

LITERATURE.

SPEAK NO ILL.

Nay, speak no ill!—a kindly word
Can never leave a sting behind,
And oh! to breathe each tale we've heard
Is far beneath a noble mind.
Full oft a better seed is sown
By choosing thus the kinder plan;
For if but little good be known,
Still let us speak the best we can.

Give me the heart that fain would hide—
Would fain another's fault efface;
How can it pleasure human pride
To prove humanity but base?
No: let us reach a higher mood,
A nobler estimate of man;
Be earnest in the search for good,
And speak of all the best we can.

Then speak no ill—but lenient be
To other's failings as your own;
If you're the first a fault to see,
Be not the first to make it known.
For life is but a passing day,
No lip may tell how brief its span;
Then, oh! the little time we stay,
Let's speak of all the best we can!

C. S.

Les Steppes de la Mer Caspienne, Le Caucase, La Crimée, et la Russie Méridionale. Voyage Pittoresque, Historique, et Scientifique. (Travels in the Steppes of the Caspian Sea, Southern Russia, &c.) By XAVIER HOMMAIRE DE HELL. Paris, 1843—6.

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UNTIL very recently the most erroneous notions generally prevailed in this country on almost every particular concerning the internal condition of the Russian empire. Its remoteness, its vast territorial extent, the prodigious numerical strength of its armies, and the gorgeous profusion with which its travelled princes and nobles strewed all the roads of Europe with their gold, suggesting fabulous visions of the wealth that fed that astounding prodigality;—all this dazzled the imagination of our countrymen; and, as they had no very urgent motives for scrutinising the truth of such appearances, they were content to believe implicitly in their reality. If they looked at the political relations of Russia with other continental states, they found in them apparently all that was wanting to confirm their first impressions. How was it possible to doubt the intrinsic greatness of that power, by which the imperial eagle of France had been struck down when soaring at its pride of place; a power whose haughty leadership was acknowledged, sometimes willingly, sometimes with reluctance, but acknowledged always by Austria and Prussia, and before which the lesser states of Europe cowered like whipped spaniels; a power which had reduced the once terrible Ottoman Porte to virtual vassalage, and that aspired to wrest the empire of India from the grasp of Great Britain? No; the might of Russia, saving only her maritime deficiencies, was admitted without question; and therein lay for her a source of real power of which she knew how to make the amplest profit. *Possunt quia posse videntur* is an adage never better understood than by the Russian government, and marvellous, indeed, has been its elaborate and successful cultivation of all the arts of imposture. Nor does the system end with the diplomacy of the empire. Baren of invention, the Muscovites are quick imitators; and the mendacious spirit that characterises their government, pervades likewise every phase and product of their spurious civilisation. To seem the thing it is not, is the grand problem of Russian existence, personal, social, and political.

The sorry figure made by the Russian arms in their cumbersome efforts to put down the Polish insurrection of 1832, and their protracted and miserably inglorious contest with the Circassians, were not easily to be reconciled with preconceived opinions. The credulous belief in the vastness of the czar's resources was shaken; but it was not until after the publication of the works of De Custine, Lacroix, and the author of the "Revelations of Russia," that the delusion stood fully exposed. Most of our Trinculos of Western Europe have by this time begun to understand what a very shabby monster it is they took for a demigod; but if there be any whose easy good nature, or whose antiquated Tory prejudices and sympathy with despotism, still cling to the old notions, let such persons refute if they can the weighty testimony of the volumes before us. Many of the most startling disclosures made by the authors we have named, and by others besides, are here abundantly corroborated by a writer whose talents, industry, candour, good temper, and rare opportunities for acquiring information on the subjects he treats of, entitle him to our highest confidence.

