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RUSSIA

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Russia

EAN 8596547372257

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PREFACE

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The first edition of this work, published early in January, 1877, contained the concentrated results of my studies during an uninterrupted residence of six years in Russia—from the beginning of 1870 to the end of 1875. Since that time I have spent in the European and Central Asian provinces, at different periods, nearly two years more; and in the intervals I have endeavoured to keep in touch with the progress of events. My observations thus extend over a period of thirty-five years.

When I began, a few months ago, to prepare for publication the results of my more recent observations and researches, my intention was to write an entirely new work under the title of "Russia in the Twentieth Century," but I soon perceived that it would be impossible to explain clearly the present state of things without referring constantly to events of the past, and that I should be obliged to embody in the new work a large portion of the old one. The portion to be embodied grew rapidly to such proportions that, in the course of a few weeks, I began to ask myself whether it would not be better simply to recast and complete my old material. With a view to deciding the question I prepared a list of the principal changes which had taken place during the last quarter of a century, and when I had marshalled them in logical order, I recognised that they were neither so numerous nor so important as I had supposed. Certainly there had been much progress, but it had been nearly all on the old lines. Everywhere I perceived continuity and evolution; nowhere could I discover radical changes and new departures. In the central and local administration the reactionary policy of the latter half of Alexander II.'s reign

had been steadily maintained; the revolutionary movement had waxed and waned, but its aims were essentially the same as of old; the Church had remained in its usual somnolent condition; a grave agricultural crisis affecting landed proprietors and peasants had begun, but it was merely a development of a state of things which I had previously described; the manufacturing industry had made gigantic strides, but they were all in the direction which the most competent observers had predicted; in foreign policy the old principles of guiding the natural expansive forces along the lines of least resistance, seeking to reach warm-water ports, and pegging out territorial claims for the future were persistently followed. No doubt there were pretty clear indications of more radical changes to come, but these changes must belong to the future, and it is merely with the past and the present that a writer who has no pretensions to being a prophet has to deal.

Under these circumstances it seemed to me advisable to adopt a middle course. Instead of writing an entirely new work I determined to prepare a much extended and amplified edition of the old one, retaining such information about the past as seemed to me of permanent value, and at the same time meeting as far as possible the requirements of those who wish to know the present condition of the country.

In accordance with this view I have revised, rearranged, and supplemented the old material in the light of subsequent events, and I have added five entirely new chapters—three on the revolutionary movement, which has come into prominence since 1877; one on the industrial progress, with which the latest phase of the movement is closely connected; and one on the main lines of the present situation as it appears to me at the moment of going to press.

During the many years which I have devoted to the study of Russia, I have received unstinted assistance from many different quarters. Of the friends who originally facilitated my task, and to whom I expressed my gratitude in the preface and notes of the early editions, only three survive—Mme. de Novikoff, M. E. I. Yakushkin, and Dr. Asher. To the numerous friends who have kindly assisted me in the present edition I must express my thanks collectively, but there are two who stand out from the group so prominently that I may be allowed to mention them personally: these are Prince Alexander Grigorievitch Stcherbatof, who supplied me with voluminous materials regarding the agrarian question generally and the present condition of the peasantry in particular, and M. Albert Brockhaus, who placed at my disposal the gigantic Russian Encyclopaedia recently published by his firm (Entsiklopeditcheski Slovar, Leipzig and St. Petersburg, 1890–1904). This monumental work, in forty-one volumes, is an inexhaustible storehouse of accurate and well-digested information on all subjects connected with the Russian Empire, and it has often been of great use to me in matters of detail.

With regard to the last chapter of this edition I must claim the reader's indulgence, because the meaning of the title, "the present situation," changes from day to day, and I cannot foresee what further changes may occur before the work reaches the hands of the public.

LONDON, 22nd May, 1905.

CHAPTER I

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TRAVELLING IN RUSSIA

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Railways—State Interference—River Communications—Russian "Grand Tour"—The Volga—Kazan—Zhigulinskiya Gori—Finns and Tartars—The Don—Difficulties of Navigation—Discomforts—Rats—Hotels and Their Peculiar Customs—Roads—Hibernian Phraseology Explained—Bridges—Posting—A Tarantass—Requisites for Travelling—Travelling in Winter—Frostbitten—Disagreeable Episodes—Scene at a Post-Station.

