hilkof, as badly expressed as Shafirof's production; and one more, far the best, by Basil Tatishtchef. The only poet of the period is Prince Antiochus Kantémir, the son of that Hospodar of Moldavia whose friendship so nearly proved fatal to Peter; but his eight satires, in syllabic verse, did not appear till after the great Tsar's death. As far as science is concerned, we have a second-rate arithmetical treatise and a few maps; in art, some statues brought from Italy, and three painters who studied there, Nikitin, Merkoulief, and Matviéief. The portrait of Peter by the last-mentioned artist is not a masterpiece.

But this is not the manner in which to assess the distance covered by the great leader, and by the subjects who followed him. These dimensions must be sought in the general change of mind and feeling brought about by the reforms, and the consequent modification of the national thought and sentiment. I will refer, if written evidence is absolutely required, to two documents, set, like frontier posts, at the beginning and end of the reign. Possoshkof's will, at its commencement, and Tatishtchef's, at its close, are both of them addressed, not so much to the writers' direct heirs, as to their intellectual posterity. Possoshkof was an enthusiastic admirer of the Reformer and of his work; he followed him faithfully, so far as his ideas and principles of order and administrative government were concerned, but, in the matter of scientific beliefs, he was bound by the monastic spirit of the fifteenth century. When Tatishtchef appeared, those bonds were broken. He was the embodiment of Modern Russia, hearkening readily to the wind that blew from afar; the open current had no terror for him; he was over eager, rather, to cast himself into it. All progress charmed him; no step was too bold for him; there is something almost American in his inclination to eccentric methods. All this was Peter's doing.

It was no light undertaking to turn the national mind from purely religious subjects, and interest it in profane and human things. It is a curious fact, though easily explained by the circumstances, that the man who did most to help Peter in this matter, Féofan Prokopovitch, was himself a

priest. He never spoke, save within churches—he never wrote, but on matters of theology or ecclesiastical discipline; but his sermons were political pamphlets, and his religious rules were satires. Peter laicised even the priesthood—for the movement he created was driven, in its search for men worthy to take part in it, to take hold of this priest within the walls of his sacristy, and sweep him into the outer world. Out of this sudden whirlwind of new sensations and ideas, which snatched men from their habits and their prejudices, from the sanctuaries in which they had spent centuries of idleness, and threw them headlong into the budding tumult of an intellectual and moral world just breaking into life, Modern Russia has arisen. This too, and above all other things, was Peter's work.

CHAPTER III

THE ECCLESIASTICAL REFORMS AND THE SUPPRESSION OF THE PATRIARCHATE

I. *The Church*—Feofan Prokopovitch—Intellectual Propaganda and Ecclesiastical Reform—Precarious condition of the ancient Muscovite Church—Material prosperity, moral degradation—The *Raskol*—The Reform forced on the Reformer—The death of the Patriarch Adrian opens the way.

II. *The Patriarchate*—A temporary guardian of the Patriarchal throne—Stephen Iavorski—Peter first attacks the Monasteries—The Black Clergy submit—The revolt of the *Raskolniks*—The struggle—It carries Peter away—Stephen Iavorski betrays his mission and cheats the Government—The conflict—Gradual destruction of the Patriarchal authority—An open void—A more radical reform necessary.

III. *The Holy Synod*—Ecclesiastical regulations—Programme and pamphlet—Universal discontent—It does not check the Reformer—Suppression of the Patriarchate—Establishment of the Holy Synod—The spirit of the Reform—Results.

I

FÉOFAN PROKOPOVITCH came into the world at Kief in 1681. By his origin, he belonged to the sphere of Polish influence, and, by his education, to the Catholic Church. He first studied in a Uniate School, and then was sent to Rome. Thence he brought back a hatred for Catholicism, a mind open to all the ideas and thoughts of the century, to philosophy, science, and politics, and even certain Lutheran tendencies. Long before his acquaintance with Peter, while still nothing but an ordinary teacher of theology, he became known as a restless spirit, an innovator, a partisan of all bold action.[1] He belonged to the movement of which Peter himself was the outcome, and which had already reached the foot of the altar. The moral features of this priest were, in themselves, a novelty in Russia. He was the type, unknown in those days, and almost extinct in these, of

[1] Pickarski, vol. i. p. 481.

the great Western Prelate. Nothing was lacking. He had the varied knowledge, the literary and artistic taste, the ambition, the spirit of intrigue, the touch of scepticism, and the sybaritic instincts. Propokovitch had a library of 30,000 volumes, he kept open house, he never ate meat from one year's end to the other, but every year 1500 salmon, 21,000 fresh-water herrings, 11 poods of caviare, and as many barrels of smoked fish of various kinds, were consumed at his table. He lived freely, and gave alms equally freely. In 1701, he established a school, the best of that period, in one of his houses in St. Petersburg. The instructions drawn up for its guidance might have been compiled by a full-fledged Jesuit, and the teachers, in several cases, were foreigners and Lutherans. He wrote verses and plays, which he caused the pupils in his school to perform. He was heard to say, when he was lying on his deathbed, in 1736, 'Oh! head, head, thou hast been drunk with knowledge; where wilt thou rest now?'[1]

The movement which bore him along originated largely, as I have already pointed out, in a Polish and Little Russian circle, which gave birth to a whole generation of open-minded and cultivated men. It supplied Peter with his principal resources and chief helpers, both in his educational undertakings, and his ecclesiastical reforms. Before Prokopovitch's time, another Little Russsian priest, Dimitri, Bishop of Rostov, served the Reformer with tongue and pen. 'Is it better to cut our beards or to have our heads cut off?' he was asked, and he replied, 'Will your head grow again, after it has been cut off?'[2] Féofan, more intelligent and energetic, was to do a different work. He was to be Peter's battering ram, to break down the defences of the old Muscovite Church.

This was a fortress which the great reform could not leave unbreached; and indeed, apart from any external interference, it was tottering to its fall. Priests and monks, white clergy and black, formed a world apart; they were numerous, powerful, rich, and utterly degraded. The Church property was enormous, the monasteries owned more than 900,000 serfs,—one alone, that of St. Sergius, near Moscow, possessed 92,000 serfs, besides fisheries, mills, fields and

[1] Tshistovitch, *Biography of Féofan Prokopovitch* (St. Petersburg, 1868).
[2] Solovief, vol. xv. pp. 125, 126.

forests without number. The Archimandrites who ruled these convents, wore diamond buckles on their shoes; all the clergy lived freely, many in scandalous luxury. The most characteristic trait of the Russian family life of that period, was its isolation. Each household lived apart, and every householder desired to have a church and priest of his own. In default of this, a family would deposit a sacred picture within the parish church, and never pray before any other. When means were not sufficient to hire a priest by the year, one or several were engaged by the hour, for special ceremonies. Priests stood in the public squares, and waited to be hired.

The power of the clergy in the State was enormous. Peter's ancestor, the Patriarch Philaretus, ruled the country, from 1619 to 1633, in the name of his brother Michael, the first of the Romanofs. The Patriarch Nicone held out against the Tsar Alexis, who, in order to overcome his resistance, was forced to appeal to the rival Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch. Catholic influences, and the weakness of the civil power, had imparted a Papal air to the Ecclesiastical Government, but, as I have already pointed out, this tremendous position was not counterbalanced by any virtue, or moral strength. The priests, sought after as they were, knew the routine of their ritual, but they had forgotten how to treat men's souls. They were far too prosperous, besides being too ignorant. In the year 1700, there were only 150 pupils in the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy, and these lived a life of idleness, within a building which was rapidly falling into decay. Godunof rendered a doubtful service to his Church, in 1589, when he ensured its independence by the final rupture of the bond that connected it with the Œcumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. The Russian Church had, indeed, a separate head after that period, but, in another sense, that head had been cut off. The Moscow Patriarch's authority was purely administrative; spiritual power, properly so called, slipped from his grasp. He could not even interpret questions of faith and dogma; all these matters were in the hands of the Œcumenical Council, and no meeting of that Council was probable or even possible. When the Church lost the power of touching these problems, she lost the principle of life and motion. She was doomed to inertia. When she tried

to bestir herself, the *Raskol* straightway rose in her path. A mere attempt at innovation, in the very limited field of the external formula of devotion, raised a shriek of rebellion from one end of the country to the other. The Patriarchate, as an organ of administration, was already discredited and broken-down.

This reform, then, like others, was forced on the Reformer. He was not sorry, we may be sure, to seize the opportunity; the legacy of Philaretus and Nicone would have been a most inconvenient element in the State he wished to bring into existence. The young Sovereign's intimacies in the German quarter, and his visits to Holland and to England, had not prepared his mind to accept any idea of divided power, nor even the scholastic principle of the two planets, which shed an independent light on the peoples of the earth. When the Patriarch Adrian ventured to find fault with the Tsar's English tobacco treaty, he received a cutting reply: 'Is the Patriarch the director of my customs?' inquired Peter. Yet, in this new matter, he went carefully. Indifferent as he was to the wills of other men, he seems to have shrunk from offending their consciences. He left the Pontiff on his throne, and when, during his absence, and even sometimes in his presence, the spiritual ruler took on the air of presiding over the secular Government of Moscow, he patiently endured it. But the news of the Patriarch's death, in October 1700, came as a sound of victory to the monarch.

II

Kourbatof is believed to have advised the Tsar to put off appointing a successor to the office. Had the idea of the suppression of the Patriarchate already occurred to him? I hardly think so. His plan at that moment would rather appear to have been to deprive the vacant office of part of its prerogatives, and to confer it, at a later date, on some more submissive holder. Advantage was to be taken of the temporary absence of the master to sweep out his house and make the necessary repairs. A ukase, dated 16th December 1700, provided for the provisional administration of ecclesiastical affairs, by a body appointed for the purpose; the different branches of the business were confided to

various departments, and the most important matters were nominally confided to a 'temporary guardian of the Pontifical throne.'

This post was conferred upon a Little-Russian. Stephen Iavorski, Bishop of Riazan and Moscow, was born at Kief, and educated in foreign schools. Peter deliberately deprived him of the management of the monasteries, which he placed in the hands of a department, presided over by a layman, Moussin-Poushkin. In this quarter the first clearance was to be made. The convents contained an enormous floating population of men and women, most of whom had never dreamt of taking vows. These mock monks and nuns, who had assumed the conventual habit to escape from the results of some intrigue, to avoid performing some unpleasant duty, or simply to enjoy the sweets of well-fed idleness, travelled from one monastery to another, scouring the country and the towns, and living a life of scandalous profligacy. Two radical measures were at once adopted. A general census was taken of all monks and nuns, whose comings and goings were in future to be regulated by the Sovereign. The conventual garb was henceforth not to be considered to constitute the conventual condition. Further, the convent revenues were, after a fashion, confiscated; all income was to be paid to the department directed by Moussin-Poushkin; the monasteries were to receive an amount sufficient for their actual needs, and the surplus was to be spent in supporting charitable institutions.

This reform had a result which Peter had not foreseen. Left to themselves, the clergy would have submitted tamely. The Tsar's absolute power in temporal matters was a tradition of the Church itself. When the priests refused to contribute to the expenses of his war with the Tartars, Ivan Vassilévitch forced twenty of them to fight with as many bears in a sort of circus.[1] Peter was not driven to such lengths as these, but Prokopovitch, acting as his mouthpiece, openly declared that any pretension, by priest or monk, to independence of the Tsar's will, was a Popish delusion.[2] The call to resistance came from without. The monks' cause, which they themselves had almost utterly abandoned, was taken up by other malcontents, who carried it out of its proper limits,

[1] Galitzin's *Memoirs* (Paris, 1867), p. 410.
[2] Tshistovitch, *Life of Prokopovitch*, p. 29.

and invested it with a purely religious character. The standard of insurrection was raised by the *Raskolniks*. Peter was astounded, and no wonder. He had never had anything to do with the *Raskol*. The movement had been aroused by Nicone's action, before his birth, somewhere about 1666, and he had never taken any interest in those ritualistic questions which were at the bottom of the great discussion. There is a sort of mingled pity and scorn in his language about the unfortunate sectarians, whom the official Church desired to persecute: 'Why make martyrs of them, they are too foolish for that?'[1] And why not, he further asked, live at peace with them? A certain number, residing in the neighbourhood of Olonets, on the banks of the Wyga, near a recently established factory, were accused, in the course of the year 1700, of desiring to form a settlement, and a regular religious community. The Tsar wrote, 'Disagreeable neighbours, you think? A piece of good luck! Let them come and work at the forges. If they will do that, they shall pray after their own fashion.'[2]

But the *Raskolniks* themselves, unfortunately, were much less peaceably inclined. A ruler who was friendly to Lefort and Gordon,—the one a Calvinist, and the other a Catholic,—was an object of suspicion in the eyes of such austere believers. He must be the accomplice, even if he were not the author, of the impious innovations which revolted the consciences of the Faithful. He might even be Antichrist. Besides all this, the defence of religion was an attractive phrase, and these defenders were most valuable allies. Like most persecuted classes, they were brave, and ended by becoming important. Hard-working, temperate and economical, relatively well taught,—having, at all events, learnt to read for the sake of understanding the subjects of their eager discussions,—they soon rose to wealth, influence, and consideration. They bribed officials, were protected in high quarters, took advantage of the ignorance of the official clergy, and soon grew powerful. They were sought for, their support was solicited, and their protests against the reform of the national ritual was gradually united with, and fused into, the universal opposition to Peter's reforms in

[1] Solovief, vol. xvi. p. 295.

[2] *Ibid.* See also *The Raskol and the Russian Church in the Days of Peter the Great* (St. Petersburg, 1895), p. xiii., etc., p. 327, etc.

general. An eloquent proof of this fact is found in the legend which describes Peter as Nicone's illegitimate son. The monks' cause was certainly strengthened by this story.

The Reformer, then, was forced to wrestle with the *Raskolniks*. But how was this to be done, unless he first made common cause with that official Church whose privileges he attempted to break down, whenever they came into collision with his own? He was driven into this course, unwillingly enough. At first he endeavoured to avoid it.

As in the case of the monks, he ordered a Census and a Fiscal measure:—the *Raskolniks*, rich as they were, refused to share the common expenses; nothing could force them either into the Army, or into the Administration; the Tsar was determined they should pay for their privileges, and doubled their taxes.[1] Naturally they refused to pay, and the struggle began. It soon raged round Peter. In September 1718, George Rjevski went with the monk Pitirim, a converted *Raskolnik*, to Nijni-Novgorod, one of the principal centres of the *Raskol*, where he laboured, knout in hand, to re-establish order. Meanwhile Stephen Iavorski used the same arms to repress the Calvinist and Lutheran heresies. In 1717, the wife of an inferior employé, in the Department of Provincial Affairs, named Nathalia Zima, who was accused of Protestant leanings, was knouted three times, receiving eighty-five blows in all, and only saved her life by abjuring her errors. Other, and less docile heretics, were executed, Peter himself signing the sentences.[2]

This was in utter contradiction to the ideas, principles, and tendencies, the Reformer had intended to put forward with the assistance of that very man, Iavorski. But, since his elevation, the 'temporary guardian of the Pontifical throne' had changed his skin. Whether out of care for his budding popularity, or from a sense of his recently assumed responsibilities, he yearly inclined, more and more, not to Orthodoxy only in all its ancient fanaticism, narrow and uncompromising, but to the old Muscovite instinct of rebellion against any idea of progress. In 1712, he actually ventured to find fault with the Administrative Reforms of the new *régime*, and thundered, from the pulpit, against the unpopular fiscal regulations!

[1] *Collected Laws*, pp. 2991, 2996.
[2] Solovief, vol. xvi. pp. 302, 315.

With such a companion, Peter could scarcely fail to go astray. The acknowledgment of his error, which, in characteristic fashion, he did not hesitate to make, was to open out new destinies before the official church and its leader.

Before the final experience of their common campaign against the *Raskol*, and his own consequent disgust, the Reformer felt the necessity of protecting himself and his work against this hostile leader, by gradually reducing the already diminished power and privileges allotted to him. Iavorski's authority, even on those questions which had been left in his hands, was soon further limited;—first, by an Episcopal Council, which met periodically at Moscow, and then by increasing interference on the part of Moussin-Poushkin. His last shadow of independence disappeared, when the Senate was created in 1711. Church affairs were, in future, to be submitted, like all others, to the supreme jurisdiction of this newly-constituted body. The Patriarch's representative could not even appoint an *Arhireï* in an Eparchy, without the approval of the Senate. When he tried to intervene in the discussions, which arbitrarily disposed of the interests committed to his care, and to claim his own rights, he was brutally treated, and quitted the Assembly in tears.[1] In 1718, Peter, suspecting his former favourite of connivance with Alexis, removed him from Moscow, kept him at St. Petersburg under his own eye and hand, and gave him a rival in the person of Prokopovitch, whom he created Bishop of Pskof, and whose influence steadily increased.

By the year 1720, scarcely a trace of the ancient power and prestige of the Patriarchs remained. Everything had passed out of Iavorski's hands. But Peter soon perceived the abnormality of a state of things, whereby the spiritual authority was subordinated, not to that of the Sovereign only,—Byzantine tradition was not opposed to that—but to a mere department of his Government. The clergy had grown tame enough, but was it still worthy of its name? It was more like a regiment, kept under military discipline, but bereft of the honour of the flag. The Abbot flogged his monks, the Bishop flogged his Abbots, the Government knouted the Bishop, and then degraded him and sent him

[1] Olchevski, *The Holy Synod under Peter the Great* (Kief, 1894), p. 9.

into exile. All classes, high and low, from the top of the ladder to the bottom, were falling into the same state of degradation, into idleness, ignorance, drunkenness, and the worst vice. Such a condition of things could not continue. Some change was indispensable. That presbyterian institution, known as the Holy Synod, dictated by imperious necessity, and inspired by the friends of Prokopovitch, who owed the greater part of his knowledge to such Protestant theologians as Quensted and Gerhard, was summoned, in 1721, to draw Russia out of the abyss, which threatened to engulf her religious and moral future.

III

The idea of the Holy Synod was occupying Peter's attention in 1718, and some people have thought the complicity of the clergy in the rebellion of the Tsarevitch had something to do with his resolution.[1] But I am inclined to believe he took a broader view. In the following year, he drew up, with Prokopovitch's assistance, a Code of regulations, intended to justify the new Reform, and explain its basis. The document is a curious one;—a striking picture of the ecclesiastical customs of the time, in which the Bishop's satirical turn finds free play, and a strange mixture of ideas and doctrines, drawn from the most distant corners of the Western world of religion, philosophy, and politics. The advantages of a collective authority are forcibly maintained, with a strange indifference to the arguments thus supplied against the Sovereign's own personal and individual power. No other proof could be needed of Peter's incapacity for abstract conceptions.

These Regulations, which were read before a special meeting of the Senate and the Episcopal Council, and sent into every Eparchy, to be signed by the Bishops and the principal Archimandrites, raised a perfect tempest of fury. They were at once recognised for what they were — a pamphlet, whose authors put themselves forward as the physicians of men's souls, and, before citing their chosen remedies, described the disease with terrible exactness. They desired to remove out of the priesthood all that numerous body who had entered it as a matter of

[1] Pierling's *Russia and the Sorbonne*, p. 47.

calculation, and without any real vocation. The Episcopal Schools, through which future candidates would have to pass, and the strict examinations to be conducted by competent authorities, until these schools could be established, were to ensure this fact. These examinations were not only to deal with the knowledge, but with the moral worth, of the future Popes. No priest, according to Peter and Prokopovitch, must be either a mystic or a fanatic; the examiners were to make sure he saw no visions, and had no disturbing dreams. Domestic chaplains, — the usual instruments, according to this Regulation, of hidden intrigues, and the prime movers in irregular marriages,—were to be questioned and tested, with special severity. As for the priests who served chapels *kept up by widows*, they were to be completely suppressed. All miraculous places not recognised by the Holy Synod were also to be done away with. Fees were to be replaced by free-will offerings, and the 'death-tax,' as the document describes the price claimed for prayers for the dead, which, according to custom, were offered for forty days, was utterly forbidden. The expenses of this part of the ritual were to be paid by means of a fixed tax on all parishioners.

But the Black Clergy were more especially attacked. No man was to enter a monastery before he was thirty, all monks were to confess and communicate at least four times a year. Work was to be compulsory in every monastery, no monks were to visit nunneries or private houses; no nun was to take final vows before she was fifty, and until the final vows were taken any female novice might marry.[1]

Discontent, this time, was universal, but Peter held on his way. The regulation was published on the 25th of January 1721, and on the 11th of the following February, the Ecclesiastical College,—later, out of some tardy deference to the Byzantine tradition, entitled the Holy Synod,—held its first meeting. The Patriarchate was suppressed. The civil and religious interests of the Church, with all the necessary powers, legislative, judicial, and administrative—these last under the management of a duly appointed

[1] This regulation was published in Russian, in the Collected Laws, No. 3718, and frequently in German translations. See *Catalogue des Russica*, 265-268. I have seen a copy, printed at St. Petersburg during the reign of Catherine II.; in this the paragraph as to 'widows' chaplains' was suppressed, but, through some carelessness, it had remained in the Index.

Government official—were made over to a permanent Assembly, in which an ordinary priest might sit, in the company of Bishops. This body held equal rank with the Senate, and took precedence of all other Administrative bodies.

It should be remembered that, at this period, the substitution of administrative bodies, for individual administrative chiefs, was much in fashion in all Western countries. Peter had just returned from Paris, where Louis XIV.'s ministers had given place to the Councils of the Regency. And again, this revolution of the Tsar's may be looked on as the consequence of a progressive evolution, two centuries old already, which had modified the constitution of the Eastern Churches. The Holy Synod was to replace, to a certain extent, the Patriarch, who had been suppressed, and the Council, which had disappeared. And the six Oriental Churches, one after the other, organised themselves on this same pattern. Finally, the reaction against the Papacy, so strong in the old Patriarchate, was evidenced in the Democratic and Presbyterian nature of the institution which took its place.

This, the most sharply contested, perhaps, of all Peter's reforms, has, since his time, received the double sanction of internal duration, and external expansion. I will not take upon myself to discuss the value of the work. But it has been a lasting one. The Holy Synod still sits at St. Petersburg. Has it fulfilled its Founder's expectations? Has it given, or brought back, to the Russian Church, together with her dignity, independence, and power, her old authority over human souls, and the virtue necessary to the wielding of it? These are matters which I cannot broach, without venturing into burning questions, which I have determined to avoid. The Reformer's chief desire was to take measures to prevent the Church from being a present or future difficulty, in the new State he had called into existence; and no one can deny that his success, in this respect, was admirable and complete.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL REFORM—THE TABLE OF RANKS

I. *The Nobility*—Was Peter a social reformer?—Social classes in ancient Muscovy—Ivan III.'s *Sloujilyié Lioudi*—Their triple part: military, administrative, and economic—Peter turns them into a Nobility—New distribution of offices and privileges—Universal enrolment—A table of ranks—Collectivism.

II. *The Peasants*—The rural population—Two classes of peasants—How their condition was influenced by Peter's policy and laws—General servitude—State reasons—The greatness of Russia and its price—Paid by the peasant.

III. *The Middle Class*—Peter's attempt to found one—Failures and inconsistencies—Municipal autonomy and bureaucracy—Nobles and Commons—A far-reaching work—The socialisation of the Church.

I

WAS Peter a social reformer? The title has been denied him. It has been argued that the changes, important as they were, in the condition of the various social classes during his reign, were only the indirect consequences, and, occasionally, those he had at least foreseen and desired, of his legislative work. This argument does not affect me. Observation, indeed, has taught me, that most contemporary reforms of that period had something of this accidental quality. Peter made no alteration, either in the constitution of the various classes, or in the nature of their respective rights and duties. All he did was to modify their distribution. But, if he did not actually introduce a far-reaching political and social principle into this reorganisation, he certainly affirmed its existence in the clearest and most energetic manner. Let us now, without further discussion as to names, come to facts.

Even before the Mongol invasion, Ancient Russia possessed three social classes, vaguely corresponding to those of the Carlovingian and Merovingian periods in the West. The *Mouji* or *Notables* bore some resemblance to the *Rachim-*

bourgs and *Bonshommes* of those days. They have all the mixed and confused character of the Gallo-Frankish aristocracy. Next in order, the *Lioudi*, like the *Homines* in the West, formed a compact body, comprising all the free men of the country. Last of all, came the serf population. This family resemblance may be explained by the Norman origin of the Russian State. This was almost entirely wiped out, under the Mongol yoke, by the levelling hand of a common servitude It was not till the second half of the fifteenth century, that a commencement of organic life began slowly to rise out of the barren ground. Ivan III., in his merciless endeavour to unify the country, gathered a new group about him, a class of 'men who gave service,' *sloujilyié lioudi*, who were, at the same time, the only landed proprietors in existence—for the Sovereign, in return for compulsory service, both in time of peace and in time of war, gave them hereditary or life interest in certain lands. From the military, from the administrative, and from the economic point of view, this body played an important part, both in the State and in society. These men made war, helped the Sovereign to govern, and owned the whole, or almost the whole, of the social capital of the country. Yet, before Peter's accession, this class had no regularly constituted form. It was not a caste, nor an aristocracy. Peter was the first to give it this character, and to bestow on it a generic title borrowed from Polish phraseology, *shlahetstvo*, or nobility. Until that period, the body had remained somewhat undefined and unsettled in character, and even the title conferred by the Tsar did not entirely remove this embryonic quality. The condition of these *sloujilyié lioudi*, or *dvorianié*, was the first to be affected by Peter's reorganisation of the military and civil services. Military service in the provincial armed bands, called out in case of war, was exchanged for permanent service in standing regiments. Thus the budding aristocracy was removed out of its natural surroundings. The corporate instinct, which had begun to develop in the provincial centres, was broken up, and removed into regiments and *corps d'armée*, which gave it a special character. At the same time, the civil was separated from the military service. The *dvorianié* had formerly performed a double office. They had been soldiers and magistrates in one, wielding both sword and

pen. Now, each service was to do its separate duty—but that duty grew all the heavier. The official, whether civil or military, was laid hands on when he was fifteen, and worked till death set him free. And this was not all. Until the age of fifteen, he was expected to prepare himself to do his duty. He was to study, and his progress was to be strictly examined. Peter expected his nobility to be a nursery of officers and officials. The gaps in his army, civil and military, were to be filled up with men of lower condition, amongst whom the *dvorianié* were to act the part of leaders. But this was the Reformer's only concession to the principle of a social hierarchy. Faithful to the tendency evident in those reforms which preceded his own accession, he determined that in his apportionment of the various ranks, the claims of aristocratic origin should be balanced by the democratic claim of merit. A peasant might rise to official rank, and, by the fact of his becoming an officer, he became *dvorianin* (noble). There was something fine about this, but it certainly sounded the knell of any autonomous distribution of social elements. Nothing was left but a universal enrolment of the units at disposal, in the ranks of an official hierarchy. The famous 'Table of Ranks,' published in 1721, is the official expression and sanction of this system. Those who served the Sovereign were thus divided into three departments, the Army, the State, and the Court. But the staff, in each case, held equal rank. There were fourteen classes, or degrees of official rank (*tchin*), corresponding, in every department, like the rungs on a triple ladder. The list was headed by a Field-Marshal on the Military, and a Chancellor on the Civil side; immediately below these two, we find a General, beside a Privy Councillor, and so it goes on till we come to a Standard-Bearer and a Departmental Registrar, at the bottom. The same order of precedence was extended to families of officials—the wife shared her husband's rank, and the daughter of a first-class official, so long as she remained unmarried, held the same rank as the wife of one of the fourth class.

This artificial classification clearly has nothing in common with those spontaneously developed in other European societies. Yet it may perhaps be the only one suited to the country of its birth. Peter's *acting Privy Councillors* and *Departmental Registrars* were nothing but a reproduction of

Ivan III.'s *sloujilyié houdi*, in a French or German disguise. This particular method of grouping the population was historical and traditional in Russia, and may very possibly be bound up with the existence of a people, which, all through the centuries, has shown but little disposition towards the formation, either of a free Democracy, or of a powerful Aristocracy. Peter, rather than let his subjects wander at random, enrolled them all. Each person was given his place and duty, and individual or corporate rights and interests were, as a general principle, subordinated to those collective ones represented by the law of the State. A certain writer has declared that Peter, in this respect, was a century before his time.[1] I should be disposed to double the period. His plan strikes me as bearing the closest resemblance to modern Collectivism. It remains to be seen whether the principle already affirmed by Ivan III. constituted a real step in advance.

