

and wrote some excellent papers, although vastly inferior to Addison's. He is the father of the periodical essay, was a man of fashion and pleasure, and had great experience in the follies and vanities of the world. It is doubtful whether the writings of the great men who adorned the age of Anne will ever regain the ascendancy they once enjoyed, since they have all been surpassed in succeeding times. They had not the fire, enthusiasm, or genius which satisfies the wants of the present generation. As poets, they had no greatness of fancy; and as philosophers, they were cold and superficial. Nor did they write for the people, but for the great, with whom they sought to associate, by whose praises they were consoled, and by whose bread they were sustained. They wrote for a class, and that class alone, that chiefly seeks to avoid ridicule and abstain from absurdity, that never attempts the sublime, and never sinks to the ridiculous; a class keen of observation, fond of the satirical, and indifferent to all institutions and enterprises which have for their object the elevation of the masses, or the triumph of the abstract principles of truth and justice.

REFERENCES.—Lord Mahon's History of England, which commences with the peace of Utrecht, is one of the most useful and interesting works which have lately appeared. Smollett's continuation of Hume should be consulted, although the author was greater as a novelist than as an historian. Burnet's history on this period is a standard. Hallam should be read in reference to all constitutional questions. Coxe's Life of Marlborough throws great light on the period, and is very valuable. Macaulay's work will, of course, be read. See, also, Bolingbroke's Letters, and the Duke of Berwick's Memoirs. A chapter in the Pictorial History is very good as to literary history and the progress of the arts and sciences. See, also, Johnson's Lives of the Poets; Nichols's Life of Addison; Scott's Life of Swift; Macaulay's Essay on Addison; and the Spectator and Tatler.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PETER THE GREAT, AND RUSSIA.

WHILE Louis XIV. was prosecuting his schemes of aggrandizement, and William III. was opposing those schemes; while Villeroy, Villars, Marlborough, and Eugene were contending, at the head of great armies, for their respective masters; a new power was arising at the north, destined soon to become prominent among the great empires of the world. The political importance of Russia was not appreciated at the close of the seventeenth century, until the great resources of the country were brought to the view of Europe by the extraordinary genius of Peter the Great.

The history of Russia, before the reign of this great prince, has not excited much interest, and is not particularly eventful or important. The Russians are descended from the ancient Slavonic race, supposed to be much inferior to the Germanic or Teutonic tribes, to whom most of the civilized nations of Europe trace their origin.

The first great event in Russian history is the nominal conversion of a powerful king to Christianity, in the tenth century, named Vladimir, whose reign was a mixture of cruelty, licentiousness, and heroism. Seeing the necessity of some generally recognized religion, he sent ten of his most distinguished men into all the various countries then known, to examine their religious systems. Being semi-barbarians, they were disposed to recommend that form which had the most imposing ceremonial, and appealed most forcibly to the senses. The commissioners came to Mecca, but soon left with contempt, since Mohammedanism then made too great demands upon the powers of self-control, and prohibited the use of many things to which the barbarians were attached. They were no better pleased with the Manichean philosophy, which then extensively prevailed in the East; for this involved the settlement of abstract ideas, for which barbarians had no relish. They disliked Roman Catholicism, on account of the arrogant claims of the

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pope. Judaism was spurned, because it had no country, and its professors were scattered over the face of the earth. But the lofty minarets of St. Sophia, and the extravagant magnificence of the Greek worship, filled the commissioners with admiration; and they easily induced Vladimir to adopt the forms of the Greek Church; which has ever since been the established religion of Russia. But Christianity, in its corrupted form, failed to destroy, and scarcely alleviated, the traits of barbarous life. Old superstitions and vices prevailed; nor were the Russian territories on an equality with the Gothic kingdoms of Europe, in manners, arts, learning, laws, or piety.

When Genghis Khan, with his Tartar hordes, overran the world Russia was subdued, and Tartar princes took possession of the throne of the ancient czars. But the Russian princes, in the thirteenth century, recovered their ancient power. Alexander Nevsky performed exploits of great brilliancy; gained important victories over Danes, Swedes, Lithuanians, and Teutonic knights; and greatly enlarged the boundaries of his kingdom. In the fourteenth century, Moscow became a powerful city, to which was transferred the seat of government, which before was Novgorod. Under the successor of Ivan Kalita, the manners, laws, and institutions of the Russians became fixed, and the absolute power of the czars was established. Under Ivan III., who ascended the Muscovite throne in 1462, the Tartar rule was exterminated, and the various provinces and principalities, of which Russia was composed, were brought under a central government. The Kremlin, with its mighty towers and imposing minarets, arose in all the grandeur of Eastern art and barbaric strength. The mines of the country were worked, the roads cleared of banditti, and a code of laws established. The veil which concealed Russia from the rest of Europe was rent. An army of three hundred thousand men was enlisted, Siberia was discovered, the printing press introduced, and civilization commenced. But the czar was, nevertheless, a brutal tyrant and an abandoned libertine, who massacred his son, executed his nobles, and destroyed his cities.

