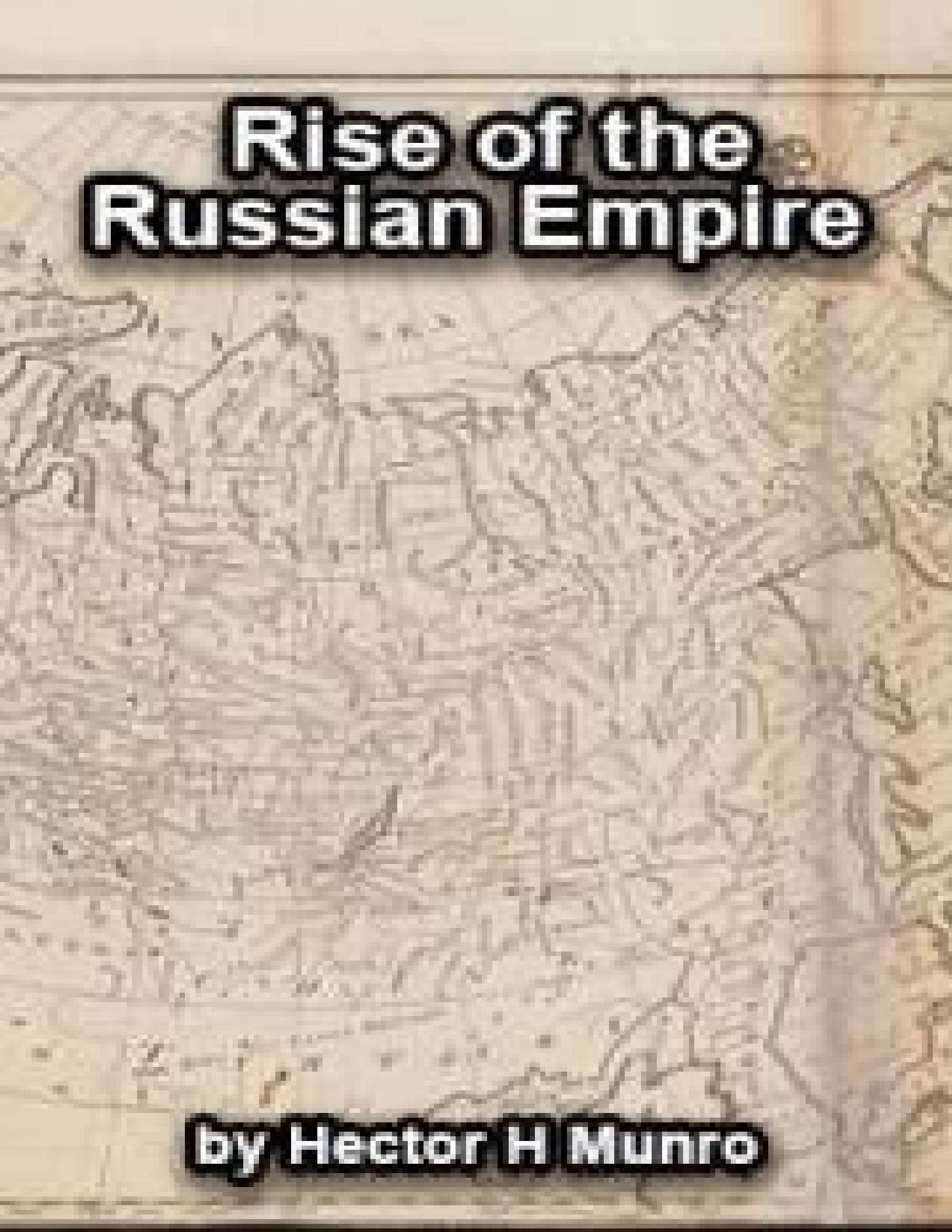
Rise of the Russian Empire



by Hector H Munro

MAP OF RUSSIA under the EARLY RURIKOVITCH PRINCES

THE RISE OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

BY HECTOR H. MUNRO

“On se flatterait en vain de connaitre la Russie actuelle, si l’on ne remontait plus haut dans son histoire.”—Le Père Pierling.

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PREFACE

With the exception of a translation of Rambaud's somewhat disjointed work, there is no detailed history of Russia in the English language at all approaching modern standards. The reigns of Petr the Great and of some of his successors down to the present day—a period covering only 200 years—have been minutely dealt with, but the earlier history of a nation with whom we are coming ever closer into contact is to the English reader almost a blank. Whether the work now submitted will adequately fill the gap remains to be seen; such is its object.

The rule observed with regard to the rendering of names of places and persons has been to follow the spelling of the country to which they belong as closely as possible. The spelling of Russian words employed, and curiously distorted, by English and other historians, has been brought back to its native forms. There is no satisfactory reason, for instance, why the two final letters of *boyarin* should be dropped, or why they should reappear tacked on to the equally Russian word *Kreml*. Moskva is scarcely recognisable in its Anglicised form, and Kiev can only be rendered Kieff on a system which would radically disturb the spelling of most English towns.

A list of works consulted is appended, arranged somewhat in the order in which they have been found useful, precedence being given to those which have been most largely drawn upon.

HECTOR H. MUNRO, 1899.

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CHAPTER I THE DAWN OF RUSSIAN HISTORY

Russia, which is blessed with a rich variety of tribes and peoples, the despair of the ethnographical geographer, who can scarcely find enough distinctive colours wherewith to denote them all on his maps, is characterised by a singular uniformity of physical conditions throughout the greater part of its huge extent. Geographically speaking, it is difficult to determine what are the exact limits of the region known as Russia-in-Europe, the Oural Mountains, which look such an excellent political barrier on paper, being really no barrier at all, certainly not what is known as a scientific frontier. As a matter of fact they are less a range of mountains than a chain of low table-lands, having precisely the same conditions of soil, flora, and fauna on either side of them. Zoologically the valley of the Irtuish forms a much stronger line of demarcation, but much of Russia west of the Ourals coincides more nearly in physical aspect with the great Asiatic plain than it does with the remainder of Europe. Southward and westward from this fancy boundary stretches a vast expanse of salt, sandy, almost barren steppe-land; this gives way in time to large tracts of more or less fertile steppe, partaking more of the character of prairie than of desert, bearing in spring and early summer a heavy crop of grasses, high enough in places to conceal a horse and his rider. Merging on this in a northerly direction is the “black-soil” belt, a magnificent wheat-growing country, which well merits the title of the Granary of Europe. Northward again is a region of dense forest, commencing with oaks and other deciduous trees, and becoming more and more coniferous as it stretches towards the Arctic circle, where pine and fir disappear, and give way to the Tundras, moss-clad wastes, frozen nine months out of the twelve, the home of reindeer and Samoved. Over all this wide extent the snows and frosts of the Russian winter fall with an almost equal rigour, though for varying duration of time. Except on the east, the country possesses strongly-marked natural boundaries; on the south-east rises the huge pile of the Kaukasus Mountains, flanked east and west by the Kaspian and Black Seas respectively; on the south-west lie the Karpathians, while from north-west to north the Baltic is almost connected by lake, swamp, and the deep fissure of the White Sea with the Arctic Ocean. Broadly speaking, nearly the whole area enclosed within these boundaries is one unbroken plain, intersected and watered by several fine rivers, of which the Volga and the Dniepr are, historically, the most important. This, then, is the theatre on which was worked out the drama of Russian national development.

It will now be necessary to glance at the racial and political conditions which prevailed at the period when the curtain rises on mediæval Russian history. First as to the ethnology and distribution of the Slavs, a branch of whom was to be the nucleus round which the empire of all the Russias was to gather. The lore of peoples and of tongues has enabled scientists to assign to the Slavs a place in the great Aryan family from which descended the stocks that made their dwelling on European soil. Exactly when their wanderings brought them into their historic home-lands it is difficult to hazard, nor is it possible to do more than speculate as to whence they came in that distant yesterday of human spate and eddy. At the epoch when Russian history, in a political sense, may be said to start into existence (the commencement of the ninth century), the distribution of the Slavs is more easy to trace; with the exception of an offshoot in the south-east of Europe, occupying Servia, Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia, they appear to have been gathered in a fairly compact though decentralised mass in what may be termed North Central Europe. Holstein, Mecklenburg, and Pomerania, roughly speaking, formed the country of the Wends; another group, the Czechs and Poles, inhabited Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland; while a fourth body, destined to become the most important, was established in North-west Russia, hemmed in by Finns on the north, Turks and Avars on the

east and south. These latter Slavs, the germ of the future Russian nation, lived in tribal communities in the midst of the mighty forests of oak, pine, birch, willow, etc., which stood thick around the basin-lands of the Upper Dniepr, Dvina, and Volkhov, and the source of the Volga. These dense fastnesses they shared with the wolf, boar, lynx, fox, bear, beaver, elk, aurochs, deer, otter, squirrel, and marten, which latter especially furnished them with a valuable article of commerce, the Russian marten skins being highly prized in the fur markets of Europe. Seals abounded on their sea-coast and in Lake Ladoga; the numerous swamps were the home of the wild goose, swan, and crane; the eagle, hawk, raven, cuckoo, and daw were familiar to them, while pigeons were early domesticated among their dwellings.

In their primitive state the Slavs had this obvious differentiation from their Asiatic neighbours—though essentially pastoral they were not nomadic. The village, as a unit of politico-social life, had arrived with them at a high pitch of development, which involves the supposition of long-existing contributory causes, the herding together, namely, of a permanent community of human beings, dependent on each other for mutual convenience, security, and general well-being. The *mir*, commune, or village was in the first place the natural outcome of a patriarchal system other than nomad, the expansion of the primitive association of members of one or more families who had grown up together under the common attraction of a convenient water-supply, a suitable grazing ground, or a wood much haunted by honey-bees.[1] The development of agricultural pursuits necessarily gave a greater measure of stability to village life, and the peasant insensibly rooted himself to that soil in which he had sown his crops and planted his fruit-trees. Thus far the life-story of the tribal Slavs travelled along familiar lines, but here it came to an abrupt halt. The village unit acquired a well-defined theory and practice of government, but it did not germinate into the town. The few townships that were to be found in Slavic lands owed their being for the most part not to any inward process of accumulation, but to extraneous and exceptional circumstances. While Teutonic peoples were raising unto themselves burgs and cities, and banding themselves in guilds and kindred municipal associations, the Slavs remained content with such protection as their forests and swamps afforded, such organisation as their village institutions supplied. The reason for this limitation in social progress was an organic one; in the Slav character the commercial spirit, in its more active sense, was almost entirely wanting. Trade by barter, of course, existed among them, but their medium of exchange had not got beyond the currency of marten and sable skins. The market, the wharf, and the storehouse were not with them institutions of native growth.

From their earth of forest, swamp, and stream, which paled them in from an outer world, and from the sky above, which they had in common with all living folks, the eastern Slavs had drawn inspirations for the thought-weaving of a comprehensive catalogue of gods. Their imaginations gave deific being to the sun, moon, stars, wind, water, fire, and air, but most of all they reverenced the lightning. In their dark, over-shaded forest homes it was natural that the sun, which exercised such mystic sway in the blazing lands of the Orient, should yield place to the swift, dread might which could split great trees in its spasm of destruction and shake the heavens with its attendant thunder. Accordingly the arch-god of Slavic myth was Peroun, in whom was personified the spirit of the lightning. Under the name of Svaroga (the different tribes probably had variant names for the same god, and sometimes, perhaps, varying gods for a common name) he was worshipped as the Begetter of the Fire and Sun Gods. The latter was sometimes known as “Dajh’bog,” but in old folk-songs the Sun is Dajh’bog’s grandchild. The Wind-God was designated “Stribog.” The personality of these nature-deities was not left entirely to the worshippers’ fancy, Peroun at least being represented in effigy by more than one

idol, which conformed to the human pattern from which so few divinities have been able to escape. A slightly more advanced conception of the supernatural was embodied in the worship of Kolyada, a beneficent spirit who was supposed to visit the farms and villages in mid-winter and bring fertility to the pent-in herds and frost-bound seeds. The festival in honour of Kolyada was held about the 25th of December, the date when the Sun was supposed to triumph over the death in which Nature had gripped him and to enter on his new span of life.

Blended with Eastern mysticism there was, no doubt, in their religious ideas a considerable sprinkling of Northern magic. In their dark and lonely forest dwellings there was likely to be something more than a natural dread of that lurking prowler which stamped such an eerie impression upon the imaginations of primitive folks in many lands. The shambling form, the wailing howl, and the narrow eyes that gleamed wicked hunger in the winter woods gave the wolf a reputation for uncanny powers, and the old Slavic folk-songs clearly set forth a belief in wehr-wolf lore.

In the matter of disposing of their dead the Slavs of Eastern Europe had a variety of customs and usages, some of which were probably local practices of the different tribes. In general the body was burned and the bones enclosed in a small vessel, which was placed upon a post near the roadside. Grave-burial was also in vogue, hill-sides being chosen for that purpose. Drinking and feasting were usual accompaniments of the funeral rites, while the opposite extreme was sometimes exhibited by the slashing and scratching of the mourners' faces in token of grief.[2]

Thickly mingled with the Slav homesteads in the lake regions of Peipus, Ladoga, and the forest country stretching eastwards, were the outlying villages of the Finns, who seem to have lived in harmony with their alien neighbours without at the same time showing the least tendency towards a fusion of national characteristics. Branches of the same people, Tchouds and Livs, occupied the lands of the Baltic sea-board on the north-west. South of these, wedged in between the Slavs of Poland and those of the east, in the marshy forest-lands of the Niemen basin, were the Lit'uanians, a people of Indo-European origin, who were divided into the sub-tribes of Lit'uanians, Letts, and Borussians (Prussians). Of doubtful affinity with the first-named were the Yatvyags, a black-bearded race dwelling on the extreme eastern limit of the Polish march. The Lit'uanians were even more ill-provided with towns and strongholds than their Slav neighbours, but they had at least a definite system of tribal government, remarkable for the division of the sovereign power between the prince (*Rikgs*) and the high-priesthood, the former having control of outside affairs, including the important business of waging war, the latter administering matters of justice and religion. The gods of the Lit'uanians were worshipped under the symbolism of sacred trees, and the religious rites included the putting to death of deformed or sickly children; this was enacted, not with the idea that bloodshed and suffering were acceptable to the Higher Powers, but rather because the latter were supposed to demand a standard of healthy and physical well-being on the part of their worshippers.[3]

In the lands lying to the south and south-east, where the forests gave way bit by bit to the open wolds of the steppe country, the Slavs had for neighbours various tribes of nomads, for the most part of Turko-Finnish origin, and these completed the encircling band of stranger folk by which the primitive forest dwellers were shut in from the outside world. At this yonder world it is now necessary to take a glimpse.

Europe towards the middle of the ninth century was still simmering in a state of semi-chaos, out of which were shortly to be evolved many of the national organisms which have lasted to modern times. Charles the Great, by the supreme folly of dividing amongst his three sons the empire he had so carefully built up, had to a great degree undone the work of his life, and political barriers are rather difficult to trace after the partition of Verdun (843), though in the dominions assigned to Charles II. some semblance of the later kingdom of France may be traced. Germany was in a transition state; the strong hand which had established dependent and responsible dukes and counts in the various Teutonic provinces—Saxony, Franconia, Swabia, Bavaria, and Karinthia—had been withdrawn, and as yet these princes had not erected their fiefs into independent hereditary duchies. Scarcely tamed and civilised themselves, the frontier districts of the east were bordered continuously by Danes, Wends, Czechs, Avars, and Slavonians, ever ready to make hostile incursions upon their territory. Hamburg in those days stood as a frontier town, almost an outpost in an enemy's country, and formed with Paderborn and Bremen the high-water mark of the Frankish expansion on the north-eastern marches.

In England national unification was in a more advanced stage; Wessex had gradually absorbed the other constituents of the so-called Heptarchy, with the exception of Mercia, which still held out a nominally separate existence. London, at this period a wooden-built town surrounded by a wall of stone, was beginning to be commercially important.

In Spain the Christians had established among the mountains of Asturias the little kingdom of Leon, and were commencing the long struggle which was eventually to drive the Moors out of the peninsula.

South of Rome and the Imperial territories in Italy, the duchy of Benevento alone foreshadowed the crowd of principalities and commonwealths which were to spring into existence in that country.

To the east the Byzantine Empire, pressed by the Saracens in its Asiatic possessions, by Bulgars and Slavs on its northern boundary, severed from Rome, Ravenna, and the Western world by divergencies of ritual and dogma, humiliated by military reverses in various quarters, still loomed splendid and imposing in her isolation, and the dreaded Greek fire, if no longer "the Fire of old Rome," helped to make her navies respected in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

But if she still attracted the attention of the world, civilised and barbarian, it was scarcely by the exhibition of any grand moral qualities; her annals were one long record of vicious luxuries, servile flatteries, intrigues, disaffection, and cruelties, which grew like an unhealthy crop of fungi in an atmosphere charged with the gases of theological dogmatism. Revolution succeeded revolution, and each was followed by a dreary epilogue of torturings, executions, blindings, and emasculations, while synods and councils gravely discussed the amount of veneration due to pictures of the Virgin, or the exact wording of a litany. In one respect, however, the first Christian State approached the New Jerusalem of its aspirations, namely, in upholstery and artificial landscape gardening, and its gilded gates and rooms of porphyry, its jewelled trees with mechanical singing-birds, might well challenge comparison with the golden streets and walls of precious stones and sea of glass that adorned the Holy City of the Apocalypse.

North of what might be termed the European mainland of the Eastern Empire, between the south bank of the Danube and the ridge of the Balkans, was wedged in the kingdom of Bulgaria, a Turko principality whose territory waxed and waned as its arms were successful or the contrary in the intermittent warfare it carried on against its august neighbour. Though never rising to the position of a considerable power, and at times being reduced to complete subjection, it continued to give trouble to the Byzantine State for many centuries, and the adjoining Zupanate of Servia was from time to time brought under the alternate suzerainty of whichever factor was in the ascendant.

Beyond the Danube the Magyars had not as yet established themselves in Hungary, in the lands lately overrun by the Avars, and a considerable section of that country was absorbed in the great Moravian kingdom, a Czech state whose existence was coterminous with the ninth century, and which also embraced within its limits the vassal duchy of Bohemia, the latter country having, however, its separate dynasty of dukes.

Farther north, Poland had scarcely commenced to have a defined existence in the polity of Europe. Its people, if the early annals are not merely fables borrowed from the common stock of European folk-lore, had elevated to the dignity of sovereign duke a peasant nicknamed Piast, from whom sprang the family of that name who held the throne not less than 600 years. From the fact that the Poles remained independent both of the Western Empire and of the neighbouring Moravian power, may be deduced the assumption that they already possessed some degree of cohesion and organization—more perhaps than distinguished them in later stages of their history.

On the north shore of the Black Sea the most easterly possession of the Byzantine Empire was Kherson, a port in the Krim peninsula, and here the territory of the Cæsars came into contact with the Empire or Khanate of the Khazars, a Turko-Finnish race whose dominions stretched in the ninth century from Hungary to the shores of the Kaspian, and north to the source of the Dniepr. They appear to have attained to a comparatively high degree of civilisation, and they kept up commercial and diplomatic relations with Byzantium and the two Kaliphates of Bagdad and Kordova. Their national religion was a form of paganism (subsequently they embraced Judaism), but in spite of differences of faith and race one of their princesses became the wife of the Emperor Constantine V. Their two principal cities were Itil, on the Volga, and Sarkel (the White City), on the Don. Several of the Turanian and Slavonic tribes on their north-west borders acknowledged their authority and paid them tribute, but at the commencement of the ninth century their power was already declining.

On their north-east frontier the Khazars had for neighbours the Bulgarians of the Volga, an elder branch of the tribe which had settled in the Balkans. Bolgary, “the great City,” was their capital, and a trading centre much frequented by the merchants and dealers of the various semi-barbaric nations in their vicinity, as well as by the more highly-civilised Khazars and Persians.

Northward of all, in the bleak mountain regions of Skandinavia, on the roof of Europe as it were, dwelt the Norsemen, those wild and warlike adventurers who were to leave the impress of their hand on the history of so many countries. In those days, when Iceland and Greenland were as yet undiscovered, Norway, Sweden, and Finland formed a stepping-stone to that unknown Arctic Sea which contemporary imagination peopled with weird and grimly monsters—for the North had its magic lore as well as the shining East. And the fierce vikings, fighting

and plundering under their enchanted Raven banner, seemed in those credulous times not far removed from the legendary warlocks and griffons of whom they were presumed to be the neighbours.

As has been already noticed, the Khazars were essentially a trading nation, and much of the commerce of the farther East filtered through their hands into Eastern Europe. According to one authority[4] the products of the East, after crossing the Kaspian Sea, were conveyed up the Volga, and after a short land journey reached the Baltic by way of Lake Ilmen and Lake Ladoga. It is not easy to see why the shorter and simpler route along the Don and the Black Sea to Constantinople and the Mediterranean was not preferred, especially as the balance of power, and consequently of luxury and wealth, lay rather in the south of Europe than in the north. It was this trade, however, which built up the importance, possibly caused the birth, of Novgorod, that fascinating city which rises out of the mists that shroud the history of unchronicled times with the tantalising name of New Town, suggesting the existence of a yet older one. What was the exact footing of Novgorod in the early decades of the ninth century—whether an actual township, with governor and council, giving a head to a loose confederation of neighbouring Slavic tribes, or whether merely a village or camp, the most convenient station where “the barbarians might assemble for the occasional business of war or trade”[5]—it is difficult at this distance of time to determine. Seated on the banks of the Volkhov some little distance from where that river leaves Lake Ilmen’s northern shore, and connected with the Baltic by convenient waterways, it not only tapped the trade-route already referred to, but occupied a similar favourable position with regard to another important channel of traffic—that between the North and Byzantium by way of the Dniepr and Black Sea. Wax, honey, walrus teeth, and furs went from the frozen North to the “Tzargrad,” as the Imperial city was called by the Slavs, and in exchange came silks and spices and other products of the South. Furs and skins, of otter, marten, wolf, and beaver especially, were in growing demand in Europe, where, from the covering of savages, they had been promoted to articles of luxury among the wealthy of Christendom. With the land covered by dense forest, or infested by savage tribes, and the seas scoured by pirate fleets, traders preferred to keep as much as possible to the great river-routes, and the large, placidly-flowing rivers of the Russian plain were peculiarly suited to their purposes. Thus the early human wanderers adopted the same methods of travel, and nearly the same lines of journey, as the birds of passage, ducks, plovers, and waders use to this day in their annual migrations, winging their way along the coasts and river-courses from Asia to Europe and back again.

Shut up in their own constricted world of forest, lake, and swamp, the Novgorodski and neighbouring Slavs would get, by means of these waterways, glimpses of other worlds, distant as the three points of a triangle, and as varied in manners, customs, and products; news of Sarkel, Itil, and the Great City, Bolgary, and strange countries yet farther east, where men dwelt in tents and rode on camels and hunted the panther, whose spotted skin was more richly marked than that of any forest lynx; visits from mariners of perhaps their own nationality, bringing tales of northern seas, of ice-floes, walruses, sturgeons, and whales; of Wends who preyed on the vessels driven on to their inhospitable shore; and, more important still, of Varangian sea-rovers who were beginning to force themselves on the Finns and Slavs of the sea-coast; above all, tidings from bands of merchants of the City of Wonders that guarded the entrance to the Farther Sea, with its gates and palaces, and temples and gardens and marts, its emperor and saints, and miracles and ceremonials, like unto nothing they had experience of themselves.

It is just at this point that the history of the Slavs of Lake Ilmen and its neighbourhood becomes largely conjectural. That they were brought in some measure under the subjection of Varangian invaders appears tolerably certain, and, favoured no doubt by the natural advantages of their position, girt round with an intricate network of forest and swamp, or, still better, protected perhaps by the poverty of their communities, they seem to have freed themselves from this foreign yoke, as the Saxons of England from time to time drove out the Danes. It was in consequence, probably, of this common danger that the Slavs were drawn into closer confederation, with the unfortunate result that domestic quarrels became rife among them, and each clan or volost was at enmity with its neighbour. “Family armed itself against family, and there was no justice.”[6] This sudden ebullition of anarchy rather suggests that the Varangian intruders had swept away previous institutions or elements of order, and left nothing capable of replacing them, or else that the native Slavs were unable to grapple with the new problems of administration on an extended scale. Evidently, too, the vigorous Norsemen had obtained the reputation of being something more than mere undisciplined robbers and raiders, and their domination seemed more desirable than the turmoil and dissension attendant upon a state of self-government. And in support of this deduction, almost the first definite event recorded in the national chronicles is the resolve of the people of Novgorod to call in the leaders of a tribe known as the Russ Varangians to restore order in their land.