Peter, when he arranged his *dvorianié* into classes, and carefully numbered them, did not overlook what they owed him as landed proprietors. He invented a strange part, which he expected them to play; they were to serve the State as '*rural stewards*.' This is the real meaning of the Ukase published on the 23rd of March 1714, on the subject of *uni-personal* inheritance, the *iédinonaslédié*, which has been wrongly taken to be a law of entail on the eldest son. Peter did indeed, before attempting this Reform, inquire into all the information obtainable on the subject, from the Codes of foreign countries. But, after having commissioned Bruce to collect a whole library of works on the order of property succession in England, in France, and at Venice, he finally fell back on the nearest possible approach to the local rights and customs of his own country. His Ukase simply confirmed the two forms of ownership already existing in Russia, the *vottchina* (freehold) and the *pomiestié* (fief), with the principles of transition affecting both. Thus he invented a right of uni-personal inheritance, united to free testamentary powers. The *dvorianin* must leave his landed property intact to *one* of his children, but he was free to choose which that child should be. This was not the principle of entail on the first-born son; it was simply the enforcement of the autocratic spirit in domestic life. There was nothing in the system approach-

[1] Filippof, *Peter the Great's Reform of the Penal Code*, p. 55.

ing to that known as a '*majorat*.' Peter did certainly consider the question of the impoverishment of the nobility, and hoped to put a stop to it, by preventing the subdivision of their fortunes. But he looked at the matter from his personal point of view, and therefore in the interests of the State. The *dvorianié* must be rich, if they were to serve him as he expected to be served, spend all their lives working, unpaid, in his armies and his State Offices, and build palaces at St. Petersburg into the bargain. Now, speaking generally, they were completely ruined; even the Rurikovitch were forced to earn their bread in private houses. Prince Biélosielski was acting as major-domo in the house of a rich merchant, and Prince Viaziemski managed the landed property of an upstart parvenu.[1]

The Tsar also desired to constitute a class of well-born younger sons, who would form an excellent nursery for commerce and industry. The disinherited sons of these *Dvorianin* were not to lose caste by going into trade, and, after seven years' soldiering, ten in the Civil Service, and fifteen in commerce or industry,—service of some sort they must give!—they had the right to acquire landed property, and thus retake their place in the so-called aristocracy they had been forced to leave. Those who would not work were not to possess anything, and those who would not learn were even denied the right to marry.

And finally, Peter desired to improve the condition of the Serfs. Their owners, if they were richer, were likely to be more merciful. All this is expressed in the Ukase, which even contains phrases about the glory of the 'illustrious families' which the legislator proposes to protect. But this was not the real question. The law was general in its application, the rule of uni-personal inheritance touched every form of real property, from arable fields to drapers' shops, and Peter's chief anxiety was to have security, both in town and country, for the payment of his taxes, and the performance of the service exacted by the State from every subject. These sole inheritors were the Tsar's *chief deputies*, and his law was, above all things, a fiscal measure.

It failed of success. When, seventeen years later, the Empress Anne repealed it, she declared her reason to be that its provisions had produced no effect. The great mass of

[1] Karnovitch, *Great Russian Fortunes*, p. 33.

landed proprietors had contrived to elude the lawgiver's will. Only two fortunes had been built up by its means—those of the Shérémétief and Kantémir families.[1] Entail on the first-born son, according to the English system, has never taken real hold in Russia; there are not more than forty instances of it in existence, in the present day, throughout the whole length and breadth of that great Empire.

II

At Peter's accession, the rural population of Russia, as apart from the landed proprietors, consisted of two principal classes of peasants, greatly differing from each other, from the political, judicial, and economic point of view—the *Krestianié* and the *Holopy*. Another class of '*free men*,' who tilled the ground, was rapidly disappearing. The *Krestianié* had two masters, the State and their owners. Each of these had a right to tax them, and demand forced labour of them. They lived in perpetual serfdom, and might be sold, with, or without, the ground they tilled. The *Holopy*, or, at all events, the *Holopy kabalnyié* or 'mortgaged' peasants (the *Polynié holopy*, or 'full serfs,' had almost disappeared at this period) owed nothing to the State, and were only united to the owners of the land on which they lived, by a personal bond, a kind of mortgage (*kabala*) on their own persons, agreed to by themselves, and which ended with the death of their holder. These could not be sold on any pretence whatever. Peter's policy, with regard to this population, was a double one. He intervened, in its favour, with a series of regulations of a liberal and humanitarian tendency. His ukases forbade the sale of serfs, except in cases of absolute necessity, and insisted, in such cases, on whole families being kept together. Special commissioners were appointed to prevent abuses, etc.[2] But the indirect action of his government and legislation was very different. Its invariable tendency was to fuse the two categories of peasants, and to tighten the yoke of serfdom about their necks. This fusion, politically speaking, took place in the year 1705, when compulsory military service was imposed on the *holopy* by ukase. Judicially and economically speaking, the general census of 1718, and a

[1] Karnovitch, *Great Russian Fortunes*, p. 33.
[2] *Collected Laws*, 3294, 3770 (1719 and 1721).

series of ukases dealing with the composition of the census papers, published between 1720 and 1722, completed the operation. At that period the land tax was replaced by a poll tax, and the Sovereign's chief object became to find the greatest possible number of taxable heads or '*souls*.' How was this to be done? The landed proprietors, who were called upon to play the part of tax-collectors, and made responsible for the new tax, neither could nor would be answerable for any 'souls' save those in their own possession, over whom they had complete control; and they, naturally, endeavoured to diminish the number borne on the census papers, while the State did all in its power to increase it. The State did not succeed in carrying the day, until it consented to agree to the general and complete serfdom of the whole body of the agricultural population. Every peasant appearing on the list had to be considered as the permanent serf of the person answerable for him, who, otherwise, refused that responsibility. Thus, little by little, the whole peasantry was swallowed up.[1]

This certainly was Peter's work. Soon it was completed by a new series of ukases, the object of which was to put a stop to the exodus of peasants, who fled from this fresh severity, and crowded to take refuge beyond the frontier, in the border districts of Poland. These were so many locks on the prison of universal serfdom. Then a fresh class of serfs was called into existence. There were no workmen for the factories the Reformer had established. Where were these to be found? The serfs supplied the only manual labour known to the country; such a thing as free labour did not exist. There must be factory serfs then, as well as agricultural serfs. And the manufacturers received permission to recruit their necessary staff by purchase.[2]

Peter was no inhuman Sovereign; this is eloquently proved by the sixty charitable establishments called into existence, in 1701, in connection with the Moscow churches.[3] But the State reasons he represented were a hard and even a cruel law. The grandeur and the glory he bestowed

[1] Klioutchevski, *The Poll Tax and its Influence on the Condition of the Peasantry*, in *Russian Thought* (Rousskaïa Mysl, 1886).

[2] Ukase dated Jan. 18, 1721. See Biélaief, *The Peasantry in Russia* (Moscow, 1860), p. 257.

[3] Pylaief, *Old Moscow*, p. 419.

on Russia cost a heavy price, and that price, up to the year 1861, was paid, for the most part, by the Russian peasantry.

III

Peter never, according to his apologists, had any intention of lessening the reforming programme left him by his predecessors, by the omission of the emancipation of his rural subjects. All he did, we are assured, was to subordinate the solution of this problem, to the preliminary accomplishment of another work—the emancipation of the Urban class. The town, once raised out of its misery and degradation, was to free the village. I cannot find any trace of such an idea, either in the actions or the writings of the great Tsar. He certainly took great pains to create a middle class, in the young cities of his Empire, and to make that class worthy of its natural vocation. According to his usual habit, he made a trial of every system at once, English Administrative Autonomy and Self-Government, French Trade Corporations, Companies and Wardenships, and German Guilds. His success did not equal his expectations. His reign marked a period in the history of the gradual development of the industrial and commercial centres of Modern Russia, but his attempted organisation of the industrial and commercial classes had nothing to do with these results. It only brought him disappointment. The development of the Russian towns grew out of political successes, and economic victories, out of the conquest of ports, and the establishment of new means of communication, which gave a fresh impulse to the national commerce and manufactures. In the Baltic Provinces, Peter found a middle class ready to his hand; his endeavour to evolve one elsewhere proved a mere waste of time. I do not myself believe the nature of the Russian people to be so averse to the corporate idea, as some writers have affirmed. There are many forms of corporation, and the *Artel*,—that eminently Russian, and democratic, method of association, is, after all, one of these,—more liberal, and in greater conformity with the original fraternal principle, which, in the case of most Western corporations, has been vitiated by the despotic influence of Rome. I believe, —and Peter's example confirms me in this belief,—that it is

not possible to create social forces by law and regulation. Peter issued many such, and all in vain. And, as so often happened in his case, his whole method was full of inconsistencies. In 1699, he sketched out a huge plan of municipal autonomy on social lines. In 1722, he finally replaced this by an ordinary Magistracy of the bureaucratic type. He never took the trouble to consider whether the exotic forms he so hastily imposed on the industrial and commercial existence of his country were fitted for its needs. He never perceived that they were a garment, which had already seen hard service on the shoulders of his European neighbours, who were about to cast it aside, and that he was dressing his own people in mere rags. While he claimed to favour the development of commerce and industry, he did not relinquish the fiscal policy of his predecessors, who regarded the urban population chiefly as a taxable element, from which forced labour might be obtained. He increased the burden thus injudiciously imposed,[1] and finally, —though, as I have already indicated, he held that his so-called nobility, the *dvorianié*, did not lose caste by engaging in Middle Class occupations,—he recognised the formal entrance of any member of that aristocracy into the middle class, as a disgraceful thing,—a blot on his reputation. Voltaire's enthusiasm on this point is difficult to understand.[2]

Peter's social reforms were unconscious, and this is his best excuse. All he did, in town and country alike, was to brush carelessly past, or else to stumble gropingly upon, certain great problems, the full comprehension of which demanded a far more powerful and extended range of vision than he possessed.

Yet, from one point of view, the work he performed in this particular sphere, though unconscious and indirect, was far-reaching in its consequences. He introduced into the social organisation of his country,—perhaps we should say, he drove back within its borders,—an element which may be held to have brought about a more harmonious combination of its every part. The Church, before his time, was outside the general community. Church rights and privileges rivalled and resembled those of the State; a huge Church

[1] Ditiatin, *The Administration of Russian Towns*, p. 175.

[2] See the views expressed by Damaze de Raymond in his *Historical, Geographical, etc., Picture of Russia*, vol. i. p. 119 (Paris, 1812).

property was managed without any reference to the temporal power; the Church was served by her own army of dependants, her jurisdiction was not restricted to ecclesiastical affairs; she formed a separate State. Peter, as we have seen, made an end of all this. During his reign, priests and monks went back to their proper place. If he could not make them citizens, at all events he made them subjects of the State; it was a good beginning.

CHAPTER V

PETER'S ECONOMIC WORK

I. Industry—Guiding ideas—Their great scope and relative consistency—Causes which partially imperilled their success—A mortal error—Peter expects to create commerce and industry by ukase—The mercantile theory—Protection—State manufactures—Peter manufactures cambric—Precarious position of his establishments—He ends by finding fruitful ground—The mining industry.

II. Commerce—A commercial monopoly—Peter's liberal tendencies—His war obliges him to put them aside—Liberal in theory—Practical continuation of arbitrary methods—The Port of St. Petersburg—Canals—Highways—The caravan trade—The Persian and Indian markets.

III. Rural economy—Peter as an agriculturist and forester—Political and moral obstacle to economic progress.

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I

At the period of Peter's accession Russian commercial industry had no existence. The Tsar was the only great merchant in Russia. During the Du-umvirate of Peter and Ivan, a large reward was offered to a French sea-captain for introducing white paper, wine, and certain other merchandise, which would otherwise have been unobtainable, into the country. Just at that moment, the earliest Russian economist, Possoshkof, was writing a book—his '*Will*'—in which he openly affirmed his contempt for wealth. Twenty years later the very same author drew up, on white paper, *made in Russia*, a *Treatise on Poverty and Riches*, in the course of which he points out every possible method of increasing private fortunes and the wealth of the State, and forestalls

both Smith and Turgot in pressing the superiority of task-work over daily labour. This again was Peter's work.

It was far-reaching in its effects. In spite of some inconsistencies, it deserves a place of honour in the great Tsar's history, both on account of the magnitude of the effort, the multiplicity and ingeniousness of the means employed, and the logical sequence of the ideas which guided it. Peter desired, and attempted to attain, the increase of private happiness, and of State resources; to simultaneously create fresh sources of taxation and production; to replace foreign importations by the produce of the national industry; to stimulate the activity and originating power of his subjects; to remove all idle persons, monks, nuns, and beggars into the ranks of the industrious classes; to check administrative indifference, and even hostility, to the productive forces of the country. He endeavoured to supply what was lacking in public justice, to develop public credit, and atone for the absence of public security, for the non-existence of a third estate;—to bring Russia, in fact, into touch with contemporary economic existence.

The partial failure of this enterprise was brought about by an unlucky coincidence, and a mortal error. The coincidence was the war, with its natural consequences and necessities. The war it was which drove Peter, the resolute adversary of all monopolies, to create fresh ones, and thus pull down with one hand what he had built up with the other. The fundamental error was his belief that, by dint of ukases and physical force, he could create a commercial and industrial life, endow it with the necessary organs, give it muscles and blood, and rule its movements, driving it to the right and left, just as he embodied regiments and drilled them. His commercial and industrial companies, founded in 1699, were his first attempt in this direction. The Dutch began by being alarmed, but they soon ended by laughing them to scorn.

Money was indispensable to carry on the war. The standing armies of the West laid the foundation of the mercantile doctrine, and Peter soon became a devoted follower of Colbert. The national tradition was with him in this respect. In the time of Alexis Mihaïlovitch, and probably earlier, all entrance duties were paid into the Muscovite Custom-house in Hungarian ducats or Dutch thalers. Peter

enforced and aggravated this system, which is still in existence at the present day. In spite of all Bodin's or Child's advice to the contrary, he forbade all exportation of the precious metal. He had never read the works of Klock, Schröder, or Decker; he went beyond their view, and actually forbade his subjects to accept payment for their merchandise in the national currency.[1] He believed in the balance of trade, and contrived to make it incline to his own side, a privilege which his Empire preserved in common with Spain, until a recent date. According to Marperger, Russia, towards the year 1723, gained several tons of gold yearly on her foreign exchange.[2] Peter also believed in protection. He ruled a country, the external commerce of which is almost entirely confined to the production of raw material; he forbade the exportation of certain produce of this nature, as, for instance, of wool, and hampered all others by an almost prohibitive export tariff. He was not yet in a position to dress his whole army in native-made cloth, but he would wear nothing else himself, and made its use for all liveries compulsory.[3] A Frenchman, named Mamoron, established a stocking factory at Moscow, and Peter forbade his Moscovian subjects to buy stockings elsewhere. When certain manufacturers under his protection seemed little disposed to turn the felt they manufactured into hats, their courage was stimulated by an official ukase which forbade them to sell their merchandise at all, unless they put a certain number of hats on the market. This system of entreaty, of persuasive and coercive arguments, and of moral and pecuniary assistance, ended by producing its effect. Factories sprang up in all directions, some of them subsidised by the Sovereign; others directly undertaken by him, and others again worked by independent persons. The Empress was interested in a tulle factory, and starch works, at Ekatierinhof. Peter's efforts were limited, at first, to the production of supplies for his navy; sailcloth, saltpetre and sulphur, leather and arms, but in time, and somewhat against the grain, he enlarged his sphere of operations. He manufactured cambric at St. Petersburg, made paper at Douderof, and had cloth mills all over the country.

[1] *Collected Laws*, 2793, 2889, 3441. Comp. Stieda, in the *Russische Revue*, vol. iv. p. 206.

[2] Moscovitischer Kaufmann (1723), p. 218. [3] Solovief, vol. xvi. p. 203.

But none of these establishments, unfortunately, made money. In vain did the Tsar sell his cambric at a loss, giving material which had cost him fourteen kopecks for five. As usual, he grew stubborn, went further and further, and even endeavoured to introduce artistic production into the manufactures of his country. Russia began to make tapestry before she knew anything about cotton-spinning. And he was not satisfied with urging her on, he dealt blows. In 1718, a ukase forbade the use of tallow, in dressing leather; tar was to be employed, on pain of confiscation and the galleys! But, in the course of this wild struggle, he came on a most promising field, teeming with riches, easily and promptly realised; and forthwith his eagerness, his passionate keenness, and creative activity, worked wonders. In the reign of Alexis, a Dutchman and a Dane had attempted mining operations in the neighbourhood of Moscow, and had extracted several tons of mineral.[1] The work, when Peter put his hand to it, took on vast proportions. This new departure was, it must be acknowledged, that inspired, guided, and hurried forward by the necessities of war. When the ironworks of Vierhotour and Tobolsk were established by ukase, in 1697, Peter was entirely prompted by his military needs;—he wanted guns and heavy artillery. But once started, he went steadily forward, and the prodigious development of Russian mining industry, in the present day, is the result.

The Sovereign began by seeking iron, and working it. But soon, as might have been expected, the gold fever was upon him. He grew more and more eager, collecting every kind of information, searching in all directions. The various expeditions he organised,—that sent towards Persia in 1717, under the command of Bekovitch-Tcherkaski, and that despatched to Siberia in 1719, under the leadership of Liharef, were unsuccessful. Up till 1722, only one silver mine was brought into actual work; but in the course of these expeditions copper was found, and more iron,—and in 1722, coal was discovered. Thirty-six foundries were opened in the Government of Kasan, and thirty-nine in that of Moscow.

Private enterprise, apart from that of Demidof, was slow

[1] Storch, *Historisch-Statistische Gemälde des Russischen Reiches* (Riga, 1797), vol. ii. p. 485.

to appear. A ukase published in 1719 gives us an insight into this question. By it all men are declared free to seek, and work, any kind of metal, in any ground. The only right of the proprietors of metalliferous soil is that of priority; if they fail to take advantage of it, so much the worse for them. If they venture to conceal the presence of workable seams, or to prevent their being worked by others, death is to be their punishment.[1] In 1723, the legislator made another step. He resolved to break, finally, with the system of the industrial monopoly of the Crown. He published a regulation for the embodiment of a *College of Manufactures*, and added a manifesto, whereby private individuals were invited to replace the State in the working of all his industrial establishments of every kind, and offered the most advantageous terms. The sum-total of these repeated efforts bore fruit at last. The creative movement increased and broadened, and the national industry became an accomplished fact.

II

The history of the National Commerce closely resembles that of Peter's industrial undertakings. The Tsar, when he ascended the Throne, was greatly inclined to do away with those Crown rights which made him the foremost, and, indeed, the only considerable merchant, in the country. But the necessities of the war forced his hand. Want of money obliged him to continue his trading operations, and, as he never did anything by halves, he increased these to such an extent as to monopolise and absorb all markets, both internal and external. He created new branches of traffic, but every one of these was a monopoly. He bought wholesale, and sold retail, in every department, even going so far as to sell Hungarian wine in small quantities, at Moscow.[2] At a certain period, overwhelmed, as he was, by the cares of government, and worried by the irregularity of the income they brought in, he began to farm out his rights. Menshikof took over the Archangel Fisheries, and the trade in castor oil and otter skins. But, when the hope of an early peace diminished the Sovereign's financial anxieties, he came back to his own natural and liberal tendencies. The Corn Trade was de-

[1] *Collected Laws*, 3464.

[2] Golikof, vol. vi. p. 326.

cleared free in 1717, and, in 1719, all monopolies were done away with. Meanwhile, the 'College of Commerce,' which had been founded in 1715, was beginning to do good work. The education of the commercial class was made the object of its special care, and dozens of young men belonging to the rich merchant families of Moscow—a rapidly increasing class—were sent into Holland and Italy. Diplomatically speaking, efforts were made, in all directions, to extend commercial relations with other nations. The war had led Peter into some regrettable errors in this respect,—such as the sale, in 1713, of certain rights and privileges to the town of Lubeck, for a sum of between 30,000 and 40,000 crowns, and similar arrangements with Dantzic and Hamburg. After the year 1717, Peter showed an evident intention to put an end to this condition of things, and no further reference to such proceedings appears, either in his negotiations with France, or in the instructions sent to the Consuls, simultaneously appointed, at Toulon, Lisbon, and London.

Yet he could not resist the temptation of trying to direct this budding intercourse after a somewhat arbitrary fashion. This fact is evidenced in the history of the Port of St. Petersburg, and of the pitched battle between the Tsar and the merchants, native or foreign, who persisted in preferring the Port of Archangel. When all pacific means of persuasion were exhausted,—when Peter realised that nothing would attract the merchants to St. Petersburg,—neither the establishment of a huge *Gostinnyï dvor* (bazaar), nor of a special Magistracy largely composed of foreigners, nor the pains he himself had taken to ensure a good and cheap supply of their favourite article of commerce—hemp—in his new Capital,—he boldly appealed to his ancestral traditions. Though he did not forcibly transfer the citizens of Archangel to St. Petersburg, as his predecessor, Vassili, had removed the Novgorod burghers to Moscow, he decreed that the recalcitrant merchants must, in future, buy and sell their hemp at St. Petersburg, and nowhere else.[1]

The result of this measure was easy to foresee. The new Capital, as a commercial mart, was still far from desirable. The system of canals, by which the Volga and the Neva were to be joined to the Lake of Ladoga, had, as yet, no

[1] Tchoulkof, *Historical Description of Russian Trade*, vol. vi. p. 488; Storch, vol. v. p. 19, etc.

existence except on paper. The great English engineer, Perry, to whom the work had been confided, disgusted by the ill-treatment he had received, had retired from the work while it was in its earliest stage. Peter planned a second canal, by which the dangerous Lake was to be avoided, and the Neva directly united to the mighty affluent of the Caspian. But this canal was not completed till 1732. A third system, based on the utilisation of various intermediate streams, served no purpose, but that of enriching a miller named Serdioukof, who invented it, and who took advantage of the concession, all too hastily granted him, to dot the banks of the Tsna and the Shlina with mills and taverns, which brought no advantage whatsoever to the Port of St. Petersburg. Thus, hemp and furs, and every other merchandise,—for after 1717 two-thirds of all produce had to be sent thither—were brought up to the Capital with the greatest difficulty, and at terrible expense. And there, as no purchasers were to be found, they were heaped up, depreciated by over-keeping, and ended—this was especially the case with the hemp—by actually rotting.

But Peter cared not. Somehow or other, he was resolved, St. Petersburg was to become a commercial port. Only sixteen foreign vessels touched there in 1714, but the next year there were fifty-three; in 1722 there were 119, and in 1724 the number rose to 180. Peter laid the foundation of that system of river communication, which all his successors, down to Catherine's time, laboured to complete, connecting the basin of the Volga with those of the Neva and Dvina, opening the way from the Caspian to the Baltic and White Sea, and uniting seventy-six lakes, and 106 streams, by means of 302 versts of artificial waterway. This result was not achieved without enormous waste of money, of labour, and even of human life. But the secret of Russian strength and success has always largely consisted in the will and the power not to count the cost of the object to be attained. Here again the patient *Moujiks*, who lie buried in their thousands in the Finnish marshes, paid the price unmurmuringly!

Peter attached by no means the same importance to land communications, and did not, indeed, make any endeavour to develop them. He made no roads, and even in the present day, this is one of Russia's weak points. The very inade-

quate highways which do exist, have been entirely constructed by the Engineering Corps called into existence so lately as 1809. Yet, the great man did not overlook the value of caravan trade, as practised by his ancestors. He engaged in it himself, bought the harvests of Tokay, on the spot, and carried his purchases to Moscow on hundreds of carts, which returned into Hungary laden with Siberian produce.[1]—And, though his best thoughts and efforts were turned towards the Baltic, and western commerce, he did not, as I have already shown, lose sight of his South-Eastern frontier, and of the commercial interests which beckoned him in that direction. Probably, if he had reached Bokhara, he would have founded an Indian trade. Occasional caravans already came to Orenburg and Astrakhan, bringing not only silken and cotton stuffs, made in Bokhara, but Indian merchandise, precious stones, gold, and silver. At all events, he took possession of the Irtish, — thereby moving the Siberian frontier back, and protecting it against the Kalmuks and the Kirghiz,—and of the Kolyvan Mountains, the treasures of which, discovered at a later period, confirmed the old Greek story of gold mines guarded by gnomes. If he had maintained his hold on Azof, he might, too, have sought, and succeeded in obtaining, the re-establishment of the ancient commercial route, followed by the Venetians and the Genoese. Driven back on the Caspian, he attempted, we may believe, to turn trade by Astrakhan, towards St. Petersburg. This idea would seem to have dictated his great expedition in 1722, and the project for a great commercial depôt, at the mouth of the Kour, on which 5000 men of various tribes were actually working, when he died. There was, it may be hinted, some fancy, and even a touch of madness, in all this: there was no attempt, certainly, at any reasonable calculation of possibilities, distances, and cost of transport. But in spite of the exaggerated boldness of his plans, and of the utter oblivion into which the indifference of his earlier successors soon cast them, one result was gained. The Persian and Indian markets, to which a kind of road was opened, were thus included in the inheritance, which, even in our days, Russia is yet receiving and reckoning up, and the huge benefits of which she continues to enjoy.

[1] Storch, vol. v. p. 37; Golikof, vol. vi. p. 326.

III

A man so catholic in his tastes as Peter could hardly have failed to be an agriculturist. And he was an eager one. His reign marks an era in the history of Russian rural economy. He did not, like the great Frederick, in later years, content himself with teaching his peasants to plant potatoes. Near Moscow, he taught them, by his own personal example, how to cut their corn, and near St. Petersburg, he showed them how to make their *lapti* (bark shoes). He treated them as a schoolmaster treats his scholars, and forbade them to wear nailed soles, because they spoilt the floors. He fixed the width of the coarse cloth they made in their cottages. He was struck by the beauty of a French Curé's garden, and as soon as he returned to Russia, he fell out with his own popes, because they had nothing of the kind. He interested himself in the matter of seed-corn, in the care of domestic animals, the manuring of fields, the use of agricultural instruments, and the improvement of methods of cultivation. He endeavoured to introduce vines into the country of the Don Cossacks, and to develop that branch of culture near Derbent, where he planted Persian and Hungarian vines. In 1712, he established the first Russian breeding studs, and in 1706, he began to breed sheep in the Governments of Harkof, Poltava, and Iékatierinoslav, which now swarm with that useful quadruped.[1] He was the first forester in his own country, the first to protect the woodlands against the inveterately destructive habits of his subjects. It must be confessed that no Minister of Agriculture, even in Russia, would venture, in these days, on his methods. All along the Neva and the Gulf of Finland, at every five versts, a gallows was set up, on which depredators were to be hanged. Within the boundaries of St. Petersburg, on the space now occupied by the Custom-house, there was a pine wood. As the people continued to cut and steal the wood, Peter ordered a sudden descent by the police, had every tenth prisoner hanged, and knouted the rest.[2]

Generally speaking, the Reformer's good intentions, with regard to economic progress, met with a double obstacle,

[1] Russian State Papers (1873), p. 2288.
[2] Sobof's Paper in the *Journal of Agriculture*, 1872.

moral and political. On the 13th of March 1716, a Ukase to the Senate pronounced the penalty of death on those Russian merchants who should continue to carry on a practice of which their English customers had long complained,—that of hiding damaged merchandise inside their bales of hemp, or even of introducing stones to increase the weight.[1] Notwithstanding this effort, the commercial and industrial morality of the country remained a problem, to be solved in future reigns. When Peter died, the elements of industrial and commercial activity, which he had created and called out of the void, were still in a condition of savagery. In 1722, Bestoujef announces the arrival, in the city of Stockholm, of certain Russian merchants from Abo and Revel. They had brought over a small quantity of coarse cloth, wooden spoons, and nuts, which they sold from their sledges in the streets; they cooked their *casha* in the open air, refused to obey the police, got drunk, quarrelled and fought, and the disgusting filthiness of their habits made them an altogether shameful spectacle.[2]

The political difficulty was connected with Finance. The Tsar's financial policy was the dark spot on his reign. It was the part of Peter's work, most directly inspired and commanded by the necessities of his war, and bears that mark. It was far from being a policy of reform, and was, almost always, thoroughly bad. I can only give a hasty summary of its more salient features.