His successors were disgraced by every crime which degrades humanity; and the whole population remained in rudeness and barbarism, superstition and ignorance. The clergy wielded enormous

power; which, however, was rendered subservient to the interests of absolutism.

Such was Russia, when Peter, the son of Alexis Michaelovitz, ascended the throne, in 1682 — a boy, ten years of age. He early exhibited great sagacity and talent, but was addicted to gross pleasures. These, strangely, did not enervate him, or prevent him from making considerable attainments. But he was most distinguished for a military spirit, which was treated with contempt by the Regent Sophia, daughter of Alexis by a first marriage. As soon, however, as her eyes were open to his varied studies and his ambitious spirit, she became jealous, and attempted to secure his assassination. In this she failed, and the youthful sovereign reigned supreme in Moscow, at the age of seventeen.

No sooner did he assume the reins of empire, than his genius blazed forth with singular brilliancy, and the rapid development of his powers was a subject of universal wonder. Full of courage and energy, he found nothing too arduous for him to undertake: and he soon conceived the vast project of changing the whole system of his government, and reforming the manners of his subjects.

He first directed his attention to the art of war, and resolved to increase the military strength of his empire. With the aid of Le Fort, a Swiss adventurer, and Gordon, a Scotch officer, he instituted, gradually, a standing army of twenty thousand men, officered, armed, and disciplined after the European model; cut off the long beards of the soldiers, took away their robes, and changed their Asiatic dress.

He then conceived the idea of a navy, which may be traced to his love of sailing in a boat, which he had learned to navigate himself. He studied assiduously the art of ship-building, and soon laid the foundation of a navy.

His enterprising and innovating spirit created, as it was to be expected, considerable disaffection among the partisans of the old régime — he old officers of the army, and the nobles, stripped of many of their privileges. A rebellion was the consequence: which, however, was soon suppressed, and the conspirators were executed with unsparing cruelty.

He then came to the singular resolution of visiting foreign

countries, in order to acquire useful information, both in respect to the arts of government and the arts of civilization. Many amusing incidents are recorded of him in his travels. He journeyed incognito; clambered up the sides of ships, ascended the rigging, and descended into the hold; he hired himself out as a workman in Holland, lived on the wretched stipend which he earned as a ship-carpenter, and mastered all the details of ship-building. From Holland he went to England, where he was received with great honor by William III.; studied the state of manufactures and trades, and sought to gain knowledge on all common subjects. From England he went to Austria, intending to go afterwards to Italy; but he was compelled to return home, on account of a rebellion of the old military guard, called the *Strelitz*, who were peculiarly disaffected. But he easily suppressed the discontents, and punished the old soldiers with unsparing rigor. He even executed thirty with his own hands.

He then turned himself, in good earnest, to the work of reform. His passions were military, and he longed to conquer kingdoms and cities. But he saw no probability of success, unless he could first civilize his subjects, and teach the soldiers the great improvements in the art of war. In order to conquer, he resolved first to reform his nation. His desires were selfish, but happened to be directed into channels which benefited his country. Like Napoleon, his ruling passion was that of the aggrandizement of himself and nation. But Providence designed that his passions should be made subservient to the welfare of his race. It is to his glory that he had enlargement of mind sufficient to perceive the true sources of national prosperity. To secure this, therefore, became the aim of his life. He became a reformer; but a reformer, like Hildebrand, of the despotic school.

The first object of all despots is the improvement of the military force. To effect this, he abolished the old privileges of the soldiers, disbanded them, and drafted them into the new regiments, which he had organized on the European plan.

He found more difficulty in changing the dress of the people, who, generally, wore the long Asiatic robe, and the Tartar beard; and such was the opposition made by the people, that he was obliged to compromise the matter, and compelled all who would

wear beards and robes to pay a heavy tax, except priests and peasants: having granted the indulgence to priests on account of the ceremonial of their worship, and to peasants in order to render their costume ignominious.

