

Poetry.

HOME.

BY AARON SMITH.

There is a simple little word—
Oh! ne'er its charms destroy—
Throughout the universe 'tis heard,
And nowhere but with joy:
There's music in its magic flow
Wherever we may roam,
The dearest, sweetest sound below;
That little word is Home.

The soldier in the battle's hum
May all things else forget;
'Mid lay'net's flash, and rattle of drum,
His home's remembered yet.
The exile, doom'd on foreign lands
Through hopeless years to toll,
May do the despot's stern commands,
Yet sighs for home the while.

I care not where may be its site,
Or roof'd with straw or tile,
So that the hearth-fire burns more bright
'Neath woman's radiant smile:
Affection on her fondest wing
Will to its portals fly,
And hope will far more sweetly sing
When that blest place is nigh.

It may be fancy, it may be
Something far nobler—far;
But love is my divinity,
And home my polar star.
Oh! sever not home's sacred ties;
They are not things of air;
The great, the learned and the wise,
All had their training there.

Interesting Sketch.

From Dickens' Household Words.

RUSSIA AND THE RUSSIANS

BY AN ENGLISH LADY

An English lady, who, for ten years, was domesticated among the Russians, and did not quit their country until some time after the commencement of the present war, has just published, under the title of "An English woman in Russia"—three hundred and fifty pages of information upon the actual state of society in that empire. The book confirms ideas familiar to many people, but inasmuch as it does this in the most satisfactory way, wholly by illustrations drawn from personal experience or information of a trustworthy kind, its value is equal to its interest. Having read it, we lay it down, and here make note of some of the impressions it has left upon us.

Unless, from one who has been for a long time an English resident, and who can speak without passion, it is not easy to get clear views of the internal state of Russia. Despotism has established there so strict a censorship, that even the Russian scholar only learns as much of his own country as the emperor shall please, and a learned traveller assured our countrywomen that, of an account written by him of his journey in the North of Asia, only those parts were allowed to be published wherein nothing was said tending to expose the desolation of the land. The regions of the barren North were no more to be confessed than a defeat in arms. The great historian of Russia—Karamsin—was obliged to read his pages to the Emperor before he was allowed to publish them. Not only certain class of facts, but also a certain class of thoughts are rigidly kept from the public mind.

The Czar of Russia practically stands before the greater number of his subjects as a little more than God. "The Czar is near, God is far off," is a common Russian saying. "God and the Czar knows it," is the Russian for our "Heaven knows!" A gentleman describing one evening the Emperor's reception on the route to Moscow, said, "I assure you, it was gratifying in the extreme; for the peasants knelt as he passed, just as if it were the Almighty himself."

And who shall contradict the decision?—Our countrywoman was once at the opera when the Emperor was graciously disposed to applaud Madame Castellan by the clapping of his hands. Immediately some one bided. He repeated his applause;—the hiss was repeated. His majesty stood up—looked round the house with dignity—and, for the third time, solemnly clapped his hands. The hiss followed again. Then a tremendous scuffle overhead. The police had caught the impious offender. An example of another kind was made by a young lady whose brother was killed at Kalafat, and who, on receiving news of his death, smiled, and said, she was rejoiced to hear it, as he had died for the Emperor." Imperial munificence rewarded her with a splendid dowry, and the assurance that her future fortune should be cared for.

There is need now to encourage a show of patriotism. The Englishwoman who, on her return found London streets as full of peace as when she quitted them; had left St. Petersburg wearing a far different aspect. Long lines of cannon and ammunition wagons drawn up here and there; parks of artillery continually dragged about; outworks being constructed; regiments marching in and out; whole armies submitting to inspection and departing on their mission, told of the deadly

struggle to which the Czar's ambition had committed him. There was no hour in which recruits might not be seen tramping in wearily by hundreds and by thousands, to receive the Emperor's approval. It is hard for us in this country to conceive the misery attending the terrible conscriptions which plague the subjects of the Russian empire. Except recruits, hardly a young man is to be seen in any of the villages; the post roads are all being mended by women and girls. Men taken from their homes and families, leave behind them among the women, broken ties and the foundation of a dreadful mass of vice and immortality. It is fearful enough under ordinary circumstances: "True communism," said a Russian noble, "is to be found only in Russia."