IV

The pecuniary resources which Peter found at his disposal, when he succeeded to the Russian throne, cannot be directly compared with those of any other European State. Their sum did not, according to Golikof, exceed 1,750,000 roubles.[3] The mere internal existence of the State, independently of all external matters, would, at first sight, appear impossible, on such slender means, but the very exceptional conditions which then specially favoured the State exchequer, must be taken into account. In the first place, except for the army, there were hardly any State expenses whatsoever. The servants of the State were all

[1] Sbornik, vol. xi. p. 308.
[2] Solovief, vol. xvii. p. 164.
[3] Vol. xiii. p. 706.

unpaid. They either gave their services in exchange for privileges granted, or they were indirectly rewarded by the system known as the *kormlénié*. There were no roads, and consequently no expenses for keeping them up. And so forth. I subjoin the Budget of State Expenses for the year 1710, which is instructive—

Expenses of the Army . . .	1,252,525	roubles
„ „ Artillery . .	221,799	„
„ „ Fleet . . .	444,288	„
„ „ Garrisons . .	977,896	„
Recruiting Expenses . . .	30,000	„
Purchase of Arms	84,104	„
Diplomatic Service	148,031	„
Other Expenses, including Chief Gunners' pay	675,775	„[1]

In 1679, before Peter's time, a great and salutary reform was introduced into this rudimentary organisation, by the centralisation of all revenue in the Great Treasury Department (*Prikaz Balshoï Kazny*) which was replaced in 1699 by the 'Hotel de Ville.' When Peter came, he undid what had already been done. He was in too great a hurry to attempt to carry out any programme, the benefits of which were not likely to accrue to him for a considerable time. He wanted money quickly, and a great deal of it, and he behaved like many young men who find themselves in a difficulty. Instead of carrying on the process of centralisation, and gradually suppressing those special and local departments, which sucked up and swallowed the National wealth, he invented new ones, such as his *Financial War Departments*, which received the special war taxation. Instead of endeavouring to increase the already existing sources of revenue, which were suited to the productive forces of the country, he began a policy of financial brigandage, taxing anything and everything which struck him as being taxable, even to his subjects' beards. He seized *oaken coffins* in the joiners' shops, had them taken to the monasteries, and there sold, four times as dear, for the benefit of the Treasury! In 1700, he took possession of the taxes hitherto paid by the merchants, to the private proprietors of the various

[1] Bloch, *The Finances of Russia* (Warsaw, 1884), vol. i. p. 20.

market-places. In 1704, he laid his hands upon the taverns; in 1705, he seized the salt and tobacco monopolies; in 1707, he extended this system to a whole series of articles of commerce, including the principal exports of the country. Meanwhile, advised by Kotoshihin, he had attempted to recoin the National Currency; but this only resulted in greater poverty, for the value of the rouble diminished one-half.[1]

A more judicious attempt was that to work the State farms (*obrotchnyïé stati*) through a special department (the *Ijora Chancery*), opened, in 1704, in Menshikof's house, met with better success, and the revenue from this source rose from 299,000 to 569,000 roubles,—but as expenses had correspondingly increased, the Treasury remained in as bad a case as ever. From the outset, there was a struggle between the 'Hotel de Ville' and the new departments, which resulted in constant waste and confusion. The great financial and administrative reform of 1708 only added a fresh element of disturbance and disorder. All the departments claimed the various revenues. In 1711, there was a deficit in the budget of the Moscow Government. The revenue of the Artillery *Prikaz* had been assigned to it, and this *Prikaz* had no revenue of its own; it was expected to subsist on subsidies given to it by other departments! The disputes, mutual recriminations, and general confusion, went from bad to worse.

In 1710, Peter, who was still at war, and sorely pressed for money, was tempted by a plan to revise the Cadastral Survey or list of inhabited houses and cultivated fields,—the basis on which the principal traditional, and really *National*, tax was levied. This operation gave most unsatisfactory results. It was found that since the last census, in 1678, taxable property had diminished by one-fifth. In the North, the loss amounted to 40 per cent. This was the result of the army recruiting, and of the flight of those subject to military service. Peter sought expedients to remedy this difficulty, and pitched on one which probably suited the national spirit, for, even at the present day, it is still in force, with regard to certain classes of the population. The actual population was condemned to pay the share of

[1] *Collected Laws*, 1799, 1977, 2014, 2015, 2132. Comp. Storch, vol. v. p. 131; Perry, *Present State of Russia*, p. 249; Oustrialof, vol. iv. pt. 2, p. 641; Sbornik, vol. xxxix. p. 361; Milioukof, p. 204.

the absentees, and the total revenue attained in 1678 was always to be kept up. But this measure was clearly not calculated to check the current of emigration, and the situation grew more and more serious. From 1704 to 1709,—though a deficit on the Budget frequently appeared,—the excess was always covered by what remained over from preceding years.

	Receipts.	Expenses.
1701.	2,860,000 roubles.	2,250,000 roubles.
1702.	3,150,000 ,,	2,470,000 ,,
1703.	2,730,000 ,,	3,340,000 ,,
1704.	2,490,000 ,,	3,240,000 ,,
1705.	2,640,000 ,,	3,340,000 ,,
1706.	2,520,000 ,,	2,710,000 ,,
1707.	2,410,000 ,,	2,450,000 ,,
1708.	2,020,000 ,,	2,220,000 ,,
1709.	2,760,000 ,,	2,700,000 ,,[1]

But in 1710 an absolute deficit appeared, and naturally increased from year to year. All attempts at borrowing from abroad ended in failure. As the finances at disposal barely sufficed for the necessities of the war, they were entirely devoted to that purpose, and the other branches of the public service were left to struggle on as best they could. At last the very sinews of war began to fail, and then, and not till then, Peter's soul fell into distress, and he began to betray an inclination to more rational principles, and a wiser practice. Soon afterwards, his stay in France brought him into more direct contact with the economic doctrines then beginning to govern the Western world. He finally put away his methods of violence and robbery, and turned his mind to increasing the resources of his country, and thus adding to its taxable capacity, by the organisation of his 'College of Commerce,' while he endeavoured to improve its fiscal management, by a general reform of taxation, carried out between 1718 and 1722.

This reform has not met with universal admiration. Certain of its qualities,—the substitution of a Poll Tax (*podoushnyï*), whereby each subject was taxed, instead of each inhabited house (*podvornyï*), or tilled field (*posochnyï*) gave the Russian fiscal system an artificial, and a certain

[1] Milioukof, p. 235.

anti-national character, which it still bears. Contemporary opinion, as in the case of Possoshkof, rose in indignation. 'How can the soul, an intangible and inestimable value, be taxed?' In later days, Count Dimitri Tolstoï, the eloquent historian of Russian financial institutions, has forcibly described the pernicious influence of the innovation on the economic development of his country. Count Cancrin, who must be acknowledged one of the best financial ministers possessed by Russia, in the course of two centuries, is almost the only native statesman who has attempted to support it. The immediate and palpable results of the reform speak in its favour. The only direct tax levied by the Treasury, doubled the revenue, which rose at a bound from 1,800,000 to 4,600,000 roubles, and the Budgets of the last years of Peter's reign show distinct progress, so far, at all events, as receipts are concerned. That of 1725 amounted, according to Golikof, to 9,776,554 roubles. At the same time the new spirit in which the finances were administered began to bear fruit. The list of expenditure shows 47,371 roubles assigned to schools, and 35,417 to the support of hospitals and refuges. But the progress, after all, was very trifling, and the improvement far more apparent than real.

As regards both receipts and expenses, these written Budgets continued most deceptive in their nature. The State really received and paid out far more than was shown in them. The revenue was increased by all sorts of devices, by contributions in kind, and even in money. The country furnished all food and forage for troops on active service. Every peasant gave half tons of rye and oats for the benefit of the Civil Service, and many pensions assigned by the Tsar were actually paid by private individuals. Thus that of Princess Anastasia Galitzin was exacted from Alexis Miloslavski, who, in return, was freed from military service.[1] In the same manner, when the clerks (*poddiatchyié*) of the Secret Office of the Chancery of the Senate complained, in 1713, of being insufficiently paid, their income was increased by a sum duly assigned them on 'the revenues of all foreign business, and all the business of Strogonof, except merchandise coming from Archangel.'[2]

[1] A Memorandum from Campredon, written at St. Petersburg in 1724, contains some curious details on this subject (French Foreign Office Papers, vol. xv. p. 75, Russia).

[2] *Collected Laws*, 2683.

Thus past mistakes were still adhered to, and this adherence, coupled with the incomplete and bungling application of the newer methods, prevented a really successful assimilation of the benefits conferred by the new *régime*. The maintenance of the army, still the great business and the chief burden of the Treasury, was a constant subject of dispute between the Financial Department, which had been re-organised after a fashion, since 1708, and the War Department, which disorganised all arrangements, and claimed to imitate the method followed in Sweden. But in Sweden, the population fed the soldiers by contracts, regularly made with the Government, which were a source, if anything, of profit; whereas in Russia, the army and the population were set face to face, as creditor and debtor; and the Government interfered, with all the weight of its authority, on the creditor's side only. The system had all the drawbacks of one of permanent billets.

And the chief cause of all,—the lack of moral education,—vitiated the principle of the wisest and most skilful measures, and destroyed their effect. The venality of the Fiscal Staff, and the ease with which the tax-payer could slip out of part of his obligation, were both proverbial. In a document which impresses me with a sense of its sincerity, I find the following words:—'If, indeed, a tax-collector should be found who is proof against gifts,—which in Russia would be a most astonishing thing—there is another expedient by which he may be deceived; this is to join several houses together during the time of his inspection. These are easily separated and brought back to their own places within a few hours, for they are all made of wooden timbers, and easily carried about.'[1]

In 1722, thanks to the Persian campaign, there was a fresh and alarming deficit; in 1723, a Ukase commanded that civil and military salaries should be paid in Siberian merchandise, other means being lacking. In the same year, these same salaries were diminished by a compulsory subsidy, to supply the Treasury's urgent needs, and the servants of the State were forced to hand back a portion of the money they had never received![2] In 1724, according to the Saxon resident, Lefort, 'neither troops, nor navy, nor departments,

[1] Memorandum from Campredon.
[2] *Collected Laws*, 4533, 4565.

nor any one, has been paid, and every soul complains of poverty.'[1] At the time of Peter's death, the Diplomatic Corps, and all the strangers in the capital, were living in dread of the excesses threatened by the lower classes, who were dying of hunger, and even by the soldiers, who had received no pay for the past sixteen months.[2]

Thus the financial policy of the great reign, inspired though it had been, by the necessities of war, and framed to supply its needs and demands, failed utterly, even as regards the army it was destined to serve.

[1] Sbornik, vol. iii. p. 382.
[2] Campredon's Despatch, February 6, 1725 (French Foreign Office).

CHAPTER VI

THE POLITICAL WORK OF PETER THE GREAT

I. *Administration*—The Spirit and the Form—Municipal Autonomy a mere fiscal expedient—The first eight Governments—Another expedient—Decentralisation—The Senate—The Institution develops and becomes a centralising organ—Absorption and confusion of Power—Administrative and Financial control—The Fiscals—Their unpopularity—The Procurators—Lack of unity and equilibrium—The 'Colleges'—No general idea in their establishment—Fresh elements of confusion—Plethora of administrative organs—Poverty of individual administration.

II. *Police*—Repression of Brigandage—The low moral level of society a hindrance to progress.

III. *Justice*—Peter's tardy attention—His desire to accomplish everything at once—Reasons of his failure—General denial of the idea of Law—The progress of legislation a hindrance to codification—Lack of judicial principles and jurists—General view.

I

As regards economic, social and intellectual progress, Russia lags, to this day, behind her Western neighbours and rivals. But she has already built up an apparatus of human power, one of the most formidable the world has ever known—archaic and Asiatic in its spirit and inner structure, modern and European in all its outward appearances. This is the undoubted outcome, and the crowning point, of Peter's work.

No idea of any general reform of his Governmental institutions, or of the constituent elements of his power, ever entered the Tsar's brain. For a considerable time, and during the whole course of the Northern war, his anxiety and his efforts were all directed to the solution of a comparatively limited problem—that of raising an army which should beat the Swedes, and a fleet which should make a good appearance on the Northern seas, and of finding funds to keep both up. Occasionally, accidentally and irregularly

only, his attention and activity were applied to the exercise of the essential rights of his sovereignty, as contained in those executive, judicial, and legislative powers, the nature and effects of which he modified and corrected, in obedience to what were, frequently, very ill-considered impulses. He ruled, and, at the same time, he reformed the administration; he dispensed justice and organised tribunals; he made innumerable laws; and, while maintaining the original, personal, and despotic principle, on which his Government was based, he modified its external appearance after a new pattern, which I shall endeavour to describe.

It is vain, in this endeavour, to look for very clear and well-defined outlines. Here, as elsewhere, the designer used his pencil roughly; his lines are scattered and run zigzag, there are gaps and dashes, and that general incoherence which marks all he did. There is not even any symptom of a deliberate attempt at transformation. The elimination of the old forms, and the substitution of new ones, were, for the most part, the result of a spontaneous work of decomposition, which prepared the way for new organic structures, and even called them into existence. The workman's will had nothing to do with this result. His work was the indirect outcome of his great war. Life flowed out of the old worn-out channels—worn out by long abuse—into the new ones, which the urgent necessities of the moment had hollowed out. On one side there was atrophy and a literal falling to pieces; on the other, a gradual development. Peter, in binding the two together, here and there, gave his country a new reform. But the progress of the phenomenon was most capricious, and its earliest effect was the production of incongruous and ill-assorted combinations, which did each other mutual injury. The new order of officials, and administrative departments, was superadded to the old one, and each worked against the other. Peter's new collaborators — Ministers, Chancellors, and Councillors, in their European dress, and equipment, and titles, elbowed the *Okolnitchyïe*, *Kravtchyié* and *Postielnitchyïe* of the old *régime*, whose offices—which had been principally invented as a means of supporting their holders—were to last as long as they lived. The old *Prikaz* stood beside the new Departments, the Offices of the Navy and Artillery, of Supply and Mines, which had only risen into existence, and begun to

work in successive jerks, under the sudden pressure of some freshly recognised necessity. Execution, in every case, followed close on the heels of conception, but the necessary measures for regular practice were less quick in their coming.

To conclude, and this must be specially noted: these new institutions were Western in form only—the Western spirit did not exist. It would have been in too great contradiction with the essence and soul of the existing political organisation, the principle of which remained unchanged. This fact has not, as a rule, been sufficiently understood; yet it is clearly proved by the history of the first legislative edict of the reign,—the Ukase, dated 30th January 1699, decreeing the organisation of Municipalities in Russia. Historians, otherwise clear-sighted, have taken this for a thoroughgoing attempt at administrative autonomy, in the English or German style, and therefore as a measure of the greatest political, economic, and social scope. According to these opinions, the new Elective Magistracies, the Provincial Chambers (*Ziemskïé Izby*), the Chamber of Burgomasters at Moscow (*Bourmistrskaïa Palata*), were intended by the lawgiver as the first Russian School of public life, in which the citizens were to learn to combine for defence of their common interests, to cast off that instinctive isolation which had hitherto left the power in the hands of the strongest, and deliver all merchants and manufacturers from the tyranny of greedy *Voïevodes*.[1] But we shall find, if we consider the matter closely, that no such mighty programme can justly be ascribed to Peter. I am not even sure that it would do him honour. Thirty years before his time, Ordine-Nashtshokin, *Voïevode* of Pskof, attempted to set up the principle of municipal self-government, with fifteen *Starostes* elected by the Burghers of the town, to whom the care of public interests was confided. He was checked by the difficulty of reconciling this institution with the general spirit of the *régime* then prevailing—with the principle, that is to say, of absolute power—and its existence was of the shortest.[2] In 1699, Peter was doubtless quite aware of this experiment, and had no idea of renewing it. His sole desire was to dress

[1] Oustrialof, vol. iii. p. 260; Brückner, *History of Peter the Great*, p. 506.
[2] Ditiatin, *Studies for a History of Russian Law* (St. Petersburg, 1895), p. 460, etc.

up the old Administrative Departments (*Prikaznyïé Izby*) already existing—and charged with the care, not of local interests, but *of those of the Sovereign*—in an English or German dress. He sought to increase the activity of his tax-collectors, and to provide them better for their work; and his general and somewhat simple-minded faith in the value of outward appearances and forms, inclined him to this imitation of autonomy. But, apart from the electoral principle, now introduced into their organisation (which of itself was by no means a novelty in Russia), the new Magistracies were exactly like the old ones, and were only called to do their predecessors' work with greater severity. Those who came under their lash had no doubt on this point. The electors were driven to the poll, and the elected candidates were kept in their places, by dint of fines and heavy blows. As for the *Voïevodes*, they thrashed the new Burgomasters just as they had thrashed their predecessors. The great work so pompously described was nothing, after all, but a fiscal expedient.

So also was the creation, in 1708, of the eight great Administrative centres called Governments. These, like everything else at that period, were the outcome of the war. The first military and financial centre arose out of the creation of the fleet at Voronèje, and the establishment of a Russian Port at Azof. The conquest of Ingria and Carelia resulted in the constitution of the first Government in the newly-acquired territory; this was intrusted to Menshikof. The advance of Charles XII. into the heart of Russia, centralised the military and financial resources for the defence of the country in the hands of the *Voïevodes* of Smolensk and Kief; the repression of the insurrectionary movement on the banks of the Volga, brought about the establishment of a Government at Astrakhan. These were all so many new administrative units, each of which served as a nucleus for the new organisation set on foot just before the Battle of Poltava. This organisation was no more than the adjustment and fusion of the elements thus prepared, and, by it, the type of administration already developed on Swedish models in the Government of Ingria, was made general throughout Russia. From the territorial point of view, these eight Governments partly corresponded with former military and financial districts, already called into existence by local needs. The

very name of Governor was only a translation of the Russian name given to the heads of these districts, *Voïevodes*, or 'Leaders of the War.' As early as 1694, Peter addressed the *Voïevode* of Archangel, in Dutch, as '*Min Her Gubernor*.'

The Reform of 1708 belies, in this particular, the criticism so frequently made as to its accidental and mechanical character. The pre-existing military and financial districts, of which the territorial limits were partially adopted, were, in themselves, somewhat arbitrary and artificial. But the creation of provinces, in the European sense of that word,—conveying the idea of an organic unity,—does not exist in Russian history. Peter merely combined his work with an organisation already installed, after a fashion, on the shifting soil of his native country. Other fault may be more justly found with his endeavour.

As I have already pointed out, he thought less, in the first instance, of forging an instrument of government, than of finding means to fill his Treasury. Peter's temporary Minister of Finance, Kourbatof, resolutely opposed the new Governments, and defended the regular principles of administration, at which they dealt a blow. He was all for administrative centralisation at the 'Hôtel de Ville.' But the Sovereign would not hear of it. If the revenues of the State were centralised at the 'Hôtel de Ville,' they could not fail to be applied to the needs of the various branches of the public service there represented; and his great aim was to apply the greater part of them to one special need and service—the carrying on of his war. These isolated governments, whose only direct connection with the State would exist at the Ruler's will, were likely to be more manageable and more useful for this object. He had invented them for this purpose, and for the sake of it he had broken with the centralising principles of the seventeenth century, which had brought about the unity of the country. He put forward all the accessory advantages which, as he claimed, this rupture would confirm, declaring his new Governments would be easier of control, and the taxes more easily collected. But, in real truth, he looked at the question from the military, and not from the political point of view. And further, he studied his own personal convenience. He was an incessant traveller; he saw no necessity for having any centre of government, or rather, he thought the centre of government

might very easily follow his journeys. As for reconciling the advantages of centralisation with those of local autonomy, he was not learned enough (in 1708, at all events), to dream of such a thing. He had no idea, to begin with, of clearly defining the rights of the administrative bodies he had established. He first divided the country and the towns between his eight Governments, and then the anxieties of his war claimed him, and he appears to have forgotten all about them, and even kept his new Governors, who were also his generals, in his camp. It was not until the spring of 1709, when the melting of the snows gave him a little breathing space, that he presented them with the official statistics of their various districts, adding orders to 'give close attention to the collection of the taxes, and to all the interests of the State.' This was the only information vouchsafed as to their new duties.

The Governors' ideas on the subject were, as may be imagined, very limited. They really scarcely knew what they were expected to do, nor how they were to do it, and the Sovereign does not appear to have been in a position to give satisfactory answers to the piles of official correspondence addressed to him on the subject. How, to begin with, was the financial administration to be removed from the offices of the 'Hôtel de Ville,' where it was actually established, into those of the various governments, where it ought to be? This was more than either he or they could tell, and Kourbatof himself had to be appealed to. Then, how were the administrative functions of the governors to be reconciled with their permanent presence with the armies they commanded? This difficulty was solved by the appointment of substitutes, under the name of *Landrichters*. And how, to conclude, were these substitutes to be made to realise that their chief duty was to fill the Tsar's war-chests?

From the very first a bitter conflict arose over the contradiction between the real and apparent objects of the new organisation. Peter's only thought was to extract money from the provincial administrations, and as these felt obliged to defend the general interests of their provinces, a struggle began, like that between an unwilling debtor and an exacting creditor. Both sides played the keenest game; every kind of subterfuge was attempted, to forestall disposable funds on one side, and protect them on the other. Peter, of

course, always had the last word, for he could fall back on his usual methods. A ukase, dated 6th June 1712, simply deprived the Government of St. Petersburg of the revenues paid by certain districts, and made them over to the Admiralty. That same day a sum of 10,000 roubles was forcibly levied on the funds of the same Government, to pay the arrears due to Frenchmen and Hungarians serving in the Tsar's army. He was so pleased with this expedient, that it was frequently repeated, especially after the removal of the Senate to St. Petersburg. The local Treasury was constantly laid under contribution. Any idea of conforming to the table of receipts and expenses drawn up in 1711 was utterly abandoned. Absolute chaos reigned.

It should be added that Peter took it into his head to imitate a Swedish practice which had been reported to him, and charged the different Governments with the support of his regiments. As these regiments were constantly on active service, commissioners were delegated, by the various Governments, to provide for their food and equipment—a fresh complication in a machine already sorely clogged.

The most immediate and evident result of the reform was the constitution of fat offices, for the possession of which the Sovereign's favourites wrangled, in which they trafficked, and whose holders, having bought them at a heavy price, were driven to indemnify themselves at the expense of those under their care. If any information was laid against them —a rare event, for such traffickers are generally wary—they got out of the difficulty by following the example of the Turks, and offering their master a bonus on the fruit of their thievery. Peter's system tended, besides, to make his Governors a sort of farmers-general, possessing almost complete latitude as to the manner in which they raised the funds out of which the huge war contribution demanded of them was paid. The new organisation, wrong in its original conception, and still more faulty in its first workings, did not put on any appearance of decency, regularity, and system until the last years of Peter's reign, when it began to benefit by the peaceful condition of the country, and came in contact with the Swedish military and administrative system, established in the conquered Baltic Provinces.[1]

[1] See, with regard to this subject, the remarkable, though somewhat gloomy picture drawn by M. Milioukof, in his work already quoted, p. 291, etc.

The creation of the Senate, in 1711, was another great step in Peter's gradual elimination of the old administrative bodies, or their external assimilation to the western type. But the honour of having replaced the former Council of Boyards, or *Boïarskaïa Douma*, by this new assembly, has been wrongly ascribed to Peter. Though nothing is known as to the precise date of the disappearance of this superannuated relic of the ancient Muscovite State, this one thing is certain, that, in 1711, it did not exist. It had already been replaced, since 1700, at all events, by a Council of Ministers, which sat in the Private Chancery (*Blijnaïa Kantsélaria*), and is frequently confused with it. From the very outset Peter withdrew a most important department from the jurisdiction of this Council, and kept the management in his own hands. I refer to a whole category of Crown rights which he claimed to direct, according to his special personal views, with the assistance of special functionaries, the *Prybylshtchiki*. At the moment of his departure for the campaign of the Pruth, he was at a loss what to do with this administration, which had grown to considerable proportions, and the first duty he required of the Senate was to relieve him of it. This was another war expedient. The ukase which called the new institution into life was published the very day of the proclamation of a war with Turkey, and though the general idea, and the name, were borrowed from Sweden or Poland, the assembly was thus endowed with a character of its own. Peter was far from foreseeing the much more important part it was to play in later years.

It was intended, in the first place,—and this was natural,—to supply the want of those central institutions, which the work of decomposition, to which I have already referred, had caused to disappear. The Reform of 1708-1710 had made no provision for reconciling the new provincial organisation with the old administration, centralised at Moscow. Its only result had been to destroy this last. The Private Chancery had thus become the only centralising power in the country, and it had proved notably inadequate for the work it had to do. But it was not till 1714 that the new Assembly was charged with a permanent commission to remedy this inadequacy, by itself despatching a certain amount of current business. From 1711-1718, the respective rights of the Chancery and the Senate remained

undefined. The other public bodies, not knowing to which their reports, or requests, should be addressed, generally settled the matter by following a policy of total abstention. It was only by degrees,—by means of Ukases published from year to year, and, sometimes, from month to month,—that the rights of the Senate were augmented and defined. These rights, before the creation of the Administrative Departments, extended over the whole field of Government action, that is to say, over the administration, properly so called, justice, police, army, finances, trade, and foreign politics. The Senate had the care of the supplies for troops on active service, of the sale of all State merchandise, of the canals, of the cleaning of the St. Petersburg streets. Until and even after, the establishment of the Holy Synod, it intervened in ecclesiastical matters. In 1720 it carried on negotiations with Poland, with the object of strengthening Russian influence in that country; and it was the final judge in civil and criminal cases.[1] In 1724, Peter ordered the Ukases published by the Senate to be printed concurrently with his own, and thus set his seal upon a legislative power which he had for some years practically recognised. He treated the principle of the division of power with complete indifference, and indeed the only European characteristic of his Senate was its name. He excused himself in his own eyes, by the reflection that the whole arrangement was purely provisional, and intended to be followed by one of a more regular nature.

Meanwhile, the Senators had 'everything in their hands.' This was the Tsar's own expression. But he expected a faithful discharge of the duties and responsibilities conferred upon them. He had given them much,—he expected a great deal in return. The unlucky representatives of his sovereign authority were pelted with reproaches, reprimands, and threats. He wrote, 'You must have done that in joke, or because you had received *vziatki* (bribes);—but I will make you come here (into Ingria), and you will be questioned in a very different fashion!'[2] These reproaches were frequently, and unhappily, only too well justified. The Dutch Resident, De Bie, writes in November 1714, 'The great drawback is that all business is made over to the Senate, which never decides anything.'

[1] Petrovski, *The Senate under Peter the Great* (Moscow, 1875), pp. 224-238.
[2] Ukase to the Senate, Sept. 1711 (Archives of the Ministry of Justice).

Peter judged it necessary, from the very outset, to complete his creation by the addition of a controlling body. He began by causing certain officers of his staff to be present at the sittings, with orders to watch the deliberations. Then he invented the *Fiscals*; but the name only, this time, was borrowed from Sweden, the thing itself was essentially local. The inquisitorial policy of the Tsar turned the Swedish *Comptrollers* into *spies*, in the worst sense of the word. Until 1714, any Fiscal could give information, which might be proved false and calumnious, without incurring the slightest responsibility, and the informer shared the fines he caused to be inflicted, with the Tsar's Treasury. Stephen Iavorski had to thunder a bold reproof in the Cathedral of the Assumption, in 1712, before this odious abuse of power was tardily diminished. By a Ukase published 17th March 1714, *intentional* error on the part of these agents was rendered punishable.