(Controversy has arisen among Russian historians as to the probable nationality or extraction of these “Russ” foreigners, who, like the Angles, gave their name to the country of their adoption, and some writers have assumed them to have been Slavs from Rugen or the south coasts of the Baltic, and not of Skandinavian origin. Apart, however, from the decidedly Norse form of their leaders’ names—Rurik, Sineus, Truvor, Oleg, etc.—the manner of their coming and their subsequent history harmonises exactly with that of the various Skandinavian offshoots who invaded and established themselves in Normandy, England, the Scottish islands, Ireland, and Sicily. Under their vigorous rule the Slavic settlement around Novgorod expanded in a few years into an extensive principality, imposing tribute on and drawing recruits from the neighbouring tribes, and carrying the terror of the Russian name into the Black and Kaspian Seas.)

Whether the “invitation” was genuine, emanating from the desire of the Ilmen folk to secure for themselves the settled rule of capable leaders, or whether the presence of the strangers had to be accepted as a disagreeable necessity, to mitigate the humiliation of which a legendary calling-in was subsequently invented, must remain a matter for conjecture; but with the incoming of this new element Russian history develops suddenly in scope and interest.[7]

CHAPTER II THE COMING OF THE VARANGIANS AND THE BUILDING OF KIEVIAN RUSSIA

Whatever the nature of the causes that led up to this irruption of stranger folk, the fact and, to a certain extent, the manner of their coming is substantially set forth in the old chronicles. Like ocean demi-gods riding out from the sea into the ken of mortal men came three Russ-Varangian brothers, Rurik, Sineus, and Truvor, with a mighty host of kinsfolk and followers, steering eastward in their long, narrow-beaked boats through the waterways that lead from the Finnish Gulf into the lake-land of the Slavs. Separating their forces, Rurik established himself at—according to some accounts, built—the town of Ladoga, on the banks of the Volkhov, twelve miles from its entrance into the Lake Ladoga, thus interposing himself between Novgorod and the sea. His brothers settled at Bielozersk and Izborsk respectively, the latter occupying an important position near Lake Peipus and the Liv border, the former pushing a Varangian outpost among the Finnish tribes to the east; all three, whether from accident or design, choosing the vicinity of an open stretch of water. The date of this immigration is fixed by the chronicler at 862, which is regarded as the starting-point of the Russian State. Two years later Rurik, by the death of both his brothers, was left in sole chieftaincy of the adventurers. From his first stronghold he soon shifted his headquarters to a point farther up the Volkhov's course, over against Novgorod, where he built himself a citadel; from thence he eventually made himself master of the town, not apparently without some opposition from the inhabitants. Henceforward the Skandinavian chief was undisputed prince of the Slavonic people who had invited him into their country; the neighbouring districts of Rostov and Polotzk were brought under his authority, and Novgorod became the capital and centre of a state which reached from Lake Peipus to the Upper Volga, and from Ladoga to the watershed of the Dvina and Dniepr. In thus extending and consolidating his power and welding his Skandinavian following and the discordant Slavic elements into one smoothly-working organisation, Rurik evinced qualities of statesmanship equal in their way to those displayed by William the Norman in his conquest and administration of England. The absence of any national cohesion among the Slavs, while facilitating the Norse intrusion and settlement, increased the difficulty of binding them in allegiance to a central authority; yet within the space of a few crowded years the Varangian ruler enjoyed an undisputed sway in the lands of his mastery such as few princes could in those unordered times rely on. Not the least difficult part of Rurik's task must have been the control of his own wanderlusting countrymen, turned loose in an extensive and vaguely-defined region, with rumours of wealth and plunder and fighting beckoning them to the south. In the nature of things such temptation would not be long resisted, especially as the Dniepr offered a convenient if insecure passage to the desired lands, and a short time after the first Norse settlement two Skandinavian adventurers, named Askold and Dir, broke away from the main body with a small following, possibly with the idea of enlisting themselves in the Varangian Guard at Byzantium. They did not immediately pursue their journey, however, farther than Kiev, a townstead of the Polian Slavs,[8] standing on a low bluff above the west bank of the Dniepr. Here they established themselves as Rurik had done at Novgorod, and, reinforced perhaps by roving bodies of their countrymen, set up a second Russian State, without losing sight, however, of the original object which had drawn them southwards. Consequently in the summer of 865 an expedition of from ten to fifteen thousand men, presumably recruited from both Slavs and Norsemen, embarked in their long, narrow war-boats and sailed for Byzantium, plundering and burning along the coast of the Black Sea, and finally riding into the harbour. The audacity of the attack, or perhaps the warlike reputation

of the invading host, seems to have paralysed the inhabitants of the city, and the authorities had recourse to supernatural invocation to deliver them from this new danger. The robe of the Virgin was removed from its venerated shrine in the Blacherne Chapel, escorted in solemn procession to the shores of the harbour, and dipped in the water, whereupon arose a tempest that drove the heathen fleet in disorder out to sea. That, at least, is the account of the transaction given by the Byzantine chroniclers.

Whether such a command over the atmospherical forces impressed the barbarian chiefs with the desirable qualities of so militant a religion, or whether the glories of the Tzargrad as seen dimly from their boats had insensibly attracted them to the worship of the “cold Christ and tangled trinities,” which was so much a part of the Byzantine life, it was said that Askold, shortly after the miscarriage of the expedition, professed the Christian faith. This much at least seems certain, that the Greek patriarch Photius was able in the year 866 to send to Kiev a priest with the title, if not the recognition of Bishop, and that from that time there existed a small Christian community in that town.

The *Chronicle of Nestor*, almost the only record of this period of Russian history in existence, is silent on two interesting points, namely, the works and fightings in which Rurik was presumably engaged on behalf of his infant state, and the attitude of the Khazars towards the adventurers who had filched Kiev and the adjoining territory from their authority.

The only further item in the *Chronicle* relating to Rurik is the announcement of his death in the year 879, his child son Igor and the governance of the country being entrusted to Oleg, a blood relation of the late Prince. The reign of this chieftain was of great importance to the fortunes of the germinating Russian State, and if Rurik played the part of a William the Bastard, Oleg may not unwarrantably be compared with Charles the Great. The rumours which had reached the North of a Varangian power that had sprung up among the tribes of the Slavic hinterland had attracted thither streams of roving warriors, eager to share the dangers and divide the fruits of their kinsfolks’ enterprise. Thus both Rurik and the Kievian adventurers had been able to maintain an easily-recruited standing force of their own countrymen for purposes offensive and defensive. The larger designs of Oleg, however, required a larger army, and he enlisted under his captaincy Slavs and Finns in addition to his Varangian guards. Having spent three years in gathering and perfecting his resources, he advanced in 882 into the basin-land of the Dniepr and moved upon Smolensk, the stronghold of the independent remnant of the Slav tribe of Krivitches. By virtue, possibly, of his position as leader of an army partly drawn from men of that tribe, he was allowed to take undisputed possession of the place, which was henceforth incorporated in the Russ dominion. Still following the course of the Dniepr, as Askold and Dir had followed it before him, he entered the country of the Sieverskie Slavs and made himself master of their head town, Lubetch.

By these successive steps Oleg had brought himself nigh upon Kiev, the headquarters of the rival principality, which was possibly the object he had had in view from the commencement of his southward march. For to the rising Russ-Slavonic State Kiev was at once a menace and an injury; not only did it offer an alternative attraction to the Norsemen pouring into the country, the natural reinforcements of Oleg’s following, but its separate existence cut short the expansion of the northern territory, and, above all, hindered free intercourse with Byzantium and the south. To the sea-rovers, reared among the rude and penurious lands that lay dark and uncivilised between the Baltic and the Arctic Sea, Byzantium was a dazzling and

irresistible attraction; rich beyond their comprehension of riches, luxurious to a degree unknown to them, renowned for everything except renown, she seemed a golden harvest ripe for the steel of the valorous and enterprising. Between this desired land and the Novgorodian principality the territory of Askold presented a vexatious obstacle, and it was inevitable that the sagacity of Oleg should aim at its destruction. At the same time it was understandable that he should seek to avoid an armed conflict with his fellow-countrymen, the Varangians of Kiev, and to effect his purpose by stratagem rather than by force. To this end he approached the town, laid an ambuscade on the banks of the Dniepr, and in the guise of a trader travelling from Novgorod to Byzantium, sought speech with the Kievian rulers. Askold and Dir came out unwittingly to see this wayfarer, and found no man of wares and whining suppliance; found rather one whose face they well knew, and with him a small lad whose significance was swiftly made plain to them. “You are not of the blood of princes,” cried a voice of triumph and boding in their ears, “but here behold the son of Rurik.” And therewith rushed out the hidden ones and slew the unsuspecting chieftains. And in guerdon of this stroke Oleg was accepted as sovereign by the people of Kiev, the Russian State was solidified, and the supremacy of Rurik’s dynasty received a valuable recognition.

The town of Kiev, advantageously situated at a pleasant elevation above the west bank of the Dniepr, and commanding the waterway to the coveted south, compared favourably with Novgorod, built among the flat marshes that bordered Lake Ilmen and surrounded by the Finn-gripped coasts of Ladoga. The advantages of the former were not lost upon its conqueror, who saluted it with the title of “mother of all Russian cities” (so the Chronicles), and thenceforth it became the capital of the country. It was now necessary to secure the connection between the newly-won territory and the districts lying to the north. West and north of Kiev dwelt the Drevlians, a fierce and formidable Slavic tribe, whose country was fortified by natural defences of forest and marsh. Against them Oleg turned his arms, and once more victory went with him; the Drevlians, while retaining their own chieftain, were reduced to the standing of vassals, and an annual tribute of marten and sable skins was imposed upon them. Within the next two years the Russian ruler completed the subjugation of the Sieverskie and enthralled the remaining lands of the Krivitches, both of which tribes had hitherto owned allegiance to the Khazars. The growing Russian dominions were now put under a system of taxation, the sums levied being devoted in the first place to the payment of the Varangians in the Prince’s service. The contribution of Novgorod was assessed at the yearly value of 300 *grivnas*, a token of its substantial footing at this particular period.

It was about this time that the Ougres or Magyars, the ancestors of the modern Hungarians, squeezed out of their Asiatic home by the pressure of the Petchenigs, burst through the Khazar and Kievian territories and settled themselves in Moldavia and Wallachia, and finally in Hungary. Their passage through the Dniepr basin-land would scarcely have been undisputed, and the Magyar Chronicles speak of a victory over Oleg; the Russian chronicler is silent on the subject. This scurrying horde of nomad barbarians, unlike the Avars who preceded them, or the Petchenigs and Kumans who followed in their wake, crystallised in a marvellously short space of time into a civilised European State, and became an important neighbour of the Russian principality.

In 903 the young Igor was mated to a Varangian maiden named Olga, who, by one account, was born of humble parents in the town of Pskov and attracted the Prince by her beauty. Other accounts make her, with more probability, a near relative of the Regent, of whose strength of

character she seems to have inherited a share.

In 907 Oleg was in a position to put into practice a project which had probably never been lost sight of, the invasion, namely, of the Byzantine Empire, including an attack on Constantinople itself, a project dear to the Russian mind in the tenth century as well as in later times. His footing differed essentially from that of Askold and Dir in their attempt at a like undertaking. No longer the leader of a mere troop of adventurers, Oleg swayed an army inspired by a long series of successes and confident in the sanction and prestige of the princely authority. Slavs, Finns, and Varangians were bonded together in a representative Russian army, trained, disciplined, and, above all, reliant on the ability of their captain. In their long, light barques they went down the Dniepr, hauling their craft overland where the rapids rendered navigation impossible, and thence emerged into the Black Sea; the boats were escorted along the river-banks by a large body of horsemen, but the Chronicle does not tell whether this branch of the expedition made its way through Bessarabia and Bulgaria into the Imperial territory, and probably it only served to guard the main body from the attacks of hostile tribes in the steppe region. Arrived in the waters of the Bosphorus the invaders landed and ravaged the country in the vicinity of Constantinople, burning, plundering, and slaughtering without hindrance from the Greek forces. Leo VI., “the Philosopher,” shut himself up in his capital and confined his measures of defence to placing a chain across the entrance of the harbour. So much had the Eastern Empire become centralised in the city of Constantinople, that it was apparently a matter of small concern if the very suburbs were laid waste, or else Leo was waiting with philosophic patience for a supernatural intervention. The Virgin, however, not obliging with another tornado, the invaders turned their impious arms against the city itself. According to popular tradition, Oleg dragged his boats ashore, mounted them on wheels, spread sail, and floated across dry land towards the city walls. Possibly he attempted the exploit, successfully carried out some five hundred years later by Sultan Mahomet II., of hauling his vessels overland into the waters of the harbour, a labour which would be facilitated by the lightness and toughness of the Russian craft. At any rate the effect of the demonstration was salutary; the Emperor, alarmed at such a display of energy, determined to come to terms with his barbarous enemy, first, however, the Russian chronicler alleges, trying the experiment of an offering of poisoned meats and fruits to Oleg and his warmen.[9] A study of the history of Byzantium fully supports the likelihood of such a stratagem, which, had it succeeded, would have been hailed as a miraculous epidemic, sweeping the heathen away from the threatened city. The gift was prudently declined, and the more prosaic and expensive method of buying off the invaders had to be resorted to. The treaty which was concluded between the Greeks and the Russians shows that the latter were fully alive to the advantages accruing from a free commercial intercourse with Constantinople. Besides the levy of a fixed sum for every man in the invading fleet, contributions were exacted for Kiev and other towns under the Russian sway, which arrangement gave to all a share in the national victory. More solidly advantageous, under certain specified conditions, Russian merchants were to be permitted right of free commerce at Constantinople.

The Christian Emperor and the pagan Prince called upon their respective deities to witness the solemn pact between them, and Oleg, having hung his shield in triumph on the gate of the Tzargrad, returned to Kiev loaded with presents and covered with the glory of a successful campaign. Five years later the great Varangian, loved and honoured by his people, feared and respected by his foes, finished his long reign of three-and-thirty years. Tradition has it that the soothsayers foretold that his death should be caused by his favourite horse, whereupon he

had it led away and never rode it more. Years after, learning that it was dead, he went to see the skeleton, and placing his foot upon the skull, taunted the warlocks with their miscarried prophecy, whereupon a snake wriggled out and inflicted a bite, of which he died. The same legend crops up in the folk-lore of many lands.

In venturing to compare Oleg with Charles the Great, whose life-work lay in somewhat similar lines, it may be noted of the former that his results were obtained with comparatively little bloodshed, and that he strengthened the position of the dynasty while forming the empire over which it was to rule. The fairest and most fertile districts of Russia were added to the principality during his regency, and, more important still, the peoples whom he subjugated were permanently welded into the confederation. The Slavs of Kiev in the later years of Oleg were essentially the “men” of the Russian State, a rapidity of assimilation which was scarcely observable in the case of the Bavarians and Frisians of the Frankish Empire, or the Saxons of Norman England. In the matter of religion, too, the heathen Prince contrasts favourably with the great Christian Emperor, and though the worshipper of the Christ who “came not to send peace but a sword” into the world may have butchered his nonconforming subjects with the honestest conviction of well-doing, it is pleasanter to read of the toleration which the follower of Peroun extended to the Christian communities within his realm.

912

Igor, who after a long minority succeeded to a more extensive and firmly established principality than his father had bequeathed him, was occupied at the commencement of his reign in suppressing a revolt of the Drevlians and Ulitches, the least well affected of the Slav tribes subject to his rule, who had refused payment of the yearly tribute. The gathering-in of this impost was entrusted to Svenald, a Varangian to whom Igor deputed the internal management of the realm; after a three-years’ struggle the rebels were mastered and the amount of their tribute increased. A new source of uneasiness arose at this juncture from the arrival in South Russia of the Petchenigs, a Finn-Turko tribe who migrated from the plains of Asia in the wake of the Magyars and settled in the steppe-land on either side of the Dniepr. The city of Kiev enjoyed an immunity from attack from their horde by reason of the strong force at hand for its defence, and the Russians, moreover, were interested in keeping up a good understanding with neighbours who commanded the waterway to the south. But to the newly-erected Hungarian State the new-comers were a veritable thorn in the flesh, and Moldavia became a debatable ground between the two peoples. It was an act of weakness on the part of Igor and his advisers, with a large fighting force at their disposal, to have permitted the establishment of a dangerous enemy or doubtful ally in such undesirable nearness to their capital, and in a position which threatened their principal trade-route. This policy of peace was all the more ill-judged as the restless spirit of the Varangian warmen required some outlet for its employment, and might fittingly have been turned to the advantage of the State. Their lust for adventure and pillage found vent instead in independent raids, and in the year 914 a fleet of 700 Russian ships appeared, somewhat like the proverbial fly in amber, on the waters of the Kaspian, where they plundered along the Persian coast.[10] Another troop penetrated into Italy in the service of the Byzantine Emperor.

If the saying, “Happy is the country that has no history” will hold good in every case, the bulk of Igor’s reign must have been a period of prosperity, for nothing further is heard of Russia or its Prince till the year 941, when, like a recurring decimal, an expedition against

Constantinople is recorded by both Greek and Russian annalists. Whether difficulties had arisen in the trading relations of the two countries, whether the rupture was forced by a war party among the Varangians, or whether Igor was fired with the ambition, to which old men are at times victims, of doing something which should shed lustre on his declining years—he was now not far off seventy—the Chronicles do not indicate, and “what was it they fought about” is lost sight of in the details of the fighting. With a fleet variously written down at from 1000 to 10,000 boats, Igor descended by the old waterway into the Black Sea and ravaged and plundered along the coasts of the Bosphorus. The Imperial fleet was absent on service against the Saracens, with the exception of a few vessels scarcely deemed fit for action, which were lying in the harbour. It occurred to the Greek Emperor Romanos, after many sleepless nights, to arm these despised ships and galleys with the redoubtable Greek fire and steer them against the hostile flotilla, a desperate expedient which was crowned with success; the mysterious flames, which the water itself was unable to quench, not only enwrapped the light barques of the Russians but demoralised their crews, and a hopeless rout ensued. The Greeks were, however, unable to follow up their advantage, and Igor rallied his men for a descent on the coast of Asia Minor, where he consoled himself by pillaging the surrounding country. Here he was at length opposed by an army under the command of the patrician Bardas and forced to make his way to Thrace, where another reverse awaited him. With the remains of his army the baffled prince made his way back to Kiev, leaving many of his hapless followers in the hands of the Greeks. Luitprand, Bishop of Cremona, present at Constantinople on an embassy, saw numbers of them put to death by torture. The Northman was not, however, at the end of his resources; with an energy surprising for his years, he set to work to gather an army which should turn the scale of victory against the Byzantians, their magical fire and intimacy with the supernatural notwithstanding. To this end he sent his henchmen into the bays and fjords of the Baltic to call in the sea-rovers to battle and plunder under his flag. The invitation they were not loth to accept, but many of them showed a disinclination to bind themselves under the leadership of the Russian Prince, and rushed instead, like a brood of ducklings breaking away from their foster-mother, into the charmed waters of the Kaspian, where they carried on an exuberant marauding expedition. A sufficient number, however, followed Igor in his second campaign against the Tzargrad to swell his ranks to a formidable host, and word was sent to the Greek capital, from Bulgarian and Greek sources, that the waters of the Black Sea were covered with the vessels of a Russian fleet. The Emperor did not hesitate what course to adopt, but hastily despatched an embassy to meet the invader with offers to pay the tribute exacted by Oleg and renew the treaty between the two countries. The Imperial messengers fell in with Igor at the mouth of the Danube, and their proposals were agreed to after a consultation between the Prince and his *droujhiniki*,[11] who in fact gained without further struggle as much as they could have hoped for in the event of a victory. Igor returned to Kiev as a conqueror, loaded with presents from Romanos, who sent thither in the following year his ambassadors with a text of the treaty. This was sworn to by the Prince and his captains before the idol of Peroun, except in the case of the Christian minority, who performed their oath at the altar of S. Elias. The fact of a Christian cathedral—a designation probably more ambitious than the building—being established at Kiev at this period speaks much for the toleration shown to the foreign religion by the followers of the national god.

Igor did not long enjoy the fruits of this success. Baulked of their expected campaign, his men of war chafed at the inaction of the old man’s court, and envied the comparative advantages thrown in the way of Svenald’s body-guards. It was a custom of the Russian rulers to spend

one-half of the year, from November till April, in visiting the scattered districts of their dominion, for the double purpose of keeping in touch with their widely-sundered subjects and gathering in the revenue. This winter harvesting of the tribute (which Igor in his declining years left in the hands of his deputed steward) is interesting as being probably the earliest stage of Russian home trade. For the most part the payment in kind consisted of furs and skins, the bulk of which went from the various places of collection in boat-loads down to Kiev, from thence eventually making its way to the sea marts of Southern Europe. The forest country of the Drevlians, rich in its yield of thick-coated sables and yellow-chested martens, lay in convenient neighbourhood to Kiev, and thither the Prince's men clamoured to be led for the purpose of gleaning an increased tribute. In a moment of fatal weakness Igor consented, and in the autumn of 945 set out to close his reign as he had begun it, in a quarrel with "the tree people" over the matter of their taxing. The armed host which accompanied the Prince overawed the resentment bred by this stretching of the sovereign claims, but the apparent ease with which the imposts were gathered in tempted Igor to linger behind his returning main-guard for the purpose of exacting a further levy. The exasperated Drevlians, hearkening to the counsel of their chieftain, Mal, "to rise and slay the wolf who was bent on devouring their whole flock," turned suddenly upon the fate-blind Igor in the midst of his importunings and put him to a hideous death. Two young trees were bent towards each other nearly to the ground, and to them the unfortunate tyrant was bound; then the trees were allowed to spring back to their normal position. Thus did the tree people avenge their wrongs.

The safest standard by which to judge a reign of the inward history of which so little can be known is the measure of stability which it leaves behind it. The widow of the murdered Prince and his young heir Sviatoslav came peaceably into the vacant throneship, and it is no small tribute to the statecraft of Rurik and his successors that the grandson of the Varangian stranger and adventurer should inherit, at a tender age and under the guardianship of a woman, the Russian principality without opposition and without question.

The young Kniaz,[12] notwithstanding the Slavonic name which he was the first of his house to bear, was brought up mainly among Skandinavian influences, his person and the domestic management of the State being entrusted to Varangian hands. His mother Olga bore no small share of the administration, and the vigour and energy of her doings were well worthy of the heroic age of early Russia. The first undertaking which was called for, alike by political necessity and the promptings of revenge, was the chastisement of her husband's murderers. With the idea possibly of averting the storm by a bold stroke of diplomacy, the latter had sent messengers to the widowed princess suggesting a connubial alliance with the implicated chieftain Mal, a proposal which was met with a feigned acceptance. Having lulled the apprehensions of the Drevlians, Olga marched into their country with a large following and turned the projected festivities into a massacre, after which she besieged the town of Korosten,[13] the scene of Igor's death, and the last refuge of the disconcerted rebels. The Chronicle of the monk of Kiev gives a quaint, old-world account of the manner of the taking of Korosten. All the summer the inhabitants defended themselves stubbornly, and the princess at last agreed to conclude a peace on receipt of a tribute, which was to consist of a live pigeon and three live sparrows from each homestead. How they caught the sparrows is left to the imagination, but the tribute was gladly paid. At the approach of evening Olga caused the birds to be set free, each with a lighted brand fastened to its tail, whereupon their homing instincts took them back to their dwellings in the thatched roofs and barns of Korosten, with the result that the town was soon in a blaze, and the inhabitants fell easy victims to the swords of the

besiegers. Thus was avenged the death of Igor, the son of Rurik.

Shortly after this exploit Olga left Kiev and went into the northern parts of her son's realm, fixing her court for some years at Novgorod and Pskov, and raising the prosperity of those townships by keeping up a connection with the Skandinavian lands. Later she turned her thoughts towards the south, not with warlike projects, as her forerunners had done, but with peaceful intent. Accompanied by a suitable train she journeyed, in the year 957, to Constantinople, where she was received and entertained with due splendour by the Emperor Constantine-born-in-the-Purple and the Patriarch Theophylact. Here, in the metropolis of the Christian religion, surrounded by all the splendours of ritual of which the Greeks were masters, this surprising woman adopted the prevalent faith, received at the hands of her Imperial host and sponsor the baptismal name of Helen, and became "the first Russian who mounted to the heavenly kingdom"—a rather disparaging reflection on the labours of the early Church at Kiev.