One morning a poor woman went crying bitterly to the Englishwoman, saying that her two nephews had just been forced from her house to go into the army. "I tried"—we leave the rest of these things to speak in her own impressive words—"I tried to console her, saying that they would return when the war was over; but this only made her more distressed. 'No, no!' exclaimed she, in the deepest sorrow, 'they will never come back any more; the Russians are beaten in every place.' Until lately the lower classes were always convinced that the Emperor's troops were invincible; but it seems by what she said, that even they have got to know something of the truth. A foreigner in St. Petersburg informed me that he had gone to see the recruits that morning, but there did not seem to be much patriotism among them; there was nothing but sobs and tears to be seen among those who were pronounced fit for service, whilst the rejected ones crossed themselves with the greatest gratitude." Reviews were being held almost daily when the Englishwoman left, and she was told that, on one occasion, when reviewing troops destined for the South, the Emperor was struck with the forlorn and dejected air of the poor sleep whom he was sending to the slaughter.

"Hold your heads up!" he exclaimed angrily. "Why do you look so miserable?—There is nothing to cause you to be so?—There is something to cause him to be so, we are very much disposed to think."

But we did not mean to talk about the war. The vast empire over which the Czar has rule is in a half-civilized—it would be almost more correct to say—in an uncivilized state. Great navigable rivers roll useless through extensive wilds. Except the excellent roads that connect St. Petersburg with Moscow and with Warsaw, and a few fragments of road serving as drives in the immediate vicinity of those towns, there are no roads in Russia that are roads in any sense. The post roads of the empire are clearings through wood, with boughs of trees laid here and there, tracks over steppes and through morasses. There is everywhere the grandeur of nature but it is the grandeur of its solitudes. A few huts surround government post stations and small brick houses at intervals of fifteen or twenty miles along the routes are the halting places of gangs destined for Siberia. A few low huts, many of them no better than the wigwams of Indians, some of them adorned with elegant wood tracery, a line of such dwellings and commonly also a row of willows by the way side, indicate a Russian village. A number of churches and monasteries with domes and cupolas, green, gilt, or dark blue, studded with golden stars, and surmounted each by a cross standing on a crescent; barracks, a government school and a post office; a few good houses, and a great number of huts—constitute a Russian provincial town, and the surrounding wastes of forest shut it in. The rapid traveller who follows one of the two good roads and sees only the show places of Russian civilization, may be very much deceived. Yet even here he is deceived only by a show. The great buildings that appear so massive are of stuccoed brick, and even the grandeur of the quays, like that of infinitely greater works, the Pyramids, is allied closely to the barbarous. They were constructed at enormous sacrifice of life. The foundations of St. Petersburg were laid by levies of men who perished by hundreds of thousands in the work. One hundred thousand died of famine only.

The civilization of the Russian capital is not more than skin deep. One may see this any day in the streets. The pavements are abominable. Only two or three streets are lighted with gas; in the rest oil glimmers.—The oil lamps are the dimmer for being subject to the speculation of officials. Three wicks are charged for and only two are burnt; the difference is pocketed by the police. All the best shops are kept by foreigners, the native Russian shops being mostly collected in a central bazaar, Gostinoy Dvor. The shopkeepers appeal to the ignorance of a half-barbarous nation by putting pictures of their trades over their doors; and in his shop a Russian tries to cheat with oriental recklessness. Every shop in St. Petersburg contains a mirror for the use of the customers.—"Mirrors," says the Englishwoman, "hold the same position in Russia as clocks do in England. With us time is valuable; with them appearance. They care not though it be mainly false appearance." They

even paint their faces. The lower classes of women use a great deal of white paint, and as it contains mercury, it injures alike health and skin. A young man paying his court to a girl generally presents her with a box of red and white paint, to improve her looks; and in the upper classes, ladies are often to be seen by one another, as they arrive at a house, openly rouging their faces before entering the drawing room.