M. Hommaire, a French civil engineer, was prompted by his zeal for science to visit Southern Russia in 1838, for the purpose of exploring the geological constitution of the Crimea, and of the vast region of plains adjoining the Black Sea. His ultimate object was to arrive at positive data for the solution of the great question so long debated by physical geographers:—the rupture of the Bosphorus. The nature of his task soon obliged him to embrace a larger field than he had at first contemplated, and to devote nearly five years to his researches in all directions, from the Danube to the Caspian, and as far south as the northern verge of the Caucasus. Twice in the course of his long sojourn, his professional services were employed on important matters by the Russian government, which conferred on him the temporary rank of colonel, rendered him on all occasions very useful aid towards promoting his comfort and facilitating his scientific labours, and finally marked its sense of his merit, by creating him a knight of the imperial order of St. Vladimir. Thus favored by the local authorities, and gifted with the talismanic virtue that encompasses the possessor of *chin* (rank), without which a man is less than nobody in Russia, his means of gathering authentic information on the condition of men and things in the czar's dominions, were such as can have fallen to the lot of few other travellers. He made excellent use of his opportunities; and

in what spirit he has set down the result of his observations may be inferred from the following significant words of his preface:—

Our work is published under no one's patronage; we have kept ourselves independent of all extraneous influence; and in frankly pointing out what has seemed to us faulty in the social institutions of the Muscovite empire, we think we evince more gratitude for the hospitality afforded us in Russia than some travellers of our times, whose pages are filled only with flatteries as ridiculous as they are exaggerated.

Madame Hommaire accompanied her husband in most of his expeditions, and as she bravely shared by his side, for five long years, the fatigues and hardships of the Scythian wilds, so she has also taken her part with him in the lighter labours of authorship. To her graceful and lively pen we owe all the narrative part of the work, comprising the greater portion of the first two volumes: Is there not something extremely touching in these simple facts? Your critic, as some suppose, should be a right of stoic mould, a sort of intellectual abstraction, regarding not the persons of authors, and mindful only of the quality of the work before him. Be this as it may, we will own that in this unobtrusive picture of wedded fellowship, there lies for us a charm apart from, and surpassing, all mere literary or scientific excellence. The devoted wife, the helpmate true and helpful in all things, is a hallowed being in our eyes; and though we had never read a line of her inditing, nor knew whether or not she was a proficient in the writer's art, we would not the less boldly aver that the native beauties of her mind would surely breathe their influence into her pages, making them redolent of kindly, pleasant, graceful thoughts and feelings. And so it is indeed with Madame Hommaire's narrative. It is before all things delightfully feminine; while perusing it, we seem not so much to read, as to listen to the conversation of an amiable and accomplished woman, who fascinates us as much by her manner as by the matter of what she relates. Her work abounds, too, with novel and curious details, which she seizes with instinctive delicacy of perception. She has great skill in communicating her own impressions and emotions to the reader; she tells a story trippingly and well, and her unaffected gaiety never deserts her, even when she speaks of those crosses and vexations incident to all travellers, and on which many of them, in the excess of their self-commiseration, are prone to descant somewhat tediously. We will not delay our readers with further preface, but proceed to justify our encomiums by extracts. Here is an amusing glimpse of the domestic habits of the great in Southern Russia:—

Two days afterwards we left Kherson, for the country seat of the marshal of the nobles, where a large party was already assembled. The manner in which hospitality is exercised in Russia is very convenient, and entails no great outlay in the matter of upholstery. Those who receive visitors give themselves very little concern as to whether their guests are well or ill lodged, provided they can offer them a good table; it never occurs to them that a good bed and a room provided with some articles of furniture, are to some persons quite as acceptable as a good dinner. Whatever has no reference to the comfort of the stomach, lies beyond the range of Russian politeness, and the stranger must make up his account accordingly. As we were the last comers, we fared very queerly in point of lodging, being thrust four or five of us into one room, with no other furniture than two miserable bedsteads; and there we were left to shift for ourselves as we could. The house is very handsome in appearance; but for all its portico, its terrace, and its grand halls, it only contains two or three rooms for reception, and a few garrets graced with the name of bedrooms. Ostentation is inherent in the Russian character, but it abounds especially among the petty nobles, who lavish away their whole income in outward show. They must have equipages with four horses, billiard-rooms, grand drawing rooms, pianos, &c. And if they can procure all these superfluities, they are quite content to live on mujik's fare, and to sleep in beds without anything in the shape of sheets.