Of course travelling in Russia is no longer what it was. During the last half century a vast network of railways has been constructed, and one can now travel in a comfortable first-class carriage from Berlin to St. Petersburg or Moscow, and thence to Odessa, Sebastopol, the Lower Volga, the Caucasus, Central Asia, or Eastern Siberia. Until the outbreak of the war there was a train twice a week, with through carriages, from Moscow to Port Arthur. And it must be admitted that on the main lines the passengers have not much to complain of. The carriages are decidedly better than in England, and in winter they are kept warm by small iron stoves, assisted by double windows and double doors—a very necessary precaution in a land where the thermometer often descends to 30 degrees below zero. The train never attains, it is true, a high rate of speed—so at least English and Americans think—but then we must remember that Russians are rarely in a hurry, and like to

have frequent opportunities of eating and drinking. In Russia time is not money; if it were, nearly all the subjects of the Tsar would always have a large stock of ready money on hand, and would often have great difficulty in spending it. In reality, be it parenthetically remarked, a Russian with a superabundance of ready money is a phenomenon rarely met with in real life.

In conveying passengers at the rate of from fifteen to thirty miles an hour, the railway companies do at least all that they promise; but in one very important respect they do not always strictly fulfil their engagements. The traveller takes a ticket for a certain town, and on arriving at what he imagines to be his destination, he may find merely a railway-station surrounded by fields. On making inquiries, he discovers, to his disappointment, that the station is by no means identical with the town bearing the same name, and that the railway has fallen several miles short of fulfilling the bargain, as he understood the terms of the contract. Indeed, it might almost be said that as a general rule railways in Russia, like camel-drivers in certain Eastern countries, studiously avoid the towns. This seems at first a strange fact. It is possible to conceive that the Bedouin is so enamoured of tent life and nomadic habits that he shuns a town as he would a man-trap; but surely civil engineers and railway contractors have no such dread of brick and mortar. The true reason, I suspect, is that land within or immediately beyond the municipal barrier is relatively dear, and that the railways, being completely beyond the invigorating influence of healthy competition, can afford to look upon the comfort and convenience of passengers as a secondary consideration. Gradually, it is true, this state of things is being improved by private initiative. As the railways refuse to come to the towns, the towns are extending towards the railways, and already some prophets are found bold enough to predict that in the course of time

those long, new, straggling streets, without an inhabited hinterland, which at present try so severely the springs of the ricketty droshkis, will be properly paved and kept in decent repair. For my own part, I confess I am a little sceptical with regard to this prediction, and I can only use a favourite expression of the Russian peasants—dai Bog! God grant it may be so!

It is but fair to state that in one celebrated instance neither engineers nor railway contractors were directly to blame. From St. Petersburg to Moscow the locomotive runs for a distance of 400 miles almost as "the crow" is supposed to fly, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. For twelve weary hours the passenger in the express train looks out on forest and morass, and rarely catches sight of human habitation. Only once he perceives in the distance what may be called a town; it is Tver which has been thus favoured, not because it is a place of importance, but simply because it happened to be near the bee-line. And why was the railway constructed in this extraordinary fashion? For the best of all reasons—because the Tsar so ordered it. When the preliminary survey was being made, Nicholas I. learned that the officers entrusted with the task—and the Minister of Ways and Roads in the number—were being influenced more by personal than technical considerations, and he determined to cut the Gordian knot in true Imperial style. When the Minister laid before him the map with the intention of explaining the proposed route, he took a ruler, drew a straight line from the one terminus to the other, and remarked in a tone that precluded all discussion, "You will construct the line so!" And the line was so constructed—remaining to all future ages, like St. Petersburg and the Pyramids, a magnificent monument of autocratic power.

Formerly this well-known incident was often cited in whispered philippics to illustrate the evils of the autocratic form of government. Imperial whims, it was said, over-ride

grave economic considerations. In recent years, however, a change seems to have taken place in public opinion, and some people now assert that this so-called Imperial whim was an act of far-seeing policy. As by far the greater part of the goods and passengers are carried the whole length of the line, it is well that the line should be as short as possible, and that branch lines should be constructed to the towns lying to the right and left. Evidently there is a good deal to be said in favour of this view.