An *Ober-Fiscal*, or Chief Comptroller, was attached to the Senate. The appointment of this official, replaced in 1722 by a '*General-Procouror*,' was a real progress, for the various authorities which had long been independently exercised,—the Tsar, the Senate and the various branches of the Executive Power,—were thus brought into connection. The *General-Procouror* held intercourse with these last through *Procourors* placed under his orders, and himself acted as intermediary between the Tsar and the Senate. Peter modelled this office, doubtless, on that of the Swedish *Ombutsman*, delegated by the Government to the judicial body. But his *General-Procouror*, having no seat in the Chief Assembly, bore a yet closer resemblance to the French *Procureur-Général* of that period, attached to the French Parliament. Like him, he possessed a right of active intervention in the exercise of those powers he was called upon to watch. He might even take the initiative; he had legislative functions; he had a Deputy who bore the name of *Ober-Procouror*. Iagoujinski was the first person to hold this post. These *Procourors*, attached, as controlling agents, to the various branches of power, advantageously replaced the *Fiscals*, whose functions had been exercised independently, and who bore an objectionable resemblance to Secret Police.

Until the year 1718, the Russian Senate remained a

mongrel and ill-balanced institution. It could not preside, like the Swedish Senate, over the working of the Administrative Bodies, because no such Bodies existed. It did not consist, like the Swedish Senate, of the Heads of '*Colleges*' gathered in Council, because there were no such Colleges in existence.

Peter early realised the advantages of the collegial form, and carried his admiration to a somewhat exaggerated point. Leibnitz had praised it, telling him its structure 'resembled that of a clock.' Peter would gladly have turned clock-maker, but he had no wheels. Those of the old *prikazes* were all worn out. We do not know how and when the idea of replacing them by these Departments or 'Colleges' grew and developed in his mind. It was the outcome, probably, of a series of suggestions. During the Tsar's stay in England, in 1698, Francis Lee submitted to him, at his own request, a plan of government by seven *Committees* or *Colleges*.[1] In 1702, Patkul suggested, in a memorandum, the organisation of a 'Geheimes Kriegs Collegium';[2] in 1711, Blücher, a Saxon engineer, recommended the establishment of a 'College of Mines,'[3] but the Reformer was still inclined, at that period, to a thoughtless destruction of all centralising institutions. It was not till 1712 that an anonymous memorandum on the utility of a 'College of Commerce' turned his mobile mind in an opposite direction. The Sovereign, with his usual prompt decision, answered the memorandum in most unexpected fashion. By his Ukase, dated 12th February 1712, he decreed the creation of the 'College of Commerce.' The decision in this case did not, it must be acknowledged, go beyond an expressed intention; no more was heard of it till 1715. At that period, the new institution, which had first been attempted at Moscow, made a sudden reappearance at St. Petersburg. It was already provided with a director, bearing the name of Apraxin, and he was about the sum-total of its possessions. But Peter's note-books prove that the idea occupied him, and had grown familiar to his mind. It was still confused enough, floating between an Office (*Prikaz*) of Mines, a Tribunal attached to the Senate, which was to be a 'College

[1] *Proposals given to Peter the Great* (London, 1752).
[2] *Writings and Correspondence of Peter the Great*, vol. ii. pp. 39-50.
[3] Milioukof, p. 567.

of Justice,' and a 'College of Commerce.' But a little later, an autograph note by the Tsar sketches out a complete organisation to consist of six 'Colleges' on the Swedish model.[1] Henry Fick, who was then in the Imperial service, probably had something to do with this plan, and the first detailed project may have been drawn up by him.[2]

He certainly went into Sweden, in December 1715, to study the subject on the spot, but two more years passed before anything was done. Peter was travelling. Towards the end of 1715, he received, through Bocticher, his Resident at Hamburg, some Reflections '*über des Russischen Reiches Staats-Œconomie*,' by Baron Christian Luberas, whose son was in the Russian service,—and Luberas was forthwith employed to draw up a definite plan.

Here, as elsewhere, no general idea inspired the projected reform, and the partial notions out of which it proceeded, were all of foreign origin. The Reformer had no very clear idea, at starting, of whither his steps were to tend, and his horizons broadened as he proceeded on his way. Problems presented themselves to his notice; he employed foreigners to seek for a solution, and they drew up plans; Peter, with his natural aptitude, seized on their principal features, and then called on his Russian collaborators to adapt them to the local needs of his Empire. Thereupon, and, generally, somewhat prematurely, he issued a Ukase. The faults of the conception became evident in its practical working, and Peter's readiness to acknowledge these, was both sincere and wise. He undid what he had begun, and started afresh.

And thus, in spite of many Ukases, the Colleges, in 1717, were still in an unfinished condition. The Tsar confined himself, that year, to deciding on the number and the nature of these bodies, and appointing their presidents. Then the work was stopped by one of his prolonged absences. When Golikof, and Peter's own journal, mention these Colleges as being in active work at this period, they refer to the *Chanceries* of War, of the Admiralty and of Foreign Affairs, which were already currently designated by that name.[3] But the *Kamer-Kollegia*, or Treasury, was not

[1] Sbornik, vol. xi. pp. 285, 286.

[2] Published by Pickarski, in his *History of the Academy of Sciences*, vol. i. p. 23.

[3] Milioukof, p. 589.

regularly established till 1722, and the organisation of the other Colleges was barely sketched out in 1720 and 1721. Peter himself had not much to do with this preliminary work. It was not until 1722, that he took some personal part, with reference to the regulations for the College of the Admiralty, which he desired to draw up himself. It then became evident that he was in complete ignorance of what had already been done, and that his ideas on the subject were of the most rudimentary and childish nature. On the 11th of May 1722, he published a Ukase, commanding that the regulations for all the other Colleges should be copied on those of the Admiralty. The only change to be introduced was that of '*altering the names should it appear necessary*.'[1] Now the regulations for all these other Colleges had already been drawn up, and the 'College of Patrimonial Property' (*Vottchinnaïa Kollegia*), the only one which literally followed the Sovereign's orders, made itself a laughing stock.

During Peter's life, the results of this reform were only partly evident. There was one immediate benefit; I mean the restoration of the unity of the Treasury, which, since the creation of the Governments, had disappeared in the ruins of administrative centralisation. Close upon this came the re-establishment of a properly-balanced Budget, which, since 1704, had also disappeared. But this last benefit was at once imperilled by a swift return, in practical matters, to those national traditions to which the adoption of Western methods was most unpalatable. The principle of generalisation was admitted, but, in practice, all receipts and expenses were specialised, and certain sources of revenue were effected to certain particular outlays. This condition of disorder extended to administrative matters. The Colleges were subordinated to the Senate, but an exception was made in favour of three, those of War, the Navy, and Foreign Affairs, which were permitted the privilege of corresponding directly with the Sovereign, and thus given rank above that of the Chief Assembly. Decentralisation reappeared, and brought insubordination and chaos in its train.

And this was not all. To the Colleges were added 'Financial Provinces' on the Swedish system. This, in itself, was a good thing, but these Provinces were called

[1] *Collected Laws*, No. 4008.

upon to perform the same work as the established Governments, which already formed regular financial and administrative districts. The Colleges themselves, in many respects, held the same functions as the Senate. There was too much machinery now, and not enough men to work it. The Tsar was reduced to sending his Swedish prisoners to fill up his innumerable offices![1] The whole thing had been overdone, and many palaces, like the houses in the new Capital, were likely to be left untenanted. Trouble was experienced, even in finding a sufficient number of respectable-looking Senators. One of the first, Prince Michael Vladimirovitch Dolgorouki, could not write his name.[2] None of them had any experience of business, any idea of their real duty, any desire to perform it, nor, for the most part, any personal integrity whatever. The time of the Colleges was wasted, so one of Peter's Ukases declares, in gossip and abuse 'like women selling at street stalls.' In 1715, Prince Volkonski, a Senator, and one of the Directors of the Mint, named Apouhtin, were convicted of fraud, knouted, and their tongues were pierced with red-hot irons.[3] Such punishments did not, as a general rule, result in the removal of the culprit from the public service—the difficulty of replacing him was far too serious. In 1723, Skorniakof-Pissaref lost his office, his titles and his goods, and was degraded to the rank of a private soldier, but he was at once given a commission to superintend the Ladoga Canal Works.

Peter contrived to place his army and his Administration on a European footing, but he found it easier to secure soldiers than administrators. The Reformer borrowed the Collegial form from Europe, but he did not succeed in assimilating its living spirit, and principle,—of common toil and divided responsibility. He never endeavoured, indeed, to secure what a recent Russian writer has described as 'too exotic a fruit to flourish in our country.'[4] All Peter attained was the establishment of a Bureaucracy.

[1] *Collected Laws*, No. 3101.
[2] Petrovski, p. 50.
[3] De Bie's Despatch to the States-General April, 26, 1715 (Dutch Archives).
[4] Milioukof, p. 565.

II

The blemishes in the great Tsar's work are largely accounted for by the nature of the moral foundation on which he built it. This is as evident in police, as in administrative, matters. His great object, in this latter department, was the repression of brigandage, a plague-spot which the savage habits of the period, the national inclination to the nomadic form of existence, and the political troubles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had maintained and deepened. In vain did the Sovereign strive to burn it out with hot irons; the hand of every class in society was against him. In 1695, a Prince Ouhtomski and two members,—brothers,—of the Shérémétief family, were taken red-handed, sacking a house in Moscow, and murdering the inhabitants.[1] The evil had been increased by the manner in which Peter's predecessors had hesitated between two methods of cure—excessive severity, and extreme clemency. They had even condescended to offers of pardon, and entreaties to desist. Matters had reached a point at which all further hesitation was impossible,—and my readers will imagine to which side Peter inclined. He issued orders that any robber, who was not hanged, was to have his nose cut off '*to the bone*,' and another edict commanded that all such malefactors should, without any exception whatsoever, be hanged on the spot. This remedy was disastrous in its effects. According to Possoshkof, and even on Peter's own admission, brigandage steadily increased. This was the result of the extreme severity, and generally unreasonable nature, of the existing *régime*. The brigands and the Cossack mutineers, were, most of them, insurgents against the Tsar's rule. The malefactors had their '*artels*,' just as, elsewhere, there have been revolutionary clubs. The police regulations at St. Petersburg were numerous, minute, and altogether excessive. In a country where mendicity had been, for centuries, one of the ordinary elements of social life, alms-giving was punished, and the beggar was threatened with the knout and with hard labour. During 1719, five or six persons were daily flogged on this account.[2] This, in itself, proves how ineffectual the measure was. And those taken by the police to put a stop

[1] Jeliaboujski, pp. 19, 42.
[2] Kostomarof, *History of Russia*, vol. ii. p. 629.

to another national plague-spot—the incessant fires—were equally useless. During one day, in 1712, 9 monasteries, 86 churches, 35 charitable institutions, 32 public buildings and 4000 private houses, were burnt in Moscow, and 136 human victims fell a prey to the devouring element.[1]

It was a hard thing for Russian society to cast off the conditions of savagery, and the justice of the country did but little to help the administration and the police to forward the work of evolution.

III

With regard to judicial matters, Peter found himself face to face with an inveterate idea, only quite recently eradicated from the Russian mind, that all functions, whether administrative or judicial, constituted not a duty, but a profitable privilege, for their holder. This was the affirmation and perpetuation of the ancient system of the *Kormlenié* (that which feeds). The only object of the office was held to be the support of the official.[2] 'In Russia,' wrote Krijanitch, a Servian, and contemporary of Locke, 'justice is a saleable commodity.' Possoshkof repeats the assertion in another form, and all foreigners, Herberstein, Fletcher, Olearius, and Maskiewicz, refer to the evil. Peter could not do away with it. In 1724, he was still making laws against dishonest judges.

The Dukes of Moscow had won their supremacy, not so much by the sword, as by gifts bestowed on Tartar officials. Russia had been brought up in this school, and bore its mark. Bribery was in the blood. Peter did not turn his attention to this portion of his work till somewhat late in his career. With the exception of a Ukase against bribes, published in 1714, and merely amplified by that of 1724, and some measures taken, in 1716, to remedy the slowness of criminal procedure, and clear the prisons, he made no attempt at any general reform, till 1718. His attention being then attracted in that direction, he endeavoured, as usual, to do everything at once, and put matters on a European footing in a moment. He turned once more to Swedish models, and caused a mass of documents to be copied at Stockholm, for his information. He deprived the *Voïevodes* of their

[1] Solovief, vol. xvi. p. 254.
[2] See Nil Popof, *Tatishtchef and his Times*, p. 25.

judicial powers, established inferior courts of two classes in the provinces, and instituted Courts of Appeal in the capital, and in the more important towns.

Here, as elsewhere, the Reformer made a considerable effort, and showed an admirable sense of his own duty. A complainant applied to him, he refused to hear him, or to receive his written request. The man said, 'My complaint is against you.' The Sovereign received it, submitted the matter to the Senate, and paid, without a murmur, the damages to which he was condemned.[1] Some of his ideas were excellent,—such as the Ukase of 1716, forbidding the torture of women about to become mothers (excepting, we are forced to admit, in the case of inquiries 'affecting the safety of the State'), and the abolition of the barbarous custom of the *Pravièje*, in 1718. But the general result was far from satisfactory. After Shafirof's trial in 1723, there appeared on the judge's table in every court in the Empire, a strange three-sided erection of gilded wood, crowned with a double eagle, which has remained there till this day. On this, Peter caused to be inscribed the text of three edicts, simultaneously published at that period, which are really nothing but a violent diatribe against the behaviour of the judges,—against magistrates, whose sole object was to hide themselves under the mantle of justice, and so to violate its laws by twisting their meaning in a way 'unknown in other countries,'—against those who professed not to know or understand the laws they were charged to administer,—and those who, like Shafirof, ventured to censure, and openly disobey, the laws they represented.

There were two obstacles to the realisation of any immediate progress in judicial matters. The first, and the greatest, was the absolute impossibility of giving any idea of law its proper value, in the midst of surroundings which were a negation of all law. One of Peter's greatest merits certainly was, that he freed this idea from the clouds of savagery and brutality which darkened it, in his subjects' eyes. He was the first person to draw attention to a principle, in certain respects independent of, and superior to, the Sovereign's own will. Once the law was established, every soul, beginning with the Tsar himself, owed it obedience. Peter set the example. But, unhappily,

[1] Popof, *Tatishtchef and his Times*, p. 17.

he had hardly won this victory over a condition of barbarism, before he compromised its benefits, and diminished its scope, by the exercise and abuse of a power he himself forgot to control. He did indeed bow before the law, but the law was only his personal will, expressed in a Ukase—it was often arbitrary, and always changeable. A great poet, whose desire to do all honour to the glory of the national hero has transformed him into a historian, has claimed to discover a characteristic difference between Peter's institutions and his edicts. The first, he believes, emanated from a far-reaching and wise intelligence. The second were the dictates of caprice, often a cruel one, and were 'written, as it were, with the knout.' The first, designed to last eternally, or, at all events, for a very prolonged period; the second, the momentary whim, as one might think, 'of an impatient and despotic provincial proprietor.'[1] This remark does not strike us as being absolutely correct, when we glance at the history of Peter's institutions, which he himself made, and unmade, and remade, over and over again. None of his legislative acts bear any sign of eternal duration. There is no doubt that he always desired to do the best he could. The care invariably taken to explain, and with some prolixity, the motive of each decision, and in what points it will be superior to the previous state of things, is a very noticeable feature. Traces of this didactic method appear, even at the present day, in Russian legislation. But the 'best' is only what, at a given moment, appears best to him. All through his legislation, it should be noted, there is a radical separation between his idea of the law, and any conception of legal morality. The law, in the Tsar's eyes, was not *what was just*, but what *ought, or ought not, to be done*—for reasons very frequently quite removed from moral ethics. The guilty man, who ought to be punished, was not the man who did a bad action, but simply the man who *acted in contravention to the text of the Tsar's ukase*. The very manner in which the penalties of the law were applied throws a curious light on this subject. In January 1724, a French artisan, of the name of Guillaume Belin, was condemned to the galleys for murder. His sentence was commuted, and he was sent to the naval dockyards to ply his trade—that of a locksmith—and teach it to the native workmen. The whole

[1] Poushkin, *Works*, vol. iv. p. 327.

judicial spirit of the period revolved between two poles, despotism and utilitarianism.[1] Occasionally, the punishment to which the culprit was sentenced was replaced by his admission into the Orthodox Church, and Baptism was substituted for the knout![2]

I come to the second obstacle. Peter made many laws, but their abundance, and their incessant production, made it impossible to gather them into a Code. The earliest Russian Code, Ivan Vassilévitch's *Soudiébnik* (1542), contains little more than directions for judicial combats, to take the place of more direct proofs. The *Oulojénié* of Alexis (1650), was for the most part, a manual of practical jurisprudence. In 1695, under the twin rule of Ivan and Peter, the need of a fresh codification made itself felt, and the Administrative Offices (*Prikaz*) were ordered, by ukase, to prepare the necessary elements. This work, it may be concluded, was not very zealously proceeded with, for it was made over, in 1700, to the Council of Boyards. This Council addressed a request to the *Prikaz* for the necessary information, and did nothing further. It soon passed out of existence, and Peter himself, for successive years, had many other things to think of. It was not till 1714 that the idea of codification re-occurred to him, and this time, naturally, the work was confided to the Senate. The Senate began as the Council had begun. The *Prikaz*, as in 1700, did nothing at all, and the business came to a standstill.

There was a fair excuse for all this non-accomplishment. How could any Code be drawn up while the publication of laws flowed on unceasingly, so that the conditions of the problem were undergoing constant change? Everything altered from day to day. One wave carried away what the last had cast up. In 1719, the Reformer was fain to have recourse to one of those heroic methods which so specially attracted him. Instead of codifying existing laws, why not use one already in existence? His mind had been haunted, during the preceding year, by the idea of a judicial anthology, in which Danish and Swedish laws were to appear side by side with a selection from indigenous Russian legislation. He was now inclined to take a shorter cut, and simply to adopt

[1] Filippof, *Peter the Great's Reform and the Penal Code* (Moscow, 1895), pp. 156, 249.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 255.

the Swedish Code, from which he proposed to eliminate all provisions unsuitable to his own country, substituting others borrowed from the *Oulojénié* of 1650. In 1720, the Senate nominated a special Commission for the execution of this programme, and associated certain foreign jurists with its labours. But these only resulted, some time in the following year, in the solemn recognition of the absolute inappropriateness of the Swedish Code to Russian needs. Meanwhile, the tide of Ukases rose yet higher and higher.

In 1724, Peter, in spite of his constitutional stubbornness, seems to have abandoned all idea of fresh attempts in this direction, and a Ukase, dated March 11th, decreed that in default of any other Code, all future laws were to be added to the *Oulojénié* of 1650. He can hardly be personally blamed for this failure. To attain complete success, two things were needful, and both failed him. The true judicial idea had not sufficiently established itself in the mind and conscience of even a small and select number of his subjects, and he had no jurists capable of seconding his efforts. The political and social edifice, thus hastily raised, was to make but a poor show, in this respect, for many a year to come. It reminds us of an old wall roughly whitewashed, with its cracks, and moss, and fungi showing through the thin coat of plaster. The whole fabric, indeed, had something of this quality. The work of ten centuries cannot be performed in twenty years, even though the builder work with fire and sword.

CHAPTER VII

THE ARMY AND THE NAVY

I. The Army—Precedents—Peter only hurried the movement forward—Strange beginnings—'The Pleasure Regiments'—Good and bad qualities of the new formations—Spirit and substance—Narva—On the right road—The moral element.

II. The Navy—Precedents—The hasty and intemperate nature of this new undertaking—The fighting Navy, and the Merchant Navy—Double failure—What remained of the work after the Tsar's death.

I

PETER did not endow Russia with a good financial system, but he gave her a military organisation, the value of which has been amply proved, and which forms one of the Reformer's most undoubted claims to glory. Yet, even on this head, his work was not the absolute personal creation it is frequently described as being, and it is open to criticism in various respects. I shall not enter on a discussion for which I do not feel myself competent, but shall confine myself to a short statement of the most striking features of the subject, and the most authoritative opinions on it.

The great Tsar's predecessors may fairly be said to have had 200,000 armed men, and not a single soldier. The army, picturesque as it was, was anything but military. Knights of the Middle Ages, clad from head to foot in mail, rode beside horsemen mounted on miserable bare-backed jades, armed with sticks, and provisioned with a bag of rye cast over their shoulders. These heterogeneous war-bands were not regularly recruited; they were a mere collection of armed men, belonging to one class only, that of the landed proprietors. There was no preparation, no training in the art of war. Military drill, in times of peace, was utterly unknown. There were no organised commands; the

leadership of the troops belonged, as a right, to the chiefs of the local aristocracy—the Boyards and the *Okolnitchyïé*. There was no commissariat. The men equipped and fed themselves as they chose, and as best they could. And finally, the army, being almost exclusively composed of cavalry, could not fulfil the needs of modern warfare.

But this state of things did not continue unmodified until Peter's accession. Even in the sixteenth century the Tsar Féodor Ivanovitch (1584-1598) had some regular troops, drilled and equipped in European fashion. Two foreign officers in his service, Margeret, a Frenchman, and Von Rosen, a Livonian, commanded a body of 2,500 men, most of them Poles and Livonians, but with a few Scotchmen, Danes, Swedes, Frenchmen, Greeks, and subjects of the Emperor.[1] Peter's immediate predecessors, Alexis and Féodor Aléxiéiévitch, went yet further. They left behind them a first attempt at a general reform, on democratic lines, of the command, recruiting, and organisation of the army. A commission established in 1681, under the presidency of Prince Vassili Galitzin, suggested that the principle of individual capacity should be considered in the selection of military chiefs. At the same time, the personal service of landed proprietors was replaced by recruits (*Datotshnyïé*) supplied by them in proportion to the extent of their properties; and, finally, permanent bodies of regular troops, foreign and even native, including some regiments of infantry, came into existence.

Peter's personal work was limited to a somewhat unmethodical, and, in the early days at least, a yet more whimsical development, of these resources. On 30th January 1683, Sergius Bouhvostof, a Court groom attached to the 'pleasure stables,' was enrolled in the military 'pleasure service,' which the young Tsar had taken it into his head to institute. This man was to be the first soldier of the Préobrajenski regiment. Other *konioukhy* were successively enrolled, and these were followed by young men belonging to the noble families opposed to Sophia's rule. In 1684, there were 300 volunteers, and the germs of a military establishment at Préobrajenskoïé. In the following year Peter ventured to beat up recruits openly. The number soon rose to 1000, and a second depôt was created at Siémionof, from which place

[1] Oustrialof, vol. i. p. 179.

a second regiment of the Guard took its name. In 1690 and 1691, the Tsar held the first manœuvres of these troops; these were called the 'Siémionof Campaign.' In 1692, the 'pleasure regiments' were definitely organised, and Peter took the rank of a sergeant in the Préobrajenski. During 1694, in another series of manœuvres, known as the 'Kojouhof Campaign,' they figured as regularly constituted tactical units, and lost the name and quality of 'pleasure regiments.' The time for playing at soldiers had gone by, and Peter was preparing for serious work. That same year a company of bombardiers was formed, in which the Tsar himself figured, under the name of Peter Alexéief.

This was the nucleus of the future army, which, from that period, was to have nothing in common, whether as, to composition, discipline, or instruction, with the old *rat'*, or war-bands of various arms. The only old regiments sharing, to a certain extent, in the new organisation, were Lefort's,—one of comparatively recent formation,—and the Boutyrski regiment, which had been raised in 1642, under Michael Féodorovitch.

The relative superiority of these troops was proved under the walls of Azof, in 1695 (see p. 77), but Peter did nothing to extend their organisation, and make it general, until 1699. All he did was to destroy the *Streltsy*,—thereby wiping out the old army, without putting a new one in its place. It was the Swedish war which finally called forth the great Tsar's creative activity. Then there was an explosion, a tremendous rush, of ideas and new efforts, which seemed to defy time, space, reason, and substance. Many of his notions were original, all his efforts were bold and energetic. To begin with, he gave up the system of enrolment as then practised in most European armies. He adopted a method of recruiting which only differed from the compulsory service of the present day, by being collective instead of individual. This difference was, indeed, a fundamental error. The necessity enforced on society of furnishing a proportionate number of recruits, carried with it the fatal practice of substitution, of buying off individual service, and of hiring by contract. To this Peter added service *for life*, which was in direct contradiction with his own principle of equality—for the whole nation could not possibly serve in an army, the ranks of which were only cleared by death,—which separated

the army from the general population, and made it a class apart, and which inevitably filled the regiments with men who were unfit for active service. His whole conception, though in advance, in certain respects, of the usual European idea, lacked proper balance. And, to begin with, it was a purely material creation. It did not possess the *spirit* which is the real strength of Western military institutions. This was soon to be proved at the siege of Narva. Peter there brought 32,000 regular troops into action, but the Préobrajenski and Siémionovski regiments alone made any stand, and even these, so Possoshkof declares, fired twenty volleys without killing a single man.

This second experience convinced the young sovereign at last of the value of that moral element which he had hitherto completely overlooked, and thus set him on the right path. In future, without neglecting other elements of effective strength, his constant care was to form the spirit of his soldiers; and this is a greater title to glory than all his cannon foundries and powder factories at Ohta, Toula, and St. Petersburg, than his School of Military Engineering at Moscow, and even than the earliest known attempt at raising a body of horse-artillery, which has been generally ascribed to him. By the end of his reign, his regular army consisted of 40 infantry and 33 dragoon regiments, 57,956 foot soldiers, and 36,333 cavalry, without reckoning his irregular troops, Cossacks, Kalmuks, and so forth. But imposing as these numbers were, the sum-total of his armies is a matter of secondary importance; the great value of his work lies in the wonderful spirit he breathed into his men. The Russian soldier was transformed, by him, out of a simple, half-conscious brute, into a thinking being, ruled, whatever his detractors may say, by other motives than the fear of punishment. An ideal has been set before him, and he follows it. Such active courage, and intelligent daring, cannot be beaten into men with blows. I will point out one feature in refutation of certain opinions on this subject, which strike me as having been too lightly adopted. At the very moment when the war of the Spanish Succession was considered, in the West, to have absolutely proved the superiority of mechanical order in battle formation, Peter was putting forward the principle of the independent organic action of tactical units. This spirit is breathed in all his military instructions and regulations,

which prove his desire to develop and cultivate the personal initiative of his fighting men.[1]

His military legislation, carefully studied as it was, and for a wonder, successfully codified, does not always deserve the same praise. Its disciplinary and penal provisions are quite absurd. They are in direct opposition to the principles adopted for the organisation and education of his armed forces. It has been asserted, in his defence, that the severity of his measures, and the barbarity of his methods of repression,—the stake, the gallows, the quartering of culprits, and the cutting-off of their noses and their ears,—was a mere imitation of foreign models, more especially of the French code, with certain merciful modifications of their severity.[2] But this plea is not convincing, because it overlooks the difference which Peter's military reform permitted to exist, —which it even sanctioned and developed,—between the composition of the Russian army, and those of Western countries. The Russian soldier of Peter's time was not, in principle at all events, a recruit, in the French or German sense. He was not drawn, as too often happened in other countries, from the very dregs of the population; he was rather, in principle at all events, the representative of what was best in his class, and as a matter of fact, he did, generally speaking, represent a decidedly superior element. But this was what Peter himself completely overlooked, and therefore it was that he succeeded in arousing a general desire for flight, as is eloquently proved by his numerous ukases with respect to the *niétshiks* (refractory recruits), who were unable to endure a military service which had become a pitiless and ignominious servitude.[3]

On the other hand, all the Tsar's energy and knowledge could not triumph over certain causes of inferiority, which, even to a quite recent date, have seemed to threaten the success of the Russian arms—I refer to defects of administration, and the incapacity of persons in high command. This experience throws light, as I think, on another difference,—that which, though frequently denied, certainly exists

[1] Maslovski, *The Russian Armies in the Time of Peter the Great* (Moscow, 1883), p. 47.

[2] Bobrovski, *Military Law in Western Europe at the Time of the Constitution of Standing Armies* (Moscow, 1882), p. 462.