Articles of furniture, the most indispensable, are totally unknown in the dwellings of most of the second-rate nobles. Notwithstanding the vaunted progress of Russian civilization, it is almost impossible to find a basin and ewer in a bed-room. Bedsteads are almost as great rarities, and almost invariably you have nothing but a divan on which you may pass the night. You may deem yourself singularly fortunate if the mistress of the mansion thinks of sending you a blanket and a pillow but this is so unusual a piece of good luck, that you must never reckon upon it. In their own persons the Russians set an example of truly Spartan habits, as I had many opportunities of perceiving during my stay in the marshal's house. No one, the marshal himself not excepted, had a private chamber; his eldest daughter, though a very elegant and charming young lady, lay on the floor, wrapped in a cloak like an old veteran. His wife, with three or four young children, passed the night in a closet that served as a boudoir by day, and he himself made his bed on one of the divans of the grand saloon. As for the visitors, some slept on the billiard table; others, like ourselves, scrambled for a few paltry stump-bedsteads, whilst the most philosophical wore away the night in drinking and gambling.

I say nothing as to the manner in which the domestic servants are lodged; a good guess as to this matter may be easily made from what I have just said of their masters. Besides, it is a settled point in Russia never to take any heed for servants; they eat, drink and sleep, how and where they can, and their masters never think of asking a word about the matter. The family whose guests we were was very large, and furnished us with themes for many a remark on the national usages, and the notions respecting education that are in vogue in the empire. A Swiss governess is an indispensable piece of furniture in every house in which there are many children. She must teach them to read, write, and speak French, and play a few mazurkas on the piano. No more is required of her; for a solid instruction is a thing almost unknown among the petty nobles. A girl of fifteen has completed her education if she can do the honors of a drawing-room, and warble a few French romances. Yet I have met with several exceptions to this rule, foremost among which I must note our host's pretty daughter Loubinka, who, thanks to a sound understanding and quick apprehension, has acquired such a stock of information as very few Russian ladies possess.

It is only among those families that constantly reside on their estates that we still find in full vigour all those prejudices, superstitions, and usages of old Russia, that are handed down as heirlooms from generation to generation, and keep strong hold on all the rustic nobility. No people are more superstitious than the Russians: the sight of two crossed forks, or a saltcellar upset, will make them turn pale and tremble with terror. There are unlucky days on which nothing could induce them to set out on a journey or begin any business. Monday, especially, is marked with a red cross in their calendar, and woe to the man who would dare to brave its malign influence.

Among the Russian customs most sedulously preserved is that of mutual salutations after meals. Nothing can be more amusing than to see all the persons round the table bowing right and left with a gravity that proves the importance they attach to a formality so singular in our eyes. The children set the example by respectfully kissing the hands of their parents. In all social meetings etiquette peremptorily requires that the young ladies, instead of sitting in the drawing-room, shall remain by themselves in an adjoining apartment, and not allow any young man to approach them. If there is dancing the gravest matron in the company goes and brings them almost by force into the ball-room. Once there they may indulge their youthful vivacity without restraint; but on no pretext are they to withdraw from beneath the eyes of their mothers or chaperons. It would be ruinous to a young lady's reputation to be caught tête-à-tête with a young man within two steps of the ball-room. But all this prudery extends no further than outward forms, and it would be a grand mistake to suppose that there is more morality in Russia than elsewhere. Genuine virtue, such as is based on sound principles and an enlightened education, is not very common there. Young girls are jealously guarded, because the practice is in accordance with the general habits and feelings of the country, and little reliance is placed on their own sense of propriety. But once married they acquire the right of conducting themselves as they please, and the husband would find it a hard matter to control their actions. Though divorces are almost impossible to obtain, it does not follow that all wives remain with their husbands; on the contrary, nothing is more common than amicable arrangements between married people to wink at each other's peccadilloes; such conventions excite no scandal, and do not exclude the wife from society. One of these divorces I will mention, which is perhaps without a parallel in the annals of the civilized world.