Loaded with presents from the Imperial treasury, Olga returned to her son, whom she strove fruitlessly to detach from the gods of his fathers to the worship of the new deities she had brought from Constantinople. The Russian mind was not yet ripe for the mystic cult of the Greek or Latin Church, and the conversion of the Prince's mother made little impression on either boyarins or people. In the year 964 Sviatoslav definitely assumed the government of the country, and struck the key-note of his reign by extending his sway over the Viatitches, the last Slavonic tribe who paid tribute to the Khazars. This was only preliminary to an attack on that people in their own country. The fate of their once powerful empire was decided in one battle; the arms of the young Kniaz were victorious; Sarkel, the White City, fell into his hands, the outlying possessions of the Khazars, east and south, were subdued, and the kakhanate was reduced to a shadow of its former glory. It would have been a wiser policy to have left untouched, for the time being, the integrity of a State which was no longer formidable, and which interposed a civilised barrier between the Russian lands and the barbarian hordes of the East, and to have pursued instead a war of extermination against the Petchenigs. Sviatoslav was himself to experience the disastrous results of this mistake.

968

In the following year the centre of interest shifts from the south-east to the south-west. The Greek Emperor, Nicephorus Phocas, irritated against his vassal Peter, King or Tzar of Bulgaria, in that he had not exerted himself against the Magyars, who were raiding the Imperial dominions, turned for help, according to the approved Byzantine policy, to another neighbour, and commissioned Sviatoslav to march against Bulgaria. A large sum of Greek gold was conveyed to Kiev by an ambassador from the Emperor, and in return the Russian Prince set out for the Danube with a following of 60,000 men. The onset of the invaders was irresistible, and the Bulgarians scattered and fled, leaving their capital, Péréyaslavetz, and Dristr, a strongly fortified place on the Danube, in the hands of the conqueror. To complete the good fortune of Sviatoslav the Tzar Peter died at this critical moment, and the Russian Prince settled down in his newly-acquired city, undisputed master of Bulgaria. East and west his arms had been successful, but in the very heart of his realm he had left a dread and watchful enemy, who would not fail to take advantage of his absence. While his army was at quarters in the head city of the Bulgarians, his own capital was being besieged and closely pressed by the Petchenigs, that "greedy people, devouring the bodies of men, corrupt and impure, bloody and cruel beasts," as the monk of Edessa portrays them; in which certificate it is to be hoped they

were over-described. The folk in the beleaguered city, among the rest the aged Olga and the young sons of Sviatoslav, were in straits from want of food, and must have succumbed if one of their number had not made his way by means of a feint through the enemy's camp, and carried news of their desperate condition to a boyarin named Prititch who was luckily at hand with a small force. On his approach the Petchenigs drew off, thinking that the Prince himself had returned with his army, and Kiev was relieved from the straits of famine. Sviatoslav meanwhile had learned of the danger which threatened his realm and household and hastened back from Bulgaria. Even this narrowly staved-off disaster did not open his eyes to the menace which these undesirable neighbours ever held over him and his, and he contented himself with inflicting a severe defeat on them and concluding a worthless peace. Possibly he found it hard to arouse among his followers any enthusiasm for a campaign against an enemy who had no wealthy cities to plunder or riches of any kind available for spoil. In any case he was bitten with the desire, to which rulers of Russia seem to have been periodically subject, of shifting the seat of his government to a fresh capital. Before his mother and his boyarins he declared his project of fixing his seat at Péréyaslavetz in preference to Kiev, and enumerated the advantages of the former. From the Greeks came gold, fabrics, wine, and fruits; from Bohemia and Hungary horses and silver; from Russia furs, wax, honey, and slaves. To Olga, with the hand of death already on her, the question was not one of great moment, and four days later she had made her last journey to a vault in the cathedral of Kiev. A certain compassion is excited by the contemplation of the aged queen, dying lonely in a faith that her husband had never known, which her son had not accepted, just as the realm over which she had ruled so actively was to be enlarged and its political centre shifted. Her death removed the last obstacle to Sviatoslav's design, the last that is to say with which he reckoned. Before departing for Bulgaria the Prince set his sons, who could not at this date (970) have been of a very mature age, in responsible positions, Yaropalk, the elder, becoming governor of Kiev, and Oleg prince of the Drevlians. The Novgorodskie, who had been left for many years to the hireling care of Sviatoslav's deputies, demanded a son of the princely house as ruler, threatening in case of refusal to choose one from elsewhere for themselves; here the stormy spirit of Velikie Novgorod shows itself for the first time. Happily the supply of sons was equal to the demand; by one of Olga's maidens named Malousha the Prince had become father of Vladimir, destined to play an important part in the history of Russia, and to him, under the guardianship of his mother's brother Drobuinya, was confided the government of the northern town. Having thus arranged for the present security and future confusion of his territories by instituting the system of separate appanages, Sviatoslav set out for his new possession beyond the Danube. "A prince should, if possible, live in the country he has conquered," wrote the political codist of mediæval Italy, and the Russian monarch found that even his brief absence had lost him much of the fruits of his victory. The Bulgarians mustered to oppose his march with a large force, and a desperate battle ensued, in which defeat was only staved off from the invaders by the heroic exertions of their leader. Péréyaslavetz was retaken, and Sviatoslav again became master of the Balkan land, permitting, however, Boris, son of the late Tzar, to keep the gold crown, frontlet, and red buskins which were the Bulgarian marks of royalty. The Greeks now repented their folly in having established in their immediate neighbourhood, within a few short marches of Constantinople, a prince who was far more dangerous to them than ever the Bulgarian Tzars had been. John Zimisces, who had succeeded the ill-fated Nicephorus on the precarious throne of the Eastern Empire, called upon Sviatoslav to fulfil the engagement made with his predecessor and evacuate the Imperial dependency. The Prince in possession contemptuously refused to comply with this demand,

and threatened instead to march against Constantinople and drive the Greeks into Asia. Fortunately for the Empire at this crisis her new ruler was a soldier of proved ability, and knew also who were the right men to rely on for active support and co-operation. On the other hand Sviatoslav prepared for the coming struggle by enlisting the aid of the Bulgarians themselves, the Magyars, and even roving bodies of Petchenigs. With this mixed force he burst into Thrace, ravaging the country up to the walls of Adrianople, where the Imperial general Bardas-Scleras, brother-in-law of Zimisces, had entrenched himself. Here in the autumn of 970 the fierce bravery of the Russians and their allies was matched against the Greek generalship, with the result that Sviatoslav was forced to retire into Bulgaria. The recall of Bardas to suppress an insurrection in Capadocia prevented him from following up his advantage, and gave the Russians an opportunity for retiring from a position which was no longer safe. Sviatoslav, however, either did not see his danger, or chose to disregard it rather than return home baffled and empty-handed. Accordingly he spent the year 971 in aimless raids into Macedonia, while his wily enemy made the most elaborate preparations for his destruction. In the spring of 972 Zimisces advanced with a large army into Bulgaria, while a Greek fleet blocked the mouths of the Danube, cutting off the Russian line of retreat. Sviatoslav with the bulk of his army was encamped at Dristr, and here tidings came that the Emperor had crossed the Balkans and, after a stubborn resistance, taken Péréyaslavetz—"the Town of Victory"—and possessed himself of the person of Prince Boris. Nothing daunted, Sviatoslav led his army against that of Zimisces, and a battle ensued which, from the heroic valour with which it was contested and the important issues involved, deserves to be recognised as one of the decisive battles of history. Both leaders showed the utmost personal courage, and victory for a long while hung doubtful, but at length the Greek forces prevailed and Sviatoslav was driven back upon Dristr, his last stronghold in Bulgaria. This time the Imperial success was followed up, and the town was attacked with a vigour and determination which was only equalled by the stubbornness of the defence. The Russians made sorties by day, retreating when outnumbered, under the protection of their huge bucklers, to within the walls of the town, from whence they issued at night, to burn by the light of the moon the bodies of their fallen comrades, and sacrifice over their ashes the prisoners they had taken. By way of propitiating their gods, or possibly the Danube, which was covered with the boats of their enemies, they drowned in its waters cocks and little children.[14] The Magister John, a relation of the Emperor, having fallen into their hands in a skirmish, was torn in pieces and his head exposed on the battlements. The besieged, however, were daily reduced in numbers and weakened by want, and Sviatoslav resolved on a last bid for victory. Swarming forth from behind their battered ramparts, the men of the North met their foes in open field, and the wager of battle was staunchly and obstinately contested. Sviatoslav was struck off his horse and nearly killed, but the Russians did not give way until mid-day, when a dust-storm blew into their faces and forced them to yield the fight, leaving outside the walls of Dristr, according to the Byzantine annalists, 15,000 slain. The monkish chroniclers, as usual, attributed the hard-won victory to supernatural intervention, and while the Imperial soldiers were resting from their exertions a story was circulated throughout the camp giving the credit of the day to an apparition of S. Theodore of Stratilat, who had appeared in the thick of the battle mounted on a white horse. The Russian defeat, whether due to saint, army, or dust-storm, was sufficiently decisive to bring the Prince to sue for terms, which were readily granted by the Emperor. The Russians engaged to withdraw from Bulgaria and to live at peace with the Eastern Empire; the Greeks on their part engaged to permit Russian merchants free commercial intercourse at Constantinople. More than this, the Emperor requested the Petchenigs to allow Sviatoslav and

his thinned host unmolested passage to his own territories. Whether this was done in good faith, or whether secret instructions were given to the contrary, is a matter of opinion, or at most of induction; it is pleasanter to set against the general treachery of Byzantine statecraft the fact that Zimisces was a brave man, and to give him credit for the honour which is the usual accompaniment of courage.

The importance of this defeat cannot be over-estimated, and it is interesting to speculate as to the possible results of a victory for Sviatoslav—a victory which might well have changed the whole course of European history. A powerful Slavonic principality with its headquarters in the basin of the Danube would have attracted to itself, by the magnetism of blood, the kindred races of Serbs, Kroats, Dalmatians, Slavonians, and Moravians, all of which, with the exception of the first-named, were eventually absorbed into the Germanic Empire; while Bohemia, instead of gravitating towards the house of Habsburg, would more naturally have entered the Russian State-organism. From Péréyaslavetz to Constantinople is a short cry, and it is reasonable to conjecture that under these circumstances the Slav and not the Turk would in due course have stepped into the shoes of the Paleologi. The palace intrigues, treason, and assassination which placed John Zimisces on the throne of the Cæsars at this critical juncture in the affairs of the Empire had an effect on the destinies of Europe which can only be likened in importance to the Moorish defeat on the plain of Tours at the hands of Charles Martel.

After a meeting between the leaders of the two armies, during which the Emperor sat his horse on the river bank while the vanquished Prince stood, simply clad, in a boat which he himself helped to work, the latter made his way towards Kiev with the remnant of his following. But the enemy which his short-sighted policy had neglected to crush was waiting for him now in the hour of his extremity; the Petchenigs held the cataracts of the Dniepr, where the returning boats must be dragged ashore, and notwithstanding their agreement with Zimisces, blocked the passage of the Russian army. Sviatoslav waited at the mouth of the river till the coming of spring, when he risked a battle with his savage enemies, and lost. Warrior to the last, he died fighting, and tradition has it that his skull became a drinking-cup for the chief of the Petchenigs; of the mighty host which had started out for the conquest of Bulgaria but few made their way back to Kiev. Thus perished Sviatoslav, in spite of his Slavonic name a thorough type of the Varangian chieftain. Brave, active, and enduring, his chivalry was in advance of his age, and it is told of him that he always gave his enemies fair warning of attack, sending a messenger before him with the tidings, “I go against you.” He was, however, more a fighter than a general, and did not display the statesmanlike qualities of Rurik, Oleg, and Olga, while the unhappy results of his partition of the realm between his three sons were immediately apparent at his death. Yaropalk did not enjoy any authority over the districts ruled by his brothers, who lived as independent princes. The inevitable quarrels were not long in breaking out. Consequent on a hunting fray in the wooded Drevlian country between the retainers of Oleg and Yaropalk, in which one of the latter’s men was killed, an armed feud sprang up between the brothers, which came to a tragic end in a fight around the town of Oubrovtch.

977

Oleg, worsted in the battle, was thrown down by the press of his own soldiers as he was seeking to enter the town, and trampled to death in the general stampede. Yaropalk is said to have been plunged in remorse at this untoward event, but the news was otherwise interpreted

at Novgorod and caused the hasty flight of the young Vladimir to Skandinavian lands, beyond the reach of his half-brother's malevolence. Yaropalk sent his underlings to hold the vacant principality, and thus became for the time sole ruler of Russia. The outcast, however, after two years of wandering in viking lands, reappeared suddenly at Novgorod with a useful following of Norse adventurers, and drove out his brother's lieutenants, following up this act of defiance by moving at the head of his men towards Kiev. On the way he turned aside to Polotzk, then held as a dependent fief by a Varangian named Rogvolod. This chief had a daughter, Rogneda, trothed in marriage to Yaropalk, and Vladimir, by way of ousting his half-brother from all his possessions, sent and demanded her hand for himself. The maiden haughtily refused to wed the "son of a slave," and added that she was already pledged to Yaropalk; whereupon the headstrong lover stormed the town, slew her father and two brothers, and bore off the unwilling bride—a wooing which somewhat resembles that of William the Norman and Matilda of Flanders some half-hundred years later. The despoiled rival had, on the approach of Vladimir and his war-carles, shut himself up in Kiev, but growing doubtful of the goodwill of the inhabitants, he suffered himself to be persuaded by false counsellors to move into the small town of Rodnya. In consequence of this faint-hearted desertion Kiev threw open her gates to Vladimir, who followed up his good fortune by besieging the Prince in his new refuge. Pressed by assault without and famine within—the miseries suffered by the Rodnya folk have passed into a proverb—the hunted Kniaz rashly, or perhaps despairingly, agreed to visit his peace-feigning brother at his palace in Kiev. Yaropalk alone was allowed to enter the courtyard doors, behind which lurked two Varangian guards, who used their blades quickly and well, and Vladimir reigned as sole Prince of the Russians.

980

The early years of the new reign were devoted to family-founding on a generous scale, the Prince, by his several wives and concubines, becoming the father of manifold sons, all of whom bore names of distinctly Slavonic resonance. By the raped Rogneda he had Isiaslav, Mstislav, Yaroslav, Vsevolod, and two daughters; a second wife, of Czech origin, presented him with Vouytchislav; a third was the mother of Sviatoslav, and a fourth, of Bulgarian nationality, was responsible for Boris and Glieb. In addition to his own ample offspring he adopted into his family Sviatopolk, the posthumous son of Yaropalk. But the pressure of family cares did not absorb his undivided attention. On the western border several Russian strongholds in the district of Galitz (Galicia) had been seized during the embarrassed reign of Yaropalk by Mscislav, Duke of Poland, and for the recovery of these Vladimir set his armed men in motion. Tcherven, Peremysl, and other places fell into his hands, but the wars on the Polish march dragged on at intervals and outlasted the reigns of both princes. This was the first clash of the two neighbour nations whose history was to be so dramatically interblended. The Duke of Poland had his hands so full with the intrusive affairs of Bohemia, Hungary, the Western Empire, and the Wends, that he was obliged to content himself with a policy of defence on his eastern border, and Vladimir was able to turn his arms in other directions. In 982 he suppressed a revolt of the Viatitches, and in the next year extended his authority among the Livs as far as the Baltic. According to the Chronicle of the Icelandic annalist Sturleson, these people paid tribute to the Russian Prince, but his sway over them could only have lasted a while, as they certainly enjoyed independence till a much later date. Two years later he made a successful raid into the country of the Volga-Bulgarians, which he wisely followed up by a well-marketed peace, and returned to Kiev not empty-handed.

At this period the Christian religion was making its final conquest of the outlying princes and peoples of Europe. The double influence of the Holy Roman Empire and the Papal See—the latter now free from any dependence on the Byzantine Court—gave that religion a powerful advertisement among the outlandish folks, and as each nation was brought into subjection to, or enjoyed intercourse with the great central State, so the rites and ceremonies of the prevailing worship were displayed before their eyes with all the glamour and sanction of Imperial authority. The Saxon annalist, Lambert of Aschaffenburg, recounts, for instance, how Easter was kept at Quedlingburg in the year 973 by the Emperor Otho I. and his son (afterwards Otho II.), attended by envoys from Rome, Greece, Benevento, Italy, Hungary, Denmark, Slavonia, Bulgaria, and Russia, “with great presents.” The feasts and devotions observed in the little town, the services in the hill-top abbey, founded by Henry the Fowler, the processions of chanting monks with lighted tapers—all in honour of the Man-God who had died in a far country, but who rose triumphant to live above them in the sky and behind the high altar—would not fail to make deep impression on the heathen visitors. The western Prince was so much greater and richer and more powerful than their princes, might not the western gods be greater than their gods? Bohemia, which early in its history came into close contact with the Empire, had already adopted Christianity, and in Poland Vladimir’s contemporary and sometime antagonist, Mscislav, had in 966 entered the same faith. Hungary was still pagan, though its conversion was to come in the lifetime of the reigning Duke (Geyza), while in Norway, towards the close of the century, the worshippers of Wodin were to be confronted with the alternative of death or baptism.

In no country was the transition from paganism to Christianity effected in so remarkable a manner as in Russia. Vladimir, who had shown much zeal in erecting and ornamenting statues of Peroun at Kiev and Novgorod, grew suddenly dissatisfied with the national worship, without at the same time feeling special attraction towards any substitute.

While contemplating a desertion of the old religion he naturally wished to replace it with the most reliable form of faith obtainable, and for this purpose trusty counsellors were sent on a mission of inquiry to Rome, to Constantinople, to the Volga-Bulgarians (who had embraced Islam), and to the Jews—probably those dwelling among the Khazars. When the scattered envoys returned, the result of their investigations was laid before Vladimir, and this young man in search of a religion examined and compared the pretensions of the competing creeds. Circumcision and abstinence from wine put the cult of the Prophet out of court; the first of these objections applied equally to the Jewish doctrine, and the vagabond condition of its votaries offended the monarch’s idea of an established religion. The Romish faith was unacceptable by reason of the claims, which her head was beginning to assert, of supreme dominion in things spiritual and active interference in temporal matters; moreover, her ritual, especially as the Russians may have seen it practised in the infant churches of Bohemia, Poland, and Eastern Germany, was overshadowed and eclipsed by the splendid ceremonial of the Greek Church, particularly in the services of S. Sophia at Constantinople. “The magnificence of the temple, the presence of all the Greek clergy, the richness of the sacerdotal vestments, the ornaments of the altar, the exquisite odour of the incense, the sweet singing of the choirs, the silence of the people, in short, the holy and mysterious majesty of the ceremonies, all struck the Russians with admiration.”[15] The recital of these splendours inclined the Prince to a favourable consideration of the Greek faith, if indeed he had not previously had leanings towards that religion, and the finishing touch was added by an argument which appealed to his family pride. “If the Greek religion had not been the true

religion, would your grandmother Olga, the wisest of mortals, have adopted it?" asked the partisans of the new doctrines; and the matter was settled. But Vladimir had a procedure of his own for the delicate process of changing his religion: not as a humble penitent was he going to enter the true Church. For the baptism of a sovereign prince an archbishop was an indispensable requisite, and it did not suit his ideas of dignity to apply for the loan of such a functionary to the Greek Emperors, who would have been only too glad to oblige him in the matter. Vladimir chose rather to capture his archbishop. For this purpose he engaged in one of the most extraordinary expeditions which history has furnished. Setting out from Kiev with a large host, he made his way down the Dniepr and along the Black Sea coast to the ancient town of Kherson, a self-governing dependency of the Eastern Empire. Closely besieging it, he was met with a desperate resistance, and only made himself master of the place by cutting off the springs which supplied it with water. From this position of vantage he sent to the brothers Basil and Constantine, who shared the Greek Imperial throne, a request or demand for the hand of their sister Anne. The circumstances of these princes did not admit of a refusal; the celebrated generals Bardas Sclerus and Phocas were in active revolt against the successors of John Zimisces, and another change of dynasty seemed imminent; consequently Vladimir's suggested alliance was agreed to on the stipulation that he became a Christian and furnished the Imperial family with some Russian auxiliaries. The Princess Anne was despatched to join her destined husband, who was forthwith baptized by the Archbishop of Kherson in the church of S. Basil, and the marriage ceremony followed. The Prince returned to Kiev with his bride and a strange booty of priests, sacred vessels, and saintly relics, having restored unfortunate Kherson, for which he had no further use, to the Greek Emperors, and sent them the promised succours. By this satisfactory arrangement Basil and Constantine were able to conserve their possession of the Byzantine Empire, while Vladimir on his part "obtained the hand of the princess and the kingdom of heaven."

Fantastic as this procedure of conversion may at first sight appear, there was probably sound policy underlying it; the Russians would be reconciled to the deposition of their wonted gods, and the acceptance of fresh ones from their old enemies, the Greeks, by the consoling reflection that their Prince had, at the sword's point, "captured" the new religion from alien hands. Priests have taught that there is but one way of entering the true faith; Vladimir demonstrated that there are at least two.

The conversion of the people followed in due course; the wooden statue of Peroun, with its silver face and moustache of gold, was thrown down, flogged with whips, and hurled into the Dniepr, whose waters cast it up again on the bank. The affrighted people rushed to worship their old god, but the Prince's men pushed him back into the current, and Peroun the silver-faced was swept down the stream and vanished into the purple haze "where the dead gods sleep."

On the banks of the same river that had engulfed their fallen idol the inhabitants of Kiev were mustered by command, and after the Greek priests had consecrated its waters, into it plunged at a given signal the whole wondering multitude, men, women, and children, and were baptized in one batch. A like scene was enacted at Novgorod, with the substitution of the Volkhov for the Dniepr, and throughout Russia the transition was effected in an equally successful manner. No doubt the cult of the ancient pantheism lingered for a while, especially in the remoter districts, but it was merged in time in the saint worship of the new religion, and the old heathen festivals and year-marks became, under other names, those of the Christian

calendar. The feast of Kolyada and the birthday of the Sun slid naturally into the celebrations of the Nativity without losing aught of its festive character. In similar fashion the institutions of the Greek Orthodox Church everywhere took root in the country till they became part of the life of the people. Kiev henceforth is a city of churches and shrines, with its Cathedral of S. Sofia and its Golden Gate, in ambitious imitation of Constantinople.

The adoption of Christianity in its Greek form exercised a momentous influence on the history of Russia. Up to this point she had been travelling in the same direction as the growing nations around her, and seemed destined to take her place in the European family; but by taking as her ghostly sponsor the decaying Byzantine State, which could scarcely protect its own territories, instead of cultivating the alliance of the all-powerful Roman Papacy, she prepared herself for a gradual isolation from Western civilisation and Western sympathy. For although the actual temporal power of the Holy See did not extend much beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the Eternal City, the moral ascendancy which the Church possessed over some fifteen kingdoms and a crowd of lesser states gave her the disposal of an ever-available fund of temporal support, and enabled her to extend her protection or assistance to all the bodies politic, great or small, within her communion. Witness, for instance, the vast armies she was able to send careering into the “Holy Land” on behoof of Jerusalem-bound pilgrims, and later, the troops she could raise from various parts of the Empire for the reinforcement of the Teutonic Order in its struggles with the heathen Prussians and Pomeranians. Russia, by her adoption of the Greek instead of the Roman faith, put herself beyond the pale of Catholic Christendom, and in the hour of her striving with the Mongol Horde could look for no help from Western Europe; when she emerged from that strife she was less European than Asiatic. In like manner the Greek Empire, two hundred years later, fell unbefriended into the hands of the Ottomans. And in civilisation as well as in war the dominions of the princes of Kiev suffered from their lack of intercourse with Rome; the visits of cardinals and nuncios would have served as a constant link between Russia and the West, and have stimulated the growth of towns in the wild lands that led up to the Dniepr basin. What in fact Rome did for Hungary, on the latter’s entry into the Latin Church—raising her from the position of a semi-barbarous state to that of an important kingdom—that might she have done under similar circumstances for the Eastern principality. There is, of course, another side to this reckoning; Russia, at least, was spared some of the distractions and unhappinesses which radiated from the throne of the apostles, while her very isolation in matters of religious polity helped to preserve for her a strong individuality which other Slav or Magyar nations lost as the price of their intercourse with Catholic-Teutonic Europe. Possibly her history is not even yet sufficiently developed for a final assessment of the matter, but for present purposes it is necessary to note a turning-point in her political evolution—a turn towards the East.

Although Christianity was become opposed to the practice of polygamy, Vladimir’s first act after his baptism had been to increase his connubial establishment by marriage with the Imperial princess. Three more sons had been added to his already ample family, and, disregarding the lesson of the disturbances which had followed the partition of the realm between himself and his half-brothers, the Prince resolved to parcel out his dominions among his surviving sons and his nephew. Eight principalities were carved out from the parent stem, and became each the share of a dependent kniaz, to wit, Novgorod, Polotzk, Rostov, Mourom, the Drevlian country, Vladimir (in Volhynia), Tmoutorokan, and Tourov.