In the development of the railway system there has been another disturbing cause, which is not likely to occur to the English mind. In England, individuals and companies habitually act according to their private interests, and the State interferes as little as possible; private initiative does as it pleases, unless the authorities can prove that important bad consequences will necessarily result. In Russia, the onus probandi lies on the other side; private initiative is allowed to do nothing until it gives guarantees against all possible bad consequences. When any great enterprise is projected, the first question is—"How will this new scheme affect the interests of the State?" Thus, when the course of a new railway has to be determined, the military authorities are among the first to be consulted, and their opinion has a great influence on the ultimate decision. The natural consequence is that the railway-map of Russia presents to the eye of the strategist much that is quite unintelligible to the ordinary observer—a fact that will become apparent even to the uninitiated as soon as a war breaks out in Eastern Europe. Russia is no longer what she was in the days of the Crimean War, when troops and stores had to be conveyed hundreds of miles by the most primitive means of transport. At that time she had only 750 miles of railway; now she has over 36,000 miles, and every year new lines are constructed.

The water-communication has likewise in recent years been greatly improved. On the principal rivers there are now good steamers. Unfortunately, the climate puts serious obstructions in the way of navigation. For nearly half of the year the rivers are covered with ice, and during a great part of the open season navigation is difficult. When the ice and snow melt the rivers overflow their banks and lay a great part of the low-lying country under water, so that many villages can only be approached in boats; but very soon the flood subsides, and the water falls so rapidly that by midsummer the larger steamers have great difficulty in picking their way among the sandbanks. The Neva alone—that queen of northern rivers—has at all times a plentiful supply of water.

Besides the Neva, the rivers commonly visited by the tourist are the Volga and the Don, which form part of what may be called the Russian grand tour. Englishmen who wish to see something more than St. Petersburg and Moscow generally go by rail to Nizhni-Novgorod, where they visit the great fair, and then get on board one of the Volga steamers. For those who have mastered the important fact that Russia is not a country of fine scenery, the voyage down the river is pleasant enough. The left bank is as flat as the banks of the Rhine below Cologne, but the right bank is high, occasionally well wooded, and not devoid of a certain tame picturesqueness. Early on the second day the steamer reaches Kazan, once the capital of an independent Tartar khanate, and still containing a considerable Tartar population. Several metchets (as the Mahometan houses of prayer are here termed), with their diminutive minarets in the lower part of the town, show that Islamism still survives, though the khanate was annexed to Muscovy more than three centuries ago; but the town, as a whole, has a European rather than an Asiatic character. If any one visits it in the hope of getting "a glimpse of the East," he will be

grievously disappointed, unless, indeed, he happens to be one of those imaginative tourists who always discover what they wish to see. And yet it must be admitted that, of all the towns on the route, Kazan is the most interesting. Though not Oriental, it has a peculiar character of its own, whilst all the others—Simbirsk, Samara, Saratof—are as uninteresting as Russian provincial towns commonly are. The full force and solemnity of that expression will be explained in the sequel.

Probably about sunrise on the third day something like a range of mountains will appear on the horizon. It may be well to say at once, to prevent disappointment, that in reality nothing worthy of the name of mountain is to be found in that part of the country. The nearest mountain-range in that direction is the Caucasus, which is hundreds of miles distant, and consequently cannot by any possibility be seen from the deck of a steamer. The elevations in question are simply a low range of hills, called the Zhigulinskiya Gori. In Western Europe they would not attract much attention, but "in the kingdom of the blind," as the French proverb has it, "the one-eyed man is king"; and in a flat region like Eastern Russia these hills form a prominent feature. Though they have nothing of Alpine grandeur, yet their well-wooded slopes, coming down to the water's edge—especially when covered with the delicate tints of early spring, or the rich yellow and red of autumnal foliage—leave an impression on the memory not easily effaced.

On the whole—with all due deference to the opinions of my patriotic Russian friends—I must say that Volga scenery hardly repays the time, trouble and expense which a voyage from Nizhni to Tsaritsin demands. There are some pretty bits here and there, but they are "few and far between." A glass of the most exquisite wine diluted with a gallon of water makes a very insipid beverage. The deck of the steamer is generally much more interesting than the banks of the river.

There one meets with curious travelling companions. The majority of the passengers are probably Russian peasants, who are always ready to chat freely without demanding a formal introduction, and to relate—with certain restrictions—to a new acquaintance the simple story of their lives. Often I have thus whiled away the weary hours both pleasantly and profitably, and have always been impressed with the peasant's homely common sense, good-natured kindliness, half-fatalistic resignation, and strong desire to learn something about foreign countries. This last peculiarity makes him question as well as communicate, and his questions, though sometimes apparently childish, are generally to the point.