A very pretty and sprightly young Polish lady was married to a man of great wealth, but much older than herself, and a thorough Muscovite in coarseness of character and habits. After two or three years spent in wrangling and plaguing each other, the ill-assorted pair resolved to travel, in the hopes of escaping the intolerable sort of life they led at home. A residence in Italy, the chosen land of intrigues and illicit amours, soon settled the case. The young wife eloped with an Italian nobleman, whose passion ere long grew so intense that nothing would satisfy him short of a legal sanction to their union. Divorces, as every one knows, are easily obtained in the pope's dominions. Madame de K. had therefore no difficulty in causing her marriage to be annulled, especially with the help of her lord and master, who for the first time since they had come together, agreed with her heart and soul. Every thing was promptly arranged and Monsieur carried his complaisance so far as to be present as an official witness at Madame's wedding, doubtless for the purpose of thoroughly making sure of its validity. Three or four children were the fruit of this new union; but the lady's happiness was of short duration. Her domestic peace was destroyed by the intrigues of her second husband's family; perhaps, too, the Italian's love had cooled; be this as it may, after some months of miserable struggles and humiliations, sentence of separation was finally pronounced against her, and she found herself suddenly without fortune or protector, burdened with a young family, and weighed down with fearful anticipations of the future. Her first step was to leave a country where such cruel calamities had befallen her, and to return to Podolia, the land of her birth. Hitherto her story is like hundreds of others, and I should not have thought of narrating it had it ended there; but what almost surpasses belief, and gives it a stamp of originality altogether out of the common line, is the conduct of her first husband when he heard of her return. That brutal, inconstant man, who had trampled on all social decencies in attending at the marriage of his wife with another, did all in his power to induce her to return to his house. By dint of unwearied efforts and entreaties he succeeded in overcoming her scruples, and bore her home in triumph along with her children by the Italian, on whom he settled part of his fortune. From that time forth the most perfect harmony subsists between the pair, and seems likely long to continue. I saw a letter written by the lady two or three months after her return beneath the conjugal roof; it breathed the liveliest gratitude and the fondest affection for him whom she called her beloved husband.

Propos to the chapter matrimonial here touched on, we find the following anecdote of General Khersanof, a man of great wealth, and son-in-law of the celebrated Hettman Platof:—

On entering the first *salon* we met the general, who immediately presented us to his two wives. But, the reader will say, is bigamy allowed among the Cossacks? Not exactly so; but the laws and public opinion are against it, still a man of high station may easily evade both; and General Khersanof has been living for many years in open avowed bigamy, without finding that his *salons* are the less frequented on account of such a trifle. In Russia, wealth covers everything with its glittering veil, and sanctions every kind of eccentricity, however opposed to the usages of the land, provided it redeem them by plenty of balls and entertainments. Public opinion, such as exists in France, is here altogether unknown. The majority leave scruples of conscience to timorous souls, without even so much as acknowledging their merit.

A man the slave of his word, and a woman of her reputation, could not be understood in a country where caprice reigns as absolute sovereign. A Russian lady, to whom I made some remarks on this subject, answered *nobly*, that none but low people could be affected by scandal, inasmuch as censure can only proceed from superiors. She was perfectly right, for, situated as the nobility are, who would dare to criticise and condemn their faults? In order that public opinion should exist, there must be an independent class, capable of uttering its judgments without fearing the vengeance of those it calls before its bar; there must be a free country in which the acts of every individual may be impartially appreciated; in short, the words justice, honour, honesty, and delicacy of feeling must have a real meaning, instead of being the sport of an elegant and corrupt caste, that systematically makes a mock of all things not subservient to its caprices and its passions.

It is said that the two co-wives live on the best possible terms with each other. The general seems quite at his ease with respect to them, and goes from the one to the other with the same marks of attention and affection. His first wife is very old, and might be taken for the mother of the second. We were assured that being greatly distressed at having no children, she had herself advised her husband to make a new choice. The general fixed on a very pretty young peasant working on his own property. In order to diminish the great disparity of rank between them he married her to one of his officers, who, on coming out of church, received orders to depart instantly on a distant mission from which he never returned. Some time afterwards the young woman was installed in the general's brilliant mansion, and presented to all his acquaintance as Madame Khersanof.

The account Madame Hommaire gives of her visit to a Kal-muck prince and princess will surprise those whose notions of

that people are derived from such travellers as Dr. Clarke, by whom they are described as amongst the most forbidding in aspect and features, and the most loathsome in habits of the whole human race.