In 998 the Russian arms were turned successfully against the Krovatians on the Galician

frontier, and against the ever troublesome Petchenigs, who continued to disturb the southern borders at intervals during the reign.

Another war broke out later in the north. Vladimir had given refuge, and possibly support, to Olaf, aspirant to the Norwegian crown, then held by Erik, and when Olaf at last succeeded in ousting his rival, the latter, in revenge, “came into the realm of King Vladimir,” in the vigorous words of the Icelandic saga, and “fell a-harrying, and slew men-folk, and burnt all before him, and laid waste the land; and he came to Aldeigia-burg[16], and beset it till he won the stead. There he slew many folk and brake down and burnt all the burg, and thereafter fared wide about Garth-realm[17] doing all deeds of war.” It was four years before Vladimir was able to drive the “spear-storm bounteous Eric” away from his northern coasts. The date of this war is uncertain; probably it stretched into the second decade of the new century. Vladimir, who had lost his Imperial throne-mate in 1011, was confronted in 1014 with a domestic trouble of another nature; his son Yaroslav, Kniaz of Novgorod, refused to continue the yearly tribute which that principality was wont to pay into the Grand Prince’s treasury, and declared himself independent of Kiev. Vladimir made ready to march against his rebellious son, who on his part prepared to resist his angry father, but the sudden failing of the old man’s powers and an inroad of the perennial Petchenigs delayed the struggle.

1015

Vladimir’s favourite son Boris, Prince of Rostov, was put in charge of the forces sent against the invaders, and during his absence the monarch ended his days at Berestov (a village near Kiev), leaving the succession to the Grand principality an open question.

The character of this Prince, to whom the Church gave the title of “Holy,” and who was commemorated by his subjects as “the Great,” is a difficult one for the historian to appraise. The excesses of a stormy and well-spent youth were atoned for, in the eyes of the monkish chroniclers, by an old age of almsgiving and other decorative virtues, and in most respects the doings of his reign gave evidence of wise and wary management. The splitting up of his kingdom was a flaw in his statecraft which had, however, the sanction of custom in the times in which he lived.

The only member of the Grand Prince’s family within reach of Kiev at the moment of his death was his nephew Sviatopalk, ruler of the province of Tourov, in which capacity, according to the contemporary Chronicle of Ditmar, Bishop of Merseburg, he had, at the prompting of his father-in-law Boleslas, King of Poland, raised a rebellion against Vladimir. The attempt was frustrated and punished by the imprisonment of the rebel and his wife, but apparently a reconciliation had taken place between the uncle and nephew, and Sviatopalk was at large, and, what was more important, on the spot when the throne of Kiev became empty. The boyarins of the court, ill-disposed towards a prince who was outside the immediate family of their late master, tried to keep back the tidings of his death while they sent messengers to recall Boris from his fruitless campaign against the Petchenigs. The corpse was wrapped round in a covering, let down by ropes from a palace window in the dead of night, and borne hurriedly to the church of the Bogoroditza (Mother of God) at Kiev. Rumours of the Prince’s death, however, began to fly about the city, and all precautions were rendered abortive by the tell-tale sight of the crowds which flocked to lament over his body. Sviatopalk proclaimed himself Grand Prince, rallied the boyarins to his side by a timely distribution of gifts, and then proceeded to strike, with the instinct of self-preservation, at the several kinsmen who were

within reach. Prince Boris was surprised and slain one night in his tent near the banks of the Alta, being, the Chronicles relate, engaged in prayer at the time of his murder. This circumstance procured for him the posthumous honour of sainthood, and he became a national fetish in the calendar of the Russian Church. His brother Glieb, decoyed from his principality of Mourom by a feigned message from his defunct father, was waylaid while travelling down the Dniepr and met the same doom—shared also in the attendant glory of subsequent canonisation. Sviatoslav, Prince of the Drevlian country, taking natural affright at Sviatopalk's deeds, which seemed to foreshadow the extinction of the sons of Vladimir, fled towards Hungary; at the foot of the Karpathian Mountains, however, he was overtaken and killed by the Grand Prince's men. From this scene of slaughter and violence there escaped a shivering fugitive, the Princess Predslava, a daughter of the luckless house of Vladimir, who made her way with all speed to Novgorod; there she found her brother Yaroslav red with the blood of his subjects, shed in cold vindictiveness rather than in hot quarrel. The hideous wrath and dole called forth by the doings of Sviatopalk mastered all other passions, and led the Prince to throw himself on the goodwill of his misused people; and the men of Novgorod, foregoing their private griefs, turned their rage and their weapons against the monster of Kiev.

1016

A thousand Varangians and fourteen thousand Russians marched southward with Yaroslav against Sviatopalk, who on his part had got together a large force, including a troop of Petchenigs. A battle was fought on the Dniepr banks near Lubetch, which resulted in the overthrow of the usurper, who fled to Poland, leaving the throne of Kiev to his triumphant rival.

Yaroslav did not remain long time in peaceable possession. Boleslas "Khrabrie," the warlike King of Poland, having by the Peace of Bautzen composed his outstanding differences with the Germanic Kaiser (Heinrich II.), burst into Russia at the head of a large army, defeated Yaroslav on the banks of the Bug, and reimposed his son-in-law upon the people of Kiev. The ousted prince withdrew to Novgorod, and but for the insistance of his subjects would have sought sanctuary, as his father had done under similar circumstances, in Skandinavian lands. The Novgorodskie, not wishing to be left to the wrath of Sviatopalk, kept their prince with them by the simple expedient of destroying all the boats available for his flight. Sviatopalk himself smoothed the way for a renewal of the strife on more equal terms. The Poles had been distributed in scattered winter quarters throughout the province of Kiev, and Boleslas himself had established his court in the city. Possibly the Russian Kniaz was impatient of the prolonged presence of the Poles in his lands, and deemed that heroic measures were needed to hasten their departure; anyhow he devised and carried out the plan of a general massacre of the unwelcome guests. Boleslas hastily left Kiev with the remnant of his men, bearing with him as much treasure as he could lay hands on, and retaining in his hold the Red Russian towns on his border. The departure of the Poles brought as a consequence the onfall of Yaroslav, and Sviatopalk was obliged to seek support among the Petchenigs before venturing to take the field against his cousin.

1019

The two forces met near the banks of the Alta, and there was waged a fierce and stubborn battle, the like of which, wrote the Kievian chronicler, had never been seen in Russia. Towards evening Yaroslav's men gained the victory, and Sviatopalk, half-dead with fatigue, delirious with fear, and unable to sit his horse, was borne litter-wise through the whispering night in wild

flight across a wild country, hunted ever by phantom foemen, and moaning ever to his bearers piteous entreaty for added speed. The fugitive checked his spent course in the deserts of the Bohemian border, where he died miserably, and contemporary legend, recalling the circumstances of his birth, asserted that he was born for crime. In which case he fulfilled his purpose.

Yaroslav was now master of Kiev and Novgorod and Grand Prince of Russia, but the family arrangements of Vladimir's many heirs had not yet adjusted themselves. From Isiaslav, Kniaz of Polotzk, sprang a line of turbulent princes who contributed a fair share to the domestic troubles of Russia during the next hundred years.[18] Still more formidable for the time being was Mstislav, whose family portion was Tmoutorakan, a province bordering on the Black Sea.

(1016)

In conjunction with the Greek Imperial General Andronicus he had driven the Khazars from the Tauride and put a finishing touch to their existence as a European State. Other victories over the Tcherkess tribes in his neighbourhood swelled both his ideas and his resources, and he began to feel his remote steppe-girded province too small for him. In 1023, while Yaroslav was away in the Souzdal country, Mstislav burst with his warriors into the grand principality and seized upon Tchernigov in the Sieverski plain. The harassed Grand Prince fled to Novgorod—his usual city of refuge—and sent urgent messengers over the Baltic to call in the ever-ready Varangians to his aid. In response came a large force, led by one Hako (in the Russian Chronicle Yakun), who has come down to posterity as suffering from sore eyes and wearing a bandage over them broidered with gold—a human touch in the portrait of one of these half-mythical seeming vikings. The avenging army came into the Tchernigov land and met their foes on the banks of a small river, the two forces sighting one another just as night was falling and a nasty storm creeping upon them. As the storm broke over the Grand Prince's host, accompanied by thunder peals and torrents of rain, out of the night there rushed in on them the war-men of the intrepid Mstislav, who rivalled with his wild battle-shock the tumult of the elements. In the darkness men fought hand to hand with a foe they could not see; the storm in the heavens rolled away, but the humans fought on, their arms flashing in the gleam of the stars, "a combat without comparison, murderous, terrible, and truly frightful."[19] A charge by Mstislav and his body-guards decided the day—or rather the night—and Yaroslav fled from the field of this epic struggle to his haven in the North. Hakon of the sore eyes left on the ground his gold-wrought bandage as a trophy for the victorious Tchernigovskie. Mstislav did not push his advantage to the extent of depriving Yaroslav of his princely dignity, and five years later a pact was made between the brothers which left the younger in possession of the lands he had won east of the Dniepr. Yaroslav was thus enabled to turn his attention to the outlying regions of the realm, where his authority had lapsed during the long civil strife. In the year 1030 Livland was again brought under some sort of subjection, and the town of Youriev (the German Dorpat) founded near Lake Peipus. The domestic troubles of Poland, where Mieceslav II., son of Boleslas Khrabrie (who had died 1025), was waging a hotly contested war with his brothers and the Kaiser Konrad II., gave an opportunity for regaining the Red Russian towns which perennially changed hands according to the respective strength and weakness of the two countries.

1031

Yaroslav, in conjunction with his half-brother, invaded Poland and wrested back the lost

territory. In 1034 died Mstislav, at the end of a day's hunting, having shortly before lost his only son Evstaf. Of all the sons of Vladimir this intrepid warrior "with dark face and large eyes" seems most to have enchained the imagination of the national chronicler.

Yaroslav, freed from the disquieting possibility of trouble which Mstislav must always have presented, made himself still more secure by seizing and imprisoning, on pretext of disaffection, Soudislav of Pskov, another member of the princely house. Shortly afterwards he was called upon to defend Kiev from an attack of the Petchenigs. Near the walls of the city Yaroslav joined issue with the barbarians, his vanguard consisting of Varangians, flanked right and left by the men of Kiev and Novgorod. After a battle which lasted till evening the Petchenigs broke and fled, leaving enormous numbers of dead on the field, and losing many more in crossing the rivers which impeded their flight. On the ground of this victory Yaroslav founded the Cathedral of S. Sofia, extending at the same time the boundaries of Kiev so as to include this building, and enclosing the city with a stone wall. Well might the Kievians rejoice as they watched the new works, which were alike the witness of their growing prosperity and a memorial of a past danger; they had at last grasped their nettle, and the might of the Petchenigs, which had hung so long like a menacing shadow ready at any moment to ride out of the steppe a grim reality, was for ever shattered. And as the new cathedral rose before them their hopes might soar to a point which would raise the mother of Russian cities to the level of Constantinople.

Amid their own congratulations and complacency came news of the misfortunes of a neighbouring and rival state; possibly across the border, through Krobatian and Drevlian lands, more probably by a less direct route, by word of merchants from the Oder and Weichsel filtering down from Novgorod or Polotzk, tidings would reach them of wild doings in Poland. Mieceslav II. had "passed in battle and in storm"; and diminished though his territories were under stress of German, Russian, and Bohemian filchings, they were more than a handful for his widow and youthful son to manage. Richense, daughter of Ehrenfrid, Pfalzgraf of the Rhine, tries to play the Queen-mother with the support of a hierarchy itself not yet firmly established; but she is no Olga, moreover she is a German. The bishops are German too, and throne, hierarchy, new religion, and all are involved in the whirlwind of a reaction that scatters them in all directions, Richense to the court of the Emperor in Saxony, her son, Kazimir, to France, where he enters the service of Mother Church as a monk of the celebrated Abbey of Cluny. Yaroslav, taking advantage of the weakness of his western neighbour, began in 1040 a series of campaigns against the tribes which inhabited the dense marsh and river-sected forests lying to the north-east of Poland, between Russia and the Baltic. The Yatvyags first occupied his attention, though it is doubtful if he acquired more than a transient sway over them. He next turned the weight of his arms against the Lit'uanians, upon a section of whom at least he imposed a tribute. The year 1041 found him actually in Polish territory, in the province or palatinate of Mazovia, which had separated from the lands of the Polish crown—if such a designation can be used during an interregnum—under the rule of a heathen noble named Mazlav, from whom the province took its name. Meanwhile the force of the reaction in Poland had spent itself, the bishops retook possession of their dioceses, and Kazimir was fetched, with the Pope's permission, from the peaceful seclusion of the Burgundian monastery to the management of a country smouldering with the embers of anarchy and religious persecution. Yaroslav seized the opportunity to form an alliance with the young Duke of Poland, by virtue of which the contested Galician or Red Russian March was definitely ceded to the Grand Prince, who on his part helped Kazimir to defeat the rebel Voevoda[20] of Mazovia and reannex that

province to his duchy. The good understanding between the princes was cemented by the marriage of Kazimir with Mariya, sister of Yaroslav.

Russia was thus freed from the apprehension of trouble both on the Polish frontier and on the side of the steppes, where the power of the Petchenigs was effectively broken. A new war-cloud, however, rose in the south, emanating from a quarrel among Greek and Russian merchants at Constantinople, in which one of the latter was killed.

1043

Yaroslav demanded satisfaction from the Greek Emperor, Constantine Monomachus, and not obtaining it, he sent an army against the Greeks, confiding its direction to his eldest son Vladimir and a boyarin named Vyatcha. Scorning the overtures for peace which came at late moment from the frightened Emperor, the Russians met their enemies in a naval fight, wherein the Greek fire and the inevitable storm played their accustomed parts. Six thousand of Vladimir's men were forced to abandon their damaged vessels and attempt to make good their retreat overland, led by Vyatcha, who would not desert them in their extremity. Constantine, instead of resting content with the victory which fortune had given him, or following it up with a vigorous pursuit, satisfied himself with half-measures, returning in premature triumph to his capital while he sent the remainder of his ships to hunt the Russians out of the Bosphorus. Vladimir meanwhile had rallied his fleet and turned fiercely at bay, destroying twenty-five of the Byzantine vessels and killing their admiral. Consoled by this success he returned home, carrying with him many prisoners. The division which had attempted the land passage was less happy; overpowered by a large Greek force near Varna, the survivors were taken captive to Constantinople, where many of them, including the brave boyarin, were deprived of their eyesight.

This was the last of the series of expeditions made by the early rulers of Russia against Constantinople, expeditions which suggest a parallel with those against Rome which exercised such a fatal fascination over the Saxon and Franconian Emperors of Germany at the same period. Not for many a long century were the Russian arms to push again across the blue waters of the Danube into the land of their desire. In 1046 peace was formally concluded between the two countries, and the blinded prisoners were allowed to return to their native land.

The remaining years of Yaroslav were years of peace and prosperity within his realm. Allied with the Court of Poland by the double marriage of his sister with Duke Kazimir, and of the latter's sister with his second son Isiaslav, he was in like manner connected with the house of Arpad by the marriage of his youngest daughter Anastasia with Andrew I. of Hungary; with Harold the Brave, afterwards King of Norway, who espoused his eldest daughter Elizabeth; and with the royal family of France by the marriage of his second daughter Anne with Henri I. And not only by court alliances was the Russia of this period connected with the other states of Europe. Commerce had made great strides in the last half-hundred years, and Kiev, in the zenith of her fortunes, attracted traders from many lands; besides her 300 churches she had 8 markets, there were separate quarters for Hungarian, Hollandish, German, and Skandinavian merchants, and the Dniepr was constantly covered with cargo vessels. Novgorod was another important centre of trade and foreign intercourse. A more convenient medium of exchange, always a stimulating factor in commerce, was gradually superseding the hides and pelts which were the earliest articles of sale and barter; the first step had been to substitute leather tokens

cut from the skins themselves, called *kounas*, from *kounitza*, a marten (being generally cut from a marten pelt). These were replaced, as silver grew more plentiful in the country, by coins of that metal, stamped with rude representations of the reigning prince.

Following the time-hallowed custom of his forbears, Yaroslav in his last days divided the lands of his realm among his surviving sons. (Vladimir, the eldest, had died in 1052.) Isiaslav became, after his father's death, Grand Prince of Kiev, his four brothers being settled respectively in the sub-provinces of Tchernigov, Péréyaslavl, Smolensk, and Volhynia. Polotzk was still held by the other branch of the family. Yaroslav died at Voutchigorod on the 19th February 1054. On a winter's day his corpse was borne in mournful procession along the snow-clad road to Kiev, there to rest in a marble tomb in a side chapel of the Cathedral of S. Sofia.

Under Yaroslav Russia enjoyed a prosperity and position that was lost in the partitions and discords of his successors, and this circumstance was probably responsible for the somewhat flattering estimate that was formed of his character by subsequent chroniclers.[21] As patron of Kiev and benefactor to the Church he was naturally glorious and good in the eyes of Nestor, and by some writers he has been styled "the Russian Charlemagne," on account of the code of laws which he formulated for his country. Concerning his piety, he lived in an age when much giving from the State treasury to church or monastery counted for such, and it is recorded of him that his dying words charged his sons to "treat each other as brothers" and "have great tenderness" one for another. His own brother still lay in the prison that was his living tomb for over a score of years.

CHAPTER III THE FEUDS OF THE HOUSE OF RURIK

The history of Russia during the next two hundred years is little more than a long chronicle of aimless and inconsequent feuds between the multiple Princes of the Blood—“the much-too-many” of their crowded little world—overlaid and beclouded with strange-sounding names recurring and clashing in a luxuriant tangle of pedigree, and further embarrassed by a perpetual shifting and reshifting of the family appanages. Here and there the figure of some particular kniaz stands out for a space from the ravelled skein that the old historians painstakingly wove upon the loom of their chronicles, but for the most part the student searches in vain for glimpses of the real life-story of Russia during this barren and over-trampled period.

The city of Kiev, carrying with it the dignity of the Grand-princedom and the nominal authority over the whole realm, was the key-stone of the body politic as Yaroslav left it, but the loosely-ordered theory of succession which obtained in the Slavonic world led to a perpetual dislocation of this local and ill-defined supremacy, and robbed the arch-throne of any chance of making good its claimed dominion over the other units of the State. Under Isiaslav I. and the brothers, son, and nephew who succeeded him in promiscuous order,[22] Kiev became merely a focussing point for the profusion of quarrels and petty revolutions which were set in perpetual motion by the restless ambition of the neighbouring Princes of Polotzk, Smolensk, and Tchernigov. The last– named province passed into the possession of Oleg Sviatoslavitch[23] (nephew of Isiaslav), and from him sprang the house of Olgovitch, which held the fief of Tchernigov for many generations and convulsed South Russia again and again in its attempts to grasp the throne of Kiev, this hereditary feud of the Olgovitchie with the branch of Vsevolod being the most understandable feature of the prevailing strife-storms of the period. A factor which might have been supposed to make for unity and self-help among the detached Russian rulers, but which instead frequently served to complicate the distresses of the country, was the appearance in the south-east, shortly after the death of Yaroslav, of a new enemy, rising phœnix-like on the ruin of the Petchenigs. The Polovtzi, or Kumans, a nomad race of Turko origin, were even fiercer and more cruel than the tribe they had replaced, and their fighting value was such that the princes, though frequently banding in short-lived leagues against them, were often tempted to invoke their aid in pressing family quarrels, and even stooped to mate with their chieftain women—a woful falling away from the bridal splendours of the Court of Yaroslav.

During the reigns of Isiaslav’s three immediate successors two figures stand out prominently amid the bewildering plurality of princes, respectively playing the part of good and evil geniuses of the country. Vladimir Monomachus, son of Vsevolod, sometime Prince of Kiev, fulfils the former function with commendable assiduity, righting wrongs and averting national disasters after the most approved chivalric pattern, and ever ready to improve the occasion by the delivery of irreproachable sentiments—if these were not fathered upon him by the chroniclers of the time. Throughout the turmoil which distinguishes the close of the eleventh century he hovers in the background, like the falcon of Ser Federigo, with his air of “if anything is wanting I am here.” The other side of the picture—and picture it doubtless is, in a large measure, painted by the prejudice and ornamented by the fancies of the old-time annalists—is the wayward Prince of Polotzk,[24] ever ready to devise new troubles for his groaning country, always managing to elude the consequences of his transgressions against the peace. Naturally he achieves the reputation of having more than human powers; rumour has it that he

traversed the road from Kiev to Tmoutorakan in a single night, and the unholy wight could in Kiev hear the clock of the Sofia church at Polotzk striking the hours. The suddenness with which he would appear before the gates of some distant town gave rise, no doubt, to the belief that he assumed the form of a wolf on these occasions: “He sped, in blue obscurity hidden, as a wild beast, at midnight to Bielgrad, at morning ... opened the gate of Novgorod, destroyed the glory of Yaroslav, and hunted as a wolf from Dudutki to Nemiga.”[25] Wonders of an evil nature were reported from his capital, where malevolent spirits rode on horseback through the streets day and night, wounding the inhabitants. What with the intermittent attacks of the princes of the house of Yaroslav and the eerie enemies within the town, it must have required exceptional nerve to be a citizen of Polotzk. In 1101 closes the eventful life of the wehr-wolf prince, who makes his last lone journey into the “blue obscurity,” where perhaps his “white soul” yet hies in wolf’s gallop over the eternal plains.

Four years earlier (1097) an interesting gathering had taken place of the numerous princes of the line of Yaroslav, who were assembled together in the town of Lubetch, “on the same carpet,” and swore on the Holy Cross to live in peace and friendship with each other. With a limited number of fiefs and a superabundant supply of Princes of the Blood, many of whom were necessarily in the position of have-nots, it was scarcely likely that the public pact would be very long-lived, but a decent lull might have been looked for before the outbreak of new dissensions. David Igorovitch, cousin of the Grand Prince Sviatopalk, went straight from the council of peace, from the carpet-in-common and the bekissed cross, to stir up fresh strife in the West Russian country, and the series of wars which ensued was remarkable for the armed participation of Kalman, King of Hungary. The reason for this foreign intermeddling, which ended in signal discomfiture and a hurried retreat across the Karpathians, is not obvious. “What were the causes of this war,” wrote a Hungarian annalist,[26] “are not to be ascertained.” It was, however, the opening of a long chapter of western encroachments in the affairs of the Red Russian provinces, while in the steppe-lands of the south, Tmoutorakan and other territory slipped into the hands of the Kuman tribesmen.

1113

The accession of Vladimir Monomachus to the dignity of Velikie Kniaz gave Kiev for the time being greater importance as the sovereign State, since the lands of Péréyaslavl, Novgorod, and Souzdal were also held in the monarch’s family. Under his son Mstislav the Novgorodskie pushed their arms into Livland and took the town of Odenpay (bear’s head), and later these hardy and enterprising folk swept the desolate Finnish northlands into their wide dominion. The character of Vladimir (who died in 1125, and was succeeded by Mstislav) exercised a lively hold on the imaginations of his countrymen, and he is yet reckoned among those sovereigns “whose earthly diadems beamed in anticipation of the crowns they were to receive in Paradise.” This much may fairly be said of him, that during his career, and particularly during his reign, Russia enjoyed a greater measure of cohesion than she experienced under his immediate successors, and that this was in no small measure the outcome of a carefully thought-out and scrupulously applied policy. But the greatest monument to Vladimir’s memory is the parchment document which he left for the guidance of his sons, and which is preserved in the archives of his country as a precious historical relic.

“Bear in mind that a man ought always to be employed” is one of the admonitions of this remarkable homily, though if the persons addressed imitated the example therein displayed it

was scarcely needed. “For my part I accustomed myself to do everything that I might have ordered my servants to do. Night and day, summer and winter, I was perpetually moving about. I wished to see everything with my own eyes.... I made it my duty to inspect the churches and the sacred ceremonies of religion, as well as the management of my property, my stables, and the eagles and hawks of my hunting establishment. I have made eighty-three campaigns and many expeditions. I concluded nineteen treaties with the Polovtzi. I took captive one hundred of their princes, whom I set free again; and I put two hundred of them to death by throwing them into rivers. No one has ever travelled more rapidly than I have done. Setting out in the morning from Tchernigov, I have arrived at Kiev before the hour of vespers.” (A feat surpassed by the goblin-post of the Prince of Polotzk.) “In hunting amidst the thickest forests, how many times have I myself caught wild horses and bound them together? How many times have I been thrown down by buffaloes, wounded by the antlers of stags, and trodden under the feet of elks? A furious boar rent my sword from my baldrick; my saddle was torn to pieces by a bear; this terrible beast rushed upon my steed, whom he threw down upon me. But the Lord protected me.”