His next important measure was the toleration of all religions, and all sects, with the exception of the Jesuits, whom he hated and feared. He caused the Bible to be translated into the Slavonic language; founded a school for the marine, and also institutions for the encouragement of literature and art. He abolished the old and odious laws of marriage, by which women had no liberty in the choice of husbands. He suppressed all useless monasteries; taxed the clergy as well as the laity; humiliated the patriarch, and assumed many of his powers. He improved the administration of justice, mitigated laws in relation to woman, and raised her social rank. He established post-offices, boards of trade, a vigorous police, hospitals and almshouses. He humbled the nobility, and abolished many of their privileges; for which the people honored him, and looked upon him as their benefactor.

Having organized his army, and effected social reforms, he turned his attention to war and national aggrandizement.

His first war was with Sweden, then the most powerful of the northern states, and ruled by Charles XII., who, at the age of eighteen, had just ascended the throne. The *cause* of the war was the desire of aggrandizement on the part of the czar; the *pretence* was, the restitution of some lands which Sweden had obtained from Denmark and Poland. Taking advantage of the defenceless state of Sweden, — attacked, at that time, by Denmark on the one side, and by Poland on the other, — Peter invaded the territories of Charles with an army of sixty thousand men, and laid siege to Narva. The Swedish forces were only twenty thousand; but they were veterans, and they were headed by a hero. Notwithstanding the great disproportion between the contending parties, the Russians were defeated, although attacked in their intrenchments, and all the artillery fell into the hands of the Swedes. The victory at Narva settled the fame of Charles, but intoxicated his mind, and led to a presumptuous self-confidence; while the defeat of Peter did not discourage him, but braced him to make still greater exertions — one of the numerous instances, so often seen

in human life, where defeat is better than victory. But the czar was conscious of his strength, and also of his weakness. He knew he had unlimited resources, but that his troops were inexperienced; and he made up his mind for disasters at the beginning, in the hope of victory in the end. "I know very well," said he, "that the Swedes will have the advantage over us for a considerable time; but they will teach us, at length, to beat them." The Swede, on the other hand, was intoxicated with victory, and acquired that fatal presumption which finally proved disastrous to himself and to his country. He despised his adversary; while Peter, without overrating his victorious enemy, was led to put forth new energies, and develop the great resources of his nation. He was sure of final success; and he who can be sustained by the consciousness of ultimate triumph, can ever afford to wait. It is the spirit which sustains the martyr. It constitutes the distinguishing element of enthusiasm and exalted heroism.

But Peter not only made new military preparations, but prosecuted his schemes of internal improvement, and projected; after his unfortunate defeat at Narva, the union, by a canal, of the Baltic and Caspian Seas. About this time, he introduced into Russia flocks of Saxony sheep, erected linen and paper manufactories, built hospitals, and invited skilful mechanics, of all trades, to settle in his kingdom. But Charles thought only of war and glory, and did not reconstruct or reproduce. He pursued his military career by invading Poland, then ruled by the Elector of Saxony; while Peter turned his attention to the organization of new armies, melting bells into cannon, constructing fleets, and attending to all the complicated cares of a mighty nation with the most minute assiduity. He drew plans of fortresses, projected military reforms, and inspired his soldiers with his own enthusiasm. And his energy and perseverance were soon rewarded. He captured Marienburgh, a strong city on the confines of Livonia and Ingria, and among the captives was a young peasant girl, who eventually became the Empress Catharine, and to whose counsels Peter was much indebted for his great success.

She was the daughter of a poor woman of Livonia; lost her mother at the age of three years; and, at that early age,

attracted the notice of the parish clerk, a Lutheran clergyman: was brought up with his own daughters, and married a young sergent of the army, who was killed in the capture of the city. She interested the Russian general, by her intense grief and great beauty; was taken into his family, and, soon after, won the favor of Prince Menzikoff, the prime minister of the czar; became mistress of his palace; there beheld Peter himself, captivated him, and was married to him,—at first privately, and afterwards publicly. Her rise, from so obscure a position, in a distant country town, to be the wife of the absolute monarch of an empire of thirty-three millions of people, is the most extraordinary in the history of the world. When she enslaved the czar by the power of her charms, she was only seventeen years of age; two years after the foundations of St. Petersburg were laid.

The building of this great northern capital was as extraordinary as the other great acts of this monarch. Amid the marshes, at the mouth of the Neva, a rival city to the ancient metropolis of the empire arose in five months. But one hundred thousand people perished during the first year, in consequence of the severity of their labors, and the pestilential air of the place. The new city was an object of as great disgust to the nobles of Russia and the inhabitants of the older cities, as it was the delight and pride of the czar, who made it the capital of his vast dominions. And the city was scarcely built, before its great commercial advantages were appreciated; and vessels from all parts of the world, freighted with the various treasures of its different kingdoms and countries, appeared in the harbor of Cronstadt.