The little island belonging to Prince Tamene stands alone in the middle of the river. From a distance it looks like a nest of verdure resting on the waves, and waiting only a breath of wind to send it floating down the rapid course of the Volga. But, as you advance, the land unfolds before you, the trees form themselves into groups, and the prince's palace displays a portion of its white facade, and the open galleries of its turrets. Every object assumes a more decided and more picturesque form, and stands out in clear relief, from the cupola of the mysterious pagoda which you see towering above the trees, to the humble kibitka glittering in the magic tints of sunset. The landscape, as it presented itself successively to our eyes, with the unruffled mirror of the Volga for its framework, wore a calm, but strange and profoundly melancholy character. It was like nothing we had ever seen before; it was a new world which fancy might people as it pleased; one of those mysterious isles one dreams of at fifteen, after reading the "Arabian Nights;" a thing, in short, such as crosses the traveller's path but once in all his wanderings, and which we enjoyed with all the zest of unexpected pleasure.

After describing her courteous reception, and the slight shock of disappointment she experienced at finding so much that reminded her of Europe in the habitation of a real Kalmuck prince, she continues:—

After the first civilities were over, I was conducted to a very handsome chamber, with windows opening on a large verandah. I found in it a toilette apparatus in silver, very elegant furniture, and many objects both rare and precious. My surprise augmented continually as I beheld this aristocratic sumptuousness. In vain I looked for anything that could remind me of the Kalmucks; nothing around me had a tinge of *couleur locale*; all seemed rather to bespeak the abode of a rich Asiatic nawab; and with a little effort of imagination, I might easily have fancied myself transported into the marvellous world of the fairies, as I beheld that magnificent palace encircled with water, its exterior fretted all over with balconies and fantastic ornaments, and its interior all filled with velvets, tapestries, and crystals, as though the touch of a wand had made all these wonders start from the bosom of the Volga! And what completed the illusion was the thought that the author of these prodigies was a Kalmuck prince, a chief of those half-savage tribes that wander over the sandy plains of the Caspian Sea, a worshipper of the grand Lama, a believer in the metempsychosis; in short, one of those beings whose existence seems to us almost fabulous, such a host of mysterious legends do their names awaken in the mind. * * *

Prince Tamene is the wealthiest and most influential of all the Kalmuck chiefs. In 1815 he raised a regiment at his own expense, and led it to Paris, for which meritorious service he was rewarded with numerous decorations. He has now the rank of colonel, and he was the first of this nomade people who exchanged his kibitka for an European dwelling.

At an early hour next day, Madame Zakarevitch came to accompany us to the prince's sister-in-law, who, during the fine season, resides in her kibitka in preference to the palace. Nothing could be more agreeable to us than this proposal. At last then I was about to see Kalmuck manners and customs without any foreign admixture. On the way I learned that the princess was renowned among her people for extreme beauty and accomplishments, besides many other details which contributed further to augment my curiosity. We formed a tolerably large party when we reached her tent, and as she had been informed of our intended visit, we enjoyed, on entering, a spectacle that far surpassed our anticipations. When the curtain at the doorway of the kibitka was raised, we found ourselves in a rather spacious room, lighted from above, and hung with red damask, the reflection from which shed a glowing tint on every object; the floor was covered with a rich Turkey carpet, and the air was loaded with perfumes. In this balmy atmosphere and crimson light we perceived the princess seated on a low platform at the further end of the tent, dressed in glistening robes, and as motionless as an idol. Some twenty women in full dress, sitting on their heels, formed a strange and particoloured circle round her. It was like nothing I could compare it to but an opera scene suddenly got up on the banks of the Volga. When the princess had allowed us time enough to admire her, she slowly descended the steps of the platform, approached us with dignity, took me by the hand, embraced me affectionately, and led me to the place she had just left. She did the same by Madame Zakarevitch and her daughter, and then graciously saluting the persons who had accompanied us, she motioned them to be seated on a large divan opposite the platform. No mistress of a house in Paris could have done better. When every one had found a place, she sat down beside me, and through the medium of an Armenian who spoke Russian and Kalmuck extremely well, she made me a thousand compliments, that gave me a very high opinion of her capacity. With the Armenian's assistance we were able to put many questions to each other, and notwithstanding the awkwardness of being obliged to have recourse to an interpreter, the conversation was far from growing languid, so eager was the princess for information of every kind. The Armenian, who was a merry soul, constituted himself, of his own authority, grand master of the ceremonies, and commenced his functions by advising the princess to give orders for the ball. Immediately upon a sign from the latter, one of the ladies of honour rose and performed a few steps turning slowly upon herself; whilst another, who remained seated, drew forth from a balalaika (an Oriental guitar) some melancholy sounds, by no means appropriate to the occasion. Nor were the attitudes and movements of her companion more accordant with our notions of dancing. They formed a pantomime, the meaning of which I could not ascertain, but which, by its languishing monotony, expressed anything but pleasure or gaiety. The young *figurante* frequently stretched out her arms and knelt down as if to invoke some invisible being. The performance lasted a considerable time, during which I had full opportunity to scrutinize the princess, and saw good reason to justify the high renown in which her beauty was held among her own people. Her figure is imposing, and extremely well-proportioned, as far as her numerous garments allowed me to judge. Her mouth, finely arched and adorned with beautiful teeth, her countenance expressive of great sweetness, her skin, somewhat brown, but remarkably delicate, would entitle her to be thought a very handsome woman, even in France, if the outline of her face and the arrangement of her features were only a trifle less Kalmuck. Nevertheless, in spite of the obliquity of her eyes and the prominence of her cheek-bones, she would still find many an admirer, not in Kalmuckia alone, but all the world over. Her looks convey an expression of the utmost gentleness and good nature, and, like all the women of her race, she has an air of caressing humility, which makes her appearance still more winning.