There is a suspicion of exaggeration in the number of campaigns enumerated, besides “many expeditions,” and the hunting reminiscences are almost too full of incident; neither do wild horses, as a rule, inhabit the thickest forests. Allowing for these enlargements of old age, however, the outlines are probably true.

“Oh, my children,” the testator continues, “fear neither death nor wild beasts. Trust in Providence; it far surpasses all human precautions.” In order, presumably, not to risk all his eggs in one basket, he qualifies this pious aphorism with the following excellent advice: “Never retire to rest till you have posted your guards. Never lay aside your arms while you are within reach of the enemy. And, to avoid being surprised, always be early on horseback.”

With the disappearance of Vladimir Russian political life lapsed into the distracting turmoil of family feuds, embittered now afresh by the jealousies of the elder and younger branches of his descendants, in addition to the existing elements of discord furnished by the houses of Tchernigov and Galitz and the sporadic turbulence of the people of Novgorod.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the condition of the Russian State at this period with that of the neighbouring Germanic Empire, whose constitution and scheme of government was not widely different, and to examine the possible causes of the decay of the Grand-princely power in the one, and the survival of the Imperial ascendency in the other. The Western Empire had, like Russia, her periods of internal confusion, but however weak or unfortunate an individual Kaiser might be, his title and office always carried a certain weight of authority, a certain glamour of reverence with it, while in the Eastern State it is sometimes difficult to remember who was at any given time in possession of the arch-throne of Kiev. Probably the greater stability of German institutions was due to their greater complexity; side by side with the oligarchy of sovereign Dukes and Margraves there had grown up, fostered by the sagacious foresight of successive Emperors, a crop of free cities and burghs, enjoying a large measure of independence, while another element was introduced by the extensive temporal possessions and powers of many of the German prelates. These interwoven and antagonistic interests were naturally fertile of disputes and petty conflicts, in which events appeal was sure to be made, sooner or later, to the Emperor, whose intervention was seldom fruitless; for where a man, or a community, had many possible enemies, it was less easy to defy the

sovereign power. If, therefore, each little fragment of the State was a law unto itself, the final supremacy of the Emperor was always in evidence, and in the same way some overweening vassal preparing to wage war on his sovereign liege might have his hand stayed by the irritating incursion of the Herrschaft of a mitred abbot or an aggrieved Burg upon his own dominions. In the Russian Weal, on the contrary, no such delicately adjusted conditions existed. With the exception of Velikie Novgorod, nothing was independent besides the princes of the house of Rurik; towns, clergy, and boyarins “went with” the various appanages to which they belonged, and shared the fortunes of the prince who for the time being ruled over them. Hence there was nothing beyond an empty title and the control of an uncertain quantity of treasure to advance the Grand Prince above the standing of his brothers and cousins. In consequence of this weakness of the central authority it follows that there was little to bind the mass together in a cohesive whole. Besides the kinship of the princes there were, perhaps, only two elements which prevented a splitting asunder of the federation: one was the physical aspect of the country, which presented no natural divisions which might have been resolved into political ones. As certainly as Denmark was destined to break away, in spite of artificial acts of union, such as that of Kalmar, from the other Skandinavian lands, so certainly was Russia likely to remain united. The wide plains, intersected by far-winding rivers, offered no obvious barriers which might have marked off a separate kingdom of Tchernigov or Polotzk, and each district was too dependent on the others to become permanently estranged. The other factor which made for unity was the bond of a common, and as regards their western neighbours, a distinct religion. The Greek-Christian faith, with all its attendant ceremonials and mysteries, had taken deep root among the Slavs of Russia, and had assimilated itself with the national life of the people. The beauties of the old cathedrals of S. Sofia at Kiev, S. John Theologus at Rostov, and S. Dimitri at Vladimir, bore evidence of the care that was lavished on the decoration of these temples of Christian worship. The Metropolitan of Kiev, as Primate over all the Russian churches, served as a link with the capital city which the Grand Prince did not always supply.

Novgorod, which has been mentioned as an exception to the state of subserviency prevalent among the other Russian towns, derived her strength and importance from her situation, which commanded both the Baltic and the Russian overland trade. Although the Hansa League had not yet taken definite shape, the elements of the later organisation were already in existence. The commercial life of the Baltic centred in Wisby, capital of the island of Gothland, and to this convenient meeting-place came, twice a year, German, Swedish, Russian, Danish, and Wendish merchants to exchange their various wares and supply the needs of their respective trade-circles. After the Wisby markets were over many of the traders from Lubeck, Hamburg, Bremen, etc., made their way to Novgorod, where they early possessed a factory and a separate place of worship, even as the Novgorodskie, since the middle of the twelfth century, had their church and quarter at Wisby. The intercourse with enterprising merchant folk from other lands—and merchants needed to be adventurous in those days—infused a spirit of energy and independence into the inhabitants of Novgorod, while the wealth at their disposal enabled them to extend their domination far over the bleak, but by no means barren, northlands of Russia, even to the further side of the Ourals. This extensive over-lordship, again, gave them control of many sources of commerce, and the produce of Arctic seas and sub-Arctic forests filtered through their hands into the channels of Baltic trade. Walrus teeth, the blubber oil from seals, and the down of sea-haunting birds formed the harvest of the frozen ocean; forest and lake furnished their markets with furs, raw leather, tallow, fish, and tar;

cultivated lands yielded flax and hemp, honey and wax—the latter an important commodity in the times when the Church kept tapers burning day and night in thousands of shrines throughout the greater part of Europe. In exchange for these products the merchants of Wisby and of the German “Hof” at Novgorod bartered metal wares and manufactured goods. Of raw metals came tin from the celebrated mines of Cornwall, copper from the Swedish uplands, and iron from Bohemia and the Netherlands. Spanish lead found its way through Bruges and Antwerp.

[27] Thus Novgorod was the staple of a flourishing and far-reaching trade, even though the rise of the Italian maritime republics had in a large measure diverted the commerce of the East from its old Russian waterway, and the wealth and importance of this world-faring traffic took the city out of the limitations of the Russian realm, even as Lubeck and her sister towns stood beyond the bonds of the Empire. To the other Russian cities their respective rulers were the mainspring of their being, and each prince might have locally adapted the boast of the great Louis; to the Novgorodskie their prince was only an incident in a busy existence. This spirit of liberty and impatience found vigorous expression in the year 1138 when the citizens of Novgorod, with those of the subject towns of Pskov and Ladoga, in Vetché assembled, solemnly deposed their prince on the following grounds: that he had no care for the poorer people; that he only loved pleasures, falcons, and dogs; that he had coveted the government of Péréyaslavl; that in a battle with the Souzdalians he had been the first to leave the field; that he had no fixed policy, but was at times on the side of the house of Tchernigov, at times on the side of its enemies. The citizens had a quaint and effective way of dealing with a troublesome minority in carrying through their frequent prince-purgings. According to an old Slavonic custom (retained in Poland till her downfall), the decisions of the Vetché or the Diet had to be of one voice; however, “the majority had the resource of drowning the minority in the Volkof,”[28] and the bridge over that river was not unseldom the scene of violent party strife. The great bell of Yaroslav would clang out the curfew of the dethroned kniaz, who was thenceforth “shown the way” out of his erstwhile principality. On an occasion when the Grand Prince Sviatopalk II. wished to foist his son on the people of Novgorod, the elders of the city grimly sent him word to keep the young prince at home, “unless he has a head to spare.”

With the onward march of days and deeds in the stormy times of the twelfth century two facts, indeed, begin to stand forth. One is the waning power and import of Kiev, consequent on the many changes of masters to which she was subject; “the Mother of Russian cities” passed into the keeping of one prince after another, like a dainty piece of carrion dropped and snatched and fought over by a parcel of kites or crows. Side by side with this decline of the southern city is to be marked the silent growth of a new principality in the lands of the north-east, where Urii “Dolgoroukie” (the Long-armed), son of Vladimir Monomachus, had nursed the savage, forest-choked marchland of Souzdal into a well-ordered province, enjoying from its very remoteness and seclusion a domestic calm which was to be found nowhere else in the wide Russian realm. Among the towns which he founded, or advanced from the position of tribal villages, was one on the banks of the Moskva, to which was given the name of the river that watered it, a name to be one day of first importance in Russian history. On the death of Urii (1157) his son Andrei, albeit one of a numerous family, succeeded him in the undivided sovereignty of Souzdal. Turning his back on glittering but unprofitable Kiev, with its thousand shrines and general odour of sanctity and its unhealthy political atmosphere, he established himself at Vladimir-on-the-Kliasma, strong in the possession of a bejewelled ikon of the Virgin, of Greek manufacture—if it were not, as was asserted, the handiwork of the Apostle Luke. From this

vantage-ground of possession and authority the wary kniaz proceeded to sweep away with unsparing hand the gaping brood of his brothers and nephews, who were exiled wholesale, together with such boyarins as were suspected of favouring a splitting-up of Andrei's dominion. The banished Urievitch princes retired to Constantinople, where they were honourably received by the Greek Emperor Manuel, who, amid the vigorous wars which he carried on with most of his neighbours, maintained terms of friendship with the princes of Russia. Shortly after this state-stroke the Prince of Souzdal became embroiled with the turbulent Novgorodskie, whose newly-elected Prince Roman was son of the then Velikie Kniaz of Kiev.

Andrei was minded to show who really was master in the Northern Russian world, and turned his arms, not upon Novgorod, but upon Kiev.

1169

Against the devoted city gathered, in obedience to the behest of Andrei, a mighty host of princes, with their boyarins and followers; Mstislav of Souzdal, Roman of Smolensk, Vseslav of Polotzk, Oleg of Sieversk, the Rostislavitches, and many another, banded themselves together, under the leadership of the first-named, to assist at the death of a fiction. The Grand Prince entrenched himself in his capital and defended the walls for two days against the assaults of his enemies. On the 8th March the walls were stormed and the "Mother of Russian cities" was given over to sack and pillage. In one wild moment all the reverence and religious piety of the Slavonic nature was scattered to the winds, and churches, monasteries, and the cathedrals of S. Sofia and the Dime shared the general disaster. Sacrilegious hands bore gleefully through the roaring streets a spoil of holy ikons, illuminated missals, crosses, priestly robes, and all the trappings of an outraged religion; even the bells were torn down from their campaniles to serve as plunder for the victorious invaders.

Kiev still existed as a city, but on her Golden Gate the conquerors might fitly have hewed the epitaph, "Ichabod. Thy glory is departed from thee."

The Grand Prince made his escape from the toils of his enemies, and one of the sons of Urii succeeded to what was left of the submerged dignity; but the real centre of authority had shifted. Souzdal extended its influence over nearly the whole of the Russian land; the Princes of Galitz and Tchernigov and the republic of Novgorod alone maintained their independence. The latter government, indeed, despite the internal disorders with which it was from time to time afflicted, had risen to a power which might well cry halt to the most ambitious potentate. Not only had it held its own against the leagued princes of Northern Russia, but it had valiantly repelled the onslaught of a foreign enemy. The union of the crowns of Sweden and Gothland, the pact between the houses of Swerker and Jeswar, and the gradual dying out of the pagan minority had given the Swedes comparative domestic quiet, and at the same time leisure to turn their attention to attacks on their neighbours. Hence it was that Karl VII., in the year 1164 (while Sviatoslav yet reigned at Novgorod), invaded the Russian northlands and besieged Ladoga, which was defended by the citizens with great spirit. The arrival of Sviatoslav with the Posadnik Zakharie and the Novgorodskie forces was followed by the complete defeat of the Swedish host, only a remnant of which, according to the city Chronicles, succeeded in making good its escape. This exploit gives some idea of the power and position of Velikie Novgorod, which at this period matches the standing of Lubeck in the days of the Kaiser Karl IV. Against so dangerous a rival it was inevitable that Andrei, dreaming of autocracy 300 years before its time, should bend the whole crushing weight of his resources and influence, and seek to

whelm Novgorod in the same humiliation that had befallen Kiev. The inhabitants of the threatened city saw an ominous league of their enemies gathering together; the Princes of Smolensk, Polotzk, Mourom, and Riazan joined their forces to those of Mstislav Andreivitch, the conqueror of Kiev, under whose banner marched the men of Souzdal, Rostov, Vladimir, and Bielozersk. At the head of the citizens stood their Kniaz, Roman, the Posadnik Yakun, and the Archbishop Ivan. These prepared by every means in their power to resist the formidable army whose skirmishers were ravaging the country for miles around and lighting the winter sky with the fires of hundreds of blazing villages. The doubt voiced by a poet of a later century—

Though kneeling nations watch and yearn,

Does the Primordial Purpose turn?

found no expression in the minds of these early Russians, in whose civil discords the members of the Holy Family of heaven were supposed to take as keen an interest as the gods of Olympus in the skirmishes round Troy.

1170

When the attack closed in upon the city the Archbishop, attended by his clergy, carried round the ramparts, during the thick of the fight, a standard with a representation of the Virgin.

An impious arrow struck the sainted ikon, which thereupon turned its face towards Novgorod and let fall a shower of tears upon the Archbishop; this was too much for the nerves of the Souzdalians, who seemingly were near enough to witness the miracle, and a headlong flight ensued, in which many were slain and many taken prisoners. In the words of the Novgorodskie Chronicle, “You could get ten Souzdalians for a grivna.” It is difficult to discern, under the mass of legend, what was the real cause of this panic. The warriors who had laid ruthless hands on the hallowed sanctuaries of the Russian capital were not likely to be cowed by a provincial representation of the Virgin; had they not their own apostle-wrought ikon of the Mother of God at Vladimir? Whatever the cause of defeat, it gave a serious check to Andrei’s projects of undisputed supremacy. Novgorod, however, was not secure from the enmity of the Prince of Souzdal, from whose province she drew her supplies of grain, and the Posadnik and Archbishop followed up their victory by timely overtures for peace, which was effected by the dismissal of Roman and the subsequent “free election” of a prince from the Souzdal family. Four years later the dreaded northern Kniaz suffered the penalty of being in advance of his times. The high hand with which he had ruled in his own province had inspired among his boyarins and courtiers a fear which might on occasion become dangerous.

1177

And the occasion arrived, when one summer’s evening a band of twenty conspirators, including the chamberlain of his household, burst into the old man’s sleeping-chamber in his palace at Bogolubov (a suburb of Vladimir) and stabbed wildly at him in the uncertain twilight. Favoured by the dusk and confusion, Andrei managed to crawl away into hiding; a light was procured, and by the track of his streaming wounds he was hunted down and the assassins finished their task. Vladimir, which he had raised to the position of his capital over the older towns of Souzdal and Rostov, mourned the grim fate of her patron, but throughout the rest of the province the long-repressed feelings of the inhabitants ran riot in bloodshed and pillage. The affrighted clergy, clad in their priestly vestments and bearing the sacred ensigns of their

religion, went in solemn processions through the towns, invoking the assistance of the Most High God to quell a revolt which threatened the submersion of their world. Andrei had tried to weld into a disciplined kingdom materials that were as yet only fitted for a modified anarchy, tempered by attachment to a loosely-ordered succession of princes; dreaming of despotism, he had at least died the death of a despot.

And while they do to death the only prince who had shown them the way to the safety which lay in union and centralisation, far away on the banks of the Okon, in the desert region which borders Northern China and Manchuria, is growing from insignificance to an overmastering weight of supremacy the tribe, horde, locust-swarm of the swarthy Mongols.

The disorders which marked the disappearance of Andrei's overshadowing personality from the throne of Souzdal were soothed, after a long struggle between his reflucted kinsfolk, by the final establishment of Vsevolod, brother of the murdered prince, surnamed "Big-nest" in allusion to his large family.[29] Applying himself to the ordering of his own province, he meddled but languidly in the seething troubles of the Dniepr-watered principalities, where the house of Olgovitch was enjoying a fitful revival of importance. A scion of that strenuous family at this time embarked on an enterprise which, though fruitless from a military point of view, was crowned with a halo of glory and immortalised in an epic poem of great beauty. "The Song of the Expedition of Igor, Prince of Sieverski," or, more shortly, the Song of Igor, one of the earliest Slavonic folk-songs that has been handed down from the dead past, has been translated into many languages, but never before into English, so that it is well worth reproducing in part in a history of Russian development. It deals with a campaign undertaken by Igor Sviatoslavitch, Prince of Severski, and his brother Vsevolod, against the Polovtzi in their own country, of its disastrous result, and the ultimate return of Igor.

Brothers, were it not well that we, after the old custom, began the song of the unlucky campaign of Igor, the seed of Sviatoslav? That we celebrate him in the heroic songs of our time, and not in the manner of Bōyan? If the sage Bōyan wished to tune to one a song, it was as if a squirrel sprang up the tree, or a gray wolf hied along the plain, or a blue eagle soared to the clouds....

Igor looked forth and saw that the sun had hidden his face, and a mist had enveloped his warriors. Then spoke Igor to his army: "Brothers and soldiers, it is better to fall in battle than to yield one's life; so will we mount our mettlesome horses and gain the Blue Don by daylight." Yearning filled the soul of the Prince, and the wish to see the noble Don led him to forget many evil tokens. "I will break a lance," cried he, "on the farthest verge of the Polovtzi land, or bow my head with you, Russians, and with my helmet draw water from the Don." O Bōyan, thou nightingale of the olden days, if thou hadst inspired these warrior-bands, alighting on the Tree of Thought and hovering in the spirit of the clouds, thou hadst, O nightingale, united this severed time (that which is Past with that which Is).... Not a storm-wind drove the falcons over the wide plain, nor hurried the flocks of daws to the glorious Don. Or thou mightest, sage Bōyan, thus have sung: The steeds are neighing this side the Sula, the war-song resounds in Kiev, the trumpets are crashing in Novgorod. The standards wave in Poutivl, where awaits Igor his loved brother Vsevolod. And to him saith the bold, war-lusting Vsevolod, "O Igor, my only brother, my bright Sun, truly are we twain the seed of Sviatoslav. Brother, let thy spirited war-horses be saddled; already are mine saddled and waiting at Koursk, and my Kourskies are right warriors, born 'neath the blare of the trumpets, and nurtured at the point of the lance. The

roads are familiar to them; they know the passes, their bows are strung, the quiver is open, the sabres are burnished, and they themselves press forward, like gray wolves on the bleak wold, in pursuit of honour and princely renown." Then set Prince Igor his foot in the golden stirrup and rode forth into the wide plain. The sun blurs the way through the gloom, the night groans in storm and wakes the birds, swells in chorus the howling of beasts, the evil Div shrieks down from the tree-tops and summons the strange lands to listen, from the Volga, and the sea-coast, and along the Sula and to the Suroz and Khorsun, to the idol at Tmoutorakan. The Polovtzi hastened by pathless ways to the glorious Don; at midnight shrieked the wheels of their carts, as though flight-circling swans screamed loud. Igor pressed with his war-men to the Don. But already the bird on the oak warned him of misfortune, the wolves set the ravines in alarm, the eagles with loud screams called hither the beasts to the banquet, the foxes barked at the purple shields.

O Russian band, already art thou this side the hill!

Long lasts the night, the twilight dawn not yet foretells the coming of the Sun, darkness clothes the fields, the flute of the nightingale is hushed, while the croaking of the daws resounds, but the Russians have bedecked the stretching plain with their purple shields, and strive after honour and the glory of princes.

On Friday early have our warriors defeated the war-hordes of the Polovtzi, and they thenafter scattered with arrow-swiftness in the plain, bearing away the lovely Polovtzi maidens, and with them also gold and precious silken stuffs; with costly rugs, with cloaks and vestments the Polovtzi strewed the streams, marshes, and swamps. The golden standards with the white pennons, the purple horse-housings and the silver staff fell to the brave Sviatoslavitch. Oleg's brave nest-brood slept on the field, thenafter they are flown afar; they were not born to suffer ill, neither from falcon, nor sparhawk, nor from these, heathen Polovtzi, the black ravens. Gsak sped like a gray wolf, and Kontchak followed him on the road to the glorious Don.

Right early the other morning rose a blood-red promise of the sun, black clouds drew in from the sea, that would have darkened four suns, and torn were they by blue flashes; there was brewing a mighty storm of thunder, and bolts rained over the majestic Don; then at the stream Kayala, by the mighty Don, lances were broken and sabres blunted on Polovtzi helmets.

O Russian band, still art thou this side the hill!

There blew the Wind (Stribog's grandchild)[30] bolts from the sea against Igor's brave fighters; the Earth shuddered, mournfully flowed the rivers, dew-drops spangled the fields, the banners rustled.

Forth from the Don, from the sea, and from all sides around came the Polovtzi; they surrounded the Russian troop, with yells the children of the devils filled the plain, but the brave Russians guarded themselves behind the purple shields. Thou Wild-Bull Vsevolod, thou art in the rank that is foremost, slinging thy arrows at the fighters, and with thy sword of steel batterest the helmets, and where thou chargest, there where thy golden helmet glitters, there lie the heads of the Heathen and the Avaric helmets, smashed by thy hardened sabre, thou Wild-Bull Vsevolod, and there was thy grief so great at the wound of thy brother, thou hadst both honour and life forgotten, and the town of Tchernigov, and the throne of thy fathers, even as the caresses of thy sweet and beauteous wife Glebovna.... So is it ever in the time of fighting and war, but never yet has been heard of such a battle as this; from early morn till the

even, from eve to red dawn, nought but flying arrows, and the clashing of sabres on helmets, and steel lances splintering in the far plain of the Polovtzi-land. The black earth under the hoofs of the horses is with bones emplanted, which spring up from the Russian soil watered with blood amid stress of grievous sorrow. What is the stamping I hear? What is it I hear ringing in the morning early before the red Dawn?...

So for a day they fought, and for two days, but on the third, towards mid-day, sank the banner of Igor.

There on the banks of the rapid Kayala the brothers were sundered....

The grass drooped its head in mourning and the tree bowed sorrowfully earthward....

The war of the princes against the Heathen had ceased, for one brother saith to another, “That belongeth to me, and this belongeth also to me.” And of each little thing the princes say, “A great matter,” and stir up strife with one another, while on all sides of the Russian land the warlike heathen press forward.

But Igor’s brave war-men shall never wake again.... Loudly weep the Russian women, “Alas! that never more can our thoughts to our dear husbands be wafted, that our eyes shall never, never again behold them, and gold and silver never more be stored.” And therefore, brothers, Kiev groaneth aloud in sorrow and Tchernigov in grief; woe streameth through the land, and pain, in full flood, through Russia, but ever more and more were the princes growing in hatred, while the warlike Heathen raged through the land, and from every holding had as tribute a squirrel pelt....

[The despairing lamentations of the saga are changed to rejoicing over the unexpected return of Igor, who had made his escape from the Polovtzi land.]

The Sun shines in the heaven since Prince Igor is on Russian land. The maidens sing on the Danube, and their voices reach over the sea to Kiev. Prince Igor rides through the Boritchev-ford to the Holy Mother-of-God of Pirogosha. The country is gladsome and the towns rejoice. [31]

This folk-song, apart from its intrinsic beauty, is valuable as a relic of Russian thought and feeling at a time when the old pre-Christian ideas were still blended with the sentiments of the newer traditions, and it is interesting to mark how the ghosts and gods of old Slavonic myth are mixed up with the saints and virgins of the Orthodox faith. Not unworthy of notice, too, are the sage strictures on the political evils of the day, the perpetual quarrelling among the Princes of the Blood, which, however, continued with unabated vehemence despite the common bond which existed in a common enemy. On the north and north-east the armies of Novgorod and Souzdal extended the Russian influence in the lands of the Finns and Bulgars, but on the south-east, south, and west occurred encroachments which the princes were too enfeebled by internal feuds to resist. The Kuman (Polovtzi) hordes held the banks of the Dniepr almost up to the walls of Kiev and Biel-gorod, as the Petchenigs had done before them; amid the dense forests of Lit’uania, on the border of Polotzk, was rising into importance the Lettish State which was to become a formidable factor in Russian and Polish annals; and the kings of Hungary cast greedy eyes on the fair province of Galitz, held in the feeble and precarious grasp of Vladimir, unworthy successor of a line of valiant Red Russian princes.