[3] Rosenheim, *Précis of the History of Russian Military Institutions*, 1878, p. 215.

between the natural and, so to speak, instinctive qualities and virtues of the human race, and those others which can only be produced by long and laborious culture. Peter was powerless, in face of the eternal laws of the intellectual and moral world. Courage and even *honour* are elementary phenomena, and may appear under conditions of savagery. It is quite otherwise with knowledge and *integrity*. Ancient Muscovy was not a warlike country. The Dukes of Moscow won their victories over the Tartars by means of their patient and cunning policy. Modern Russia could not become a nation of heroic warriors again, at one bound. Peter found, just below the surface of the national character, the necessary instincts for this transformation,—a return to the distant traditions of the Norman period. Further he could not go, but, when he gave his country the army of Poltava, he forged a wonderful instrument of material power and moral progress. That army has made the greatness of contemporary Russia.

II

In considering the Navy created during the great reign, whether for mercantile or fighting purposes, I shall venture to be more critical. I am inclined to regard the haste and excess of its production as the result of an atavic instinct, which, when we consider the local circumstances, would appear to have developed into a mania, and become the wild caprice of a despot. Precedents, for such there had been, should have warned Peter not to allow himself to be carried away by his imagination. In the reign of Michael Féodorovitch, certain Holstein merchants begged permission to build vessels at Nijni Novgorod, and to utilise the waters of the Volga for their trade with Persia. In later years, Alexis Mihailovitch himself began building ships at Diédinof, at the confluence of the Moskva and the Oka. All these attempts ended in failure; some of the Dutch ships were lost in the Caspian, others were taken and burnt by Stenka Razin at Astrakhan.[1] The very nature of things, in this country without a seaboard, seems to have protested against the violence done her.

[1] Viéssiélago, *Précis of a History of the Russian Navy*, vol i. p. 5, etc.

Peter ran a yet greater risk for himself, and for his Empire, when he ventured on the stormy waters of the White Sea in a hastily constructed yacht, built in his improvised shipyards at Archangel. Aided by Dutch ship-builders, he contrived, as early as 1694, to possess three vessels, intended to do double duty,—armed for war, and fitted for commerce,—a type imposed on these first attempts, by the fear of pirates, and which was long continued in the naval architecture of the country. But this squadron was nothing but a toy, and the young Sovereign was so fully conscious of the fact, that, in 1695, he suddenly turned his back on his Northern port, and all the work he had made himself there, just as he might have turned his back on any pleasure party. He came back to the fresh waters of the Iaouza, where his first attempts at navigation had been made. He was bent on preparing the elements of a flotilla, built on the model of a Dutch galley, brought there piecemeal, on sledges,—which flotilla he proposed to transport by land to Voronèje, whence it was to proceed down the Don, and take part in the siege of Azof.[1]

The doubtful success of this fresh attempt has already been described. In the following year, the war flotilla took its place amongst the young Tsar's cast-off toys. Peter's chief desire then became, to possess a merchant navy, and, faithful to his usual manner of conception and procedure, he deemed it possible to bring one into existence, by merely embodying his will in a decree, and using authoritative methods. He called his council together at Préobrajenskoïé, on the 4th of November, and ordered all owners, lay or ecclesiastic, of 100 houses and more, to form themselves into companies, for the the construction of merchant vessels. The Archimandrites who held domains under the abbeys, were not to be excused, and the Patriarch was called on to supply two frigates, of fifty guns each! The number of ships to be fitted out was definitely fixed; there were to be ninety, and the State undertook to build eighty more. Their design and equipment was formally regulated, and they were all to be finished within two years,—under pain of death to the laggards! The order was obeyed; everything was ready on the appointed day, but, on 20th April 1700, a fresh Ukase decreed the suppression of the companies

[1] Tsviétaief, *The Creation of the Russian Fleet*, 1696, p. 12.

which had so obediently organised themselves, and built a fleet they evidently could not learn how to use.[1]

All this expenditure of time, and energy, and money, only resulted in a naval demonstration, which, it must be acknowledged, had a certain value of its own. In August 1699, a Russian ship sailed across the Black Sea, and cast anchor before Constantinople. The action was purely pacific, and the vessel brought the Tsar's two plenipotentiaries, who were charged to negotiate a definite treaty. But the Turks offered vehement opposition. Everything they could think of was brought into play—diplomatic arguments, entreaties, and even threats. But Peter stood firm, and this demonstrative character has never left the Russian navy. It has always been used with a special view to moral effect, and thus its best service has been done. As for the flotilla which was shut up at Voronèje, because there was not enough water to float it down the Don, it proved of no service when hostilities with Turkey recommenced in 1711. The surrender of Azof to the Turks deprived Peter of all future hope of using it. Part of it was made over to the Porte, and the rest was left to rot.

The Northern fleet, called into existence by the necessities of the Swedish war, was a more serious undertaking. There was something heroic about its beginnings. Two Russian sailors, who had been seized by the Swedes, and forced to pilot them during an attack on Archangel, in June 1701, ran the enemy's ships under the guns of the Fort, where they were stranded and captured. They themselves were wounded, counterfeited death, and contrived to escape. Then came several victorious fights on the Lake of Ladoga, of which the Russians retained possession. In 1703, after the conquest of the Mouth of the Neva, a ship-building yard was established at Olonets, at the confluence of the Mégréga and the Olonka. The next year, the St. Petersburg Admiralty had come into existence, and the young Baltic fleet carried troops and provisions to the sieges of Derpt and Narva. In 1705, it repulsed a Swedish attack on the Island of Kotlin; in 1706, it captured a large Swedish vessel, the 'Espern,' under the walls of Viborg, and, in 1710, it played a part in the capture of that town. But Sweden was mistress of the Gulf of Finland, and blockaded all the Baltic shores.

[1] Viéssiélago, vol. i. p. 13, etc.

The mere numerical superiority of her fleet sufficed to ensure her this advantage. Peter had indeed boasted, when he met Augustus at Birzé, that he possessed eighty ships, of sixty and eighty guns each—one of which, built on his own designs, was to be called the 'Divine Foresight.' The prow of this ship was to be adorned with a figure of St. Peter, surmounting an allegorical representation, also of the young Tsar's design, of a boat manned by children.[1] The plans and drawings had, doubtless, been distributed, but the squadron with which he made his victorious attack on Helsingfors and Borga, ten years later, only reckoned seven ships of the line and four frigates, three of which ships, and two frigates, had been bought abroad.

This same squadron, escorting a flotilla of two hundred galleys and small craft, figures in the first naval victory of any importance of which Russian annals can boast. This took place at Hango-Udde, where the Swedish Admiral Erensköld handed his sword to *Peter Mihaïlof*, on the 25th of July 1714. The same squadron ravaged the coast of Sweden in 1719, and largely contributed, by the assistance it rendered to the descent of Admiral Lascy on the Swedish shore in 1721, to the conclusion of the Peace of Nystadt. But the success of these operations, which, for the most part, were *demonstrations*, was secured by the number and excellence of the land forces on board the ships. Thus, in 1719, Apraxin had 27,000 infantry under his command. The battles in which the fleet took part were invariably fought close in shore. They were not real sea fights, and success was ensured, in every case, by the territorial element, which predominated.[2]

To sum the matter up, Peter, whether we look at it from the fighting or the commercial point of view, passionately and unsuccessfully endeavoured to make his Russians a nation of sailors. The inhabitants of a huge continent, washed, on one side, by most inhospitable seas, can hardly be blamed for not having fallen in with his fancy. Russia, even to this present day, is, commercially speaking, largely dependent on foreign navies. The fighting navy of the Don, with its imitations of Dutch, English, and Venetian galleys, was an expensive and unfortunate experiment. The neces-

[1] Solovief, vol. xiv. p. 331.
[2] Mychlaievski, *The Finland War*, 1712-1714 (1896).

sity for reducing the draught of the new vessels made it impossible to reproduce the elementary nautical qualities of the foreign models. Thanks to their less unfavourable local conditions, and to the experience acquired by the Sovereign, his northern dockyards were more successful, and even caused an anxiety in England, which subsequent events proved to be somewhat premature.[1] Here, as elsewhere, the exaggeration and precipitation, which were the cardinal faults of all the great Tsar's efforts, diminished their success. His timbers were too green, his rigging was of inferior quality, his sailors were ill-taught. Leaks and broken masts, unskilful and inferior crews, hurriedly recruited, and frequently decimated by sickness, constantly appear in the annals of these squadrons. The number of vessels of every kind—ships of the line, frigates and galleys—built during Peter's reign, has been reckoned at something near a thousand. In 1734, nine years after his death, when their co-operation was needed for the projected blockade of Stettin, there were not fifteen fit to put to sea, and not an officer could be found to command any one of them.[2]

Peter went too fast, and, above all, he tried to go too far. It would have been a good thing to give Russia a fleet; it was not a reasonable thing to endeavour to turn Russia into a second Holland. He established ship-building yards at five-and-twenty points, many of them in the very centre of *terra firma*, and abandoned them, one after the other.[3] He replaced the Department of Naval Construction at Vladimir by the Department of the Admiralty at Moscow, and each of these places was more than three hundred and seventy-five miles from the sea. He thus gave his creation an artificial character, which it has never lost. His naval enterprises, which he carried to St. Petersburg in 1712, with the 'Chancery of the War Fleet,' and finally concentrated there, in 1719, at the 'College of the Admiralty,' would seem to have been principally destined as an amusement and a delusion to himself. They certainly supplied the opposition with which his whole work was to wrestle, and to which I am now about to refer, in concluding this work, with a certain amount of cogent argument, if not, indeed, with any actual justification.

[1] Sbornik, vol. lxi. p. 563. [2] Viéssiélago, vol. i. pp. 54-70. [3] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VIII

THE OPPOSITION—THE TSAREVITCH ALEXIS

I. Collective and isolated resistance—Plots and attacks—Nature of the opposition personified by Alexis.

II. The education of the Tsarevitch—His first struggle with the parental authority—Alexis will not be a soldier—He is left at Moscow—Mutual sympathy—The clergy and the aristocracy—Idea of a change of ruler—His father intervenes again—Alexis must *serve*—A bad recruit—The Tsarevitch too ill to be present at the Battle of Poltava—He is sent abroad to study and take a wife—Marriage—The Princess Charlotte—Honeymoon—An early disturbance of conjugal harmony—Alexis at the head of a party—Charlotte's death—Catherine bears a son—Disinheritance—Prince or monk—First and second requisition.

III. A legend—Charlotte alive—Her adventures—An explanation.

IV. Final requisition—Peter sends for his son—The Tsarevitch's flight—The pursuit—The Tsar's bloodhounds—Vienna—Ehrenberg—Naples—Euphrosine appears—The treachery of the mistress—Betrayal of Alexis—The return.

V. Abdication—The Moscow inquiry—Alexis gives up his friends—Executions—Paternal forgiveness—Plans for the future—Marriage with Euphrosine—Confidence and happiness.

VI. St. Petersbnrg—Arrival of the mistress—Cross-examination—A witness for the prosecution—A fresh inquiry—The prince is arrested—Brought into court—Torture—Confession and recantation—The High Court of Justice—The sentence.

VII. Death—Various versions—Probabilities—Material reality and moral responsibility—European opinion—The judgment of posterity—Voltaire—Before the bar of History.

I

THE great Reformer's work, and the difficulties with which he had to contend, have not been fairly judged even by his own peers. 'He worked on his people,' said the great Frederick, not, perhaps, without a touch of jealousy, 'just as aquafortis bites into the steel.' This comparison is hardly just. The Russian nation did not preserve a passive attitude under the rough and sudden attack made on its habits,

its sense of decorum, and its inner feelings,—an attack which more resembled blows dealt with hammer and axe, than the slow action of corrosive fluid on the metal plate. Peter, in the wildest moments of his rage and desire to punish, often answered violence with violence. This is proved by the minutes of the *Préobrajenskoïé Prikaz*. 'What Tsar is this?' cried a prisoner named Vanka Borliout, who was put to the question, in 1698, 'he is a Turk; he eats meat on Wednesdays and Fridays, and eats frogs! He has exiled his wife, and lives with a foreigner!' 'What Tsar is this?' Here, as afterwards, the exclamation, with its note of mingled astonishment and indignation, was the cry of a wounded conscience. And then followed the argument, 'It is not possible that this man, to whom none of those things which, for centuries past, have made the life and faith of Holy Russia, appear sacred, can be born of a Russian man and woman! He must be the son of some German,—the son of Lefort and of a German woman substituted in the cradle for the child of Alexis and Nathalia! The real Peter Aléxiéiévitch remained abroad in 1697, the *Niemtsy* kept him, and sent an impostor to take his place. Or perhaps, indeed, this may be Antichrist!'[1] In 1701, a writer named Talitski was condemned to death for having lent his pen to the support of this latter supposition. And, in later years, Stephen Iavorski wrote a book, full of quotations from the Apocalypse, to demonstrate the falseness of the idea.[2] In 1718, a foreigner, travelling through a village on the road to St. Petersburg, noticed a crowd of three or four hundred men. He inquired of a pope as to the meaning of what he saw, and was told, 'Our fathers and our brothers have no beards; our altars are left unserved; our most sacred laws are violated; and we are groaning under a foreign tyranny.' What he saw was the beginning of an insurrection.[3]

The example made of the *Streltsy* had, indeed, discouraged any attempt at concerted revolt, but individual cases of mutiny, and even of violent resistance, were still frequent, and occasionally took a very simple and touching form. One poor gentleman brought a written protest, addressed to God Almighty, into the church, and laid it before the holy images,

[1] Kostomarof in *Russian Antiquities*, 1875, vol. xii.
[2] Siémievski, *Slovo i Dielo*, p. 107, etc.
[3] La Vie's despatch from St. Petersburg, Jan. 10. 1718 (French Foreign Office).

in the presence of the Tsar.[1] But, in most cases, the fanatical followers of the Domostroï, wounded in their tenderest point, raised angry hands, and strove to render blow for blow. Attempts on the person of the Sovereign occurred almost every year. In 1718, La Vie refers to the *twenty-ninth* which had taken place since the beginning of the reign. 'There is no doubt,' wrote Campredon, in 1721, 'that if the Tsar were to die, this State would go back to its ancient form of government, for which *all his subjects* secretly sigh.'

The opposition was not really so general; it grew more and more timid and weak, as the new order of things gained consistency and strength. It failed to interfere seriously with its development, but it never gave in, to the very end. The elements of this opposition, the motives which swayed it, its special means of action, its spirit and its character, are all evidently summed up in the gloomy incidents of which Peter's eldest son was the pitiful hero. And as I, too, must shortly sum up my own work, I shall give those incidents the principal place in the study for the purpose of which this closing chapter is written.

My task has been facilitated, in some ways, and complicated in others, by the multiplicity of former efforts devoted to the same subject. History, romance, drama, and poetry, in all countries, and every language, have essayed to conjure up the tragic picture of the unhappy Tsarevitch. A brilliant French writer has endowed the somewhat rough-hewn work of Russian historians with the personal charm of his own brilliant style.[2] I desire to avoid all useless repetition. But, as it seems to me, the true features of these events, and of the persons who played their part in them, have not, as yet, been brought out with the desirable clearness, and the greatest attainable amount of veracity. I do not claim that I shall succeed, as I would fain have succeeded; but my readers will forgive me if I make the attempt.

II

Alexis was born on February 19th, 1690. His portraits help us to understand his story, and the terrible prosecution with which it closed. He was neither ugly nor

[1] Russian State Papers, 1878, vol. ii. p. 353.
[2] Vicomte Melchior de Vogué, *Le Fils de Pierre le Grand* (Paris, 1884).

handsome; his forehead was full; his eyes were round and uneasy, and his whole appearance puny and obstinate. Neither physically nor morally, did he resemble his father; yet he was anything but the ill-favoured creature he is so frequently represented to have been. He strikes me as a man whose health, never strong, was early ruined by excess of every kind, but he had no actual infirmity. His intelligence was naturally clear; he was fond of reading, had the Slavonic facility for foreign languages, and the Slavonic love of knowledge,—of a certain kind, at all events. Like his Uncle Féodor, he preferred theological works. This marked the old Russian spirit, and also the effect of the *methodus instructionis* drawn up for the young prince by one of his tutors, the Baron Von Huissen, who seems to have been a very devout person. Certain extracts from Baronius, which figure in the records of Peter's prosecution of his son, as telling against the culprit, strike me as indicating quite different tendencies from those suspected by his stern father. They seem to me the evidence of a generous and tender-hearted soul. Alexis found pleasure in the thought that Theodosius and Valentinian habitually liberated prisoners on the occasion of the Easter Festivities, forbade capital executions during Lent, and ordered that firewood and bedding should never be taken from the poor. He was glad too, it must be admitted, to remember that one of these Sovereigns had observed the Fasts with considerable severity, and that the other had been killed, because he had attempted to interfere with the rights of the Church. Certain points about this son and grandson of semi-Asiatic despots, mark him, in my eyes, as what we should call, nowadays, a liberal-minded man, though others prove him a fanatic, of the purest water. But he was neither uncultivated nor dull-minded. Sometimes he was actually witty. When he was asked, in the course of cross-examination, how he had dared to foretell that the Tsar might one day lose St. Petersburg, he replied, 'Well! he has lost Azof!' He was violent, coarse, and brutal, but it must be remembered that, when still very young, he was taught to drink to excess, and that he was frequently intoxicated. He pulled his second tutor, Viaziemski, about by his hair, and he even dragged at the beard of his Confessor, the Proto-pope Ignatief. But these fits of rage seem innocent compared

with those in which he saw his father daily indulge. Violence, coarseness, and brutality were the salient characteristics of the society in which he lived.

I do not even notice any deliberate intention, on his part, of hostility to the reforming movement; I find him taking an interest in the visit paid to foreign countries by the son of one of his servants, and in the studies he is pursuing,—insisting that the boy should be taught Latin, German, and even French. But what alarmed and estranged him from the revolution by means of which Peter desired to hurry on this movement, was the excess of effort, the too great violence of the shock, the too great suddenness of the change, and, in this respect, he did not stand alone. The repugnance which put him out of tune with his father, was shared by a good half of Russia.

He remained with his mother till he was nine years old. The earliest effects of the Reform had not been fortunate for her, and of this the child had doubtless been made aware. In 1699, the unhappy Eudoxia was shut up in the Convent of Souzdal; the separation was probably a cruel pang and a cause of early bitterness to her son. The mother's place was taken by tutors. The father, absent for the most part, and absorbed by the anxieties of war, did not, for some time, take any active interest in his son's education. When he did, the first conflict at once arose. The Tsar, who had been beaten at Narva, and who was to conquer at Poltava, desired, first and foremost, that his son should be a soldier. Alexis had not the smallest taste for the warlike profession. In vain did Peter dilate, in high-sounding language, on the duties incumbent on a Sovereign. The Tsarevitch willingly admitted his duty to fight in the front rank, wherever his subjects fought; but why were they fighting now? It would be such a simple matter to stay in their own country and leave the Swedes in theirs! The pupil was not docile, the master was not patient. After several ineffectual attempts, on Peter's part, to inspire his son with a taste for the rough profession over which they wrangled, Alexis was left to himself at Moscow, and treated as a perfectly useless individual. Naturally his house became the rallying-point of all the numerous malcontents in the neighbourhood of the Kreml,—all those persons who were worried and irritated by the incessant disturbance, and never-ceasing activity, and

merciless expenditure of strength, so characteristic of the new *régime*. The youth and the old city suited each other. He loved it, and it returned his affection. Especially he loved its most lovable and attractive feature,—those innumerable sanctuaries, cathedrals and chapels, adorned with gold and precious stones, full of mysterious legends, redolent of mystery, and simple poetry. 'Do you believe,' he was asked at a later date, 'that your betrothed will consent to change her religion?' Smiling confidently, he replied, 'I will do nothing to force her; I will only take her to our Moscow churches—I am sure she will readily pray there with me.'[1]

And now the revolution dared to lay a sacrilegious hand on the beauty and the majesty of those holy places, to deprive the capital of its Patriarch, and strip the monasteries. Alexis discussed the subject with his confessor. Kneeling in his bedroom at Préobrajenskoïé, before he made his first communion, he had sworn eternal obedience to this priest, promising he should always be 'his guardian angel, the judge of all his actions, the mouthpiece of Christ.' And the thrilling voice of this man of God echoed, excited, and inflamed, the Prince's inner feelings. It spoke of the indignation of the clergy, the profound dejection of the people, and the hopes which had risen, in those bleeding hearts, of a change of ruler—to one who should follow the right, and repair the errors of the past. It called up memories of his mother, that first and most piteous victim of the errors and excesses from which the whole community was suffering.

A change of ruler? Did the Church herself see no other hope of salvation? The mind of the youth, startled at first, soon grew accustomed to the thought. The words of the Muscovite aristocracy, following on the first eager ones spoken by the priest, increased this familiarity. The nobles were furious too, and out of patience; especially they were outraged by the sight of the foreign collaborators with whom Peter's intercourse was daily growing more exclusive. Did not Menshikof seem to usurp the Tsarevitch's own proper place beside the Tsar? A change of ruler? That meant a father's overthrow. Yes! but it also meant the deliverance of a mother, and her liberation from the most unmerited disgrace. Alexis saw his father but rarely nowadays, and

[1] Solovief, *Readings* (Tchténia), 1861, Book iii.

when he did appear it was always in the character of a severe and angry master. How had he caused him to employ his time? What had he taught him? He had never dropped a kindly word,—nothing but reproaches, threats and sometimes blows, occasionally most unjust,—as in 1707, when the boy ventured to pay a visit to the unhappy prisoner shut up in her nunnery at Souzdal.[1]

In 1708, Peter was suddenly seized with a fresh desire to set his heir to work, 'to make him serve,' as he himself described it. He first sent him to Smolensk, on Army Commissariat duty, and then to Moscow, with orders to fortify the town against a possible Swedish attack. The experiment failed; the father was furious, and the son wrote letters to the most influential people in his circle, to beg their friendly intervention. He applied, amongst others, to the new favourite, who was to become his step-mother, but whom, in the meantime, her future step-son addressed as *Catherine Aléxiéiévna*. The following year, while the Tsarevitch was bringing up reinforcements sent for by the Tsar, the young prince caught cold and was unable to be present at the Battle of Poltava. He was too sickly, evidently, to be worth anything as an apprentice in the art of war. If he was to be made into a satisfactory heir, some other course must be pursued. Peter resolved to send his son into Germany, to complete his studies. There was a chance that he might thus gain a taste for that civilisation to the elements of which he was so complete a stranger. And besides, he was to choose a wife whose influence might help to change the direction of his mental tendencies.

Alexis was delighted with an arrangement, the earliest effect of which was to set a greater distance between himself and his father. He allowed himself to be sent to Dresden, and there applied himself, or pretended to apply himself, to the study of Geometry and Fortification. But he still kept up an active correspondence with Ignatief,—who sent him an extra Confessor, disguised as a lacquey,—and with his other Moscow friends, who kept him informed as to their long-standing grievances and hopes. He allowed himself a certain amount of pleasure, too, and, besides thinking of his soul's salvation, he took care to replace the lady-loves he had left behind him in the old Capital. Ex-

[1] Oustrialof, vol. vi. p. 18.

treme devotion was very compatible, in the Byzantine mind, with a certain amount of licentiousness. But Peter surrounded his son with a whole gang of confidential agents, who were commissioned, not, indeed, to protect his virtue, but to get him married, at the earliest possible moment. The young prince suddenly gave in to their entreaties, and pitched his choice on Princess Charlotte of Wolfenbüttel, whose sister had married the future Emperor, Charles VI., —a very suitable marriage. The ceremony took place at Torgau, on the 14th of August 1711, in the house of the Queen of Poland and Electress of Saxony, by whom Charlotte had been brought up.

Peter's idea was a good one, the success of which, as too often happened in his case, was compromised by the over hasty method of its execution. Charlotte, though not very pretty, though her face was pitted with small-pox, though her figure was long-waisted and flat, was, in spite of these physical imperfections, a very charming woman. But she was not, by any means, the life-companion Peter had dreamt of for his son. It goes to our hearts to see this poor, delicate, graceful creature, caught like a bird in a net, overshadowed by the gloomy events of the coming drama, utterly unable to defend herself, or even to understand what was happening to her. Suffering and death were her inevitable fate.

The early days of the marriage promised fairly. Alexis appeared well pleased with his bride. He replied sharply to Menshikof's ill-natured remarks about her; she was grateful to him, and showed her gratitude. She was a gentle, dreamy-natured woman, and love was her great desire. An expedition to the island of Rügen, in which the Tsarevitch was to take part, filled her with alarm. She would be, she wrote, 'unspeakably wretched if she were to lose her beloved husband.' The idea of accompanying him to St. Petersburg terrified her at first, but, immediately afterwards, she declared herself 'ready to go to the other end of the world, so as to stay with him.'[1] It was Peter, again, who began to spoil matters by his unflagging efforts, during the following years, to destroy his work. The idea of making his heir 'serve' was upon him again. Between 1711 and 1713, Alexis was perpetually travelling about,—between Thorn, where he was again despatched on business connected with

[1] Guerrier, *Die Kronprinzessin Charlotte*, 1875, pp. 25, 86, 90.

Army Supply, Pomerania, where he was sent to carry secret orders for Menshikof, and the shores of the Lake of Ladoga, where he was employed about shipbuilding matters. At the same time, the household, thus broken up, was cruelly pinched,—never well-off, pecuniarily speaking, and frequently without visible resources. In April 1712, the Princess was forced to appeal to Menshikof, who had insulted her, to lend her 5000 roubles, and in 1713, fearing she might die of starvation, she took refuge with her own relations.[1]

Conjugal happiness did not withstand these trials. Charlotte's letters to her own family soon began to betray the fact that her mind was disordered, and her soul distressed. In November 1712, she was in despair. Her position, she wrote, was 'terrible.' She was married to a man, who had 'never loved' her. Then there was a ray of sunshine, and everything seemed changed. The Tsarevitch loved her 'passionately,' and she loved him 'to madness.' But this was a mere passing gleam. Another letter, written soon after, describes her as being 'more wretched than any one can imagine,' adding that she had endeavoured, up to the present, to cast a veil over her husband's character, but that the mask had fallen at last.

The danger of trusting anything to the chances of the Russian post may have had something to do with the apparent contradictions visible in these confidential communications. It is certain, at all events, that no durable reconciliation, nor any serious intimacy, can ever have existed between two young people so absolutely unsuited to each other. Graver difficulties of a moral nature were added to the material fact of an almost incessant physical separation. Charlotte was a confirmed Lutheran,—all the eloquence of the Moscow churches had been wasted on her. Then she had brought a small German court in her train, and this formed her habitual circle. Alexis was as fanatical as ever in his religious views, and grew more and more wrapped up in the narrow particularism of Moscovian orthodoxy. All Peter's authority and violence had done, was to make his son's resistance to the spirit of the new *régime* more and more stubborn. An open struggle had begun between the father and the son, and on each side the natural disposition grew more clearly marked,—Peter's eager and active originating

[1] Solovief, vol. xvii. p. 148.

power, his deliberate and despotic coercion, in the interests of revolution,—Alexis' stubborn and passive immobility, and equally deliberate sullen opposition. In 1713, the Tsarevitch fired a pistol into his own right hand, to avoid an examination into his talents as a draughtsman!

His attitude was strengthened by the fact that a more general opposition was beginning to take shape. Without any intention on his part, without, indeed, being well aware of it, he had become the head of a party. Amongst the clergy, even Stephen Iavorski had a sympathetic feeling for him, evidenced by the famous sermon preached on the 12th of March 1712, and the representatives of the old aristocratic families, such as the Dolgoroukis and the Galitzins, looked towards him with anxious eyes. Now everything that drew him nearer them, removed him yet farther, not only from his parent, but from his wife. She, the heretic and the foreigner, had no place in the future they dreamed for him and for themselves. She, too, personified the hated *régime*.

In 1714, Alexis obtained permission to take the cure at Carlsbad. He left his wife without regret, though she was on the brink of her confinement, and she saw him depart without any sense of sorrow. She herself now suffered from his natural brutality, all the more that the members of his circle had encouraged him in that coarse debauchery which formed part of the national tradition, the perpetuation of which they claimed to share with him. He frequented women of bad character, and drank to excess. 'He is almost always drunk,' writes the Princess. She was even alarmed as to the danger with which the intemperate language, resulting from his drinking excesses, threatened him. Under the influence of wine, he would give his dreams expression, 'When what is to happen does happen, his father's and his stepmother's friends are to make acquaintance with the stake . . . the fleet is to be burnt, and St. Petersburg will sink down into its own marshes!'