Now for her costume. Over a very rich robe of Persian stuff, laced all over with silver, she wore a tight silk tunic, reaching only to the knee and open in front. The high corsage was quite flat, and

glittered with silver embroidery and fine pearls that covered all the seams. Round her neck she had a white cambric habit shirt, the shape of which seemed to me like that of a man's shirt collar. It was fastened in front by a diamond button. Her very thick, deep black hair fell over her bosom in two magnificent tresses of remarkable length. A yellow cap, edged with rich fur, and resembling in shape the square cap of a French judge, was set jauntily on the crown of her head. But what surprised me most in her costume was an embroidered cambric handkerchief and a pair of black mittens. Thus, it appears, the productions of our workshops find their way even to the toilette of a great Kalmuck lady. Among the princess's ornaments I must not forget to enumerate a large gold chain, which, after being wound round her beautiful tresses, fell over her bosom passing on its way through her gold earrings. Her whole attire, such as I have described it, looked much less barbarous than I had expected. The ladies of honour, though less richly clad, wore robes and caps of the same form; only they had not advanced so far as to wear mittens.

When we came out from the kibitka the princess's brother-in-law took us to a herd of wild horses, where one of the most extraordinary scenes awaited us. The moment we were perceived, five or six mounted men, armed with long lassoes, rushed into the middle of the *taboun* (herd of horses), keeping their eyes constantly fixed on the young prince, who was to point out the animal they should seize. The signal being given, they instantly galloped forward and noosed a young horse with a long dishevelled mane, whose dilated eyes and smoking nostrils betokened inexplicable terror. A lightly-clad Kalmuck, who followed them on foot, immediately sprang upon the stallion, cut the thongs that were throttling him, and engaged with him in an incredible contest of daring and agility. It would be impossible, I think, for any spectacle more vividly to affect the mind than that which now met our eyes. Sometimes the rider and his horse rolled together on the grass: sometimes they shot through the air with the speed of an arrow, and then stopped abruptly, as if a wall had at once risen up before them. On a sudden the furious animal would crawl on its belly, or rear in a manner that made us shriek with terror, then plunging forward again in his mad gallop he would dash through the *taboun*, and endeavour in every possible way to shake off his novel burden.

But this exercise, violent and dangerous as it appeared to us, seemed but sport to the Kalmuck, whose body followed all the movements of the animal with so much suppleness that one would have fancied the same thought possessed both bodies. The sweat poured in every limb. As for the rider his coolness would have put to shame the most accomplished horsemen in Europe. In the most critical moments he still found himself at liberty to wave his arms in token of triumph; and in spite of the indomitable humour of his steed, he had sufficient command over it to keep it always within the circle of our vision. At a signal from the prince, two horsemen, who had kept as close as possible to the daring centaur, seized him with amazing quickness and galloped away with him before we had time to comprehend this manœuvre. The horse, for a moment stupified, soon made off at full speed, and was lost in the midst of the herd. These performances were repeated several times without a single rider suffering himself to be thrown.

But what was our amazement when we saw a boy of ten years come forward to undertake the same exploit! They selected for him a young white stallion of great size, whose fiery bounds and desperate efforts to break his bonds, indicated a most violent temper.