The occupant of the throne of S. Stefan was not the only interested onlooker at the spectacle

of misgovernment provided by the Prince of Galitz; his nearest neighbour on the Russian side was Roman of Volhynia, the same Roman who had held Novgorod against the might of Andrei, and who had been thrown over to procure for the city a substantial peace. This prince, whose forefathers in the direct line back to the first Igor had all been sovereigns of Kiev, was possessed of exceptional qualities of energy and enterprise, and saw himself fitted to replace the effete and impolitic Vladimir in the important and Magyar-threatened principality of Galitz. Between the warlike and strenuous efforts of this battle-loving kniaz, who was renowned for the eagle-swoop rapidity with which he was wont to hurl himself upon his enemies, the assiduous intrigues and invasions of Bela III. of Hungary, and the occasional intervention of the princes of Poland, the West Russian lands were kept in a continual ferment; in the words of the saga, “Men’s lives were shortened by the wars of the brother princes. Then seldom in the Russian land was heard the call of the husbandman, but often indeed the ravens croaking as they divided the corpse among them, and the cry of the corbies as they called to each other to come to the banquet.” Long time the clashing factions warred and schemed, but Roman at last broke down all opposition without and within. In dismal plight were then those notables of Galitz who had resisted his incoming; according to Polish accounts he treated the disaffected boyarins with a savagery unworthy of a brave prince. The unfortunate objects of his ill-will were dismembered, flayed, riddled with arrows, buried alive, and done to death in various other barbarous ways.[32] “To eat a drop of honey in peace, one must first kill the bees,” was his explanation of this severity. This prince, who, in the words of the Russian Chronicles, “walked in the ways of God,” was soon called upon to defend his “drop of honey” against the Princes of Tchernigov and Kiev—a coalition brought together by jealousy and dislike of the vigorous Roman, for whom, however, it was no match. Gathering together his Galician and Volhynian retainers, and calling to his aid the Tchernie-Kloboukie (“Black-caps,” a name given to the nomads of the western steppes other than the Polovtzi), he threw himself with the famous eagle-swoop upon Kiev, the centre-point of his enemies. In vain did its Grand Prince Rurik and the Kniaz of Tchernigov apply themselves to repel his attack; the Kievians, who had a trained eye for the strongest side, threw open the Podolian Gate, and the redoubtable Roman swirled with his warriors into the lower city. His opponents did not stay to dispute the upper quarter with him, and the victorious Prince of Galitz was able, with the assent of Vsevolod of Souzdal, to bestow the time-worn capital on one of his own kinsfolk.

1202

At the request of the Metropolitan, Alexis Comnenus, and on behalf of the Greek Imperial family, the indefatigable Roman made a diversion against the Polovtzi, who were ravaging the Thracian border. Having successfully drawn off their attack and destroyed their camps, he returned in triumph to Galitz. During his absence Kiev, which had betrayed the cause of Rurik, experienced in full measure the resentment of that prince; calling to his assistance the Polovtzi —“children of the devils,” but useful on occasion—he let them loose on the miserable inhabitants. The Kuman warfolk passed over the city like a swarm of locusts over a barley field; nothing escaped their devouring fury except the foreign merchants who defended themselves behind the stone walls of the churches, which became veritable sanctuaries in the midst of a blazing, blood-streaming Kiev. The cathedrals and monasteries suffered as severely from the heathen pillagers as they had done at the hands of the Christians at the previous sacking of the city: “They stripped the Cathedral of S. Sofia, the Church of the Dime, and all the monasteries, monks and nuns, priests and their wives, old and cripple, they killed, but the young and strong they drove into captivity.”[33]

The death of Roman in battle with the Poles near Zawichwost (1205) left Red Russia once more a prey to domestic strife and foreign inroad.

On the 14th April 1212 came to an end the thirty-seven years' reign of Vsevolod, the last days of which were clouded by a quarrel with his eldest son and natural heir, Konstantin. The latter, whether from statesmanlike motives or mere grasping ambition, refused to cede to his brother Urii the patrimony of Rostov designed for him, in consequence of which Vsevolod bequeathed to the injured younger son the succession to the grand principality of Vladimir-Souzdal, which would otherwise have been the share of Konstantin. Vsevolod, overweighted by the Russian chroniclers with the title of "Great," shared in his youth the exile of his brothers on the accession of Andrei, and received his education amid Byzantine influences. In this connection it is interesting to note that the scheme of policy unfolded during his long reign bears some resemblance to that favoured by the Greek Emperors. Avoiding for the most part the employment of open force against Novgorod, he contrived, nevertheless, to be always to the fore in the affairs of the republic, in the aspect either of a bogey or a patron, in any case a factor to be reckoned with. Kiev he allowed to pass backwards and forwards from one hand to another, and in this way contributed to the decline of her importance and the consequent advancement of his own capital as the head-town of Russia. This pacific policy gave his Souzdalian subjects a measure of peace and tranquillity unknown to their brothers in the other provinces, but it permitted the dangerous aggrandisement of princes of lesser strength and more limited resources.

The Grand Prince's Greek upbringing and possible Greek sympathies may have influenced the Russian hierarchy in the decision they were called upon to make during his reign between adherence to or desertion of the distressed Church of Constantinople. For evil times had fallen upon the Orthodox communion; since the eastern and western Christians had solemnly and bitterly quarrelled over the merits of the respective formulas "proceeding from the Father by the Son," and "proceeding from the Father and the Son,"—the celebrated controversy of the *Filioque*,—the two Churches had drifted wider and wider apart, and the hatred existing between them found expression in the massacre of the Latin or Roman Catholic inhabitants of Constantinople in the year 1183, when young and old, sick and infirm of both sexes were indiscriminately slaughtered; when the head of the Pope's Legate, severed from its legitimate body and tied to the tail of a dog, went bumping and thudding along the public streets to the accompaniment of hymns of praise and thanksgiving. Now (in the year 1204) it was the turn of the Latins to revenge themselves on the stronghold and headquarters of the rival religion; the French and Venetian Crusaders, turning aside from the pious object of their expedition, the rescue of the "Holy Land" from the infidels, had carried Constantinople by assault, replaced the fugitive Greek Emperor by a Latin prince, and sacked the Tzargrad with systematic thoroughness. The furniture and adornments of S. Sophia and other sacred buildings became spoil for the western soldiery, and the Lion of S. Mark waved triumphantly over the scene of pillage and desecration. Then did the head of the Roman Church, the splendid Lotario Conti (Innocent III.), beneath whose despotic sway chafed and trembled most of the princes of Christendom, follow up the triumph of the Latin arms by an attempt to draw the heretic Church of Russia into the Catholic fold. In a pastoral letter to the prelates and clergy of the Orthodox faith he pointed out the temporal ruin which had overtaken the heads of the schismatic religion, and invited the Russian Christians to attach themselves to the glories and benefits of Rome. The appeal fell on hostile ears, and the next Metropolitan was consecrated at Nicæa, where the dispossessed Emperor had established his court.

In other quarters the zeal and activity of the Roman Church brought her into contact with Russian “spheres of influence,” to use a modern term.

1201

Albrecht, Bishop of the new Livlandish see of Riga, had instituted in that district the Order of the Warriors of Christ, or Sword Brethren, whose mission was to convert the pagan Livlanders by fire, and steel, and thong to the worship of Jesus, and teach them the lesson of peace on earth and goodwill towards men with which His name was associated. As the scope of their endeavours included a temporal as well as a spiritual ascendancy over the lands they were able to conquer, their arms soon clashed with those of Vladimir, Prince of Polotzk, who claimed the over-lordship of Livland. Reinforced by Danish warmen, sent to their assistance by King Waldemar at the instance of the Pope, the knights of the Order were able to hold their own against the Russian kniaz, and the Catholic Church scored another triumph in Europe to make up for her disappointments in Asia Minor.

Vsevolod left to his successors the heritage of a ready-made feud, in which the members of his family took different sides, some supporting Urii, who held Souzdal and Vladimir, others ranging themselves with Konstantin, who kept his grasp on Rostov. After a campaign in which neither side could obtain a decided advantage, the brothers agreed to divide the principality between them, Urii retaining the largest share, which included Vladimir, Souzdal, and Moskva. Another brother, Yaroslav, became in an unlucky hour the choice of the people of Novgorod. In course of time they quarrelled with him, as was their wont. Yaroslav shook the dust of the ungovernable city off his feet, and settled himself down at Torjhok to starve it into submission. Its imports of grain were systematically cut off, supplies of every kind were intercepted, and famine stalked through the streets of Novgorod. Want, in its most fearful form, the starvation of an entire populace, tamed the spirit of the proud citizens. Pine-bark and moss were chewed in place of the bread that could not be bought for money; the bodies of those who died of hunger lined the streets—the dogs at least were fed. What manner of man was this who sat gloating, vampire-like, over the misery of a province which he would neither govern nor renounce? Vainly embassies and petitions were sent by the stricken citizens, who tendered their submission and besought him to take up his rule over them; the spokesmen were cast into prison and the dearth continued. Then like a god from the blue appeared to the famishing and despairing Novgorodskie their erstwhile prince, Mstislav of Toropetz. The bitter cry of their extremity had reached him in Southern Russia and drawn him to their succour. After vainly attempting to bring Yaroslav to reason, Mstislav took up arms against him. The first-named prince could count on the support of Urii, but on the other hand Mstislav had engaged Konstantin on his side, so that the province of Souzdal was drawn, town against town, into this local quarrel. The armies of the two leagues, burning with resentment against each other, met on the plain of Lipetsk.

1216

After a desperate battle the troops of Rostov, Smolensk, and Novgorod scored a decisive victory and hewed down their scattering foes during an April afternoon with the fierce joy that a triumph in civil warfare inspires. Over 9000 of the vanquished are stated to have fallen in the fight and subsequent slaughter. Four days later the inhabitants of Vladimir, consisting for the most part of women, children, monks, and priests, and men too old to have marched to the war, saw in the gray distance a single horseman making with weary speed for the city—a

courier, they fondly imagined, sent to announce their Prince's victory. The Prince (Urii) himself rode in through the startled crowd, the forlorn herald of the disaster which had overwhelmed his army. The depleted province was in no plight to withstand the victors, and the Grand Principality was practically at the disposal of the upstart Kniaz of Toropetz. Konstantin, by his decree, became Prince of Vladimir-Souzdal, naming Urii, however, to succeed him at his death. Mstislav returned in triumph to Novgorod, where he was hailed with acclamations by the citizens, to whom he had been a friend in need. It was a bitter irony of circumstance that almost the only prince for whom they had had a lasting affection could not find it well to stay with them. Perhaps he was fearful of outstaying his welcome, or wished to secure for himself a more assured possession than the government of the fickle republic, and the foreign encroachments which disturbed Russia on her western marches attracted his adventure-loving spirit to play the rescuer in that direction. In Livland, Volquin von Winterstadt, Grand Master of the Sword Order, was ever seeking to push forward his military outposts; the Lit'uanians, harassed by Catholics on one side and Orthodox neighbours on the other, were drawing closer together in self-defence, and becoming more formidable to Polotzk and Pskov, while Red Russia was a prey to Hungarian domination and Polish interference. It was by invitation of the latter power, in the person of Duke Lesko, that Mstislav undertook to drive the Hungarians out of Galicia, and in consequence bade an affectionate farewell to the people of Novgorod, the tomb of his father, and the Cathedral of S. Sofia.

While foreign war flamed lurid in the west, a peaceable restoration had been witnessed in the north-east, where Urii, on the death of his brother Konstantin (1219), had come into possession of the Grand Principality. In the north-west, again, important happenings were forcing themselves disagreeably on the notice of the border princes. Many causes contributed to complicate the struggle for mastery which was beginning to be waged in the pagan-inhabited lands at the mouth of the western Dvina and along the "Baltic gull-sought strand." The institution of the Crusades and the erection of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem had aroused a spirit of religious and temporal colonisation and conquest, of which the seizure of Constantinople was a symptom, while on the other hand the comparative failure of the Asiatic expeditions and the recapture of Jerusalem by the Moslems had modified the crusading fervour and disinclined the champions of the Cross to seek adventures so far afield. Hence many Catholic princes and knights were glad to avail themselves of the Papal permission to divert their pious raids from the valley of the Jordan to the shores of the Baltic, a more convenient locality, where they might gain, in addition to their eternal salvation, welcome pieces of earthly territory. Danes, Swedes, the Sword Brothers, and later (in 1230) the Teutonic Order, fought indiscriminately with the native pagans, with the Russians, and with themselves for the advancement of the Catholic religion and of their own interests. Estland, Kourland, Livland, Lit'uania, and Prussia became happy hunting-grounds for these various adventurers and military companies, and the unfortunate inhabitants, confronted with an *embarras du richesse* in the way of spiritual guides, knew not which way to turn for safety. A Tchoud notable was hanged by the Danes for having received baptism from the Sword Order, and the Latin and Orthodox Christians systematically destroyed each other's churches and settlements whenever they had the opportunity. Of the knights of the two Orders, however, it may be said that the cruelties and oppressions with which they sought to harry the heathen into their particular fold were in some measure condoned by the splendid bravery and devotion which they displayed in carrying out their self-imposed task. Moreover, it was to these northern crusaders that the Baltic provinces owed many of their most important towns: Riga was the

creation of the Knights of Jesus; Thorn, Kulm, and Elbing marked the rise of the Teutonic Order; Revel sprang into existence under Danish auspices. It was during a combat in the neighbourhood of the latter town that the Danes received “from the clouds” the red flag blazoned with a white cross which has since remained their national standard—a mark of Divine favour which did not, however, cause the immediate withdrawal of their Christian competitors. The cruelties and dissensions of the invaders moved the inhabitants of Northern Livland to throw off the Catholic yoke and call the citizens of Novgorod to their assistance, propitiating them with a portion of the spoil they had wrested from the Germans and Skandinavians. Novgorod, by a curious revulsion of feeling, had, after a succession of princes of the house of Souzdal, elected the same Yaroslav who had treated her people with such heartless cruelty. Possibly, in the turn affairs were taking on their west, the Novgorodskie saw an opportunity for employing his malignant genius against their obnoxious enemies. But the warlike efforts of the men of Lake Ilmen and their Souzdalian prince were neutralised by the fact that the Germans, fighting behind the walls of their towns, were more skilled in the handling of the slings and stone-hurling engines, the rude artillery of the day; the old Russian proverb, “Who can resist God and Velikie Novgorod?” had to be modified in the face of such weapons of precision, and the Westerners remained masters of the greater part of the disputed territories.

Two hundred years of unending domestic strife, carving and shredding off into a crowd of incoherent provinces—Kiev, Tchernigov, Riazan, Souzdal, Smolensk, Polotzk, Novgorod, Pskov, Volhynia, Galitz, and others of less importance—had not fitted Russia to contend with the expanding powers of Catholic Christendom, or to show a solid front against the incursion of teeming Asiatic hordes on her east.

The Chronicles of Russian history at this period were wholly in the hands of the monks who wrote them around the deeds of the princes or of the luminaries of the Church; hence little can be gleaned from them of the social life and condition of the people, who existed therein solely for the purposes of supplying raw material for a massacre or a pestilence. The history of Novgorod is valuable as yielding occasional glimpses of the life-pulse that beat beneath the over-crust of court or cathedral annals, but this city was too impregnated with outside influences to furnish a faithful picture of the inward state of old-time Russia. Of the towns it may be broadly stated that they were yet little more in scope than walled villages; universities or seats of learning other than the monkish cloister there were none, and much of the trade was in the hands of foreign merchants. The wealthy boyarins had their houses and palaces clustered within the walls, and often possessed in addition other houses in the *sloboda*, or detached village, without, where there was more space available for gardens, etc. Freemen as well as slaves (the latter captured in war or bought) were in their service, but the abject poverty of the lower classes of freemen bound them in almost servile dependence on their masters. Even more grinding was the normal state of poverty in which the peasants eked out their livelihood, and the name *smerd* applied to them was one of contempt, something akin to our “rascallion.” For the most part the peasants tilled the soil for the landowners under a system which allowed them a half, or other fixed share, of the harvest produced, the freeman having this distinction from the *kholop* or bondman that he was able to move from one estate to another at will. Under these conditions of hand-to-mouth existence farm-craft remained at a very low ebb; with axe, scythe, and plough the peasant won precarious roothold for his crops, which might be blighted by an untimely frost-coming or damaged by a too-late thaw, leaving him to propitiate his appeal-court of saints by an involuntary emptiness of stomach. With

cattle-stock, horses, and horned beasts, the Russian lands, of the north especially, were ill-provided, and possibly this was partly the outcome of the unsettled state of the country, which discouraged the multiplication of movable property, even the heaviest church bells being now and again swept off in the wake of some pilfering kniaz-raid.[34]

CHAPTER IV THE COMING OF THE MONGOLS

As an advancing tide, engulfing in its progression the stretches of ooze-land which lie in its onward path, sends scurrying before it flights of waders and other shore-haunting birds, driven from their feeding grounds, so the great Mongol wave which was creeping upon Eastern Europe drove before it disordered troops of the Polovtzi nomads, seeking among their old enemies the safety which their desert fastnesses no longer afforded. Into the principality of Kiev poured the fugitives, bringing with them droves of horses, camels, cattle, and buffaloes—a wonderful and misgiving sight to the staring Russians, who saw their fierce, untamable foes, the incarnation to them of all that was barbarous, outlandish, and terrible, cowering and fleeing from some unseen horror behind. That the wolf of the steppes should come to lie down, panting and trembling, with the lamb, boded the advent of anything but a millennium. The accounts given by the Polovtzi khans of the Mongol hordes which had swept the tribes of Western Asia before their advancing host, roused the Russian princes to a sense of the danger they courted by their disunion, and gathered them together in the old capital to deliberate on a common action in opposition to the threatened invasion. Mstislav of Galitz, erstwhile of Toropetz, Mstislav Romanovitch (of the house of Smolensk), Prince of Kiev, Daniel of Volhynia, Mstislav of Tchernigov, and other princes of less importance, held high counsel between them, and debated the means of averting the Mongol advance; and as they paused in their deliberations to mark the unwonted caravans and uncouth brutes of the desert that thronged the streets and approaches of Kiev, it must have been borne in upon them that already Asia had overflowed her limits and swept the Russian lands into her embrace. And while, taking heart of grace from the assemblage of so many important princes and the leadership of the redoubtable Mstislav of Galitz, they consider how best to oppose these fearsome enemies, it will be of interest to learn something of the history of this Mongol horde, this mushroom growth that had over-spread the northern empire of China, made a desolate waste of Persia, carried its arms into Hindostan, and risen to be the greatest power in Asia, and which was now threatening to attack the outskirts of Christendom.

In the dreary steppe-land of the Gobi desert, south of the Baikal Sea, where flows the Onon, a tributary of the Amur, history first locates the Mongols, in the sixth century, under the name Mongu, possibly derived from the word “mong,” signifying bold, daring. At that period they are indicated as a sub-tribe of the Shi-wei, who dwelt to the north-west of Manchuria, and did not enjoy any considerable importance. This insignificance continued till the accession, in 1175, to the Mongol Khanate, of Temudjin, known later under the world-famous name of Jingis Khan, when the number of his subjects did not exceed 40,000 families. A series of successful wars with the tribes in his immediate neighbourhood paved the way for more ambitious undertakings, and he soon carried his victorious standard, the *Tuk* with nine yak tails, into the northern empire of China, which was ruled over by the Kin, or Tartar dynasty (South China being separately governed by the Sung dynasty). From this point Jingis carried on campaign after campaign with almost uniform success, till the greater part of Asia grovelled beneath his yoke. Pitilessly cruel, this “cormorant of conquest” marked each fresh advance, whether resisted or unopposed, with wholesale massacres, which, after allowing for Oriental exaggeration, swell to a ghastly total. “From 1211 to 1223, 18,470,000 human beings perished in China and Tangut alone at the hands of Jingis and his followers,”[35] a record which would have turned the early kings of Israel green with envy. The Mongolian policy was to scatter, ruin, and, if possible, exterminate existing civilisations and communities wherever their

victorious armies passed.[36] The terror which the Mongol cruelties inspired unnerved their opponents and disinclined nations with whom they were at peace from combining against them, while their hardy desert horses, light equipment, and powers of endurance enabled them to travel enormous distances in all conditions of weather. Powerful empires like those of China and Persia writhed beneath their yoke; lesser states, such as Great Bulgaria and Georgia, were almost wiped out of existence. The conquest of this latter country by a division of the Horde, under the leadership of Chepe and Subatai, two of the Mongol chiefs, was followed by an incursion into the land occupied by the Kumans, or Polovtzi, which brought the destroying hosts on to the verge of the Russian dominion. Southward the flying Kumans were pursued as far as the Krim peninsula, at which point the Mongols first came into contact with Western civilisation, burning Sudak, where the Genoese had a flourishing commercial station. Now were ten ambassadors sent to the alarmed Russian princes, assuring them that they had nothing to fear from the Horde, but warning them against showing any support to the Polovtzi. Fear and resentment made the princes forget the customs of civilisation, and the messengers were put to death, an inauspicious opening for the coming struggle. Having thus defied the gathering storm, the Russians crossed the Dniepr and marched to the banks of the Kalka, where they prepared to meet these new foes from the east, as they had aforetime met the Polovtzi and the Petchenigs before them. But even at this critical moment the princes were not in complete accord; each was jealous of the other, each fought for his own hand. Mstislav of Galitz thought he could win the fight with his own forces and the assistance of the Polovtzi, but the latter were unable to withstand the Mongol onset and broke in wild confusion. The Russians fought well, but they fought apart and without cohesion, and were only united in one overwhelming ruin. The battle of the Kalka, on the 31st May 1224, was a terrible catastrophe in Russian history, and fitly heralded a disastrous epoch in her annals. An army of over 80,000 men was scattered like chaff before the exulting Mongols, and to add to the horror of the flight the treacherous Polovtzi, on behalf of whom the Russians had entered into the quarrel, slew and plundered as they fled. From the fatal banks of the Kalka to those of the Dniepr raced the broken bands of Russians, the laggards falling beneath the lances and sabres of their grim pursuers. Six princes, many boyarins, and thousands of soldiers were numbered among the slain. The young Daniel Romanovitch of Volhynia escaped wounded from the woeful field, while Mstislav of Kiev with two other princes defended themselves for three days in a fortified camp on the bank of the Kalka. Deluded by a false promise of security, they at length fell into the power of the Mongols, who slaughtered the men and smothered the princes under planks, holding wild carousal over their swollen bodies—a scene which recalls the “night of Cannae’s raging field.” Southern Russia lay helpless at the pleasure of these merciless enemies, who ravaged unchecked in the villages and homesteads near the scene of their victory. Then they did a most unexpected thing; they went. Retiring through Great Bulgaria, they vanished as suddenly as they had come; of their arrival and departure might almost be said what was said of their attack on Bokhara: “They came, dug, burnt, killed, robbed, went.” The Russian lands awoke as from a nightmare to find their unwelcome guests had departed.

In the midst of their conquests the separate Mongol bands turned as if by common instinct back to their native haunts in the remote valley of the Onon, where they hunted and hawked after swans and cranes, antelopes and wild asses, in the odd moments when they were not engaged in hunting men. Then occurred that picturesque gathering which Howorth has so eloquently described, when the old Khan held his simple court surrounded by his family and chieftains, a little knot of desert nomads who between them had conquered half the known

world.

The Russians meanwhile, delivered from the desolating presence of the Mongol hosts, resumed the uneven tenor of their ways; the citizens of Novgorod continued to displace and re-elect their princes, archbishops, and posadniks; the boyarins of Galicia to plot and intrigue with Hungary, Poland, and the house of Romanovitch; the princes to quarrel over the eternal readjustment of their appanages. And here is a fit moment to review the unfolding spectacle of national development among the Russian Slavs since their focussing under the early princes, and examine the drift and purpose underlying the chronicle of their doings. Frankly the result is not edifying. It is an unpleasant accusation to hurl against a people, but in these early centuries of their history they may be aptly likened to the “gray apes” portrayed by Kipling’s magic pen,—always setting out to do some great thing, never quite remembering what it was they had meant to do, holding fast to a thing one moment, letting it go the next, restless and ambitious, without any clear idea of what they desired, such is the character that must reluctantly be given them. These blind devotions to the Princes of the Blood, these aimless rebellions against their authority, these fervid worshippings of Mother-of-God and saints, these impious plunderings of cathedrals and monasteries, these kissings and swearings on the cross, these shameless breaking of oaths, these holy wars against the Polovtzi, these frequent military and matrimonial alliances with them, these sacrifices to keep in touch with the Greek Empire and the south, this abandoning of the south lands to Turko nomads and Italian merchants, these internal complications, revolutions, banishments, recalls, leagues, and counter-leagues, shifting as the sands of a river-bed, what do they bring to mind but a family of children squabbling and loving and squabbling again in ever-varying combinations, or, nearer still, the former simile, the gray apes. Other countries and peoples were, it is true, going through the same period of anarchy and disorder, but there was at least some method in their madness. In Italy, amid the wild chaos of republics, principalities, and imperial cities, there can plainly be discerned in the as yet scarcely named factions of Guelph and Ghibelline the Papal power seeking to extend itself on the one hand, and the Imperial interest striving to establish itself on the other, and a third party playing off one against the other for the attainment of its own independence. In Germany, Emperor, electors, prince-bishops, free cities, and the other constituents of the commonweal are balanced one against the other in an intricate but perfectly understandable whole, each working to a definite and rational end. In France and England king and barons fight out the old battle of monarchy against aristocracy, which is to be merged one day in a conflict with a newer force—if anything is new under the sun. But where is the aim or interest in these minutely-recorded Russian struggles? Hidden away in the forests of Souzdal, perhaps, lies the embryo or germ of a state policy, if it ever be hatched into life. Meanwhile Russia is losing ground, literally and metaphorically, in many directions. Southward, as has been noticed, a broad zone of steppe, inhabited by Turko tribes, shuts her off from the coast cities of the Black Sea, where the pushing Genoese have ensconced their factories. Galicia, with its population of White Kroats, is becoming less Russian every day. Lit’uania, no longer held under by the neighbouring provinces, threatens to expand at their expense. The Baltic lands are drifting into Teutonic and Catholic hands. Velikie Novgorod herself, absorbed in the details of parochial administration, has let her magnificent foreign trade slip into the grip of strangers. For Novgorod was not, as Howorth imagines, “a famous member of the Hanseatic League”; the League, now beginning to play an important part in the annals of Northern Europe, merely had a factory and station there, as it had at London and Lisbon, and this factory speedily monopolised the oversea trade of the great Russian

emporium; “during three centuries the Hanseatic League concentrated in her own hands all the external commerce of Northern Russia.”[37] Finally, on the eastern marches hovered the shadow of the late incursion, an incursion which might at any moment be repeated.