Among the passengers are probably also some representatives of the various Finnish tribes inhabiting this part of the country; they may be interesting to the ethnologist who loves to study physiognomy, but they are far less sociable than the Russians. Nature seems to have made them silent and morose, whilst their conditions of life have made them shy and distrustful. The Tartar, on the other hand, is almost sure to be a lively and amusing companion. Most probably he is a peddler or small trader of some kind. The bundle on which he reclines contains his stock-in-trade, composed, perhaps, of cotton printed goods and especially bright-coloured cotton handkerchiefs. He himself is enveloped in a capacious greasy khalat, or dressing-gown, and wears a fur cap, though the thermometer may be at 90 degrees in the shade. The roguish twinkle in his small piercing eyes contrasts strongly with the sombre, stolid expression of the Finnish peasants sitting near him. He has much to relate about St. Petersburg, Moscow, and perhaps Astrakhan; but, like a genuine trader, he is very reticent regarding the mysteries of his own craft. Towards sunset he retires with his companions to some quiet spot on the deck to recite

evening prayers. Here all the good Mahometans on board assemble and stroke their beards, kneel on their little strips of carpet and prostrate themselves, all keeping time as if they were performing some new kind of drill under the eve of a severe drill-sergeant.

If the voyage is made about the end of September, when the traders are returning home from the fair at Nizhni-Novgorod, the ethnologist will have a still better opportunity of study. He will then find not only representatives of the Finnish and Tartar races, but also Armenians, Circassians, Persians, Bokhariots, and other Orientals—a motley and picturesque but decidedly unsavoury cargo.

However great the ethnographical variety on board may be, the traveller will probably find that four days on the Volga are quite enough for all practical and aesthetic purposes, and instead of going on to Astrakhan he will quit the steamer at Tsaritsin. Here he will find a railway of about fifty miles in length, connecting the Volga and the Don. I say advisedly a railway, and not a train, because trains on this line are not very frequent. When I first visited the locality, thirty years ago, there were only two a week, so that if you inadvertently missed one train you had to wait about three days for the next. Prudent, nervous people preferred travelling by the road, for on the railway the strange jolts and mysterious creakings were very alarming. On the other hand the pace was so slow that running off the rails would have been merely an amusing episode, and even a collision could scarcely have been attended with serious consequences. Happily things are improving, even in this outlying part of the country. Now there is one train daily, and it goes at a less funereal pace.

From Kalatch, at the Don end of the line, a steamer starts for Rostoff, which is situated near the mouth of the river. The navigation of the Don is much more difficult than that of the Volga. The river is extremely shallow, and the sand-

banks are continually shifting, so that many times in the course of the day the steamer runs aground. Sometimes she is got off by simply reversing the engines, but not unfrequently she sticks so fast that the engines have to be assisted. This is effected in a curious way. The captain always gives a number of stalwart Cossacks a free passage on condition that they will give him the assistance he requires; and as soon as the ship sticks fast he orders them to jump overboard with a stout hawser and haul her off! The task is not a pleasant one, especially as the poor fellows cannot afterwards change their clothes; but the order is always obeyed with alacrity and without grumbling. Cossacks, it would seem, have no personal acquaintance with colds and rheumatism.

In the most approved manuals of geography the Don figures as one of the principal European rivers, and its length and breadth give it a right to be considered as such; but its depth in many parts is ludicrously out of proportion to its length and breadth. I remember one day seeing the captain of a large, flat-bottomed steamer slacken speed, to avoid running down a man on horseback who was attempting to cross his bows in the middle of the stream. Another day a not less characteristic incident happened. A Cossack passenger wished to be set down at a place where there was no pier, and on being informed that there was no means of landing him, coolly jumped overboard and walked ashore. This simple method of disembarking cannot, of course, be recommended to those who have no local knowledge regarding the exact position of sand-banks and deep pools.

Good serviceable fellows are those Cossacks who drag the steamer off the sand-banks, and are often entertaining companions. Many of them can relate from their own experience, in plain, unvarnished style, stirring episodes of irregular warfare, and if they happen to be in a

communicative mood they may divulge a few secrets regarding their simple, primitive commissariat system. Whether they are confidential or not, the traveller who knows the language will spend his time more profitably and pleasantly in chatting with them than in gazing listlessly at the uninteresting country through which he is passing.