I will not attempt to depict our intense emotions during this new conflict. This child, who like the other riders, had only the horse's mane to cling to, afforded an example of the power of reasoning over instinct and brute force. For some minutes he maintained his difficult position with heroic intrepidity. At last, to our great relief a horseman rode up to him, caught him up in his outstretched arm, and threw him on the croup behind him.

We pass over the account of that day's dinner; its choice cookery, half Russian and half French; the rich service of plate; the profusion of Spanish and French wines, and the toasts in honor of the Emperor of Russia and the King of France, &c. &c. All this was in very good style, and common-place in the same proportion. After dinner the visitors proceeded to the mysterious pagoda, which had so much excited their curiosity.

The moment we set foot on the threshold of the temple, our ears were assailed with a *charivari*, compared with which a score or two of great bells set in motion promiscuously, would have been harmony itself. It almost deprived us of the power of perceiving what was going on around us. The noise was so piercing, discordant, and savage that we were completely stupified, and there was no possibility of exchanging a word.

The perpetrators of this terrible uproar, in other words the musicians, were arranged in two parallel lines facing each other; at their head, in the direction of the altar, the high-priest knelt quite motionless on a rich Persian carpet, and behind them towards the entrance stood the *ghepki*, or master of the ceremonies, dressed in a scarlet robe and a deep-yellow hood, and having in his hand a long staff, the emblem, no doubt, of his dignity. The other priests all kneeling as well as the musicians, and looking like grotesque Chinese in their features and attitudes, wore dresses of glaring colours, loaded with gold and silver brocade, consisting of wide tunics, with open sleeves, and a sort of mitre with several broad points. Their head-dress somewhat resembled that of the ancient Peruvian, except that instead of feathers they had plates covered with religious paintings, besides which there rose from the centre a long strait tuft of black silk, tied up so as to form a series of little balls, diminishing from the base to the summit. Below, this tuft spread out into several tresses which fell down on the shoulders. But what surprised us most of all was the musical instruments. Besides enormous timbrels and the Chinese tamtam, there were large sea-shells used as horns, and two huge tubes, three or four yards long, and each supported on two props. My husband ineffectually endeavoured to sound these trumpets; none but the stentorian lungs of the vigorous Mandshuis could give them breath. If there is neither tune, nor harmony, nor method in the religious music of the Kalmucks, by way of amends for this every one makes as much noise as he can in his own way and according to the strength of his lungs. The concert began by a jingling of little bells, then the timbrels and tamtams struck up, and lastly, after the shrill squeakings of the shells, the two great trumpets began to bellow, and made all the windows of the temple shake. It would be impossible for me to depict all the oddity of this ceremony. Now indeed we felt that we were thousands of leagues away from Europe, in the heart of Asia, in a pagoda of the Grand Dalai Lama, of Thibet.

The temple, lighted by a row of large windows, is adorned with slender columns of stuccoed brickwork, the lightness of which reminds one of the graceful Moorish architecture. A gallery runs all round the dome, which is also remarkable for the extreme delicacy of its workmanship. Tapestries, representing a multitude of good

and evil genii, monstrous idols and fabulous animals, cover all parts of the pagoda, and give it an aspect much more grotesque than religious. The veneration of the worshippers of Lama for their images is so great, that we could not approach these mis-shapen gods without covering our mouths with a handkerchief, lest we should profane them with an unhallowed breath.

The priests showed how much they disliked our minute examination of everything, by the uneasiness with which they continually watched all our movements. Their fear, as we afterwards learned, was lest we should take a fancy to purloin some of those mystic images we scrutinized so narrowly; certainly they had good reason to be alarmed, for the will was not wanting on our part. But we were obliged to content ourselves with gazing at them with looks of the most profound respect, consoling ourselves with the hope of having our revenge on a more favorable occasion.

