

Then the Tsar became of a sudden furiously angry, and bade us withdraw, which command we promptly and gladly obeyed; and so ended our first audience of the Cæsar of Muscovy.

It was told us that the bluffness of Sir Jerome Bowes proved the cause of much ill-humour on the part of his Grace, which ill-humour being visited upon the courtiers around his person, in blows and curses and threatenings and every kind of ill-usage, Sir Jerome was not blessed by the Court for his sturdy championing of the Queen's honour.

Understanding the Muscovish tongue as I now did, I was able to learn more of the opinions of those around us than was Sir Jerome himself, of whom it was characteristic that he had declared he would not offend his tongue by causing it to struggle with the outlandish gibberish spoken by these barbarians. Consequently he had not a word of Russian, but trusted entirely to Muirhead, the interpreter.

## CHAPTER X.

FOR many a day I never heard anything from Amy herself as to her first reception by the Tsar. Offended and mortified, but even more angered was she, that is certain, for never would she speak of that experience.

Nevertheless, there were others present from whose descriptions of the scene I may quote, Muirhead, as interpreter, being one. Muirhead has often declared that Amy has never looked finer, haughtier, more beautiful than when she walked proudly into the Tsar's presence. The anger of the Cæsar was still at its flood-height, for Sir Jerome had but a short while ended his audacious interview. The Prince Ivan still sat at the right of the jewelled chair of state, and Boris Godunof on the left, but there were few boyars present.

The Tsar did not fix his eyes upon Amy when she entered; he had turned his shoulder towards the door by which she entered the

audience chamber, and so remained, as though he conversed with Godunof.

Nevertheless, having been informed that the lady from England had now entered, he shot over his shoulder a snarling remark, though without glancing in her direction. But Muirhead has often described how the young Tsarevitch or Cæsarevitch, as they call the heir to Cæsar's throne, fixed his eyes upon Amy the moment she entered the room, and stared at her throughout the audience as though he would eat her.

"If thou art the young Englishwoman sent hither without an invitation by the Queen of England," Ivan said, over his shoulder, "go back whence thou camest and tell the Queen—who is, I am told, thy kinswoman—that I had thought she was mistress in her own country, yet I find that not only the women-folk are permitted to do as they please, but even her ambassadors are not instructed in the reverence due to princes, but are allowed to speak with unbridled tongues. Let Sir Bowes escort thee whence thou camest. Does the Queen thy cousin think that I cannot find a bride in my own country that she must needs foist upon me the sweepings of her Court?"

Amy flushed, and replied angrily:—

"Tell his Grace that the Queen, my mistress, will thank God that neither Mary Hastings nor my unworthy self is a slave. We marry or not marry, as we please. Tell him also that if her Grace had known what manner of bridegroom was this she sent me to see, she would have spared me the journey."

Muirhead did not translate the speech literally. His version was this: that in England women marry whom they please, and it did not please Mary Hastings to go so far for a husband; her Grace, he said, knew not how long was the journey upon which she had sent this lady whom the Tsar now rejected.

"Ha! and says the lady nothing of her own feelings?" said the Tsar. "She has come a long way to be disappointed in her hopes. She had, doubtless, fixed her ambitions on becoming the bride of the Cæsar?"

Muirhead translated this to Amy, who understood it well enough without his interference. "Let me recommend you to make some conciliatory reply," he said, noting Amy's flashing eyes and fearing an angry rejoinder, for he had not lived in Amy's company four months without learning something of her haughty temperament.

But Amy would have none of his interference. Distrusting Muirhead, she now plunged for herself into the Muscovish language.

"*Nyet, nyet!*" ("No, no!") she said aloud and defiantly; "I did not know, or I would not have come."

"Ha! you did not know!" the Tsar still threw the words over his shoulder without turning his head. "How should you know that the Tsar would refuse to have for his wife, pushed down his throat by the English Queen, any woman she chose to send him? Now that you know this, you may return and tell her."

"*Nyet, nyet!*" said Amy again, "the Queen did not know, and I did not know, that the Tsar is like one of his own *medvedyi!*"

There was a stir in the audience-chamber; every boyar present gasped and looked at the Tsar. The young prince opened his mouth as wide as his eyes. Godunof concealed a smile as he glanced in the Tsar's face. Amy had called his Grace a bear! What would happen next?

Ivan turned quickly round upon his turquoise throne, and for the first time his eyes fell full upon this audacious English girl.