These are small things indicative of an extensive principle. Peter the Great undertook to civilize Russia by a coup de main—A walk is shown at St. Petersburg along which he made women march unveiled between files of soldiery to accustom them to go unveiled. But civilization is not to be introduced into a nation by imperial edict, and ever since Peter the Great's time the Russian empire has been laboring to stand for what it is not, namely, the equivalent to nations that have become civilized in the slow lapse of time. It can only support, or attempt to support, this reputation by deceit. It must hide, or attempt to hide—and it had hidden from many eyes with much success its mass of barbarism, while by clever and assiduous imitation, as well as by pretensions cunningly sustained, it must put forward a show of having what it only in some few directions even strives to get.

The elements of Civilization Russia, has, in a copious language, soft and beautiful without being effeminate, and a good-hearted people, that would become a nobler people under better government. Their character is sustained chiefly by ignorance and fear. The best class of Russians—especially those who are not tempted by poverty to the meanness that in Russia is almost the only road to wealth—are boundlessly hospitable, kindly, amiable almost beyond the borders of sincerity, but not with the design of being insincere. They are humane to their serfs; and although this class suffers in Russia troubles that surpass those of the negro slaves, it is not from the proper gentleman and ladies of the country that this suffering directly comes. When the noble proprietor himself lives in the white house that peeps from among the trees, side by side with the gilt dome of its church, the slaves on the estate are reasonably happy. It is not true that a Russian gentleman is frequently intoxicated. A Russian lady is never so. Of the government functionaries, who form a large class of the factitious nobility and gentry of the empire, no good is to be said: they are tempted to pillage and extortion under a system that all radiates from a great centre of deceit. Ostentation is the rule. A post master, a colonel in rank, receiving forty pounds a year, and without private estate, is to be seen keeping a carriage, four horses, two footmen and a coachman. His wife goes extravagantly dressed: she has two or three children, a maid and a cook to keep; but she can afford to pay a costly visit every season to the capital. This system of false pretensions ruins the character of thousands upon thousands. It makes of Russia what it is,—a land eaten up with fraud and lying. Living near such a colonel postmaster, the Englishwoman could observe his mode of operation. He was about to pay a visit to St. Petersburg, but wanted money. His expedient was to send an enormous order for iron, for the use of government, to a rich iron-master in the town. The iron-master knew that gold, not iron, was the metal wanted; and as he dared not expose himself to the anger of a government official, he was glad to compromise the matter by the payment of a round sum of silver roubles as a fine for default in execution of the order. The habit of ostentation—barbarous in itself, which destroys the usefulness and credit of the employees of government tempts the poor nobles also to a forfeiture of their own honor and self-respect.

It runs into everything. Even in the most cultivated classes, few Russians who have not gone out of Russia for their knowledge are really well informed. They have learned two or three modern languages, and little else. Yet they cultivate a tact in conversing with an air of wisdom upon topics about which they are wholly uninformed, an after an hour's sustenance of a false assumption show, perhaps, by some senseless question that they cannot have understood properly a syllable upon the points under discussion.—Their emptiness of mind is a political institution. "If three Russians talk together, one is a spy," stands with them as a social proverb. They are forbidden to express their own opinions upon great movements in the world; their censorship excludes from them the noblest literature; they have no common ground of conversation left but the merits of actors and actresses, the jests of the last farce or trashy comedy, or the state of the opera, in which place, by-the-by, such operas as William Tell and Massaniello are performed with new libretti, from which all taint of liberty has been expunged. Feeling the weakness of this men shrug their shoulders and say, "What would you have? We must play cards and talk of the odd trick." While our countrywoman was staying with a friendly Russian lady, an old gentleman called to borrow a few roubles, got them, and departed. "Ah, poor man," said the lady, "when he was

gone, 'think how unfortunate he has been. He once possessed fourteen thousand slaves, and he has lost them all at cards.'—The English visitor expressed regret that a man of his years should be the prey of such a vice. "How old do you think him?" was then asked. "Oh, sixty at the least." "Sixty! He is past eighty, only he wears a wig, paints his eyebrows, and rouges to make himself look younger."