Having borrowed so largely from the lady we will now turn to her husband's portion of the work.—His exposition of the pernicious effects which prohibitive duties have wrought on both the trade and agriculture of Russia, is a very clear and convincing document. Though strongly inclined to epitomise it here, we resist the temptation, in the consciousness that additional arguments and illustrations in support of free trade doctrines are scarcely needed among us at this moment. The advocates of protection are not to be convinced by any reasoning: fortunately, they are a minority and must yield to necessity. However, as the repeal of the corn-laws must lead to extensive changes in our foreign trading relations, our author's remarks on the commerce of the Black Sea deserve the serious attention of both parties, of those who hope for, and those who fear a great immediate influx of corn into our ports from the shores of Southern Russia. Both appear to entertain very exaggerated notions on this subject. The immense tracts of virgin soil possessed by Russia, and her command of slave labour, will, it is assumed, enable her to produce cheap corn in unlimited quantity. This may be so, and the corn may rot on the ground for want of purchasers. Before it can reach the coast its price must be enormously enhanced by the cost of carriage over huge distances through a country that can scarcely be said to have even the rudiments of a system of roads or internal navigation. Besides this, the Russian tariff reacts deplorably on her own exports, especially on her corn trade; and it is a certain fact that agriculture is at this moment in a state of extreme depression in the most fertile governments of New Russia.

Whenever any of the thousand festering evils that prey upon the body of the Muscovite empire are exposed to view, some fond admirer of despotism gets up and tells us of the czar's enlightened views, the prodigious designs for the amelioration of his people with which his god-like brain is teeming, and so forth. This is mere slavish drivelling. Some high and praiseworthy qualities Nicholas undoubtedly inherits from nature, which not even the awful curse of his position can wholly extinguish; but the best excuse which charity itself can offer for the manifold wickednesses perpetrated by him directly and indirectly, is, that he is condemned to the most pitiable state of ignorance by the inevitable force of circumstances. This "God on earth" of sixty millions of men, as he is officially styled in the prayers prescribed for his soldiers, is a blind puppet in the hands of the most sordid jugglers. "The saddest of all things in Russia," says M. Hommaire, "is that the truth never finds its way to the head of the state, and that a public functionary would think himself undone if he divulged the real state of things: hence in all the documents, reports, and tables laid before the emperor, the fair side of the question is alone acknowledged, and the unfavorable is disguised." There is no hope for Russia in the wisdom of its government, which is actuated in its home administration by one fixed idea, that of effacing all local peculiarities however innocent or even vitally subservient to the general good, and reducing all the heterogeneous elements of the empire to one invariable standard. Uniformity is to be produced at all costs by the vulgar device of lopping and crushing down all things to the dead level of a slave population. Some of Nicholas's wiser predecessors, his grandmother Catherine especially, occasionally deviated from their usual routine in this respect, as in the case of the German colonies in the south. Wherever this was done, there grew up palpable standing evidence of the great benefits to be derived from a liberal policy. Favoured by the reasonable immunities conferred on them, the industrious German and Bulgarian colonists became most valuable pioneers of civilization. They reclaimed the waste steppe and brought it under profitable cultivation; they offered to their Russian neighbours the best models these had yet seen of agriculture and gardening; and while they maintained themselves in rude plenty by their honest thrift, they contributed largely to the coffers of the state. They were never in arrear with their taxes, and what capital they accumulated was always employed in useful undertakings. When there was famine in the country, it was always to them the improvident Russians looked for the means of subsistence. It was with good reason that a German colonist said proudly to his countryman Khol, "When the emperor comes into this country he cannot but rejoice to see us here: he must own it is to us that Russia owes the cultivation of the steppe."

The most valuable immunity formerly enjoyed by the colonies was, that their relations with the state were managed in a direct and simple manner by a special committee, so that they were exempt from the villainous extortion and maladministration that afflicted the rest of the community. In almost any other country than Russia no one would have thought of disturbing a system that was found to work so well; but they manage things differently in St. Petersburg. For several years the government has been contriving measures to put its foreign subjects on the same footing with the crown serfs; the colonial committee was suppressed in 1841, and in less than two years several hundred families forsook their lands in consequence, and returned to Germany. "Seeing the corruption and venality of the Russian functionaries," says our author, "this change of system will bring ruin upon the colonists. In spite of all the efforts and the good intentions of the government, when once the Germans are subjected to nearly the same laws as the crown serfs, they will no longer be able to save their property from the rapacity of their new rulers.

The Russian nation is divided into two great classes: the aristocracy, who enjoy all the privileges, and the people who support all the burdens of the state. There is no middle class, though there are a million and a half of merchants and burghers capable of forming the nucleus of such a body, and needing only a word from the emperor's lips to raise them to the posi-