While the war-clouds were lowering dark and ill-boding over the land, sank in the west that day-star of Russian chivalry, Mstislav Mstislavitch, more or less Prince of Galitz.

1228

Brave as a boar in battle, in council he was about as intelligent; “nothing is sadder than victory, except defeat,” and with him certainly a success was almost as expensive as a reverse could have been. His brilliant achievements gained no advantage for his family or for Russia, and on his death Andrew, son of the Hungarian king of that name, stepped into the vacant sovereignty. This border province, with its involved political conditions, had a magnetic attraction for the more adventurous spirits among the Russian princes, and a candidate was ready to hand to dispute its possession in the person of Daniel Romanovitch of Volhynia. Just such another knight-errant as Mstislav, Daniel possessed more of the ability to seize the contested throne than the address to establish himself firmly on it. The son of an imperious and overbearing father, he had many enemies. Vladimir Rurikovitch of Kiev, for instance, had not forgotten that Roman had made his father assume the tonsure against his inclinations, and in pursuance of this bequeathed quarrel formed a league against Daniel, which included the Princes of Tchernigov and Pinsk, and of course the Polovtzi. By detaching Kotian, the celebrated Polovtzi Khan, from this confederation, Daniel was able to gain a complete victory over his enemies. Scarcely was this accomplished than he whirled away, as his father had done, into the troubled affairs of Poland, where he supported Duke Konrad of Mazovia against the party opposed to his regency, his murdered brother, Duke Lesko V., having left his son and heir, Boleslas V., in his charge.

1229

Elate with the success which attended his arms in this direction, on his return he flung himself, with the hereditary eagle-swoop, on to the city of Galitz, which fell into his hands, together with the person of Prince Andrew. This advantage he threw away by permitting his valuable prisoner to retire to Hungary, whither had already fled Soudislav, one of the most active of the boyarins who favoured the Magyar dynasty. The reward of this clemency was a new attack on Galicia by the Hungarians, led by Prince Bela (afterwards Bela IV.) The elements were unpropitious; torrents and floods damaged and hindered the invading army, and contributed to its defeat, and the Hungarians recrossed the Karpathians in evil plight. The position of Daniel was, however, too precarious to withstand for long the resources of Hungary, the disaffection of his subjects, and the enmity of some of his brother princes. Foremost among the latter was his cousin and inveterate enemy, Aleksandr of Belz, who, having been implicated in a plot which miscarried, fled to Hungary and roused the king to a new attempt on this fair and coveted province. The boyarins, who saw themselves, doubtless, of more authority and importance as the courtiers of a foreign prince than under the personal rule of a vigorous Russian kniaz, deserted to the Hungarian standard, and the young Andrew became once more “King of Galicia.” His death in 1234 paved the way for the restoration of the Romanovitch, and the boyarins of the Magyar party had to seek safety beyond the mountains. Less concerned, however, in strengthening his hold upon this slippery fief than in carrying his arms into quarrels which did not concern him, Daniel rushed to the assistance of his late

enemy, Vladimir of Kiev, who was embroiled in a war with Mikhail of Tchernigov. Daniel ravaged the latter province, but disaster overtook him and Vladimir in the shape of a defeat by a Polovtzi army, led by Isiaslav, grandson of the immortalised Igor of Severski—a strange combination.

1236

Kiev and Galitz both fell into the hands of the victors, Mikhail establishing himself in the latter principality, while Isiaslav held Kiev. On the departure of the Polovtzi he was obliged to restore the city to Vladimir, who in turn ceded it to Yaroslav Vsevolodovitch, prince and sometime persecutor of the Novgorodskie; he, on leaving Novgorod, placed in his stead his son Aleksandr, afterwards celebrated as “Nevski.” Daniel flitted about the neighbouring lands like a restless ghost, seeking aid against the intruding Olgovitch, even in Hungary, where Bela had succeeded his father Andrew (1235), and where the exile could obtain nothing more than promises, which were scarcely likely to be fulfilled. Nor did he receive warmer support from Duke Konrad.

In the north-west things were in a somewhat chaotic condition; the year 1236 was marked by a disaster to the Sword Brethren, in which Volquin von Winterstadt and a large proportion of his knights lost their lives, having ventured rashly into the Lit’uanian country, where they were surrounded by the enemy and cut to pieces. The following year the Order was amalgamated with that of the Teutonic Knights, who had established themselves in Prussia under the Grand-Mastership of Herman von Salza. This province had been formally presented to them by the Emperor Frederick II., by the Duke of Mazovia, and by Pope Gregory IX., finally by Pope Innocent IV., notwithstanding which, the inhabitants of this much-bestowed country offered a vigorous resistance to their new masters.

Out of their fools’ paradise of fancied security on their eastern border the Russians were rudely aroused by the news that the Volga lands were being devastated by the Mongols, that Bolgar was in ashes, that the heads of the Tartar horses had been turned west, and that their hoofs were now scoring broad tracks through the forests towards Riazan.

1237

On before them journeyed an eerie harbinger of ill, a woman (described in the Chronicles as a sorceress), with two attendants, and bearing a demand from Batu, the Mongol Khan, for a tenth part of the princes’ treasures.

Batu, nephew of Ogotai Khan, who had ruled the Horde since the death of his father Jingis (1227), may well have been astonished at his own moderation, since he was followed by an army estimated at 300,000 men. But the Princes of Riazan and Mourom refused his demand with a defiance of the true heroic ring: “When we are dead you can have it all.” “Just as it afterwards happened,” as the old Saxon Chronicles used to say. No aid was forthcoming from the Grand Prince Urii in response to the urgent appeals from Riazan, and the devoted principality received the full shock of the Mongol attack. The town was taken by assault after six days’ incessant fighting round the walls, and a “blood bath,” to use an appropriate German expression, ensued in the streets, houses, and churches. The Prince of Riazan and many of his family perished in the general slaughter. This was in the month of December, but, undeterred by the snow which choked the forest roads and filled the valleys, Batu turned north towards Souzdal, leaving behind him a banquet of frozen corpses for the wolves and foxes,

ravens and vultures. Moskva, Tver, Souzdal, and Vladimir fell one by one into the power of the Mongols and experienced their cruel fury.

Feb. 1238

In the latter city perished Vsevolod and Mstislav, sons of Urii, who had retreated to the banks of the Sit, where he turned to bay against the ravagers of his province. Here, on the 3rd March, was fought a battle big with importance for Russia, the West fighting against the East, the forest-lands against the steppe, Christianity against Shamanism. Urii had deferred the decisive moment too long, and paid with his life the penalty of his mistake; his disheartened soldiers broke before the overwhelming numbers of the Mongols, and left them undisputed masters of the Grand Principality. The East had won. Not for many a long century, if ever, would Russia shake off the Oriental influences which the Mongol victory imposed upon her. From her history the shadow of the Horde, one is tempted to forebode, in the words of Poe, “shall be lifted nevermore.”

The Bishop of Rostov, haunting the scene of desolation, found the headless body of the Grand Prince, and conveyed it to the church of the Virgin at that town, where it was afterwards joined by its recovered head and interred, together with the corpse of Vassilko Konstantinovitch, who also fell on that fatal field. The triumphant Mongol host marched towards Novgorod, but turned aside on seeing the fastnesses of swamp and lakelet with which that town was girdled, and to which it owed its safety. Less fortunate were Volok-Lamskie, Torjhok, and Kozelsk, which drooped one by one before the blight of conquest and devastation. To the latter town, which resisted the enemy for two months and slew of them four thousand, the Mongols gave the name of “the evil city.” Vasili, its defending kniaz, fighting to the last, was said to have been drowned in blood—an end worthy of the war-lusting vikings of the twilight past.

Careful not to leave a foe behind him, Batu withdrew his forces to the basin of the Don, to hunt out the Kumans once more from their hiding-places, and to rest his warriors and their horses in the steppe-lands to which they were accustomed. Yaroslav seized this opportunity to hasten from Kiev to the evacuated Souzdalian province, of which desolated region he was now sovereign. To him fell the task of restoring order to a distracted country and courage to an affrighted people. Despite the terror which loomed in the deserts near the Don, he was able to give his attention to the succour of Smolensk, over-run by the Lit’uanians, whom he brilliantly defeated. In the south, far from making common cause against the national enemy, or seeking to revenge the cruelties which had been meted out to so many of the Russian cities and towns, the Romanovitch and Olgovitch princes renewed their private feuds and fief-grabbings. Mikhail of Tchernigov and Galitz left the latter province in the keeping of his son Rostislav, while he seized on Kiev, vacated by the new Prince of Souzdal-Vladimir. While Rostislav and his boyarins were absent on an expedition against the Lit’uanians, the ever-imminent Daniel made the inevitable eagle-pounce on Galitz, and despite the opposition of its bishop, was received with acclamation by the people, who buzzed around him, in the words of the Chronicle, “as bees swarm about their queen.”

Meanwhile, in the deserts of Astrakhan, Kotian, the old Polovtzi Khan, had been defeated by the Mongols, and fled, he and his, along the wild steppe country till he came to the Karpathian range and sought refuge in the Hungarian kingdom. Russia no longer offered a safe retreat. Swiftly and remorselessly the death-dealing Horde bore down on the middle provinces, and throughout the length and breadth of the land bishops and priests and people knelt in

agonised supplication to their all-powerful God to deliver them from their savage enemies. From cathedral, church, and roadside shrine wails the pitiful litany, “Save us from the infidels!” Candles burn and incense swings, and anguish-stricken hearts yearn out their prayer, “Save us from the infidels!” Call Him louder. Perchance He sleepeth.

Tchernigov and Péréyaslavl experienced the common fate, the general ruin; town and country alike suffered the affliction of fire and sword and rapine. Shuddering villagers, lying awake around their flickering hearths at night, would hear the uneasy barking of their watch-dogs, scenting or seeing something not yet palpable to human senses; and later the house-pigeons would fly far and wildly over a landscape lit up by a glow that was not the dawn.

After a short respite, while the destroyers had turned aside again to the deserts of the Don, Central Russia once more became the scene of their ravaging. It was now the turn of Kiev to become the miserable victim of their attentions. Around the mother of Russian cities (a very Niobe under present circumstances), the sacred site of the tombs and relics of the grand old princes, the resting-place of “all the glories,” gathered a host that blackened the face of the country for miles round. Batu himself, Mengu and Kujuk, sons of Ogatai (the Grand Khan), and five other princes of the family of Jingis, came to help the city on the Dniepr to its doom. Mikhail of Tchernigov fled to Hungary on the approach of the enemy, and even the daring Daniel Romanovitch preferred not to shut himself up like a trapped rat in Kiev or Galitz, and sought refuge with King Bela, leaving, however, in the former town his voevoda Dimitri to direct the defence. Happy had it been for the inhabitants had they all fled from the death-trap. Within the walls men could scarce hear themselves speak for the floating din of creaking carts, bellowing oxen, groaning camels, neighing and stamping horses, and yelling Mongols which resounded on all sides.

1240

Against the Polish gate day and night the battering-rams crashed and splintered, till a breach was effected by which the besiegers entered. S. Sofia had become the last refuge of the defenders, but the roof, crowded with fugitives, gave way beneath the pressure, and forestalled the vengeance of the Mongols. Men, women, and infants, houses, churches, tombs, and shrines became a prey to the children of the desert, a vast hecatomb to grace the funeral pyre of the old Russia. The famous monastery of Petcherski, where the monk Nestor wrote his Chronicle, shared the general destruction, and from amid its crashing ruins the pagans seized the massive gold cross which had adorned its cupola.

From this victory the Horde pressed on through Volhynia and Galicia; Vladimir, Galitz, and other Red Russian towns fell beneath their attack, and then the conquering host branched off into two divisions; one, under the command of Batu, invaded Hungary; the other, led by Baidar and Kaidu (sons of Jagatai), carried desolation into the Polish provinces. The storm, sack, and burning of Lublin, Zawikhost, Sendomir, and Krakow, and the ravaging of the province of Breslau led up to the pitched battle of Liegnitz, where the might of Poland measured itself in desperate struggle with the Mongol wave. On the Christian side stood Duke Henry II. of Silesia; Boleslav, son of the Markgraf of Moravia; Miecislav, Duke of Ratibor; and Poppon d’Osterna, Provincial Master (in Prussia) of the Teutonic Order. Outnumbered by the Mongols, the Poles fought valiantly and with effect, till at last their spirit failed them; the great Tuk banner, lurid with flaring naphtha, and decorated with two gleaming sheep bones, transversely crossed, seemed to reproduce, amid unholy goblin flames, their own mystic symbol. The

powers of darkness and the seething masses of human foes were too formidable a combination to fight against, and the chivalry of Poland broke and fled. Duke Henry on that awful night fought savagely as he fled, but was torn down at length by his untiring pursuers. Many a count and palatine shared his fate; from every corpse the savage victors cut an ear, and nine sacks full were sent to the Grand Khan, together with the head of Duke Henry, as a record of the slain.[38] In tracing the Mongol march of devastation through Silesia, Moravia, and Transylvania into Hungary, it is only necessary to observe that wholesale slaughter, destruction, and sweeping victory continued to characterise the advance of the Horde.[39] In Hungary men had awaited with cold and anxious hearts the onfall of the Mongols. Had they not heard with sorrow and foreboding at Christmas-tide last year the doleful intelligence of the fall of Kiev? And the wild stories of each fresh batch of fugitives—Kumans, Russians, Poles, Silesians—increased the terror of the Mongol name and brought their armies nearer. The King rallied his nobles round him (none too well-affected though they were) in a determined effort to stem this swarthy torrent that threatened to submerge the country. The prelates of the realm, good old fighting churchmen as they were, led their vassals in person to the fight. On the field of Mohi (name strangely like that of the other fatal battle in their history), on the banks of the Sajó, the cross of S. Stefan went down before the yak-tailed Tuk, and the nomad warriors triumphed over the Magyar chivalry. Hemmed in on all sides, the Hungarians were powerless; “it was not a battle, but a butchery.”[40] Bela fled to the Karpathians, thence to Austria; his brother Kalman reached Kroatia, where he died of his wounds. Among the slain were the Archbishops Mathias of Gran and Ugolin of Kalocza, the Bishops of Raab, Neutra, and Siebenbürgen, and counts and nobles galore, the flower of Hungarian aristocracy. Surely not to be reckoned as “the weak and the false,” “the fool and the knave.” Bela, betrayed by the Duke of Austria and hunted from one refuge to another by the remorseless enemy, took ship from the Dalmatian coast and left his kingdom in the hands of Batu. Southern Hungary, Servia, Dalmatia, and parts of Bulgaria were ravaged by detachments of the Horde, but south of Albania and west of Austria they do not appear to have penetrated. The news of the death of the Grand Khan Ogatai, and possibly the increasing difficulty of supporting so large a body of men in a devastated country, determined Batu to withdraw his hosts from the scene of their conquests, and the Mongol swarms melted away from the erstwhile fertile lands which they had turned into a howling wilderness. Bela returned to take possession of his stricken kingdom, confronted on all sides by evidences of the great calamity; “the highways were grown with grass, the fields were white with bones, and here and there for more than a day’s journey round, no living soul.”[41] In distant corners of Europe men shuddered at the tales that were told of these fearsome sons of the desert; in marvel-loving Constantinople it was gravely averred that they had the heads of dogs and fed upon human flesh, and the dread of their coming kept the fishermen of Sweden and Friesland from attending the herring-market on the English coast, thereby demoralising prices.[42]

CHAPTER V “THE YEARS THAT THE LOCUST HATH EATEN”

While the Golden Horde was dealing out death and destruction in the neighbouring western kingdoms, Russia was exerting her powers of recuperation to regain some of the life that had been crushed out of her. Like unscathed pheasants stealing back one by one to the coverts from which the beaters had sent them whirring forth, the fugitive princes returned to the wrecks of their provinces. Daniel re-established himself at Galitz, Mikhail at Kiev; Tchernigov was still infested by roving bodies of Mongols. Meanwhile the Novgorodskie, in their own little world in the North, pursued as usual a political existence isolated from that of Central and Eastern Russia. On the top of their quarrels with the German knights they became involved in a question of frontier lands with the crown of Sweden. Under the command of the Skandinavian Prince Birger, an army of Swedes, Norwegians, and Finns disembarked at the mouth of the Ijhora, an affluent of the Neva, and threatened an attack upon Ladoga.

1240

Aleksandr Yaroslavitch, the young Prince of Novgorod, gathering together the few men at his disposal, flung himself on the Swedish camp and gained a brilliant victory, wounding Birger himself in the face with his lance. In honour of which battle he ever after bore the added name of Nevski (“of the Neva”).

While the young Yaroslavitch waged brilliant, if not particularly fruitful, campaigns against German and Lit’uanian enemies, matters were settling down in gloomy mould in the other Russian provinces. The great Mongol inundation, which had submerged the Palearctic region (no less comprehensive definition is adequate), from the basin of the Amur to the Dalmatian sea-board, had receded so far as to leave the Polish, Hungarian, and Bulgarian lands high and dry, though strewn with the wreckage of its violence. But here the shrinkage stopped. The conqueror Batu halted his retiring hordes in the steppe-land of the lower Volga, on the left bank of which river he established his camp-city, Sarai. From here he was able to maintain the ascendancy which his arms had won him over the Russian princes, and to guard the supremacy of the great Mongol Empire in the western portions of its extensive territory. And now comes perhaps the saddest period of Russian history—certainly the meanest. The locust-plague that had swept through the land had blighted the fair promise of its growth; Russia was no longer free, and her princes ruled, not by the grace of God, but by favour of the Grand Khan, Kuyuk, last heard of before the crumbling walls of Kiev. To the peasantry, perhaps, it mattered little in whose name they were taxed or pillaged, whether they beat the forehead to Russian kniaz or Mongol khan; but to the Princes of the Blood, proud of their heirship of the throne of Rurik, treasuring their religion as a personal glory-reflecting possession, jealous of their standing with the royal houses of Europe, it was a terrible and bitter humiliation to have to own allegiance to this desert chief, this Asiatic barbarian, as he must have been in their eyes, this pagan sun-worshipper, who derived his authority neither from the keys of S. Peter nor from the sceptre of the Cæsars. Yet, so adaptable to altered circumstances is nature, that even this galling yoke ceased after a while to deaden the political energies of its wearers, which found vent, unhappily, not in struggles towards emancipation, but in a renewal of the old miserable squabbles between prince and prince. In this internal strife the power of the Khan was even invoked to overwhelm an opponent, a state of things which, however degrading it may appear, is not unique in the history of peoples, and proud peoples moreover. The Jewish factions in the days of Josephus, groaning under the abhorred dominion of Rome, expended

their energies in fighting each other with any weapon that came to hand, including the Gentile-wielded authority, and in this same thirteenth century the Scottish nobles did not scruple to turn the English suzerainty to account in their party schemes and feuds.

1244

The first to tender his submission at the Court of the Mongol chief was Yaroslav, Grand Prince of Souzdal, whom Batu confirmed in his principality and added thereto that of Kiev. Two years later, however, Yaroslav was required to present himself at the headquarters of the Grand Khan, in the Amur valley, where he bowed the knee before his Mongol master and obtained permission to return to his province, dying, however, before the weary homeward journey was accomplished. Mikhail of Tchernigov, forced to undertake the same humiliating pilgrimage, died at the hands of the Mongol priests, a martyr to his religion. His son Rostislav, a voluntary exile in Hungary, became Ban of Sclavonia and of Makhov in Bosnia.[43] Daniel of Galitz, farthest removed from the power of the Khan, was one of the last to surrender his independence and journey across Russia to the tent of Batu, who received him with more consideration than had been shown to the other princes. Little indeed might such humouring avail to gild the bitter pill, that the proud Romanovitch, whose favour had been sought by princes and Pope, should go forth from the Mongol presence wearing the title, “Servant of the Grand Khan.” The enormous fighting-strength at the disposal of the conquerors, the rapidity with which it could be put in motion, and the terror inspired by a long succession of victories and attendant cruelties, helped to uphold their authority as it had contributed to the ease of their conquests. “In Asia and Eastern Europe scarcely a dog might bark without Mongol leave, from the borders of Poland and the coast of Cilicia to the Amur and the Yellow Sea.”[44] Even the hero of the battle of the Neva found it expedient to toil through some thousand miles of desert to the habitation of the Grand Khan, and pay the same distasteful homage to the great barbarian. In his absence important events were happening at Souzdal.

1248

His uncle, Sviatoslav, who had succeeded to the Grand Principality on the death of Yaroslav, was chased out of this dignity by Mikhail, Aleksandr’s younger brother. The same winter Mikhail lost his life in battle with the Lit’uanians. His place was filled by Andrei, another brother, who had just returned with Aleksandr from the eastern pilgrimage. While the greater part of Russia was passing into the hands of the Souzdal family, Daniel was leaning more and more towards Western Europe and dallying openly with the Pope. No stone was left unturned by the strenuous Pontiff (Innocent IV.) to tempt the Galician Prince into the Roman communion, and Daniel certainly nibbled at the bait. Russia had become a province of Tartary; Constantinople no longer harboured the Orthodox faith; only in Catholic Europe did the worship of Jesus and the glory of princes go hand in hand. Hence it is not to be wondered at that a Russian prince should lose heart in the faith of his fathers, and seek for support against the Mongols in an alliance with the Holy See and neighbouring Catholic powers. In 1254 matters had so far progressed in this direction that, after much beating about the bush on both sides, the Abbot of Messina, in the capacity of Papal Legate, placed on Daniel’s head a royal crown and hailed him King of Galicia. Innocent followed this up by an appeal to the sovereign Princes of Bohemia, Poland, etc., to unite with Daniel in a crusade against the Mongols; but Catholic Christendom was at that moment too divided against itself, in the strife of the Papacy with the Hohenstaufen emperors, to show a united front to any enemy. The Russian Prince, who had

not definitely committed himself to a change of creed, saw that he was not likely to obtain any substantial support from the western princes, and broke off relations with Rome.[45] In the north Aleksandr was seeking to conserve his power and that of his family by a different policy—by cultivating a good understanding, namely, with the rulers of the Horde. Had he chosen the more heroic line of resistance, and sacrificed his religious scruples to the Latin Pope rather than to the Mongol Khan, he might, with the alliance of the Swedes and Teutons, have defied the armies of the desert from behind the swampy forests which girdled Novgorod. This would have meant, however, abandoning Kiev and Souzdal as well as the Orthodox faith, possessions which he was able to retain by acquiescing in the Mongol supremacy.

(1252)

His less subservient, or less tactful brother, Andrei, had found it necessary to depart hurriedly from the Grand Principality, before the advent of the Horde's agents, sent to punish him for insubordination to the Grand Khan; Aleksandr, by a friendly visit to Sardak (son of Batu), obtained the reversion of the escheated fiefs, and thereby sealed his obligation to his Tartar masters.[46] Five years later he had to acquiesce in another humiliation, the numbering and taxing of his provinces by the agents of the new Khan Berke. This was followed in due course by a command that Novgorod should submit to the same operation, and Aleksandr, who had defended that city against all comers, had now to undertake the unpleasant task of reconciling the citizens to this indignity. Velikie Novgorod hummed like a hive at the shameful proposal. Alone of all the Russian lands she had kept her liberty; she had checked the encroachments of Sweden and the missionary efforts of the German military Orders; had kept the House of Souzdal on its good behaviour, and dismissed princes, posadniks, and archbishops with a prodigality of independence; and now, at the hands of her well-beloved Nevski, this hateful thing was thrust upon her. No wonder the "proud city of the waters" throbbed with indignation, and the great bell of Yaroslav echoed the popular tumult.