On his return from Carlsbad, he seized the very moment when she had borne him a daughter, to outrage her in the most cruel manner. Euphrosine, the celebrated courtesan, who was to play such a ruinous part in his existence, appeared beside him, with every attribute of a publicly acknowledged mistress. In the following year his wife once more had hopes of becoming a mother. He

watched over her, with a certain amount of care, during a period of very trying health, but, worn out by sorrow, she died in childbed on the 22nd of October 1715. Her resignation, in her last moments, was truly admirable. Alexis *fainted three times in succession* beside her bed! Was this sorrow or remorse? Perhaps it was the mere consciousness of the manner in which her death increased the gravity of his own position. He acknowledged, later, that at that moment the feeling that a fresh danger threatened him had crossed his mind. The dead woman's child was a boy; a second heir was thus provided for the Empire, and the consequences of this event, which the rebel son may have dimly foreseen, were soon to be apparent.

Six days later, his anxiety was confirmed by a letter from his father, cunningly antedated so as to appear as if it had been written on the 11th of October. All the elements of the drama of which he was to be the principal hero, and the victim, had been brought together, and the curtain was about to rise.

The letter was a summons, 'a last summons,' as the Sovereign wrote, and he pointed out that it was not his habit to make use of empty threats. 'Thou wilt do nothing, and thou wilt learn nothing; when thou comest to power, thou wilt have to be fed like a little bird. . . . I do not spare my own life, nor that of any of my subjects; I will make no exception in thy case. Thou wilt mend thy ways, and thou wilt make thyself useful to the State, otherwise thou shalt be disinherited.'

The word had been spoken, and the very day after the delivery of the letter, the lines of the dilemma it referred to were deepened by another incident; Catherine, in her turn, bore a son.

What feeling swayed Peter at that moment? This, from the point of view of historical responsibility, is the great problem that hangs over his son's lamentable trial. The apologists of the great Tsar have claimed that he was inspired by State reasons. Peter's anxiety, and his legitimate anxiety, was to ensure the future of his work, and protect his own inheritance from the incapable and unworthy heir who threatened it. But considerations to which I have already had occasion to refer (see p. 172), and others which will become apparent as my story proceeds, disincline me to adopt

this solution. The extreme energy and consistency of the Sovereign's exercise of his paternal authority, in the first place, and the weakness and inconsistency of his final settlement of the dynastic question, in the second, lead me to the conclusion that these two matters cannot have been closely connected in his mind. I believe, on the whole, that, in the first, his action was purely despotic,—he was determined to be obeyed. He may, too, have been influenced by the natural consequences of his second marriage. Independently of any direct pressure on Catherine's part, the child of that beloved wife was surely dearer to him, than the son of his repudiated consort. Alexis must have been a living reproach to his father, and that father's customary manner of treating men and things which caused him discomfort is well known. I shall have to return to this question.

Alexis, advised by his most intimate confidants, Viazi-emski, Kikin, and Ignatief, made a bold answer to the mighty blow dealt at him. He acknowledged himself unfit to bear the heavy burden of the Crown, declared himself ill, and weakened in body and mind, and offered, now that he saw he had a brother to replace him, to spontaneously resign his rights. All he asked was to be allowed to retreat into the country, and to be given means to live there quietly. Peter, who had not expected to be taken literally, was somewhat suspicious of this prompt submission. He took time to reflect, and then, on the 19th January 1716, he returned to the charge. He had endeavoured, in former days, to convince his son of the necessity of taking up a more manly attitude, by appeals to the memory of Louis XIV., and even to the heroes of Greek history. This time he invoked the memory of King David. The Psalmist King had proclaimed the truth that 'all men are liars.' A retreat into the country would, in the case of the Tsarevitch, be both an impropriety and a deceit. The subject must be reconsidered. An heir who never expected to reign, and still remained a prince, would be neither fish nor flesh. Alexis must choose between the throne and a more safely-guarded retreat. He must either prove himself worthy to reign or become a monk; there was to be no alternative. The choice lay in his hand. If he failed to make one, he was to be treated 'as a malefactor.'

The cloister! 'the deep dungeon, the tomb-like retreat

which kills in silence,' as a certain poet-historian has described it! Alexis shivered at the thought. He consulted again with his friends. 'Pooh!' replied Kikin, 'you will come back, the *klobook* (monk's cap) is not fastened on with nails!' Three lines expressed the son's reply; he would be a monk, but, while he addressed this message to his father, he took care to give its real meaning in two letters confided to Euphrosine, for Kikin and Ignatief, two of the foremost members of the retrograde party. These letters contained the words, 'I am going into a monastery, *driven there by force*.'

Peter was once more taken at a disadvantage. He was just about to go abroad, and left things as they were. He evidently felt he had gone too far. He had expected to frighten his son, and make him sue for mercy. He knew only too well the part in the national history played by monks, even less closely related to the throne. Unhappily for Alexis, his friends soon gave him other and less wise counsels, and he, obedient to their advice, took the offensive, lost all the benefits of his apparent resignation, gave back his father all the advantage he had won over him, and finally cast himself into the gulf.

But before I follow him down that fatal slope, I must say a few words about a very strange, and, at one time, a very generally credited legend, which increases the complications, and adds to the dark riddles, and romantic features, of this gloomy tragedy.

III

The Princess Charlotte is said to have survived her husband. According to the accepted story, worn out by his ill-treatment,—he had actually kicked her, when she was near her confinement—she had passed herself off as dead, and aided by one of her ladies, Countess Warbeck, she first of all escaped to France, and then sailed to Lousiana, where she married a French officer, the Chevalier d'Auban, to whom she bore a daughter. After ten years of marriage, she reappeared in Paris, whither her husband had come to consult doctors, and undergo an operation. She was recognised in the Tuileries Gardens by a gentleman, the future Marshal de Saxe, who had seen her at St. Petersburg. He was

anxious to mention their meeting to the King, but she made him promise to keep silence for three months, and, at the end of that period, she had disappeared. She had departed to the island of Bourbon, where her husband had taken up duty. The King, informed of this fact, transmitted the news to the Empress Maria Theresa, who was Princess Charlotte's own niece, and who offered to receive her, if she would consent to separate from the gentleman whose name she bore. She refused. She did not return to France till after the Chevalier's death in 1760, and then lived a most retired life, in a country house at Vitry, which she bought from President Feydeau, for 112,000 francs. These details, it will be observed, are very exact. She received a pension of 45,000 *livres* from the Empress, her niece, and gave away three-parts of it in alms. Her story was fairly well known in Paris, so much so that when Voltaire was occupied on his 'History of Russia, under Peter the Great,' he applied to the Duc de Choiseul for information on the subject. The Duke answered, that, like everybody else, he was acquainted with the story, but that he could not vouch for its authenticity.[1]

The supposed Princess died in 1771, and the Paris newspapers gave the strange posthumous biography, the principal features of which I have just described, in the fullest detail. Catherine II., who then ruled Russia, was much disturbed, and answered by an argument containing six heads. 'Every one knows,' she affirmed, 'that the Princess died of consumption in 1715, and that she never suffered any ill-treatment whatsoever.' 'Every one knows,' retorted one of the journalists concerned, 'that Peter III. died of apoplexy!' The Austrian Ambassador—and this is an historical fact—was present at the lonely burial at Vitry, and the Abbé Sauvestre, Court Almoner, officiated, by order of the King. But Voltaire appears to have been enlightened, at an early date, with regard to this enigmatic personage. In a letter to Madame Fontaine, dated September 1760, he laughs at the credulity of the Parisians, and in another written a little later, to Madame Bassewitz, he asserts that the Chevalier

[1] This answer is included in one of the Memoirs, written by Voltaire, with a view to this work. These documents, the loss of which Oustrialof has wrongly deplored,—for they are in the Philosopher's Library, which is known to have been removed to St. Petersburg,—prove that he laboured very conscientiously, though certain notes and remarks are singular enough, such as the following :—'Camshatka, grand pays où ni pain ni vin . . . Comment messe?'

d'Auban married a Polish adventuress. In 1781, an inhabitant of the French capital had the curiosity to go to Vitry, and there consult the Parish Registers; the name of the dead woman was given as *Dortie-Marie-Elizabeth-Danielson*.[1]

I possess no more information on the subject.

IV

On the 28th of August 1716, after a silence which had lasted six months, Peter, who had left St. Petersburg very early in the year, sent a fresh summons to his son. 'If he desired to remain in the world, he was to prove his princely quality by coming to join his father, and making the Campaign with him. If he preferred to become a monk, the moment had arrived for giving effect to his declared intention; he must choose a Monastery, and specify the day on which he proposed to be received.' According to some writers, the Tsar had already forestalled his son's decision, by choosing an Abbey at Tver, and causing a cell to be prepared for his reception, the arrangements of which strongly resembled those of a prison.[2] Were the young Prince's friends aware of this fact? Such knowledge would excuse their action. In any case, the decision, taken on their unanimous advice, by the unhappy Alexis, was promptly made. He informed Menshikof that he was starting to join his father, asked for 1000 ducats to pay his journey, and for leave to take Euphrosine with him; obtained another 2000 roubles from the Senate, and set forth towards Riga, on 26th of September 1716. But, at the last moment, he confided his secret intentions to Afanassief, his valet-de-chambre, whom he left behind him at St. Petersburg. He had no idea of joining the Tsar; he was going to Vienna, to place himself under the protection of the Emperor. Kikin had arrived there several months previously, to feel the way,

[1] *Journal de Paris*, Feb. 15, 1771. Consult also, with reference to this incident, the Chevalier Bossu's *Nouveaux Voyages dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, Paris, 1877 (the first work which alludes to it); *Continuation de l'Histoire Moderne de l'Abbé de Marcy*, by Richer; *Extrait du Mémorial de M. Duclos, historiographe de France*, inserted in *Interesting and Little-known Historical Documents*, Brussels-Paris, 1781; Levesque, *History of Peter the Great*, vol. ii.; *Russian Antiquities*, 1874, p. 360. A clever tale was written on the subject, and a vaudeville founded on the incident was performed at the Théâtre des Variétés in Paris.

[2] *Messager Russe*, 1860, No. 13.

and had sent back reassuring tidings; the Emperor would not give up his brother-in-law, and would allow him 3000 florins monthly for his support.

At Libau, the fugitive met his aunt, Maria Aléxiéiévna, and at once took her into his confidence. She was alarmed, 'Where dost thou think to hide thyself? He will find thee everywhere!' She did not encourage him, for though ill-disposed towards Peter, on account of his second marriage, she was filled with a terrifying sense of his omnipotence. Alexis did his best to reassure her, found courage himself in the hopes held out by Kikin, and continued on his way.

It was a considerable time before Peter knew what had become of his son. At the first news of his disappearance, he loosed his cleverest bloodhounds in pursuit,—Viesselovski, his Resident at Vienna, Roumiantsof, and Tolstoï. It was a regular coursing match. 'We are on the track, we shall soon catch the brute.' Such terms as these were constantly used by the pursuers. The hunt went on for nearly a year.

On the evening of the 10th of November 1716, the Tsarevitch suddenly appeared at Vienna, in the presence of Count Schönborn, and 'with many gesticulations, casting terrified glances right and left, and rushing from one end of the room to the other,' he claimed the Emperor's help, to save his life. He accused his tutors of having brought him up ill, declared Menshikof had ruined his health by teaching him to drink, said his father desired to kill him by dint of overwork, and ended by asking for beer. The Emperor and his councillors, sorely perplexed, made up their minds to endeavour to arrange the differences between father and son, and in the meantime to conceal the whereabouts of the latter. An old keep in the valley of the Lech, known as the Castle of Ehrenberg, which was destroyed, in the year 1800, by Massena's soldiers, occurred to them as being a safe hiding-place, and thither Alexis allowed himself to be conducted, and shut up as a State prisoner, in the most profound incognito.

It was not until the month of March, in the following year, that he was discovered. It then became known that Roumiantsof and several officers were prowling round the little fortress, and it was reported that his orders were, to obtain possession of the fugitive's person at any cost. The Austrian Government decided to send him to Naples, which, as my

readers are aware, had been ceded to the Imperial house by the Treaty of Utrecht. He was invited to dispense with his Muscovite servants, whose drunken habits compromised his safety. He insisted on keeping one page, and this was permitted for reasons thus explained in a letter from Count Schönborn to Prince Eugene of Savoy: 'Our little page . . . has been at last acknowledged as a female. . . . She is declared to be a mistress, and indispensably necessary.'[1]

This page, as my readers will have guessed, was Euphrosine. Testimony as to her origin is most conflicting. She may have been a Finnish peasant, one of Viaziemski's serfs, or, like Catherine, the captive of a victorious general. Roumiantsof describes her as tall, stout, with thick lips and red hair. Viesselovski declares she was short of stature. In any case, she was a child of the people, and of a very low class. How did she acquire that absolute mastery over the heart of Alexis, which, so often, lies at the root of human tragedy? This is an eternal mystery. The unhappy prince seems to have inherited that peculiar form of sensuality, coarse to the last degree, and yet not untouched by sentimentality, which appears in most of the great Tsar's love affairs, without a symptom either of his intelligence or of his strong will. At Naples, Euphrosine was to decide his fate.

Roumiantsof first of all followed him to that place, then, returning to Vienna, he joined Tolstoï in an official demand for the surrender of the Tsarevitch's person. The matter was growing serious. The Tsar seemed resolved to proceed to extreme measures, and the army he then had in Poland was very well able to convert the threats, evident in the haughty language held by his agents, into grim reality. Silesia was within his grasp, not to mention Bohemia, where he was certain to be heartily welcomed by the Slavonic population of the country. Charles VI. tried to temporise. He wrote to King George of England, to interest him in the cause of the persecuted son, and endeavoured to delay matters till the end of the campaign then in progress, which did not promise well for the Tsar's arms. Meanwhile, he persuaded the two Russians to try

[1] Oustrialof, vol. vi., p. 95. All the following details have been drawn, except where the contrary is indicated, from the documents published by the above historian, and from the sixth volume of his work, which is entirely devoted to the Tsarevitch and his trial.

what they themselves could do at Naples. Perhaps the Tsarevitch might be induced to put himself into their hands willingly. To Naples they went, and then began a struggle, in which Count Daun, the Viceroy, played a far from noble part. Orders had been sent him from Vienna to facilitate an interview between the Russian Sovereign's agents and the young Prince, and even, if necessary, to force the young man to grant one. He simply opened the gates of the Castle of St. Elmo, where the fugitive had been shut up, to the Tsar's messengers. He suspected his master's great desire to get rid of his protégé, and he was not mistaken. Tolstoï and Roumiantsof soon drove him to assume the extreme consequences of this supposition.

Alexis underwent a regular siege. He was first shown a letter from his father, half threatening and half merciful, which promised him pardon for all his faults, in return for his swift submission. If this was refused, the Tsar would declare war on Austria, and take back his son by main force. Alexis held firm. Then Count Daun's secretary, Weinhart, who had been bought over with a few ducats, dropped a confidential word in his ear. The Emperor had decided to leave him to his fate. Next, Tolstoï, in the course of conversation, said something of Peter's expected arrival in Italy, and Alexis, already terrified, began to tremble. Finally, Daun himself went beyond his instructions, and put forward a threat which had the most immediate effect. If the Tsarevitch desired to remain at St. Elmo, he must make up his mind to part with Euphrosine. Then the serf-girl herself appeared upon the scene. She had been won over by promises or gifts, and made common cause—as she boasted at a later period—with the father against the son. Her tears and supplications strengthened the assault, and Alexis gave in at discretion.

Two conditions, only, he attached to his obedience. He was to be allowed to live quietly on his country property, and there was to be no more talk of parting him from his mistress. Tolstoï and Roumiantsof both agreed, and even undertook to obtain the Tsar's consent to his son's marriage with the girl. He wrote his father a very humble letter, full of repentance for the past, and entreaties that his two final requests might be granted. Then after an excursion to Bari, where he greatly desired to adore the relics of St. Nicholas,

he allowed himself to be carried off. He soon recovered confidence and cheerfulness, and was delighted with a letter from his father, received on the road. The Tsar was willing to allow him to marry Euphrosine, and only stipulated that the ceremony should take place in some out-of-the-way corner of Russia, 'so as to avoid still greater shame.' The mistress was in an interesting condition, and he had been obliged to leave her behind him in Italy; but she was to rejoin him after her confinement, and he had charged one of her own brothers to watch over his treasure. To this individual he writes as follows:—'Ivan Fedorovitch, I salute thee! I beseech thee to watch over thy sister and my wife (this is not yet accomplished, but I have the order) [*sic*], so that she may have no sorrow, for so far nothing has interfered' (to prevent the marriage) 'save her condition, and, with God's help, all will go well.' This letter contains a postscript, addressed to one of the servants who waited on the lady of his affections. It betrays all the anxiety, and all the inherent coarseness, of her lover. 'Alexander Mihaïlovitch . . .' (here come two coarse expressions), 'do all that in thee lies to amuse Euphrosine, so that she may not be unhappy, for everything is going well,' adding an intimation that, because of the lady's condition, 'things cannot be quickly accomplished.'

Euphrosine's amusement does not appear to have been a difficult matter. During her journey along the road whereon the man she had betrayed was travelling to torture and to death, her chief thought was to amuse herself by spending the money—the price of his blood—she had just earned. At Venice she bought thirteen ells of cloth-of-gold, for one hundred and sixty-seven ducats, besides a cross and earrings and a ruby ring. She went to listen to a concert, and was sorry to find neither opera nor play-acting in the town. Did she give a thought to the future—to that dream of love and happiness, free from all care, in a retirement shared with *Aphrosiniioushka*, which was the theme of all Alexis' letters? No sign of it appears in the commonplace answers she dictated to a secretary, to which she would add a few lines in her own large, ill-formed handwriting, requesting her lover to send her some national dainty—*caviare*, or *casha*.

One chance of salvation for the unhappy Alexis yet remained. The events which had occurred at Naples had disturbed the Emperor's feelings, and caused him pricks of

conscience. He feared some violence had been done the Tsarevitch, and resolved to see his brother-in-law, on his way through his dominions, and make personal inquiry of him. Suddenly he became aware that the Russian Prince was already at Brünn in Moravia. Tolstoï and Roumiantsof had hurried him through Vienna in the night. They were determined to carry off their spoil. Charles VI. did his duty nobly. The Governor of the Province, Count Colloredo, was given orders to stop the travellers, to see the Tsarevitch *without witnesses*, to find out whether he was returning to Russia *of his own free will*, and, in case of a negative reply, to provide him with means to stay in Austria, and take all necessary measures to ensure his safety. This order, alas! was not carried into effect. A scene took place at the inn, where Alexis was lodged with his escort, which proves the immense increase of moral power already acquired by Russia, under Peter's rule and teaching. Right in the middle of the Emperor's country these agents of the Tsar barred the progress of the Emperor's representative. They threatened, if that were necessary, to oppose access to the Tsarevitch, sword in hand. Colloredo sent for fresh instructions, and this time—alas! again—the Imperial Council pronounced for abstention. Thus Alexis' fate was sealed, and, on the 31st of January 1718, Peter had the gloomy satisfaction of knowing his son was back in Moscow.

V

No one in Europe suspected the nature of the fate to which the unhappy boy was destined, and the weakness of the Imperial Councillors finds a partial justification in this fact. The *Gazette de Hollande* was actually announcing the Prince's approaching marriage with his cousin, Anna Ivanovna. In Russia, on the contrary, the emotion was general and deep. The most contradictory stories had been circulated during the long absence of the Tsarevitch. He had been believed to be betrothed to a German Princess,—imprisoned in a cloister,—put to death by his father's order,—concealed, under a borrowed name, in the ranks of the Imperial army. When the real truth came out, it spread terror amongst his open and his secret partisans. There was no likelihood that Peter would be content with having

regained possession of his son; there would certainly be an inquiry, a search for accomplices, and sittings in the Question Chambers at Préobrajenskoïe. Kikin, the most directly compromised of all the Tsarevitch's friends, endeavoured to induce Afanassief, the Prince's valet-de-chambre, to go to meet, and warn, his master; but the man, fearing he might arouse suspicion, refused to budge. None of the persons most closely interested ever reckoned, for a moment, on the pardon granted the culprit by the Tsar; and Peter soon justified the general opinion.

On the 3rd of February 1718, the higher clergy and all the lay dignitaries were convoked in solemn meeting at the Kreml. Alexander was brought into their presence as an accused prisoner,—without his sword. When Peter saw him, he burst into a fury, and overwhelmed him with abuse and reproaches. The Tsarevitch fell on his knees, wept floods of tears, stammered excuses, and once more entreated the forgiveness on promise of which he had allowed himself to be led home, like a sheep to the slaughter. Pardoned he should be, but he had made conditions, and now the Tsar was going to impose his. The guilty and unworthy Prince was solemnly and formally to resign the Crown, and to denounce all those who had shared in his wrong-doing,—who had advised, or assisted him, in his wicked flight. The popular fear had come true. This meant a criminal inquiry, with all its hideous following of torture and execution. In the Cathedral of the Assumption, before the Gospels, and on the very spot where he should, one day, have assumed the Imperial diadem, Alexis abdicated his rights to the throne, and recognised his younger brother, Peter, Catherine's son, to be the rightful heir. Then, in one of the low-roofed chambers of the Kreml, where his father shut himself up with him alone, he gave up the names,—all those he could call to mind, all those which corresponded, in his terrified memory, with the recollection of any encouragement, with any sign of sympathy, even with any affectionate word, dropped in the midst of that mental crisis which had driven him into flight.

He was warned that one single omission, or reticence, would cost him the benefit of his confession.

Kikin's was the first name given, then came Viaziemski, Vassili Dolgorouki, Afanassief, and many others. Even the Tsarevna Maria herself was mentioned, on account of that

meeting at Libau, and in spite of the reserve she had then manifested. At each fresh name, Peter yelled with fury. Until 1714, Kikin had been one of the most intimate members of his circle,—Weber had, on more than one occasion, seen the Tsar holding him in his arms, '*for over a quarter of an hour.*'[1] Dolgorouki was the only member of the old aristocracy in whom the Sovereign had placed great confidence. Both were at once brought to Moscow, with iron collars round their necks, and the inquiry began.

One thing was soon proved, that no understanding as to any fixed aim had ever existed between Alexis and his friends. There was not the shadow of a conspiracy, properly so called. The foreign diplomats' reports to their Governments, almost unanimously expressing a contrary view, must have arisen out of a misunderstanding, or been inspired by a base desire to please the Tsar. Alexis may, indeed, as the Dutch Resident affirmed, have had the aristocracy his father had humiliated, the clergy he had stripped, and the people he had crushed under the triple yoke of serfdom, taxation, and perpetual military service, 'on his side.'[2] But all these were partisans, not conspirators. And, indeed, as a party, their condition was most elementary, there was no organisation of any kind. De Bie goes so far as to speak of two plots, directed simultaneously, and separately, to the same object—the accession of Alexis to the throne, the proscription of all foreigners, and the conclusion of a peace of some kind with Sweden. All this is pure imagination. The Préobrajenskoïé torture-chambers brought nothing of the kind to light. A certain clerk in the Department of the Artillery, named Dodoukin, was called upon to swear allegiance to the new heir-apparent. He replaced this formula by a violent protest; but he was no conspirator, he was a political martyr.[3]

Kikin, during a stay of several weeks at Vienna, had entered into relations with certain refugees,—the remnants of some former political parties,—a few old *Streltsy*, who had miraculously escaped the massacres of 1698. Besides this, he had kept up intercourse with some members of the Tsar's

[1] Herrmann, *Peter der Grosse und der Tsarevitch Alexis* (Leipzig, 1880), p. 122.

[2] De Bie's Despatches, Jan. 8, 1717, Feb. 24, and May 10, 1718 (Dutch Archives); La Vie's Despatch, Feb. 26, 1718 (French Foreign Office).

[3] Solovief, vol. xvii. p. 216.

own circle, and was intimate with Poklanovski, one of Peter's favourite *Dienshtchiks*, one of those in whose arms he habitually slept. Alexis, just before his flight, had an interview with Abraham Lapouhin, one of Eudoxia's brothers, who gave him tidings of the unhappy recluse. Far from conspiring with his mother, the poor young Tsarevitch had not even known whether she was still alive. Learning her destitute condition, he gave Lapouhin 500 roubles to convey to her. These facts, and some unseemly remarks dropped by the young Prince in moments of anger, or of drunkenness, were the only points of accusation the inquiry revealed against him. Speaking of his marriage with Charlotte, he had complained of his father's counsellors, who had bound him to a 'she-devil,' and swore to be avenged on them. Speaking of them, he said, 'I spit upon them all! Long live the common people! When my time comes, and my father is no longer here, I will whisper a word to the bishops, they will give it to the popes, and the popes to their parishioners, and they will call me to rule whether I will or not.'

None of this was either very wicked or very serious, and besides, when Alexis left Russia, he was firmly resolved to adhere to the abdication forced on him by his father's last attempts on his independence. His depositions on this point never varied, even when he could have had no further object in lying, or in hiding anything. His plan, which his own weakness prevented from carrying out, was to remain abroad, and await the death of his father, after which, he hoped to get possession of the Regency during his brother's minority.

What, then, was the Tsar's object in putting the whole machinery of justice into motion? Probably he scarcely knew himself. Those long-prepared designs, with which he has been credited, for drawing his unhappy son into a sort of maze which should lead him from mistake into mistake, and weakness to weakness, until his own head was placed in jeopardy, are not confirmed by any clear fact, and are contradicted by everything we know of Peter's character.[1] He was not at all the man likely to enter into such calculations. He was most likely led by events, and suited these to his own passions. He seemed satisfied, in the beginning, with the victims supplied by his son's confessions, and by the inquiries

[1] Pogodin, *Trial of the Tsarevitch Alexis*, in the *Rousskaïa Biéssiéda*, 1860, vol. i. pp. 1-110.

which he extended to the convent at Souzdal. Kikin received twenty-five blows with the knout, on four different occasions, and was finally broken on the wheel. Afanassief, whose only guilt, poor wretch, was that he had listened to his master's confidences, had his head cut off. The fate of Eudoxia and Glebof has already been described. Dolgorouki and Viaziemski, whom Alexis specially charged, escaped, on account, probably, of his insistence, with their lives; their goods were confiscated; they were dismissed from their offices, and exiled. Dositheus, Bishop of Rostof, acknowledged that he had foretold Peter's approaching death, and the accession of his son, to the ex-Tsarina. But he addressed these significant words to the *arhireis* gathered together in solemn assembly to pronounce his degradation :—'Look into all your own hearts, *carry your ears into the midst of the people*, and repeat what you hear!' He, too, was broken on the wheel, with one of his priests. The heads of the executed persons were set on pikes, and their entrails were burnt. Poklanovski lost his tongue, his ears, and his nose; Princess Trouïékourof, two nuns, and a large number of gentlemen,—one of them a member of the Lapouhin family, recently returned from England,—were knouted. That merry gossip, Princess Anastasia Galitzin, who had kept silence after the Abbess of Souzdal had informed her of the relations between Eudoxia and Glebof, escaped the knout, but she was beaten with 'the sticks.' Peter forced his son to be present at the executions, which lasted three long hours, and then carried him away to St. Petersburg.

Alexis believed himself out of the wood, and was more than contented with his own fate. Adversity had hardened his heart. He had no feeling left for any one but his Euphrosine. He wrote to tell her that his father treated him perfectly well, and had invited him to his own table, and expressed his satisfaction at having got rid of the title of heir-apparent.

'We have never thought, as well thou knowest, of anything but living peacefully at *Roshestvienka*. To be with thee, and in peace, until I die, is my sole desire.'[1] This letter may possibly have been written with an eye to the Secret Police, but he was certainly more bent than ever on marrying

[1] Quoted by Kostomarof (*The Tsarevitch Alexis*, in *Russia, Old and New*, 1875, Jan., Feb.). It does not appear in Oustrialof's work.

his mistress. Before his departure from Moscow, he had cast himself at Catherine's feet, and entreated her to favour his union.