Charles XII. looked with contempt on the Herculean labors of his rival to civilize and enrich his country, and remarked "that the czar might amuse himself as he saw fit in building a city, but that he would soon take it from him, and set fire to his wooden house;" a bombastic boast, which, like most boasting, came most signally to nought.

Indeed, success now turned in favor of Peter, whose forces had been constantly increasing, while those of Charles had been decreasing. City after city fell into the hands of Peter, and whole

provinces were conquered from Sweden. Soon all Ingria was added to the empire of the czar, the government of which was intrusted to Menzikoff, a man of extraordinary abilities raised from obscurity, as a seller of pies in the streets of Moscow to be a prince of the empire. His elevation was a great mortification to the old and proud nobility. But Peter not only endeavored to reward and appropriate merit, but to humble the old aristocracy, who were averse to his improvements. And Peter was as cold and haughty to them, as he was free and companionable with his meanest soldiers. All great despots are indifferent to grades of rank, when their own elevation is above envy or the reach of ambition. The reward of merit by the czar, if it alienated the affections of his nobles, increased the veneration and enthusiasm of the people, who are, after all, the great permanent foundation on which absolute power rests; illustrated by the empire of the popes; as well as the despotism of Napoleon.

While Peter contended, with various success, with the armies of Sweden, he succeeded in embroiling Sweden in a war with Poland, and in diverting Charles from the invasion of Russia. Had Charles, at first, and perseveringly, concentrated all his strength in an invasion of Russia, he might have changed the politics of Europe. But he was induced to invade Poland, and soon drove the luxurious and cowardly monarch from his capital and throne, and then turned towards Russia, to play the part of Alexander. But he did not find a Darius in the czar, who was ready to meet him, at the head of immense armies.

The Russian forces amounted to one hundred thousand men; the Swedish to eighty thousand, and they were veterans. Peter did not venture to risk the fate of his empire, by a pitched battle, with such an army of victorious troops. So he attempted a stratagem, and succeeded. He decoyed the Swedes into a barren and wasted territory; and Charles, instead of marching to Moscow, as he ought to have done, followed his expected prey where he could get no provisions for his men, or forage for his horses. Exhausted by fatigue and famine, his troops drooped in the pursuit, and even suffered themselves to be diverted into still more barren sections. Under these circumstances, they were defeated in a disastrous battle. Charles, struck with madness, refused to retreat. Disasters

multiplied. The victorious Russians hung upon his rear. The Cossacks cut off his stragglers. The army of eighty thousand melted away to twenty-five thousand. Still the infatuated Swede dreamed of victory, and expected to see the troops of his enemy desert. The winter set in with its northern severity, and reduced still further his famished troops. He lost time by marches and counter-marches, without guides, and in the midst of a hostile population. At last he reached Pultowa, a village on the banks of the Vorskla. Peter hastened to meet him, with an army of sixty thousand, and one of the bloodiest battles in the history of war was fought. The Swedes performed miracles of valor. But valor could do nothing against overwhelming strength. A disastrous defeat was the result, and Charles, with a few regiments, escaped to Turkey.

Had the battle of Pultowa been decided differently; had Charles conquered instead of Peter, or had Peter lost his life, the empire of Russia would probably have been replunged into its original barbarism, and the balance of power, in Europe, been changed.

But Providence, which ordained the civilization of Russia, also ordained that the triumphant czar should not be unduly aggrandized, and should himself learn lessons of humility. The Turks, in consequence of the intrigues of Charles, and their hereditary jealousy, made war upon Peter, and advanced against him with an army of two hundred and fifty thousand men. His own army was composed of only forty thousand. He was also indiscreet, and soon found himself in the condition of Charles at Pultowa. On the banks of the Pruth, in Moldavia, he was surrounded by the whole Turkish force, and famine or surrender seemed inevitable. It was in this desperate and deplorable condition that he was rescued by the Czarina Catharine, by whose address a treaty was made with his victorious enemy, and Peter was allowed to retire with his army. Charles XII. was indignant beyond measure with the Turkish general, for granting such easy conditions, when he had the czar in his power; and to his reproaches the vizier of the sultan replied, "I have a right to make peace or war; and our law commands us to grant peace to our enemies, when they implore our clemency." Charles replied with an insult; and, though a fugitive in the Turkish camp, he threw