Unfortunately, these Don steamers carry a large number of free passengers of another and more objectionable kind, who do not confine themselves to the deck, but unceremoniously find their way into the cabin, and prevent thin-skinned travellers from sleeping. I know too little of natural history to decide whether these agile, bloodthirsty parasites are of the same species as those which in England assist unofficially the Sanitary Commissioners by punishing uncleanliness; but I may say that their function in the system of created things is essentially the same, and they fulfil it with a zeal and energy beyond all praise. Possessing for my own part a happy immunity from their indelicate attentions, and being perfectly innocent of entomological curiosity, I might, had I been alone, have overlooked their existence, but I was constantly reminded of their presence by less happily constituted mortals, and the complaints of the sufferers received a curious official confirmation. On arriving at the end of the journey I asked permission to spend the night on board, and I noticed that the captain acceded to my request with more readiness and warmth than I expected. Next morning the fact was fully explained. When I began to express my thanks for having been allowed to pass the night in a comfortable cabin, my host interrupted me with a good-natured laugh, and assured me that, on the contrary, he was under obligations to me. "You see," he said, assuming an air of mock gravity, "I have always on board a large body of light cavalry, and when I have all this part of the ship to myself they make a

combined attack on me; whereas, when some one is sleeping close by, they divide their forces!"

On certain steamers on the Sea of Azof the privacy of the sleeping-cabin is disturbed by still more objectionable intruders; I mean rats. During one short voyage which I made on board the Kertch, these disagreeable visitors became so importunate in the lower regions of the vessel that the ladies obtained permission to sleep in the deck-saloon. After this arrangement had been made, we unfortunate male passengers received redoubled attention from our tormentors. Awakened early one morning by the sensation of something running over me as I lay in my berth, I conceived a method of retaliation. It seemed to me possible that, in the event of another visit, I might, by seizing the proper moment, kick the rat up to the ceiling with such force as to produce concussion of the brain and instant death. Very soon I had an opportunity of putting my plan into execution. A significant shaking of the little curtain at the foot of the berth showed that it was being used as a scaling-ladder. I lay perfectly still, quite as much interested in the sport as if I had been waiting, rifle in hand, for big game. Soon the intruder peeped into my berth, looked cautiously around him, and then proceeded to walk stealthily across my feet. In an instant he was shot upwards. First was heard a sharp knock on the ceiling, and then a dull "thud" on the floor. The precise extent of the injuries inflicted I never discovered, for the victim had sufficient strength and presence of mind to effect his escape; and the gentleman at the other side of the cabin, who had been roused by the noise, protested against my repeating the experiment, on the ground that, though he was willing to take his own share of the intruders, he strongly objected to having other people's rats kicked into his berth.

On such occasions it is of no use to complain to the authorities. When I met the captain on deck I related to him

what had happened, and protested vigorously against passengers being exposed to such annoyances. After listening to me patiently, he coolly replied, entirely overlooking my protestations, "Ah! I did better than that this morning; I allowed my rat to get under the blanket, and then smothered him!"

Railways and steamboats, even when their arrangements leave much to be desired, invariably effect a salutary revolution in hotel accommodation; but this revolution is of necessity gradual. Foreign hotelkeepers must immigrate and give the example; suitable houses must be built; servants must be properly trained; and, above all, the native travellers must learn the usages of civilised society. In Russia this revolution is in progress, but still far from being complete. The cities where foreigners most do congregate—St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa—already possess hotels that will bear comparison with those of Western Europe, and some of the more important provincial towns can offer very respectable accommodation; but there is still much to be done before the West-European can travel with comfort even on the principal routes. Cleanliness, the first and most essential element of comfort, as we understand the term, is still a rare commodity, and often cannot be procured at any price.

Even in good hotels, when they are of the genuine Russian type, there are certain peculiarities which, though not in themselves objectionable, strike a foreigner as peculiar. Thus, when you alight at such an hotel, you are expected to examine a considerable number of rooms, and to inquire about the respective prices. When you have fixed upon a suitable apartment, you will do well, if you wish to practise economy, to propose to the landlord considerably less than he demands; and you will generally find, if you have a talent for bargaining, that the rooms may be hired for somewhat less than the sum first stated. You must be careful, however,

to leave no possibility of doubt as to the terms of the contract. Perhaps you assume that, as in taking a cab, a horse is always supplied without special stipulation, so in hiring a bedroom the bargain includes a bed and the necessary appurtenances. Such an assumption will not always be justified. The landlord may perhaps give you a bedstead without extra charge, but if he be uncorrupted by foreign notions, he will certainly not spontaneously supply you with bed-linen, pillows, blankets, and towels. On the contrary, he will assume that you carry all these articles with you, and if you do not, you must pay for them.