VI

Euphrosine's arrival at St. Petersburg on the 15th of April 1718, roused general curiosity, swiftly transformed into a stupor of astonishment. Could this possibly be the person with whom the Tsarevitch was so desperately in love?[1] The lady was shut up in the fortress, she underwent a certain amount of examination, and then, suddenly, a story went about that the Tsarevitch had been arrested. Up till that time he had remained at liberty, lived in a house close beside the Palace, and enjoyed a pension of 40,000 roubles.[2] Had the girl's depositions brought new facts to light? None, so far as we are aware. The Tsarevitch, when at Ehrenberg, had written to his Russian friends, to the Senate and the Bishops, to recall himself to their recollection, and he had also written to beseech the Emperor's protection. He had spoken of a mutiny amongst the Russian troops quartered in Mecklenburg, of disturbances in the neighbourhood of Moscow, and rejoiced over the news, which had appeared in the gazettes. At Naples, he had continued his correspondence and his unseemly remarks. He had declared his intention, when he came to power, of leaving St. Petersburg, spending his winters at Moscow, and his summers at Iaroslav, of getting rid of all the ships, and only keeping enough troops for the defence of the country. When he heard of the illness of the little Prince Peter Petrovitch, he had said to his mistress, 'Thou seest, my father does as he chooses, and God does as He wills!' Finally, when he saw the Emperor had forsaken him, he had thought of placing himself under the protection of the Pope.

All this was mere repetition; and Peter himself was so thoroughly convinced of it, that he did not cause Alexis to be arrested for fully two months. The Prince was examined, doubtless, during the interval, as to the details supplied by his mistress, and his examination may have been combined with those coercive methods his father so currently employed.

[1] De Bie to the States-General, April 29, 1718 (Dutch Archives).
[2] Sbornik, vol. xxxiv. p. 331.

He accompanied the Tsar to Peterhof, in May, and the expedition was certainly no pleasure party. Some time later, one of Count Moussin Poushkin's peasants was condemned to the galleys, for having related that when the Tsarevitch had accompanied the Sovereign to his country residence, he had been taken to a lonely outhouse, whence screams and sobs had been heard to issue.[1] However that may have been, Alexis preserved his liberty, till the 14th of June.

On the eve of that day, Peter convoked a fresh meeting of lay and ecclesiastic dignitaries, to whom he presented a declaration appealing to them to judge between himself and his son, whose partial concealment of the truth had broken the agreement whereby mercy was to have been shown him. The Sovereign had evidently contrived to make Euphrosine's depositions a pretext for reopening the trial which had been nominally brought to a close at Moscow. But why did he seek such a pretext? Perhaps he had become aware of the dangers arising out of the ex-heir's position. He had, at a previous period, declared such a position inadmissible. But perhaps, too, he simply yielded to the horrible charm of the murderous procedure he was tempted to set in fresh motion. Willingly would I believe that he himself had been caught in the wheels! His inquisitorial tastes, his instincts as a despot, and a merciless judge, were all excited. He thirsted for blood.

The clergy, who formed part of the Court to which he had appealed, were sorely put to it. After five days, they got out of the difficulty by appealing, turn-about, to the Old Testament and to the New. The Old Testament contained precedents for the punishment of a guilty son by his father; others, more merciful, appeared in the New Testament. There was the story of the Prodigal Son, and of the woman taken in adultery. The Senate demanded further information. This doubtless was the answer Peter desired. It was Alexis' death-knell. Never again was the terrible machinery of suffering and death to relax its hold upon its prey!

Alexis appeared once more before the Court, with no further result than a confirmation of his former confessions. It was the same dull and monotonous history of intercourse

[1] *Messager Russe*, 1861, No. 21.

with the partisans of the old *régime*, and of hopes common to him and to them. On the 19th of June, the Tsarevitch was put to the torture, for the first time. Five-and-twenty blows with the knout extorted a fresh confession. He had desired his father's death. He had confided this to his Confessor, who had replied, 'God forgive thee, we all desire it!' Ignatief's examination confirmed this deposition. But this, after all, was only a guilty thought. It was not enough. Three days later, the Tsarevitch was confronted with three questions, 'Why had he disobeyed his father? How was it he had not been deterred by fear of the chastisement he must have expected? Why had he thought of obtaining his paternal inheritance by illegitimate means?' Alexis, from that moment, lost his footing in the chasm he felt yawning beneath him. He had only one care,—to shield Euphrosine. We are told he was confronted with her, and heard her speak accusing words, which proved her false to his love. No matter, he loved her—he would love her always, till he died. He accused himself, and everybody else, and steadily refused to implicate her. She had known nothing, she had done nothing,—save give him good advice, which, to his misfortune, he had not followed. All the pitiful agony of his soul shows in his answers, inspired by this one great anxiety. 'I was brought up by women, who taught me nothing but hypocrisy, to which, indeed, I was naturally inclined. I did not want to work, as my father desired I should work. Viaziemski and Naryshkin, in their turn, only encouraged me to gossip and get drunk with popes and monks. Menshikof was the only person who advised me well. So by degrees, not only everything about my father, but his very person, became odious to me, and my stay in foreign countries, whither my father sent me for my own good, did not suffice to cure me. It was my own wicked nature which prevented me from fearing his just wrath. Since my childhood, I have been far from the right path, and as I would not follow my father, I was obliged to seek my way elsewhere.'

Tolstoï, who was acting as Examining Judge, was not satisfied with these recantations. He wanted something more precise, some peg on which a trial might be hung. At last he succeeded in making the unhappy Prince acknowledge 'that he would have accepted the Emperor's help to

conquer the Crown by main force.' But when asked whether this help had been offered him, he answered 'No.' And so the inquiry came back to its original point of departure. Guilty intention there may have been, and criminal thoughts, but not a single act. Something had to be done. On the 24th of June, there was a fresh visit to the torture-chamber, and fifteen blows with the knout, which brought forth nothing. The accused had felt great confidence in the turbulent Bishop, Stephen Iavorski, but he had never held any conversation with him. He had been informed by other persons of the bishop's sympathy with his cause. It was hopeless. Nothing more was to be gained either by the knout, or the strappado. Some end must be made.

What was that end to be? There could be no doubt. The idea of having worked in vain was not admissible. No Tsarevitch, who had been given over to the hands of the torturer, could be permitted to come clear out of his trial, and leave his prison, so that all the outer world might read the odious proofs of the paternal iniquity, written on his back by the bloody thongs. But would Peter dare it?

During his struggle with the people of Novgorod, Vassili Bousslaiévitch, the legendary hero of the tenth century, lifted his sword against his own father. His mother, to restrain him, came behind him, and laid hold of the skirts of his garment. The hero thus addressed her,—'You are a cunning old woman; you knew what to do to overcome my mighty strength! Had you approached me in front, my mother, I would not have spared you; I would have killed you like any Novgorod *Moujik*.' Peter belonged to this wild race. He was the last representative of that cycle of terrible warriors, and no one stood behind, to stay his arm. In spite of the emptiness of the testimony collected against him, Alexis had grown to be the very personification, in the Reformer's eyes, of that hostile party with which he had been wrestling, for the last twenty years. It was no son, it was an adversary, a rebel, a 'Novgorod *Moujik*,' who stood before the Tsar. And then, from Moscow to St. Petersburg, the inquiry had already spilt a sea of blood round the chief culprit. Twenty-six women, and men innumerable, had writhed under the lash, and laid their panting flesh on red-hot bars. The miserable servants, who had followed Alexis abroad,—in utter unconsciousness that they were doing

anything except their duty,—had been knouted, given the strappado, and sent to Siberia, because, so the sentence runs, 'it would not have been proper for them to have been left in St. Petersburg.' For many months a redoubled reign of terror had existed in the Capital. 'There have been so many accusations in this town,' writes La Vie, in January 1718, 'that it seems like a place of disaster; we all live in a sort of public infection, every one is either an accuser, or an accused person.' Peter had caught the infection. The blood he had already shed had risen to his head.

A High Court of Justice, composed of the Senate, the Ministers, the great officers of the Crown, and the Staff of the Guard (the Clergy, which seemed inclined to excuse itself, had been dispensed with), was convoked to pronounce the sentence. There were 127 judges; every one knew what verdict he was expected to give, and not one dared refuse his vote to what he guessed to be the sovereign will. One single individual, a lieutenant in the Guard, refused his signature—but he did not know how to write. So the trial drew to its inevitable close—the death-sentence.

Yet the tragedy was not played out. There was to be a final episode, the gloomiest of all, one of the darkest riddles in all history. The verdict was not carried into effect. Alexis died before his father had made up his mind whether he would show him mercy, or allow the law to take its course. How did he die?

VII

Here is the official version: 'The Tsarevitch, when the verdict was read to him, was seized with a sort of apoplexy. When he recovered his senses, he asked to see his father, confessed his faults in his presence, received his pardon, and, in a few moments, breathed his last.' Peter, according to documents emanating from the same source, was disposed to be merciful, but, 'in the midst of this uncertainty and distressing agitation, it pleased God Almighty, whose holy judgments are always just, to deliver the person of the Sovereign and his Empire from all fear and all danger, by means of His all-divine goodness.' The Prince's corpse was exposed for eight days,

and every one was allowed to see it, so that all might perceive that he had died a natural death.[1]

Some doubt, we thus see, did exist, as to whether the Prince's death was natural. All other contemporary versions of the event betray something far beyond mere doubt; they categorically affirm the contrary. Their only disagreement is as to the nature of his violent end. The Imperial Resident, Pleyer, declares the Tsarevitch was beheaded in his prison, and Scherer goes so far as to mention the name of the executioner, General Weyde. A girl of the name of Krahmer, the daughter of a townsman of Narva, is said to have been employed to sew the severed head to the dead body, and thus hide all traces of the assassination, which fact did not prevent her becoming, in later years, Mistress of the Robes to the murdered man's daughter, the Grand Duchess Nathalia. All Staehlin knew was that she had been employed to dress the Prince's corpse, but he could give no other explanation of her intervention.[2] Henry Bruce tells the story of a potion intended for the Prince, which General Weyde went himself to procure from a druggist named Behr, who, when he read the prescription, turned deadly pale.[3] The poison hypothesis also appears in a collection of anecdotes published in England,[4] according to which, a paper, given to the Tsarevitch, on which the judgment was written, was impregnated with some deadly compound. A letter from Alexis Roumiantsof, of which numerous manuscript copies have been circulated, appears conclusive. In it the writer relates to one of his friends, Dimitri Titof, that the Tsarevitch had perished by his father's order; that he had been stifled with cushions; and that the will of the Sovereign had been accomplished by Boutourlin, Tolstoï, Oushakof, and himself. But the authenticity of this document has been contested, by Oustrialof amongst others, and is certainly doubtful. De Bie and Villebois hold that the Prince's veins were opened with a lancet, but they only speak from hearsay. The most detailed accounts are those given by Lefort, then

[1] Memoir presented to the States General on the 6th of August 1718, by Kourakin (Archives of the Hague): '*The true relation of all that passed with regard to the sentence of the Prince Alexis and the circumstances of his death.*' 1718 (published officially).

[2] *Anecdotes*, p. 322.

[3] *Memoirs*, p. 186. The authenticity of these memoirs is contested.

[4] *A Select Collection of Singular Histories*. London, 1774. Vol. ii. p. 123.

in the Tsar's service, and later highly placed in the Saxon Legation, and by Count Rabutin, who subsequently replaced Pleyer, as the Emperor's Resident. These only differ on very secondary points. 'On the day of the Prince's death,' says Lefort, 'the Tsar, accompanied by Tolstoï, went to the fortress, and into one of the vaulted dungeons, furnished with gallows, and all the other necessary preparations for applying the knout. The unhappy wretch was brought in, and having been fastened up, he was given numerous blows with the knout, and,—though I am not sure of this,—I have been assured, that his father struck the first blows. The same thing was done at ten o'clock in the morning, and, towards four o'clock, he was so ill-treated that he died under the lash.'[1] Rabutin is more definite in his assertions, and he mentions Catherine. Peter struck his son, and, 'as he did not know how to use the knout, he struck so hard that the poor wretch fell swooning to the ground, and the Ministers thought he was dead.' But Alexis had only fainted, and when he recovered, Peter said angrily, as he moved away, 'The Devil will not take him yet!' He evidently intended to recommence the process. But Catherine spared him that trouble. Hearing the Prince was recovering, she took counsel with Tolstoï, and sent the Court physician, Hobby, to the prisoner, to open his veins. Peter, when he was informed of what had occurred, came to look at the corpse, shook his head as if he suspected what had happened, but said nothing.[2]

This testimony has the merit of its ghastly agreement with a most indubitably reliable document, the Journal of the St. Petersburg garrison, daily posted up, in the very fortress within which the tragedy was played out.[3] In it the following details appear: 'On the 14th of June, a special torture-chamber was arranged in the Troubetzkoï Bastion, in a casemate close to the dungeon in which, on that same day, the Tsarevitch had been shut up. On the 19th, two visits were paid to this chamber, the first from noon to one o'clock, and the second from six to nine o'clock in the evening. The following day a third visit was paid, from eight till eleven, and on the 24th, two more, one from

[1] Herrmann, *Geschichte Russlands*, vol. iv. p. 330.
[2] *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. xi. p. 487.
[3] Preserved in the library of the 'Académie des Sciences,' at St. Petersburg.

ten o'clock in the morning till noon, and the other from six till ten o'clock at night. On the 26th, there was yet another sitting, in the Tsar's presence, from eight o'clock in the morning till eleven; and that same day, at six o'clock in the evening, the Tsarevitch died.'

Thus on one point, at all events, we have an evident certainty. Even after his condemnation, Alexis was tortured; and in this matter indeed, his tormentors only adhered to the usual errors of the criminal procedure of the period.[1]

But, that being so, it is not easy to understand, in the first place, why Peter or Catherine should have had recourse to other methods to hasten their victim's end, for which the knout amply sufficed; and in the second, the hypothesis that the Tsarevitch's death was hastened by an immoderate use of torture, acquires a great deal of likelihood. Thousands of analogous cases are to be found in the judicial annals of the period, and Alexis, as we know, must have been anything but a tough subject. So early as 1714, he had, according to De Bie, suffered from a sort of apoplexy, which had attacked his left side.[2] To conclude, the sudden nature of the end, and the probable intervention of some element of violence, whether steel, or poison, or excessive torture, seems placed beyond all doubt, by a very significant incident. De Bie's report of the catastrophe, which, like that of Pleyer, was intercepted by the Russian Government, brought very trying disfavour on its author, and even resulted in a somewhat aggressive violation of his domicile, and his diplomatic position. The information he had collected was made the subject of a special inquiry, which principally turned on the following fact. A carpenter of the name of Boless, the son-in-law of a Dutch mid-wife, named Maria van Husse, was employed in the fortress, while the Tsarevitch was imprisoned there. All the Prince's food was cooked in this man's house. The day after Alexis' death, this carpenter's wife told her mother, who repeated the story to the Resident's wife, that, on the previous day, the Tsarevitch's meal had been served, as usual, at twelve o'clock. She herself had seen the dishes, which did not return from his presence intact. This detail

[1] Brückner (*Der Tsarewitch Alexei*, p. 221) points out that there is no express mention of the Tsarevitch's presence at the sitting of the Torture Chamber on the 26th of June, but I do not think that any one, reading the document, can have the slightest doubt on the subject.

[2] Intercepted despatch, dated 5th May 1712. Moscow Archives.

had not struck her as possessing any importance. That given it by the inquiry was very great, and most expressive. But the two poor women maintained their general assertion, in spite of some trifling contradictions, during an examination probably accompanied by torture, and they ultimately recovered their liberty.[1] If then, only a few hours before his death, Alexis was able to take food, his death must certainly have been a violent one.

I pass over the endless legends which have given their own colour to the terrible story. The peasants long preserved their belief in the survival of the Tsarevitch, whom they supposed to have miraculously escaped from his tormentors. In 1723, a false Alexis appeared at Pskof, and there was another in 1738, at Iaroslaviets. For my part, I am almost inclined to believe that the material reality of the events which brought about the disappearance of the unhappy Prince, has no very great historical importance. Morally speaking, all the responsibility lies on Peter. The trial, which arraigned a man guilty of mere intentions, leaves us in no doubt as to the Tsar's. He was determined to get rid of his son, no matter how, and he will bear that gloomy mark upon his forehead, to all eternity. His behaviour after the event was enough to put a stop to any attempt at apology. The Journal of the St. Petersburg Garrison, and Menshikof's own private journal,[2] give us details as to the fashion in which the Sovereign spent the first days after that terrible event, which fairly make one shiver. '27th June (the day after the Tsarevitch's death), Mass and Te Deum for the Anniversary of the Battle of Poltava, artillery salutes in his Majesty's presence. . . . At nine o'clock in the evening, the body of the Tsarevitch was removed from the Troubetzkoï Bastion to the Governor's house.'

'28th June.—At ten o'clock in the morning, removal of the body of the Tsarevitch to the Church of the Trinity, in which it was exposed.'

'29th June.—His Majesty's fête-day. Launch at the Admiralty of a newly-built ship, the "Liesna," constructed after His Majesty's plans. His Majesty and all his Ministers

[1] See the result of this inquiry in Oustrialof, vol. vi. p. 289. De Bie, on his side, confirmed his own report (*Exhibition*, dated 8th August 1718, Archives of the Hague).

[2] Preserved in the Imperial Archives.

were present at the ceremony; *there was great merry-making.*'

Pleyer also speaks, in his despatches, dated 4th and 8th July, of a dinner given, on the same occasion, at the Summer Palace, and followed by an evening entertainment, and a display of fireworks. When the members of the Diplomatic Body inquired as to what mourning they should put on, the Chancellor replied, that none was to be worn, *as the Prince had died guilty.* And the Imperial Resident affirms that though Catherine showed some signs of sorrow during these disgraceful rejoicings, Peter's cheerfulness never abated. Even this final insult was not spared in the lamentable fate to which Eudoxia's son was doomed,—a very abyss of misfortune, which we can readily conceive to have inspired the deepest and most poignant expressions of feeling, in poetry and art. Kostomarof's very curious study is accompanied by a reproduction of the work of a famous Russian painter—*Peter laying Euphrosine's depositions before his son.*

What became of the mistress? In spite of all affirmations to the contrary, she certainly received the price of her treachery. She was present when the Tsarevitch's possessions were inventoried, and herself received a goodly share of them.[1] Pleyer declares that the Tsar and Tsarina showed her a great deal of kindness, and, according to other contemporary testimony, she married an officer of the St. Petersburg Garrison, with whom she spent another thirty years, in peace and plenty.[2]

Peter's spirits never flagged. On the 1st of August 1718, a month after the catastrophe, in a letter to his wife, written from Revel, he refers to the event with visible contentment, and in a somewhat sportive manner, claiming to have discovered graver accusations against the dead man than any which had yet come to light. Alexis, he declared, had endeavoured to enter into relations with Charles XII.[3] At the close of the year, a medal was struck, by the Tsar's orders, which bore an Imperial crown floating in the air, and bathed in rays of sunlight, streaming through the clouds. Below the device this inscription appeared:—'*The horizon has cleared!*'

[1] Oustrialof, vol. vi. p. 571.
[2] *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. xv. p. 235.
[3] Solovief, vol. xvii. p. 232.

Yes! Peter had cleared his horizon, with a thunder-clap. He had beheaded the hydra of opposition; he had broken the spirit of his subjects, under a terror yet more mighty than that with which the trial of the *Streltsy* had inspired them, and he had joyfully taken up his course. Although that dreary trial had not put an actual stop either to his usual avocations, or his pleasures, both had been slightly interrupted. Between the 21st of April and the 21st of June, only twenty-one Ukases appeared, and not a single one was published between the 9th and the 25th of May;[1] while such publications, as a general rule, were of daily occurrence. The dose should be doubled now; he could legislate in safety. He had much more chance of being obeyed than in the past!

But he had stirred up public opinion—outside his own country, at all events—and he never succeeded in deceiving it, in spite of his huge expenditure of official apologies, manifestos, 'faithful and authentic relations,' and liberally-paid articles in various gazettes. Forty years later, he was sorely to try the conscience of the least scrupulous of European political writers. In a confidential letter to D'Alembert, Voltaire wrote the following words:—'The Tsar Peter plagues me; I do not know how to take that matter about his son. I cannot think that any prince deserves to be killed for having travelled about, when his father was doing the same thing, and for having lived with a woman of bad character, while his father had the . . .' He was less explicit in his communication to the Count Shouvalof. He undertook to refute Lamberty's view, by means of certain favourable documents, substituted for others possessing less of that quality; yet, he declared, he could not take sides against Alexis without laying himself open to the charge of being a 'basely partial' historian—and, carried away by his polemic fervour, he wrote the following magnificent plea for the accused:—

'After four months of a criminal trial, this unhappy prince was forced to write, that if a powerful revolt had been raised, and he had been appealed to, he would have put himself at its head. When was such a declaration ever taken to have any real or valid weight in any trial? When was judgment ever pronounced on a thought, an hypothesis, a supposed

[1] *Collected Laws*, iii. 193; iii. 211.

case, which never came into existence? Where are these rebels? Who took up arms? Who proposed that the Prince should place himself one day at the head of the revolt? To whom did he mention the subject? With whom was he confronted on this important point? Let us not deceive ourselves! When I tell this story, I shall appear before the whole of Europe. You may be very sure, Sir, that there is not a man in Europe who believes the Tsarevitch died a natural death. Men shrug their shoulders when they are told that a prince of three-and-twenty died of an apoplexy, on hearing a sentence which, he might reasonably hope, would not be carried into effect. And any communication to me of documents bearing on this fatal subject has been carefully avoided at St. Petersburg.'[1]

Long years after his death, then, the unhappy Alexis found the most eloquent of advocates, and Peter, a most formidable accuser. A perusal of the 'History of Russia' does, unfortunately, convince us that Count Shouvalof ultimately found (not in the St. Petersburg Archives, certainly) arguments which shook Voltaire's conviction, and changed his views. But the counsel's address and formal accusation still remain. They will be, to all eternity, the expression of the public conviction with regard to the great trial, and Peter must bear that burden to the end of time.

I willingly acknowledge that he was not the man to totter beneath it.

He killed his son. For that step there is no possible justification. I have rejected, and do still reject, the argument of a political necessity, brought forward by his defenders. One single fact is its sufficient answer. Peter would not have this son to be his heir. To whom, then, did he leave his inheritance? To utter uncertainty. A Court intrigue threw it into Catherine's hands, and for half a century Russia was a prey to adventurers and to chance. It was for this that the great man set his executioners to work.

Yet a great man he was,—and he made Russia a great country. Herein lies his sole excuse.

[1] Voltaire's Works, vol. xii. p. 255.

CHAPTER IX

PETER THE GREAT'S LAST WILL—CONCLUSION

I. Peter's death.
II. The great man's apocryphal Will, and his real Will.
III. General survey.

I

It was all very well for Peter to hold the posthumous vengeance of history cheap. His treatment of Alexis was swiftly avenged by fate. I do not believe that, when the Sovereign doomed his eldest son to death, he imitated Abraham, and sacrificed his own flesh and blood for the sake of the future of his country, and the salvation of his work. This idea is disproved by the heedlessness, the reasons for which I have already detailed (see page 172), apparent in his subsequent conception, short-sighted, though powerful, of surrounding circumstances, and especially by that condition of self-absorption in which he lived, which made him incapable of taking any interest in, or even comprehending, a future in which he himself would have no part. Yet, once in possession of the heir he had himself chosen, he must naturally have taken delight in the idea of spending the leisure granted him by the cessation of the war, in shaping the body and mind of the child of his affections, according to his own dream. He was most tenderly attached to this younger boy. But on the 16th of April 1619, less than a year after the death of his elder brother, death knocked at the Tsar's door, and little Peter Petrovitch, Catherine's son, was carried off, after a few days' illness. The heir, now, must be the second Peter, the son of Charlotte, and of the murdered Tsarevitch.

At first Peter seemed to rebel against this death-sentence, which appeared an answer to his own,—and all his circle,

Catherine and Menshikof in particular, must have been equally enraged. Yet the Sovereign let two years slip by without taking any step. It was not till the 11th of February 1722, that a Manifesto appealed to the authority of Ivan Vassilévitch, in sanction of the Tsar's claim to regulate the succession according to his own will. This was the principle of the *Pravda voli monarsheĭ* (the truth of the Sovereign will), the doctrine of which was simultaneously brought forward in a famous document penned by Féofan Prokopovitch. But any practical sanction of this theory was vainly awaited all through the following years. The only sign the Tsar vouched was somewhat vague, and variously interpreted. I refer to Catherine's coronation.

Meanwhile, the ruler's health had begun to alarm those about him. So early as May 1721, Lefort speaks of an asthma, which caused the Sovereign great suffering, and he was also believed to have an internal abscess. 'Besides these ailments,' adds the Diplomat, 'a fresh one supervened at Riga, which would soon have brought matters to a close, and which was really most unseasonable. God only knows its origin, but it was noticed that one of the hero's ill-kempt pages had the good fortune to fall ill at the same time as his master.'[1] The Tsar had been at the point of death for seventeen hours, and though he was barely recovered, it never occurred to him to spare himself. But it was remarked 'that he performed his devotions with much more attention than was usually the case, with many *mea culpa* and genuflexions, and frequent bendings to kiss the ground.'

Peter's temperament was a singularly robust one, but he had always overstrained it. He had lived the life of two, and even of three, men. In 1722, in the course of the Persian campaign, symptoms of kidney trouble appeared, and increased all through the winter of 1723. He would hardly allow anything to be done for him, and absolutely refused to rest. The irritation caused the sick man by the Mons affair, and by the necessity under which he found himself of removing Menshikof from the head of the War Department, on account of his constant peculation, hurried the progress of the mischief. And all this time he went on making the most excessive demands on his own strength. He told his doctors they were ignoramuses, and drove

[1] Sbornik, vol. iii. p. 332.

Blumentrost, a German, and Paulson, an Englishman, who both urged moderation, out of his presence, with blows from his *doubina*. In September 1724, the diagnosis of his complaint grew clearer. He was suffering from the stone, and this was complicated by the results of certain former excesses, from which he had never properly recovered. He had violent pains in the loins. There was 'a good-sized stone,' and, some days after, 'fragments of corrupt matter,' then tumours formed on the thighs, and began to suppurate.[1] Yet all this did not prevent him from going, in the following month, to inspect the works of the Ladoga Canal, where he slept in a tent on bitter cold nights, and plunged on horseback into the half-frozen swamps.[2] This visit over, he hurried to the forges at Olonets, and thence to the factories at Staraïa Roussa, where he worked like an ordinary labourer. Finally, he insisted on returning to St. Petersburg by water in the middle of November. On the way, near the little town of Lahta, he saw a boat aground. and the soldiers on board her in a very perilous position. He at once went to the rescue, and plunged up to his waist in the water. The crew was saved. But, by the time the Tsar reached his capital, he was in a high fever, went to his bed, and never rose from it again. An Italian doctor, named Lazarotti, suggested tapping, but this was put off till the 23rd of January, and the operation, when finally performed by the English surgeon, Horn, revealed the hopeless condition of the patient.

Peter died as he had lived. He was worn out by exertion, but his last act had been to sacrifice his duty as a Sovereign. to his mania for using his own hands. All the heroic excess, all that was most unthinking, and ill-proportioned, in the ubiquity of his effort, was manifested in the closing incident of his career. He lost sight, as always, of the truth, that the heroism of a sailor, and the heroism of the head of a great Empire, are different in their nature. He saved a boat indeed. and the lives of several men, but he left the great ship and the mighty crew he himself commanded, in mortal peril. Who was to replace him at the helm? No one could

[1] Campredon, 30th September 1724. French Foreign Office.—Richter, in his *History of Medicine in Russia,* vol. iii. pp. 84-94, denies that any of the complications in the Tsar's illness had a syphilitic origin; but the only authority he appeals to is Staehlin's anecdotes.