For a moment no one spoke as the Tsar sat

and glared at Amy. Muirhead expected to see the iron-pointed staff poised and thrown, and was prepared to seize the girl by the arms and drag her out of the line of fire. Then the good Scotsman did a daring thing.

"Majesty," he said, "she knows not the Russian language; in her own tongue the word is used differently; she would have said 'she knew not that the Tsar had been irritated'."

"So!" muttered Ivan, still gazing at the haughty girl, who gazed defiantly back. "She is young, and—as it appears—the Queen's servants know no better manners. Let her be taken back to the terem, Muirhead; when Bowes returns she will return with him."

Ivan made a gesture with his hand, and Muirhead, thanking God for the opportunity, swept Amy away as quickly as might be.

"What have you done?" he whispered in her ear. "You have called the Cæsar a bear." Amy replied angrily and aloud:—

"A bear he is—knows he no better manners than to receive a lady with his shoulder to her? Marry, I will call a bear a bear, let him be Tsar or plain man!"

"Did you mark that I made him turn and

face me in the end?" she continued. "Oh, the bear, the bear that he is!—may-be I shall yet tame that bear, Muirhead. Shall I put a ring in his nose and compel him to dance to my music; what think you?"

"I think not," said Muirhead. "You have not seen such a bear as this, Mistress Amy; be careful or he will eat you up!"

"Let him be careful, rather! I say I will tame him."

"Do as thou wilt, but call him not bear again, for by Heaven's mercy I know not how thou art alive, having so called him."

"Dost thou not? dost thou not? May-be I could tell thee. This bear is in some matters a man!" Amy laughed, though her eyes still blazed with fury. "I tell thee, Muirhead, I will tame the man in him and the bear in him."

"What, you are still determined," said Muirhead, "to aspire to be Cæsar's bride?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Amy; "I said I would tame the beast, not marry him!"

"If that be your intention," said Muirhead, "then may God help you!"

Telling me of this notable audience of Amy, Muirhead was much concerned for her. "She knows not what she does, nor what passions she

threatens to arouse for her sport; that way lies death, Shadwell. I tremble for the child."

"She is angry and means not all she says," I replied; "moreover, be sure, my friend, that as her guardian I shall see that she does not run her head into the bear's open mouth."

"If I judge rightly," said Muirhead, "she is one who will act as she pleases, be it wisely or foolishly."

I took upon myself to argue with Amy upon her foolishness, but came off very poorly.

"But for the wit of Muirhead you were lost," I told her, "for I hear that you grossly offended his Grace."

"Tell Muirhead that I love not babbling tongues," she snapped, "and that I will neither be interfered with by him nor will I have tales carried concerning my behaviour, which is neither his affair nor yours."

"I am told that never since this Tsar ascended the throne has any but one person so greatly dared as thou this day; it is madness to attempt to withstand this Ivan, who is called by his people Grosny—the Cruel or Terrible."

"If it was a woman that withstood him, I wager he married her," laughed Amy. "Can you not see, or is your understanding too dense,

that a palate cloyed with sweets would delight in a flavour of acid long withheld from it? Who was this woman; which of his six wives?"

"It was no woman, but a boyar, one Prince Krapatkin, the Prince of Daredevils he should be called if I am told truly, for he bearded the Cæsar until the Cæsar wearied of him and despatched him upon a campaign against the Siberian chiefs."

"Will he return presently?" asked Amy. "That is a man I could love."

"As for returning, be sure that Ivan sent him where death certainly awaits him. As for loving such a man, it is foolish to speak of loving where one has not seen."

"At least I may say," replied Amy, flashing an angry glance at me, "that of those men I have yet seen there is none I could ever love."

When it came to this, I thought the time had arrived to end the conversation, from which I seemed to be deriving little advantage.

## CHAPTER XI.

AMY lost little time in bettering her acquaintance with the chief personages of the realm into which fortune or her own rashness had placed her to live. It is the custom in Muscovy that young women of the boyar rank be kept in strict seclusion. They are not to be seen excepting on rare occasions, and then heavily veiled; and for their accommodation each house is provided with its *terem*, or women's quarters, in which they are obliged to remain, amusing themselves as best they may with sewing, with playing upon the *balalaika*, and doubtless with listening to attractive tales of men and morals told for their entertainment by the older women of the house or palace: those who have already tasted of the delights of the wicked world that lies without the *terem* and the walled garden in which they are allowed to stroll.

And thus they live until the day comes for their betrothal, which is arranged for them by their parents, unless, indeed, the Tsar himself