This ancient custom has produced among Russians of the old school a kind of fastidiousness to which we are strangers. They strongly dislike using sheets, blankets, and towels which are in a certain sense public property, just as we should strongly object to putting on clothes which had been already worn by other people. And the feeling may be developed in people not Russian by birth. For my own part, I confess to having been conscious of a certain disagreeable feeling on returning in this respect to the usages of so-called civilised Europe.

The inconvenience of carrying about the essential articles of bedroom furniture is by no means so great as might be supposed. Bedrooms in Russia are always heated during cold weather, so that one light blanket, which may be also used as a railway rug, is quite sufficient, whilst sheets, pillow-cases, and towels take up little space in a portmanteau. The most cumbrous object is the pillow, for air-cushions, having a disagreeable odour, are not well suited for the purpose. But Russians are accustomed to this encumbrance. In former days—as at the present time in those parts of the country where there are neither railways nor macadamised roads—people travelled in carts or carriages without springs and in these instruments of torture a huge pile of cushions or pillows is necessary to

avoid contusions and dislocations. On the railways the jolts and shaking are not deadly enough to require such an antidote; but, even in unconservative Russia, customs outlive the conditions that created them; and at every railway-station you may see men and women carrying about their pillows with them as we carry wraps. A genuine Russian merchant who loves comfort and respects tradition may travel without a portmanteau, but he considers his pillow as an indispensable article de voyage.

To return to the old-fashioned hotel. When you have completed the negotiations with the landlord, you will notice that, unless you have a servant with you, the waiter prepares to perform the duties of valet de chambre. Do not be surprised at his officiousness, which seems founded on the assumption that you are three-fourths paralysed. Formerly, every well-born Russian had a valet always in attendance, and never dreamed of doing for himself anything which could by any possibility be done for him. You notice that there is no bell in the room, and no mechanical means of communicating with the world below stairs. That is because the attendant is supposed to be always within call, and it is so much easier to shout than to get up and ring the bell.

In the good old times all this was quite natural. The well-born Russian had commonly a superabundance of domestic serfs, and there was no reason why one or two of them should not accompany their master when his Honour undertook a journey. An additional person in the tarantass did not increase the expense, and considerably diminished the little unavoidable inconveniences of travel. But times have changed. In 1861 the domestic serfs were emancipated by Imperial ukaz. Free servants demand wages; and on railways or steamers a single ticket does not include an attendant. The present generation must therefore get through life with a more modest supply of

valets, and must learn to do with its own hands much that was formerly performed by serf labour. Still, a gentleman brought up in the old conditions cannot be expected to dress himself without assistance, and accordingly the waiter remains in your room to act as valet. Perhaps, too, in the early morning you may learn in an unpleasant way that other parts of the old system are not yet extinct. You may hear, for instance, resounding along the corridors such an order as—"Petrusha! Petrusha! Stakan vody!" ("Little Peter, little Peter, a glass of water!") shouted in a stentorian voice that would startle the Seven Sleepers.

When the toilet operations are completed, and you order tea—one always orders tea in Russia—you will be asked whether you have your own tea and sugar with you. If you are an experienced traveller you will be able to reply in the affirmative, for good tea can be bought only in certain well-known shops, and can rarely be found in hotels. A huge, steaming tea-urn, called a samovar—etymologically, a "self-boiler"—will be brought in, and you will make your tea according to your taste. The tumbler, you know of course, is to be used as a cup, and when using it you must be careful not to cauterise the points of your fingers. If you should happen to have anything eatable or drinkable in your travelling basket, you need not hesitate to take it out at once, for the waiter will not feel at all aggrieved or astonished at your doing nothing "for the good of the house." The twenty or twenty-five kopeks that you pay for the samovar—teapot, tumbler, saucer, spoon, and slop-basin being included under the generic term pribor—frees you from all corkage and similar dues.

These and other remnants of old customs are now rapidly disappearing, and will, doubtless, in a very few years be things of the past—things to be picked up in out-of-the-way corners, and chronicled by social archaeology; but they are still to be found in towns not unknown to Western Europe.

Many of these old customs, and especially the old method of travelling, may be studied in their pristine purity throughout a great part of the country. Though railway construction has been pushed forward with great energy during the last forty years, there are still vast regions where the ancient solitudes have never been disturbed by the shrill whistle of the locomotive, and roads have remained in their primitive condition. Even in the central provinces one may still travel hundreds of miles without ever encountering anything that recalls the name of Macadam.