[2] Biography of Munich: *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. iii. p. 401.

tell. He had foreseen nothing, he had arranged nothing, and, he showed himself incapable, in the face of death, of that great and crowning exertion of his will and conscience, which his subjects had the right to expect of him. A few days previously, they had seen a sailor at his work; now all they had before them was a mere ordinary death-bed. His end was that of a devout son of the Orthodox Church. It was not the end of a great Tsar. Between the 22nd and the 28th of January, he confessed, and received the sacraments, three times over; he gave some signs of repentance; he dictated orders to open the prison doors. When he received the Last Sacraments, with much contrition, he repeated, several times over, 'I hope,—I believe.' But he said not a word as to the terrible problem which stirred the hearts of all those who stood around his dying bed. He was false to the principle affirmed in his Manifesto, to the omnipotence which his whole life had so loudly proclaimed, and so passionately defended, to his most essential duty. He left no will. That kind of terror and moral weakness which had several times appeared, in the tragic circumstances that marked his life, would seem, in his last great trial, to have wiped out his intelligence and his courage. Campredon mentions that he betrayed great cowardice.[1]

On the 27th, at two o'clock in the afternoon, he asked for writing materials, but he could only trace these words, 'Give back everything to—' The sentence was never finished, but it is yet another proof of that summary and rudimentary fashion of settling the most delicate and complex questions, which was one of his too frequent characteristics. A little later, he sent for his daughter Anne, and expressed his intention of dictating his last wishes to her. She hurried to his bedside, but he was already speechless. And while he lay dying, Catherine, who was shedding floods of tears beside his pillow, dried her eyes now and again, and slipped into an adjoining chamber, there to discuss, with Menshikof, Tolstoï and Boutourlin, the methods and conditions of the *coup d'etat*, by which the possession of power was to be ensured. At six o'clock on the following morning, Peter drew his last breath, and, within a few hours, a *régime* of mingled gynecocracy and military oligarchy was inaugurated in Russia, under the auspices of the *ci-devant* Livonian

[1] Despatch of 30th January 1725. French Foreign Office.

servant-girl. It was to last till the very end of the century, and it was no thanks to Peter that his work, and the very existence of his country, were not utterly destroyed in the course of this long trial. The fortunes of Modern Russia have proved themselves superior to the genius of their creator.

The death of the great man does not, indeed, seem to have roused very lively nor universal regret. On the mass of the public, the impression seems to have been, to a certain extent, that which Napoleon, in later years, thought his own departure likely to produce. Russia, too, appears to have said '*Ouf!*' Count de Rabutin even speaks of 'general rejoicings.'[1] Féofan Prokopovitch pronounced a lofty panegyric, but the popular sentiment was more faithfully expressed in an engraving of a satirical and ludicrous nature, called 'The burial of a cat by the mice.'[2] Popular feeling is frequently marked by such fits of momentary indifference and ingratitude, and Russia, since those days, has fully paid her debt to the memory of the most deserving and the most glorious of her children. That no more heartfelt tears than Catherine's should have fallen upon that open tomb, is easily conceivable; there was too much blood upon the ground about it! 75706871766667

II

Peter left no Will. I do not overlook the existence of the document which has been so freely circulated, and so copiously criticised, under that title.[3] But, apart from the fact of its possessing no immediate practical value (it contains a far-reaching programme for the conquest of Europe by Russia, and no provision whatever for the hereditary transmission of the throne), the document in question is nothing but a hoax. I am not a very fervent supporter of what is known as historical certainty. My faith has too often wavered, when brought into contact with the elements on which such certainty is generally built. But, in this case, the evidence seems to rest on a body of proof which defies all doubt. Let us first take the moral proofs.

[1] *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. xi. p. 497.

[2] Rovinski, *Popular Russian Engravings*, vol. i. pp. 391-401.

[3] Quite lately it furnished a brilliant newspaper writer with the thesis of an argument as to the dangers of the Franco-Russian Alliance (*Libre Parole*, 4th September 1896).

Can you imagine a man who died without having endeavoured to foresee, or provide for, the immediate future of so important a succession as Peter's, giving serious thought to what was to become of Europe, and of Russia, a hundred years after his own death? And that not in any vague fashion, as in the vision of a dream,—I should have believed this possible—but in the most precise and methodical manner, marking out every stage to be covered in the journey. And what stages, too, this strange route unfolds! and how extraordinary the point of departure indicated! Russia, we must not forget, had, at the moment of Peter's death, after eighteen years of desperate effort, vanquished Sweden, *with the assistance of a good half of Europe*, of Saxony and Prussia, Denmark and England. She had not even succeeded in lording it over Poland. She had come into collision with Turkey, and met with disaster. And that was all. Fiery as you may take Peter's imagination to have been, can you imagine or understand that he could regard the conquest of Europe as being in any way, logically or mathematically, deducible from this initial fact?

And the Chevalier or *the Chevalière* D'Eon? My readers know it was he, or *she*, who first communicated a copy of this threatening document to the Versailles Cabinet. The publication of the Memoirs of this enigmatic personage by Gaillardet, in 1836, placed the general public in possession of this astounding revelation. Where did Gaillardet find these Memoirs? In 1836, he was five-and-twenty, and had just collaborated with Dumas in writing 'La Tour de Nesle.' Authentic memoirs written by D'Eon do exist in the archives of the Quai d'Orsay. They have nothing in common, I need hardly say, with those which have been ascribed to him, and they do not contain a trace of any Will whatever. On the other hand, the author's condition of mind strikes us as being evidently and absolutely irreconcilable with his knowledge of the existence of any such document. D'Eon is rather opposed, than otherwise, to any arrangement between France and Russia,—not because he looks on Russia as a dangerous factor, but because he considers her an absolutely unimportant one!

I do not know where Gaillardet found the Memoirs he has chosen to saddle on D'Eon, or rather, I should say, I have a more than shrewd suspicion. I know where he

found the famous Will, and here I come to my material proofs.

The first version of this document appears in a book, *The Policy and Progress of the Russian Power*, published in Paris, by Lesur, in the year 1811. The date of this publication is sufficient proof of its character, and I will add a still more striking detail. Sir Robert Wilson, who acted as British agent with the Russian army, during the campaign of the following year, speaks of the numerous copies of this work which had been found amongst the effects of the Duc de Bassano, the French Foreign Minister.[1] In this work the Will was only represented as *a Summary of secret notes preserved among the private archives of the Russian Sovereigns.* Lesur's work was quickly forgotten, and, until 1836, European literature makes no further mention of the prophetic document. A comparison of certain passages in Villemain's 'Souvenirs Contemporains,' in Count Mollien's 'Memoirs,' in the 'Message to the Senate,' and the 'Memorials of St. Helena,' convinced Berkholz that the author of the *Summary*, which Gaillardet slightly modified and converted into a *Will*, was no other than Napoleon I.[2] I will only add one word. In the course of the discussion as to the authenticity of the document, the existence of any copy,—whether furnished by D'Eon himself, or otherwise,—at the Quai d'Orsay, has been strenuously denied.[3] This is a mistake. Such a copy does exist, but its position, and its external appearance, render any misapprehension as to its date and origin quite impossible. It is contemporary with the Second Empire, and the Crimean Campaign.

The importance of this discussion is, I am quite willing to admit, very secondary. It has a certain interest, in so far as it concerns Peter's personal characteristics, but it is utterly valueless, as regards the arguments it furnishes, from the more general point of view of Russian power and policy. Peter never wrote one line of the document which has grown famous under his name. That point seems to me, historically speaking, absolutely clear. But he did more and

[1] *Private Diary*, vol. i. p. 258. London, 1861.

[2] Napoleon I. Auteur du *Testament de Pierre le Grand*, Brussels, 1863. See also on the same subject *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 1865, Nos. 225-227.

[3] Les Auteurs du *Testament du Pierre le Grand*, Paris, 1877 (anonymous).

better. The first eleven paragraphs of the *Summary* published in 1811, have been generally accepted as a fairly exact statement of the policy followed by Russia, and the progress of her power, from 1725 onwards. This is the great man's real Will,—a Will not hidden in secret archives, but written in the open day, graven on the face of the contemporary world, with all Europe for its witness. His Will was in his work, and on that work I must now cast a final and comprehensive glance.

III

I do not address myself to this closing portion of my task without a certain feeling of apprehension. At the foot of the mausoleum placed on the spot where, on the day of his burial, the remains of the most unresting man who ever trod this earth, were rested for a space, an ingenious inspiration has set the symbolic image of a sculptor, beside the unfinished figure his tool has chiselled in the marble. The Latin inscription adds its own commentary, instinct with simple sincerity: 'Let the ancient heroes hold their peace; Let Alexander and Caesar bow before him! Victory was easy to men who led heroes, and commanded invincible troops, but he, who never rested till his death, had subjects who were not men, greedy of glory, skilful in the arts of war, and fearless of death, but brutes, scarce worthy of the name of man. He made them civilised beings, though they had been like the bears of their own country, and though they refused to be taught and governed by him.'[1]

Ten years later, this first judgment of posterity was reversed at the tribunal of a judge whom we must acknowledge competent. The future Frederick the Great, then Prince Royal of Prussia, thus wrote to Voltaire:—'Lucky circumstances, favourable events, and foreign ignorance, have turned the Tsar into a phantom hero. A wise historian, who witnessed part of his life, mercilessly lifts the veil and shows us this Prince as possessing all the faults of man, and few of his virtues. He is no longer that being of universal mind who knows everything, and desires to sift all things; he is a man, governed by whims sufficiently novel to give them a certain glamour, and dazzle the onlooker. He is

[1] Galitzin, *Memoirs*, p. 118.

no longer that intrepid warrior who neither feared danger, nor recognised it, but a mean-spirited and timid prince, whose very brutality forsook him in seasons of peril—cruel in peace, feeble in war.'[1]

I will quote no further. The eternal quarrel which snatches the mighty dead from the peace of the tomb began early, round Peter's august memory, and travelled far. In foreign countries, in England, and even in Germany, and notably in France, opinion, as expressed by Burnett and Rousseau, Frederick and Condillac, De Maistre and Custine, and down to Leroy-Beaulieu, has been unfriendly to the Tsar. In Russia, public opinion, and historical criticism,—which, more or less, followed in its wake,—have taken various directions. At first, with the feeling of sudden reaction, came a passionate glorification of that past the Reform had doomed. This is clearly indicated in Boltin's work. The reign of Elizabeth, and more especially that of Catherine II., cut this short, and Golikof's book echoes the concert of enthusiasm evoked by the great Empress's continuation of the reforms of Peter's reign. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the reactionary instinct once more ruled, under the double influence of the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic Hegemony. All revolutionary enterprises were viewed with horror; the national sentiment woke in Russia, as in Germany, and the Slavophile party rose in one country, just as the Germanophile party rose in the other. Peter and his work were both censured. Then there was another sudden change. Opinions began to condense. Certain representatives of the Slavophile school went so far as to modify and diminish the severity of their disapprobation. Peter was no longer held guilty of having turned Russia away from her natural and happiest destiny, by casting her into the arms of a corrupt and foreign civilisation. His fault was held to be, that the precipitation and violence which he himself had rendered necessary, had hurried on, and thus vitiated the nature of an evolution which would have been more slowly, and more healthily, accomplished, without his interference. This is very much the position taken up by Karamzin in his later years. If Peter had not burst on his country like a whirlwind, pitilessly snatching every indigenous seed of culture out of his native soil, and replacing

[1] Remusberg, 13th November 1737. Voltaire's *Works*, vol. x. p. 45.

them by siftings brought together indiscriminately from all the corners of Europe,—fragments of European speech,—rags of European clothing,—remnants of European institutions,—scraps of European customs,—and crumbs from European feasts,—his work would have carried neither fear nor displeasure to any Russian heart. But his unthinking violence, his brutality and cynicism, his attempt to civilise his people by dint of blows from his heavy *doubina*, inspired no one—save an occasional individual here and there—with any desire of instruction, or love of learning. The rest were only terrified and stunned, and remained, for many a year, in motionless stupor and alarm.

At a relatively recent period, a highly-placed Russian official took it into his head to reward the excellent conduct of his peasants by giving them a school. The building remained perfectly empty. And the founder's attempts to enforce attendance, only resulted in driving his dependants to wait upon him in a body, and sue for mercy. 'Master, we have always done our duty, why will you punish us?'

This was the idea of civilisation imparted by Peter to his *Moujiks*![1]

Reduced to these limits, the Slavophile theory closely approaches the view pretty generally adopted by Western criticism. I should be disposed to acknowledge its truth, while denying Peter's personal responsibility, or reducing it, at all events, to the position of a partial constituent. And even as regards this partial responsibility he should, as I think, be granted the benefit of extenuating circumstances. The idea of the Man of Providence, or the Man of Fate, who exercises an arbitrary and decisive action on the march of human events, and the natural development of nations, appears to me pretty generally abandoned, now-a-days, by historical science, and relegated to the rank of romantic fiction. The modern mind has become convinced of the reality of the collective forces, which surround the great protagonists of the drama of human life, and carry them forward. This reality is very evident in the career, and in the work, of Peter the Great. His programme of reform was not his own. Did he stand alone in its execution? I see him brought into power, in the first place, by a party, and then I see him surrounded by a group of men, such as Lefort and

[1] Mamonof, Russian Archives (1873), p. 2503.

Vinnius, who inspired and directed his earliest actions. He did not even fetch these foreigners himself, out of Switzerland and Holland; he found them under his hand, ready to play a part appropriate to their origin and their natural tendency, waiting for their cue. And then all his helpers were not foreigners. Kourbatof, Menshikof, and Demidof were all Russians. But, some will say, how about the Northern War, and its influence on the advance of the reforming movement? I have already recognised it, and I have also been forced to recognise that in this case also, Peter followed a previous current. Long before his time, there had been a Russian movement towards the Baltic. Before his time, too, Tsars had taken up arms. Surely this must have been done because they meant to fight? But, again, how about the personal character and education of the great man? I have also taken these elements into account, but I have tried at the same time to indicate their origin. I have pointed to the *Sloboda*, where the young Tsar received his earliest teaching. Was it Peter who set the Faubourg there, on the very threshold of his ancient capital? I have called my readers' attention to the depths of rugged fierceness, and savage energy, so rooted in the physical and moral nature of the nation from which the great man sprang. And he did not come into existence all alone. Did not Menshikof's character, in more than one feature, closely resemble his? It was almost the story of Sosia over again! And the others,—Romodanovski with his fits of sanguinary rage, and Shérémétief, with his heroic tenacity of purpose! But for the sake of argument, I will suppose Peter to have been a unique and solitary being, bursting upon the world like an isolated phenomenon, falling out of the sky like an aerolite, carrying all the surrounding elements with the rapidity of its fall and the weight of its huge mass. I should still ascribe it to the genius of the people capable of producing such phenomena; I would call up the whole of the national past, and on it I would cast the original responsibility of the catastrophe. But nothing in the history of the community in question, proves it so easily moved, or led, in a direction which it has no desire to seek. Russia has been ruled, since Peter's time, by two madmen, or something very like it. The country did nothing mad. It scarcely wandered from its path. That path was traced

out before Peter's time, and its direction has not changed since his departure. The Reformer's work did not cease with the earthly course of his existence. It has continued to develop, in spite of the insignificance, and the occasional unworthiness, of its direct inheritors. It has never altered in character; it is still violent, excessive and superficial. Is any other proof necessary, to make me recognise its origin and descent, and proclaim it the child of the whole Russian nation?

Peter, too, was the man of his own people, and of his own time. He came at his appointed hour. One of the popular songs of that period, relates the melancholy sensations of an obscure hero, suffering from the excess of strength he feels within him, which overwhelms him, and which he does not know how to employ. This is the picture, and the plaint, of a whole nation. The Russia of those days was overflowing with just such a superfluity of physical and moral energy, all of it condemned, by the emptiness of public life, to lie in idleness. The heroic days had gone by, but the heroes still lived. Peter came, to give them the work they longed for. Violent and brutal he certainly was, but let us not forget that he had to do with very different temperaments from those with which we are accustomed to deal, with men whose vigour and power of endurance are almost inconceivable to us. When Bergholz was at Moscow in 1722, he went to see the execution of three robbers, who had been condemned to be broken on the wheel. The eldest had died, after five or six hours of torture, but the two others, who were younger, were still alive, and one of them painfully raised his broken arm to pass the back of his sleeve across his nose,—then, seeing he had spilt a few drops of blood on the wheel to which he was fastened, he lifted his mutilated arm again, to wipe them off![1] A man served by men of this stamp could do many things, and might rule them to a great extent, but any attempt to run counter to their natural inclinations, instincts or prejudices, by gentle means, was, evidently, not likely to be crowned with success.

Peter was a cynic and a debauchee. That mixture of native savagery and Western corruption so severely blamed by the detractors of his work was most especially evident in his own person. Whence did this come? He was affected

[1] *Büschings-Magazin*, vol. xx. p. 540.

by it, long before his first visit to foreign countries. Eudoxia's conjugal misfortunes, and the triumphs of Anna Mons, all date before his great journey. A step across a rivulet, at the very doors of the old Moscow Kreml, brought the young man within the gates of the German Faubourg, where unfortunate fusion of foreign elements was already more than half accomplished. It was aggravated, I will admit, in his own person, but, on the other hand, has not the example of his splendid virtues given his people the means of raising themselves, as he raised himself, above its level?

To conclude, Peter was impatient and passionately violent. In this respect, I am convinced, he was merely the expression, in intellect, character and temperament, of a collective condition of mind. His sudden, fiery, and feverish activity was a manifestation of a generally existing phenomenon. There is nothing astonishing about the fact that he himself did not exactly realise that he was a wave in a rising tide, drawing other waves after him, but himself borne forward by the flood, driven by distant and incalculable forces. This mistake of his has been shared by many illustrious imitators. Even the most clear-sighted of contemporary witnesses may often be deceived. It is far easier to grasp things from a distance. Then the flowing tide, and the march of events, are clearly and visibly defined. This onward course is, to my eyes, clearly marked through several centuries. It is long delayed, and then hurried forward by a variety of causes, completely independent of the will either of one or of several men; and, for this reason, it appears to me, individual and generic responsibility should hardly be allowed to enter into our discussion.

The sudden character taken on by the work of evolution which, after long years of preparation, carried Russia—or, rather, brought her back—into the European family, was the inevitable outcome of the historical conditions of the country. In the thirteenth century, the work of civilisation was suddenly cut short. It was not till the end of the seventeenth that circumstances smiled on the recommencement of the process, and then, finding the road open, the stream naturally hurried its course, and, naturally also, followed the outlets open before it, without any attempt to form new and special channels. The well-known phenomenon of the harbour bar precisely typifies this event.

What thus occurred in Russia, in moral matters, happens there constantly in the material world. Everything, in that country, comes to pass suddenly. The period of active vegetation is much shorter than in neighbouring countries, and this fact has affected the national methods of cultivation. No plough can turn the soil till the May sun has shone upon it, and, less than three months afterwards, the harvest must be gathered in.

The same reason accounts for the violence of the moral evolution to which I refer. The suddenness of any movement, whether the bursting of a dyke by the triumphant flood, or the fall of an avalanche from the mountain side, must always cause a considerable shock. The last reforms —those accomplished in Russia during the current century— possessed, though in a minor degree, the same characteristic. In certain portions of the Empire, the abolition of serfdom took on the appearance of a social cataclysm. Those countries which have been permitted to arrive at a state of superior civilisation without any great shock, or external intervention, by means of a slow internal process, and a peaceful advance along the road of progress, are specially privileged spots on the surface of the globe. In America the process has been a very hurried one. There is little chance of its being carried out in Asia, or in Africa, without a certain amount of violence.

I do not deny that there are certain drawbacks to the system of making forced marches, in the attempt to get abreast of more favoured neighbours. But there are also some objections to being born a Kaffir or a Polynesian savage.

A highly-gifted writer, who has made a study of the consequences brought on Russia by Peter's hasty procedure, has charged his work with four great faults, moral, intellectual, social, and political.[1] I cannot make myself responsible for the correctness of the calculation, but I am willing to grant that, when the Reformer brought the coarseness of ancient Muscovy into such sudden contact with the sceptical licence of Western countries, he gave birth to a condition of cynicism, which was as revolting to the old Russians as to their European neighbours; that the violence done his subjects by the severity of his laws, the indiscretion

[1] Leroy Beaulieu, *L'Empire des Tsars* (Paris, 1890), vol. i. p. 270, etc.

of his regulations, and the cruelty of his punishments, ended by teaching them hypocrisy and meanness, and that, when he trampled with such utter disdain on the traditions, the institutions, and even the prejudices of his country, he brought about a mental condition which was the not unnatural forerunner of modern Nihilism. This is the moral drawback of his work. Further, I am willing to admit that the too rapid and excessive development of the faculties of assimilation may, from the intellectual point of view, have strengthened that lack of individuality and personality which were rooted in the nature and history of the Tsar's subjects, and quite wiped out any power of initiative they may have possessed. I will admit too, that, as regards social matters, the necessarily superficial nature of such forced cultivation may have produced a dangerous division between the upper and the lower classes of society, the former becoming impregnated with those Western habits and ideas, to which the latter remained obstinately impervious. And finally, from the political point of view, I will confess that the sudden introduction of a foreign form of Government may have prevented the organisation thus imposed on the country from harmonising with the natural tendencies and aspirations of the nation. All this, and a great deal more, I am willing to concede. I will go so far as to say, with Custine—who, in this respect, has the exceptional good fortune of agreeing with a Russian writer, the poet and historian Soumarokof, whose later days brought a revulsion against his original and optimist view—that it was no very brilliant victory to 'convert men who did not wear powder into brutes covered with flour,' and to turn 'bears into monkeys!'[1] I will say, with Levesque, that the idea of endeavouring to reconcile industrial, commercial, and intellectual progress, with the aggravation of the serf system, was most unfortunate. Joseph de Maistre has declared, 'that men must crawl to knowledge, it cannot be attained by flight.' I will grant this too. Numa, the philosopher further observes, never dreamt of cutting the skirts of the Roman toga, and no mistake can be greater than to attempt to reform a people by means which betray a lack of the respect due to it. To this I am ready to agree. Kostomarof himself, in spite of his enthusiasm, confesses that

[1] Custine, *La Russie*, Paris, 1843, vol. iii. p. 382. Soumarokof, *Der Erste Aufstand der Strelitzen* (Riga, 1772), p, 15.

the method whereby the national hero sought to force his reforms upon his people—the lash, the axe, the tearing out of nostrils—was not that best fitted to arouse, in the hearts and minds of his subjects, those feelings and ideas, that civic courage, and honour, and sense of duty, most likely to aid in acclimatising his work in Russia. And here again, I side with Kostomarof, and against Peter.

But, does not all this amount, in fact, to an assertion that it would have been better for Russia if there had been no Tartar invasion in the thirteenth century, and if the country had been left free, during those which followed, to work out its own civilisation, quietly and undisturbed?

As for those 'seeds of original culture' which Peter's reform is held by those who contemn him to have overlooked, and even destroyed, this question is much like that of Russian art, as seen in the buildings of the Russian Kreml. All discussion, archæological and æsthetic, is checked by the difficulty of discovering any original architectural or ornamental features, side by side with those numerous instances in which form and decoration have been more or less evidently borrowed from Byzantine or Roman Art, from that of Ancient Greece, of the German Middle Ages, or of the Italian Renaissance. I do not believe that the Reformer can be accused of any considerable waste of any very precious material. A certain historian blames Peter severely for having done away with Ordin Nashtchokin's system of administrative autonomy.[1] But was this autonomy—which was, moreover, exceedingly restricted and ephemeral in its application and existence—a very *Russian* product? Was not Ordin Nashtchokin himself, even in those early days, a lover of the West? And further, how can Peter fairly be accused of having repudiated this legacy from a period which had only just elapsed? He began by making it the corner-stone of his own building! He may not, perhaps, have derived every desirable benefit from its use, but was that likely? Nashtchokin's experience does not lead us to that conviction. And putting that aside, what essential point can he be said to have slighted or suppressed? He never disturbed the *Samodierjavié*, and the only change he made in his *Tchinovniks* was to dress them in European garb.

It has been said that the net cost of his reforms greatly

[1] Goltsef, *Laws and Customs*, St. Petersburg, 1896, addenda, p. 22.

exceeded their value. They did indeed cost dear. In a country where the usual rate of payment did not exceed four copecks a day—twelve roubles a year—the yearly tax suddenly rose to one rouble per head for the whole population. And this money tax was the lightest of the burdens the people had to bear. In 1708, 40,000 men were sent to the building work at St. Petersburg. Every one, or almost every one, seems to have perished at the task, for, in the following year, a fresh and equally numerous levy of labourers was called for. In 1710, only 3000 fresh workmen were demanded, but, in 1711, a first levy of 6000 men became necessary: this was followed by another of 40,000, and, in 1713, this last levy was again repeated. These labourers, until they disappeared into the pestilential marshes which lay all round the new capital, each received half a rouble a month. They lived on the country, some of them by begging, and others by absolute robbery. Meanwhile, the army swallowed up a goodly number of human lives. In 1701, all insolvent debtors were delivered over to the recruiting officers—creditors might lose their money, but the country gained soldiers. In 1703, all peasants, who were owned by officials or merchants, were ordered to send every *fifth* man to the army. In 1705, in the month of January, one recruit was levied on every twenty houses; the same thing took place in the month of February. There was another levy again in the month of December, besides a levy of dragoons on the relations of the Chancery officials. To sum it up, taxation rose, in the course of the great reign, in the proportion of three to one, and the diminution of the population was calculated at twenty per cent.[1] This does not allow for the terrible holocaust offered up on the altar of civilisation, in the prisons and torture-chambers of Préobrajenskoïe, on the Red Square at Moscow, and in the dungeons of the fortress of St. Peter and St Paul.

But Russia has paid the price, and what Russian, looking at the results acquired, would now desire to cancel the sanguinary bargain and convention, between his ancestors and their terrible despot? The country paid, and, in 1725, it was none the poorer. For forty years, until the accession of Catherine II., the great Spendthrift's successors lived on

[1] Milioukof, p. 244, etc.

his inheritance, and Peter III.'s widow found means, out of the residue, to make a figure in Europe which will not be swiftly forgotten.

Again,—and this, of all the criticisms on Peter's work, is the one which moves me most.—That work may have been conceived, I will admit it, from an exclusively utilitarian point of view, without due respect to the other and nobler elements of culture and civilisation. The Russia of Peter the Great is a factory and a camp,—she is not the focus of light and heat, whence the noblest discoveries, and the most brilliant researches, in science and art, beam on the world, shedding those noble influences which do honour to the history of other nations, and are their greatest claims to glory. And I think that the pessimistic view of the Slavophile party has been prompted by this consideration, suggested, in 1764, to Betski, who collaborated with Catherine in artistic matters, and pondered over, in later days, by Shtcherbatof. Peter made his Russians a nation of officials, of labourers and of soldiers; not, in any sense, a nation of thinkers and of artists. Practical and matter-of-fact as he himself was, in the most eminent degree, he taught, or tried to teach them, the use of the improved weapons he gave them; he taught them to read and count, but he never attempted to inspire them with splendid impulses of heart or mind, with the pursuit of any humanitarian ideal, of the worship of beauty, nor even with instincts of kindness or of pity. But this, on reflection, may possibly appear natural, and consequently justifiable. Those historical, geographical, and climatic conditions to which I have previously referred, as having surrounded the birth and development of Russia, have made her existence one perpetual warfare. Without natural frontier, and under a most inclement sky, the country has struggled, and does still struggle, with a special coalition of hostile elements, with men and things, with neighbouring nations, and with great Nature herself, for the defence of her soil, and the security of her daily bread. The development thus attained, by the most petty of all instincts, that of self-preservation, and the preponderance acquired by material cares, may easily be understood. To this has been added a tendency to physical indolence and mental torpor, followed by sudden fits of fierce combativeness, the natural result of long periods of unavoidable inactivity. In this mould Peter and his work

were cast. In his own way he was a great idealist. He sacrificed everything else, to his dream of a Russia not only capable of defending and increasing her material patrimony, but worthy, some day, to claim the intellectual inheritance of Italy and Greece. It was only a dream. Reality soon forced him back into the original mould, into the fight for existence,—and a fighter he remained,—his chief and inevitable anxiety, to provide himself and his people with muscles and weapons, for work and warfare.

Will this mould be ever broken? The most clear-sighted prophets have so frequently failed to forecast the destiny of the great Empire, that I will not attempt to follow their example. Europe, so far, is neither Republican nor Cossack. Before that comes about, modern Russia may perchance have realised the desire of her great creator, and borrowed the only real and indestructible elements of European power and greatness.

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THE END

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