Dramorous.

Getting in at Night Without Making a Noise.

"The door was locked when I got home," said Tom, "and how to get in without waking up 'the governor' was the difficulty. I knew he'd give me 'particular fits' if he knew I was out after ten, and the clock had just struck one. The back yard was an impossibility, and but one chance remained. There was a porch over the front door, the roof of which was a few feet below two windows. One of them I knew was fastened down, and the other opened from a bedroom, which might or might not be occupied. An old maiden, sister of Jim's wife had arrived on the same day, and it was very probable that she was in that room; but I knew the bed was in a corner the farthest from the window, and hoped I would be able to get in and through the room without awakening her, and then I had a comparatively easy thing of it. So getting a plank from a neighboring board pile, I rested it against the eave of the shed, pulled off my shoes, put them in my pocket, and then 'cooned up.' All right so far, but I thought it necessary, in order not to arouse any suspicion in the morning, to remove the plank; so dragging it up, I threw off the end, and down it went with an awful clatter on a stray dog that had followed me for two or three squares, who immediately set up the most awful howl a whipped hound ever gave tongue to. That started half a dozen other dogs in the neighborhood barking: a mocking-bird in the window above commenced singing as if he intended to split his throat at it, and an old woman, in her night clothes, with a candle in her hand, appeared at a window across the street. I knew I was safe as far as she was concerned, but if any one came to our windows, the candle gave enough light to very probably discover me. Nobody did come, however, and the old lady, after peering up and down the street for a minute or more, popped her head in and retired.—The mocking-bird still kept up his eternal whistle, and it was fully half an hour before it and the dogs settled down to give me a chance to move. Creeping slowly along the wall, till I reached the window, I put my hands on the sill, sprang up, and, with my head and shoulders within, and my legs hanging out, stopped to listen. Yes, she was in that room, for I could hear her breathing. After waiting for a minute, I cautiously drew up one leg, then the other, slewed them round, and putting them down to the floor, was just conscious that I had stepped on something soft and yielding, and was about withdrawing them, when another yell broke out at my feet; the old maid jumped up from her bed crying 'murder! murder!' and the dogs and mocking-bird started again. I saw through it all; I had put my foot in it in more ways than one. A little darkey was lying on her blanket, under the window, and I had stepped on her face, and, of course, woke her up. I decided in a flash what to do. The house would be aroused, and I caught, to a certainty, unless I could get to my room before the governor was up, but I hadn't a moment to lose, for the little nigger was yelling, and the woman screaming, so I started for the door, made three steps, and struck a chair; tumbled over it, of course, made the awfullest racket you ever heard of in the 'dead hour of night,' in a peaceable house; the nigger and the old maid screamed louder than ever, the mocking-bird whistled like a steamer whistle, and the dogs fairly made a chorus as loud as Julien's. I reached the door, however, swiftly and quietly opened it, and just got outside in time to see the old gentleman open his door, with a candle in his hand, and come lurching up the stairs. Not a moment was to be lost. There was a wardrobe near where I stood, and I sprang behind it. Up came the 'governor,' reached the door, opened it, went in, and in the meantime there was all sorts of confusion and inquiry as to what was the matter. Nobody else came up, though, and from where I stood I heard every word of inquiry and explanation in the room. Of course they couldn't make much out of it. The little darkey was too much frightened and too sound asleep at the time to understand the truth, and the upshot of the business was, that they concluded she had been dreaming, and the 'governor,' after giving her a sound spanking, and explaining the matter to the aroused neighbors, from the window, went down to his room again.