If popular rumour is to be trusted, there is somewhere in the Highlands of Scotland, by the side of a turnpike, a large stone bearing the following doggerel inscription:

"If you had seen this road before it was made, You'd lift up your hands and bless General Wade."

Any educated Englishman reading this strange announcement would naturally remark that the first line of the couplet contains a logical contradiction, probably of Hibernian origin; but I have often thought, during my wanderings in Russia, that the expression, if not logically justifiable, might for the sake of vulgar convenience be legalised by a Permissive Bill. The truth is that, as a Frenchman might say, "there are roads and roads"—roads made and roads unmade, roads artificial and roads natural. Now, in Russia, roads are nearly all of the unmade, natural kind, and are so conservative in their nature that they have at the present day precisely the same appearance as they had many centuries ago. They have thus for imaginative minds something of what is called "the charm of historical association." The only perceptible change that takes place in them during a series of generations is that the ruts shift their position. When these become so deep that fore-wheels can no longer fathom them, it becomes necessary to begin making a new pair of ruts to the right or left of the old ones; and as the roads are commonly of gigantic breadth, there is

no difficulty in finding a place for the operation. How the old ones get filled up I cannot explain; but as I have rarely seen in any part of the country, except perhaps in the immediate vicinity of towns, a human being engaged in road repairing, I assume that beneficent Nature somehow accomplishes the task without human assistance, either by means of alluvial deposits, or by some other cosmical action only known to physical geographers.

On the roads one occasionally encounters bridges; and here, again, I have discovered in Russia a key to the mysteries of Hibernian phraseology. An Irish member once declared to the House of Commons that the Church was "the bridge that separated the two great sections of the Irish people." As bridges commonly connect rather than separate, the metaphor was received with roars of laughter. If the honourable members who joined in the hilarious applause had travelled much in Russia, they would have been more moderate in their merriment; for in that country, despite the laudable activity of the modern system of local administration created in the sixties, bridges often act still as a barrier rather than a connecting link, and to cross a river by a bridge may still be what is termed in popular phrase "a tempting of Providence." The cautious driver will generally prefer to take to the water, if there is a ford within a reasonable distance, though both he and his human load may be obliged, in order to avoid getting wet feet, to assume undignified postures that would afford admirable material for the caricaturist. But this little bit of discomfort, even though the luggage should be soaked in the process of fording, is as nothing compared to the danger of crossing by the bridge. As I have no desire to harrow unnecessarily the feelings of the reader, I refrain from all description of ugly accidents, ending in bruises and fractures, and shall simply explain in a few words how a successful passage is effected.

When it is possible to approach the bridge without sinking up to the knees in mud, it is better to avoid all risks by walking over and waiting for the vehicle on the other side; and when this is impossible, a preliminary survey is advisable. To your inquiries whether it is safe, your yamstchik (post-boy) is sure to reply, "Nitchevo!"—a word which, according to the dictionaries, means "nothing" but which has, in the mouths of the peasantry, a great variety of meanings, as I may explain at some future time. In the present case it may be roughly translated. "There is no danger." "Nitchevo, Barin, proyedem" ("There is no danger, sir; we shall get over"), he repeats. You may refer to the generally rotten appearance of the structure, and point in particular to the great holes sufficient to engulf half a post-horse. "Ne bos', Bog pomozhet" ("Do not fear. God will help"), replies coolly your phlegmatic Jehu. You may have your doubts as to whether in this irreligious age Providence will intervene specially for your benefit; but your yamstchik, who has more faith or fatalism, leaves you little time to solve the problem. Making hurriedly the sign of the cross, he gathers up his reins, waves his little whip in the air, and, shouting lustily, urges on his team. The operation is not wanting in excitement. First there is a short descent; then the horses plunge wildly through a zone of deep mud; next comes a fearful jolt, as the vehicle is jerked up on to the first planks; then the transverse planks, which are but loosely held in their places, rattle and rumble ominously, as the experienced, sagacious animals pick their way cautiously and gingerly among the dangerous holes and crevices; lastly, you plunge with a horrible jolt into a second mud zone, and finally regain terra firma, conscious of that pleasant sensation which a young officer may be supposed to feel after his first cavalry charge in real warfare.

Of course here, as elsewhere, familiarity breeds indifference. When you have successfully crossed without

serious accident a few hundred bridges of this kind you learn to be as cool and fatalistic as your yamstchik.

The reader who has heard of the gigantic reforms that have been repeatedly imposed on Russia by a paternal Government may naturally be astonished to learn that the roads are still in such a disgraceful condition. But for this, as for everything else in the world, there is a good and sufficient reason. The country is still, comparatively speaking, thinly populated, and in many regions it is difficult, or practically impossible, to procure in sufficient quantity stone of any kind, and especially hard stone fit for road-making. Besides this, when roads are made, the severity of the climate renders it difficult to keep them in good repair.

When a long journey has to be undertaken through a region in which there are no railways, there are several ways in which it may be effected. In former days, when time was of still less value than at present, many landed proprietors travelled with their own horses, and carried with them, in one or more capacious, lumbering vehicles, all that was required for the degree of civilisation which they had attained; and their requirements were often considerable. The grand seigneur, for instance, who spent the greater part of his life amidst the luxury of the court society, naturally took with him all the portable elements of civilisation. His baggage included, therefore, camp-beds, table-linen, silver plate, a batterie de cuisine, and a French cook. The pioneers and part of the commissariat force were sent on in advance, so that his Excellency found at each halting-place everything prepared for his arrival. The poor owner of a few dozen serfs dispensed, of course, with the elaborate commissariat department, and contented himself with such modest fare as could be packed in the holes and corners of a single tarantass.

It will be well to explain here, parenthetically, what a tarantass is, for I shall often have occasion to use the word. It may be briefly defined as a phaeton without springs. The function of springs is imperfectly fulfilled by two parallel wooden bars, placed longitudinally, on which is fixed the body of the vehicle. It is commonly drawn by three horses—a strong, fast trotter in the shafts, flanked on each side by a light, loosely-attached horse that goes along at a gallop. The points of the shafts are connected by the duga, which looks like a gigantic, badly formed horseshoe rising high above the collar of the trotter. To the top of the duga is attached the bearing-rein, and underneath the highest part of it is fastened a big bell—in the southern provinces I found two, and sometimes even three bells—which, when the country is open and the atmosphere still, may be heard a mile off. The use of the bell is variously explained. Some say it is in order to frighten the wolves, and others that it is to avoid collisions on the narrow forest-paths. But neither of these explanations is entirely satisfactory. It is used chiefly in summer, when there is no danger of an attack from wolves; and the number of bells is greater in the south, where there are no forests. Perhaps the original intention was—I throw out the hint for the benefit of a certain school of archaeologists—to frighten away evil spirits; and the practice has been retained partly from unreasoning conservatism, and partly with a view to lessen the chances of collisions. As the roads are noiselessly soft, and the drivers not always vigilant, the dangers of collision are considerably diminished by the ceaseless peal.

Altogether, the tarantass is well adapted to the conditions in which it is used. By the curious way in which the horses are harnessed it recalls the war-chariot of ancient times. The horse in the shafts is compelled by the bearing-rein to keep his head high and straight before him—though the movement of his ears shows plainly that he would very

much like to put it somewhere farther away from the tongue of the bell—but the side horses gallop freely, turning their heads outwards in classical fashion. I believe that this position is assumed not from any sympathy on the part of these animals for the remains of classical art, but rather from the natural desire to keep a sharp eye on the driver. Every movement of his right hand they watch with close attention, and as soon as they discover any symptoms indicating an intention of using the whip they immediately show a desire to quicken the pace.

Now that the reader has gained some idea of what a tarantass is, we may return to the modes of travelling through the regions which are not yet supplied with railways.

However enduring and long-winded horses may be, they must be allowed sometimes, during a long journey, to rest and feed. Travelling long distances with one's own horses is therefore necessarily a slow operation, and is now quite antiquated. People who value their time prefer to make use of the Imperial Post organisation. On all the principal lines of communication there are regular post-stations, at from ten to twenty miles apart, where a certain number of horses and vehicles are kept for the convenience of travellers. To enjoy the privilege of this arrangement, one has to apply to the proper authorities for a podorozhnaya—a large sheet of paper stamped with the Imperial Eagle, and bearing the name of the recipient, the destination, and the number of horses to be supplied. In return, a small sum is paid for imaginary road-repairs; the rest of the sum is paid by instalments at the respective stations.

Armed with this document you go to the post-station and demand the requisite number of horses. Three is the number generally used, but if you travel lightly and are indifferent to appearances, you may content yourself with a pair. The vehicle is a kind of tarantass, but not such as I