"So far, so good. I now had to go down stairs, reach the back door, unbar it, get into the yard, and make for my room, which was in the second story of a back building that stood unconnected with it, and about a dozen

yards from the main one. After giving everybody another half hour to settle down again, I started.—Boys, did you ever try to go up or down a pair of stairs, at midnight, without making a noise? You may try all sorts of ways, but every step is sure to crack, each with a peculiar noise of its own, and loud enough, you are certain to waken everybody. I had got nearly to the bottom, when a little fisto dog came trotting up the entry towards me, yelling furiously. A suppressed 'Come here, sir, you Zip,' silenced him, for he recognized me; but the fisto started the mocking-bird, and the dogs in the neighborhood having learned to take the cue, of course all joined chorus for the third time. I ran along the passage, reached the door, and unlocked it, just as the 'governor' aroused the second time, opened his door and seeing a man escaping from the house, by the back way, of course cried 'Thieves! Thieves!' and made a rush after me. I was too quick for him though, opened the door, sprang out, broke for the door that opened into the room below mine, and had just reached it, when crash! within a foot of my head went a brick, and another voice, that I knew belonged to our next door neighbor, Tomkins, joined the 'governor' in the cry of 'Thieves! Thieves! Murder! Thieves! I was safe, though. Rushing up the stairs, I 'shelled' myself quicker than I ever did before or since, and was in bed and sound asleep in less than half a minute. Wasn't there a row though? I never heard so many dogs before, the mocking-bird, of course, was outdoing all previous efforts, the chickens even began to crow, Tomkins, next door, was hawling 'Thieves!' and calling the 'governor.' I could hear screams and all sorts of talking and noises among the neighbors, until at length the old gentleman's voice was heard in the yard calling 'Tom! Tom!'

"Tom was sound asleep—snoring!" "Tom!" cried the old man in a voice that would have roused a man from an epileptic fit. "I judged it prudent to wake then, and jumping from my bed raised the window, and rubbing one eye, and looking particularly frightened, (which I was) asked:

"Why, father, what in the world's the matter?" "There's thieves in the house!" was the reply; 'get your gun and come down and be quick!'

"He's in that room below you, Tom!" hallowed Tomkins, 'I'm certain of it. I saw as he ran down, and threw a fire brick at him. I know he didn't pass that door, Mr. Jones'

"I was directed to look out for myself," the 'governor' stood sentinel at the door below, armed with a club, while Tomkins had five minutes to collect aid from the neighbors, and in less than half the time so thoroughly was every house alarmed, there was a dozen or more men in the yard armed with guns, pistols, and sticks.

"The governor led the attack. Opening the door, he called, 'come out here, you house-breaking scoundrel! If you attempt to run or resist, I'll blow your brains out! Nobody came, however.

"Watch the door," was the order, 'while I go in,' and I was to 'look sharp,' and 'shoot the rascal if he came up stairs.' A momentary search was sufficient to satisfy everybody that the thief was not in that room.

"He's up stairs, then," cried Tomkins, 'for I'll take my Bible oath he didn't pass that door.'

"So up stairs they tramped, but I had lit a candle by that time, and there was no bugbear there. The strictest search, even to looking under a bootjack, didn't show the faintest trace of him. The yard was next examined, then the house, and everybody being at length tolerably well satisfied that he had escaped, the neighbors dispersed to their several homes, but I was appointed as sentinel for the rest of the night, and ordered not to go to sleep on my post under penalty of a flogging.

"The articles missing, on a thorough investigation next day, were two pies, and the old lady's silver thimble. The thimble turned up in a week or two, being discovered under a corner of the carpet, but the pies have never been accounted for to this day. On oath, I could have given very material testimony as to the disposition of the stolen property, but as the case didn't come before any court, I remained quiet.

"Didn't the local editors loom, though! One of them elongated himself through a quarter of a column, and headed the item, 'A Diabolical and Atrocious Attempt at Burglary and Murder!' describing, with graphic particulars, the 'fiendish attempt to throttle Miss—and her servant,' complimented the 'coolness and resolution of R. Tomkins, Esq.,' and perorated with a withering anathema on the want of vigilance displayed by the police.

"It was fun for me to see with what wide awake sagacity the watch used to stop at the front door and listen, during their nightly rounds, for a month after; and you couldn't have bribed a youngster to go under the porch, on any account, after dark. The excitement died away, though, after a while, but I'll never forget the night I tried to get in 'without making a noise.'"

C. A. P.

LOUISVILLE, KY.