1259

But the insistence of the Khan, coupled with the Grand Prince's influence, wore down the noisy opposition, and the Novgorodskie, spent with fury, admitted the Mongol assessors into their houses, and became the tributaries of the Golden Horde.

While Aleksandr had been employed in linking the northern province on to the Mongol chain, Daniel had been making tentative experiments in the direction of freedom, which brought a considerable detachment of the Horde galloping into his territory. The Galician Prince averted the storm by a hasty submission, and had the satisfaction of seeing the monster he had called up vent its fury on his doubtful allies, the Lit'uanians.

(1258)

But the conquest of a people who had no towns worth speaking of, and who were adepts in the art of eluding pursuit, did not exhaust the Mongol craving for loot and slaughter, and the following year found them still on the war-path, this time in Polish territory. "From Lublin they circled round to Zavikhvost, passed across the Vistula, captured Sendomir and the town of Listz."[47] Then, having given Daniel an object-lesson in obedience, the Horde melted away into the steppe—and the Lit'uanians issued anew from their fastnesses and renewed their border warfare in the surrounding lands. The attack of the Mongols adds another item to the long list of enemies against whom these irrepressible people had to battle for their liberty and their

existence. Livlandish knights, the citizens of Pskov and Novgorod, the Princes of Polotzk, Souzdal, and Galitz, the palatines of Mazovia, and now the nomads of the desert, battered and smote perseveringly upon this pre-eminently “buffer State,” whose security lay partly in the nature of its physical conformation, partly in the disunion of its enemies. In the fierce struggle for life and growth which was going on in this corner of Europe the result would necessarily be a survival of the fittest, and which that fittest was (under the conditions then obtaining) a glance at a graduated political map of the region will demonstrate.[48] The very stress of external attack which bore upon them from all sides, drove the Lit’uanians into closer fusion and welded them together under the leadership of a single chief. In the person of Mindovg appears the first historically reliable Duke of Lit’uania, and under his auspices spring up the towns, or strongholds, of Kernov and Grodno. A few years later his nephew Tovtivl is installed, whether by conquest or election is not clear, in the neighbouring Russian kniazdom of Polotzk. In 1262 occurs the first recorded aggressive alliance between the Russians and Lit’uanians; during one of Aleksandr Nevski’s frequent pilgrimages to the Mongol headquarters, his son Dimitri and his brother Yaroslav (Prince of Tver), in conjunction with Mindovg and Tovtivl, banded their forces together in an attack on Uriev, called by the Germans Dorpat. This town, which had long been a bone of contention between the Knights of Jesus and the north Russian princes, and had experienced more than once the fate of a border burg, suffered considerably on this occasion, and its blazing outworks lit home the booty-laden raiders—roused also to vengeance, according to some accounts, the Landmaster Werner von Breithausen, who led his knights, burning and plundering, into Russian land till failing strength constrained him to return homewards.[49]

The return of Aleksandr from Sarai, where he had for several months been the guest—or prisoner—of the Khan, was soon followed by his death, in November 1263—an event which, according to some of the older Russian historians, was universally wept and deplored by his bereaved subjects. The people of Novgorod, with whom he should have been especially popular, seem to have successfully dissembled their grief, and marked their attachment to his memory by expelling his son Dimitri, killing Mikhail Stefanovitch, the posadnik of his choosing, and electing to that office Mikhail Thedorovitch, a boyarin opposed to the late Prince’s interests.

1264

Having thus thoroughly broken “off with the old love,” they dispatched their new posadnik and a deputation of citizens to offer their allegiance to Yaroslav, who had succeeded, with the consent of the Khan, to the grand princedom; Andrei, who lay under the displeasure of the Horde, having further disqualified himself by dying a few months after his brother. The terms of the deed by which Yaroslav was invited to assume the sovereignty of Novgorod are interesting as throwing valuable light on the position occupied by the city at that period. The Prince was to swear by the cross to govern Novgorod “conformably to her ancient laws”; to content himself with presents from the country districts and dependencies, in place of levying tribute; to govern them only by Novgorodian magistrates, chosen with the assent of the posadnik; he was only permitted to visit the vassal town of Staraia Rousa in the autumn, while Ladoga was out of bounds for himself or any member of his household, except his fisherman and brewer; his judicial and domestic officials were to pay “with money” for the use of horses on their travels, but the military couriers were permitted to impress what they wanted in this respect for their service; on the other hand, it was engaged that Novgorodian merchants journeying in the

Grand Principality were to pay “two squirrel-skins for boat, cart, and measure of flax or hops.” “In consequence, and for guarantee that you execute these conditions, kiss you the holy cross in presence of the ambassadors of Novgorod: on that, Prince, we salute you.”

1265

This document, which was made out in the name of the Archbishop, posadnik, boyarins, and people of Novgorod, “from the oldest to the youngest” (a Russian equivalent for high and low, or great and small), was subscribed to by Yaroslav, who thereon became Prince of Novgorod. Among other things to be gleaned from this covenant is the fact that the Prince was supposed to be supported “by voluntary contributions”; that minute fiscal and domestic regulations (similar in nature to those existing in some of the Swiss cantons in the Middle Ages) were enforced in the lands of the republic and in relation with other Russian provinces; and that fur-pelts had not yet been wholly displaced, as a medium of payment, by the circulation of money. The petty and irritating nature of some of these restrictions may have been the effect, rather than the cause, of the long series of quarrels between princes and citizens, but they could hardly fail to produce friction under the most favourable circumstances. Yaroslav soon had proof of the independent dispositions of his northern subjects, who peremptorily thwarted his design for a campaign against the sister republic of Pskov, which had elected a Lit’uanian chief as its ruler without consulting the Grand Prince. The latter soon after returned to the more congenial atmosphere of Vladimir, leaving as his representative his nephew, Urii Andreievitch. Relieved of the presence of the Velikie-kniaz, the Novgorodskie, allied with Dovmont, the aforesaid Prince of Pskov, marched with an army 30,000 strong, furnished with battering-rams and other siege engines, into the charmed region of the Baltic provinces, where German knights, the Archbishops of Riga, Danes, Swedes, Lit’uanians, and Russians disputed over and over again, with never-flagging zest, every corner of that most debatable land. The objective of the Russ-Lit’uanian army (with which marched Dimitri, the whilom Prince of Novgorod), was the Dane-held town of Rakovor (Wesenberg), in Estland; as they approached the town, however, the Russians found themselves confronted by a strong force of “the gentlemen of God” (as they magnanimously, or satirically, styled the Teutonic knights), under the command of their Landmaster, von Rodenstein—the last people they were anxious to meet. The dark winter day (18th February 1268) was all too short to decide the furious combat which ensued, and many a noted leader, many a thousand men-at-arms, fell on either side without the issue being settled one way or the other. The Novgorodskie lost their posadnik and the tisyaszhnik[50] Kodrat, while on the other side Alexander, Bishop of Dorpat, was among the slain. Better armed and better disciplined, it is probable that the knights of the Order inflicted the heavier loss on their opponents, and the Russians had to abandon their projected attack on Rakovor. The spring of the next year brought von Rodenstein and his pied-mantled warriors into the territory of Pskov, where they burnt Izborsk, the old pre-Rurikian town on the Lake Peipus, and stormed Pskov itself. Its Lit’uanian Prince was a match for the Teutons, and for ten days steel and iron and stone clashed and hurtled round the tottering ramparts. Dovmont himself wounded the Landmaster, and held the enemy at bay till the bear-blazoned standard of Velikie Novgorod waved in the distance and warned the knights to retire beyond the border. The Order, however, by a treaty with the powerful Hanse city of Lubeck, was able to strike Novgorod in a more vulnerable spot than the shores of Lake Peipus, and a combination directed against her shipping caused her to conclude a peace with her German neighbours.[51]

This war, in which both sides had lost heavily in men, while neither had gained any distinct

advantage, had been sustained by Novgorod without the assistance and without the sanction of the Grand Prince, and now that it had come to a lame conclusion mutual recriminations were indulged in by the citizens and by Yaroslav.

1270

The sins of the father were visited on the child, so to speak, and Urii, like so many of his forerunners, was “shown the way” out of the city, and the old quarrel between the Princes of Souzdal and the great republic broke out anew. In all the misery and humiliation of their subject position the Russians clung to the luxury of their private feuds, as a fate-cursed man takes to a soothing narcotic. Yaroslav even rose to the brilliantly despicable idea of turning the national misfortune to account by employing the Mongol hordes to bear upon the defensive array of the turbulent city. A boyarin sent by him to Sarai depicted the attitude of the citizens as one of revolt against the Grand Prince and the authority of the Horde, and invoked the aid of the Khan to quench this dangerous disaffection. Fortunately for the men of Novgorod they had a friend at court in the person of Vasili, the Grand Prince’s youngest brother, who stated their side of the case and obtained the recall of the punitive force which had been dispatched against them.[52] The credit of restoring good relations between the proud republic and the irritated Prince rests with the Metropolitan Kirill, who was ever ready to exert the influence of his office in the interests of peace.

While these events had been passing in the north, Daniel Romanovitch had quietly slipped out of existence, the date of his death being vaguely fixed “between 1264-1266.”[53] Taking into consideration the very open question which the possession of his province had been when he first enforced his claims upon it, the scant notice which his death attracted was rather a compliment to his statecraft. “King of Galitz,” where his forerunners had been simply princes, he was probably the only sovereign in Europe who had outwitted Innocent IV., and swallowed unconcernedly the bait which was to have lured him into the Catholic fold. Of his four sons, Roman (who had been successively dazzled, utilised, and disillusioned by Bela IV. in the expectation of the reversion of the contested Austrian lands) had died before him, and the remaining three—Lev, Mstislav, and Shvarn—were established at Pérémysl, Loutzk, and Galitz respectively, while their uncle Vassilko reigned at Vladimir. The influence of the latter, who had loyally supported his brother in all his vicissitudes, prevented the province from falling to pieces, and an unlooked-for event gave Galicia new importance. Voeshelk, son of Mindovg, who had succeeded to a reduced share of his father’s dominions and authority, had adopted the Christian religion, and displayed from time to time the uncomfortable zeal of a convert; already he had tasted the sweets of monastic retirement, and after the short interval of a rule which was not remarkable for over much mercy towards his subjects, he wished again for the solitude of the cloister. It was necessary to appoint a successor, and as a Christian prince was preferred in that capacity, his choice fell upon Shvarn Danielovitch, who possessed the further recommendation of having married the Lit’uanian chief’s daughter. Thus Galitz and the greater part of Lit’uania became united under one ruler, and it seemed possible that in this direction was to be looked for the building up of a Russian monarchy—a development from the West rather than from the East. The union of the States, however, was followed by a dark and ill-omened deed, when the Prince of Pérémysl, incensed by the preference shown to his youngest brother, murdered the monk-prince Voeshelk after a banquet in the city of Vladimir. The sudden death of Shvarn (1270) ended the union so inauspiciously inaugurated; Lev succeeded to the fief of Galitz, and Lit’uania was wrested from Russia and Christianity by the

heathen Prince Troiden.

1272

Two years after this event died Yaroslav-Yaroslavitch, Grand Prince of Souzdal-Vladimir and Prince of Novgorod. In the former province he was succeeded peaceably by his brother Vasili; at Novgorod, naturally, affairs did not pass off so smoothly. Dimitri Aleksandrovitch was chosen by the posadnik and many of the citizens in opposition to Vasili, and another contest between Novgorod and Souzdal seemed imminent. The peace party in the former province averted the threatened rupture by out-voting the adherents of Dimitri, and Novgorod was once more united with the Grand Principality. It is interesting to note that the rulers of the republic were being chosen more and more exclusively from the reigning family of Souzdal-Vladimir, and here may be seen for the first time since the death of Vladimir the Holy a reliable hint of the germ-growth of “all the Russias.” With Pskov and Polotzk in Lit’uanian hands, Kiev and the steppes little more than Mongol outposts, and Tchernigov enjoying but a shadow of its former importance, Novgorod, Souzdal, and Galitz between them make up very nearly the total of the Russian-ruled lands; and of these three provinces the two largest have settled down under one family. Like the acorn-seed, Russia had to decay and shrivel to a certain extent before she could begin to grow; but the process of decomposition and denudation was not yet arrested.

Again did the Russian Princes of Galicia, Volhynia, and Smolensk call in the aid of the Mongols—this time against the Lit’uanians, who were becoming more and more uncomfortable neighbours. In two campaigns the latter held their own against the combined Tartar-Russian attack, and the idolaters of Grodno and Novgorodek successfully resisted the forces of Christianity and Islam—to which latter creed the Mongols had a few years previously been converted.

In 1276 Vasili Yaroslavitch was gathered to his fathers, and Dimitri came in, as peacefully as the proverbial lamb, to the possession of the Grand Principality and of Velikie Novgorod. Not long had he been on the throne ere the wildest anarchy broke out in his dominions; scarcely had the inevitable quarrel with Novgorod been smoothed over than civil war desolated the grand province. Andrei Aleksandrovitch, kniaz of the appanage of Gorodetz on the Volga, was brother to Dimitri—by the accident of birth a younger brother; an accident which he proposed to correct with the assistance of the Horde. In league with these formidable warriors and with his uncles Thedor and Mikhail, Andrei let slip the dogs of war on the unhappy province, and drove Dimitri from the field. After the Mongols had worked their will on the wretched inhabitants, and established Andrei as Grand Prince of a ravaged and depopulated territory, they retired with their booty and captives and left the two princes to fight out their own quarrels.

1283

Andrei soon had to call them in again, and Dimitri, not to be outdone, played Mongol against Mongol, and secured the support of Nogai, the almost independent Khan of the Oukrain steppes. The people, as usual, suffered heavily at the hands of the nomad squadrons: the “Scourge of God” has a way of falling on the most innocent shoulders. The condition of the Russian peasant and tiller of the soil was at this time deplorable. Debarred from exercising his labour on the fertile, but robber-haunted lands of the south, he was obliged to struggle patiently with the mighty forces of the northern forests, like the Indian ryot fighting against the

encroachments of the jungle; only in place of elephant, boar, and sambur, which ruin from time to time the fruits of the latter's toil, the former had periodically to bewail the devastations of Kuman, Mongol, and, not seldom, Russian raiders.

With intervals of exhaustion, the war of the brothers dragged on for many years, kept alive, now by intrigues at the Mongol Courts, now by raid and rapine in the lands of Souzdal and Péréyaslavl. Out of this seething incoherent dust-storm rises one tangible fact, the independence of the province of Tver; born of anarchy, this little principality shall contribute its quota to the red page of Russian history ere it sinks back into obscurity. Under its young Prince, Mikhail Yaroslavitch, it has taken advantage of the weakness and embarrassments of Dimitri to secure for itself a separate existence, and to impair the solidity of the grand province. The Novgorodians, but languidly attached to the interests of the rival princes, started a domestic war of their own, one of those vigorous, exuberant burgh-strifes peculiar to the free cities of Northern Europe in the Middle Ages—a strife in which the whole population took part, from the Archbishop, posadnik, and boyarins, down to the "youngest people"; a strife which has been handed down blurred and sketchy, devoid of meaning and purpose, if it ever had any, but still instinct with life and movement. Wild crowds skirling through narrow streets, hunting the posadnik into the protection of the Archbishop, hammering on the closed door of the sanctuary, the Cathedral of S. Sofia; tumultuous gatherings in the great square, angry dooming of citizens, hurlings of struggling victims from the bridge into the Volkhov; and above all these scenes of disorder, the great bell of Yaroslav clanging and dinning, like some evil spirit of unrest prisoned in its owl-tower. The picture lives.

Western Russia also had its own troubles, or rather it had become involved in those of Poland, where, the scruples of Boleslas "the Chaste" having prevented him from reproducing his species, his death in 1279 was followed by a scramble for his throne. Where there is no heir there are many, may not be a proverb, but it has all the qualifications for one. The Dukes of Mazovia, Krakow, Silesia, and Kujavia put forward their interests, and the cousins Lev of Galitz and Vladimir of Volhynia entered into the fray without any more substantial claim than a backing of Mongol horsemen, borrowed from the Horde. Even this powerful argument broke down when the supporters of the new Duke, Lesko the Black, defeated the Russ-Mongol army near Sendomir with great slaughter (1280). The following year Galicia and Volhynia received return visits from the Poles, but the dissensions which soon after broke out in the palatinate of Mazovia again gave the Red Russian princes the opportunity of interesting themselves in Polish affairs.

In Eastern Russia Andrei had practically established his authority in the Grand Principality; the Tartar-hunted, fate-cursed Dimitri, driven even from his beloved domain of Péréyaslavl, was compelled at last to seek refuge with his cousin and erstwhile enemy, Mikhail of Tver, and renounce his claim to the grand province, stipulating only for the possession of his hereditary fief. This was conceded him, and the wanderer turned his weary steps towards his burnt and plundered Péréyaslavl, which he was not to see.

The dead man rode through the autumn day

To visit his love again.

1294

On the road to Volok died Dimitri Aleksandrovitch, and Ivan his son reigned at Péréyaslavl in

his stead.

Andrei's position as Grand Prince was more than ever assured, but the long struggle had sapped the authority formerly attaching to that dignity in the lands of Souzdal; not only Tver, but Moskva and Péréyaslavl had taken unto themselves a greater measure of independence—apart, that is to say, from their subjection to the Horde. Unable to overawe this dangerous coalition by superior force, Andrei laid his griefs at the feet of the Khan, hoping to establish his ascendancy by the same means with which he had overthrown his brother's.

1296

The result of this move was a renewal of the old "council on the carpet"; most of the princes interested, with the Bishops of Vladimir and Sarai, gathered at the former city in obedience to the summons of the Khan's deputy, who presided with Oriental gravity over their somewhat heated deliberations. Even this significant reminder of their servitude could not depress the princes into the decencies of debate; angry words flashed out, and swords leapt from their scabbards, and had not the Vladuika[54] Simeon, Bishop of Vladimir, parted the combatants, the blood of Rurik might have been squandered on the carpet. In the end Andrei had to accommodate himself with the vassal princes, who were too strong for him to subdue, and a peace was effected in 1304 between the two parties. Two years previously Ivan Dmitrovitch, dying without issue, had bequeathed his province of Péréyaslavl to his uncle, Daniel of Moskva—a circumstance which added considerably to the importance of the latter principality.

Thus drew to a close a century which had witnessed a vital dislocation in the course of Russian history, which had been fraught with important changes in Europe generally. The House of Hohenstaufen, which had played so bold a part in the affairs of Germany, Italy, and Palestine, had gone down in the death-struggle with the Papacy, and out of the ashes of its ruin had risen, phœnix-like, the House of Habsburg, which one day was to prove the surest bulwark against the enemies of the Holy See; in Rudolf, petty Count of Habsburg and Kyburg, the Empire had found the strongest master it had known since the death of its founder. In that other Empire, whose luxurious capital seemed to enervate and paralyse the manhood of its rulers, the Catholic dynasty had drooped and shrivelled, and when the trade jealousies of Genoa led her to strike with the Greeks against the Latin allies of her hated rival, Venice, the end was at hand; the House of Courtenay gave way to that of Paleologus, and the formula "proceeding from the Father by the Son" re-echoed once more in the high places of S. Sofia. In Hungary died out with the century the male line of the princely House of Arpad, which had given sovereigns to that country since the first erection of the Magyar State; from this point the crown of S. Stefan became the ambition and prize of the surrounding princes, a fate similar to that which overtook the neighbouring kingdom of Bohemia a year or two later. The Livlandish debatable lands still seethed and bubbled with the wars of the rival immigrants. The gentlemen of God maintained a vigorous contest with the See of Dorpat, with the city and Archbishop of Riga, and with the Lit'uanians. In Riga the burghers burnt the church and chapel of the Order and killed sixty of the convent brothers (1297). On the other hand their Archbishop, Johann of Schwerin, was besieged in his castle of Treiden and taken prisoner by the Order, to the scandal of Pope Boniface VIII. The heathen Lit'uanians, headed by their Prince, Viten, and allied with the Church troops of Riga and Dorpat, fought against the knights "in eighteen months nine bloody battles." In 1298 they won a decisive victory over the Landmaster Bruno, in which the latter and many of his knights lost their lives. The Komthur Berthold, with

reinforcements from Prussia, wiped out this reverse by a victory at Neuermühlen, and later the new Landmaster ravaged the archiepiscopal territory. Ultimately the release and withdrawal of the militant Archbishop and the appointment of Isarnus Tacconi, the Pope's chaplain, to the See of Riga, relieved the situation and gave some measure of peace to this over-apostleised land.[55]

In 1300 the Novgorodians witnessed a descent of the Swedes upon the banks of the Neva, where they built the fortress of Landskron, which position was promptly attacked and destroyed by the troops of the republic, supported by those of the Grand Prince.

1304

Four years later the death of Andrei involved Northern Russia in a contest between Mikhail of Tver and Urii Danielovitch of Moskva for the vacant sovereignty. Novgorod and the greater number of the Souzdalskie boyarins declared for the former, but both candidates hastened to put their respective cases before the tribunal of the Khan, leaving their followers meanwhile to fight the matter out between themselves. A march of the Tverskie boyarins against Péréyaslavl was intercepted by Ivan, brother of the Prince of Moskva, and their voevoda Akinf (Hyacinth) perished in the battle which ensued. The decision of the Khan in favour of Mikhail did not end the contest. The town of Moskva twice repelled the attack of the Prince of Tver, who was, however, successful in establishing his authority in the remaining portions of the grand province and at Novgorod. The accession of a new Khan, by name Usbek, necessitated the departure of Mikhail to Sarai, where he remained long enough to lose the affections of the Novgorodskie, who transferred their allegiance to the Prince of Moskva, grandson of their champion Nevski. This readjustment of the political balance enabled Urii to reopen the contest with the Grand Prince; long time the struggle dragged on, indefinitely protracted by the shifting policy of the Khan. For the practice of appealing to Sarai to reverse the decisions of Souzdal had become with the Russian princes a habit, confirmed, like opium smoking, by constant indulgence. Both candidates for the Grand Principality were constantly to be found at the Court of the Khan, or devastating their opponent's provinces with Tartar troops; Urii even contracted a matrimonial alliance with the sister of Usbek. Nor were the princes the only competitors for the Mongol favour; the Metropolitan Petr, in 1313, sought and obtained from the Khan an exemption from taxes for the priests and monks, and a confirmation of the clerical privileges,—concessions which would seem to indicate that the Mongols united with their Mohametanism the toleration which distinguished their early Shamanism—or did the wily Khan gauge the measure of Holy Church, and conciliate her on her most susceptible side? Whatever the clergy might gain by the Mongol patronage, to the princes it brought nothing but disaster.

1319

Mikhail himself was destroyed by the agency he had invoked, and Urii had the miserable triumph of seeing his rival stabbed to death by the officers of the Khan. Six years later Dimitri Mikhailovitch avenged his father's death by spitting Urii on his sword in the Tartar camp, an affront which was punished by the strangulation of the offender. Aleksandr, another son of the ill-fated Mikhail, succeeded to the principality of Tver and to the dignity of Grand Prince, but a mad act of fear-impelled violence drew down on himself, his family, and province the consuming fury of the Khan. A harmless, or at any rate customary, visit from a Mongol envoy to the city of Tver, roused the apprehensions of Prince and people, who feared that an attempt

was to be made to convert them forcibly to Islam. Taking courage from the fact that the stranger had but a feeble escort—a circumstance which should have confuted his suspicions—Aleksandr roused his subjects, (gathered in great numbers at Tver for the Feast of the Assumption), to fall upon and annihilate the Mongol band.

1327

The Russians can scarcely be condemned for an act of treachery towards an enemy who had never shown a scrupulous regard for honour and good faith, but the deed was one of criminal folly, and even its heroic aspect is blighted by the fact that Aleksandr had remained subservient to the Khan despite the murder of his father and brother, and was only roused to rebellion by an alarm of personal danger. The vengeance of Usbek took a cynical turn; instead of sending his hordes killing and harrying into the devoted province, he entrusted the vindication of his outraged majesty to a Russian prince and Russian troops. Ivan Danielovitch of Moskva, with his own forces and those of Souzdal, reinforced by a strong detachment of Mongols, marched, nothing loth, into the domains of his rival, and scattered desolation around him with a thoroughness which left the Khan nothing to complain of.

1328

The Prince of Tver did not wait to share with his people the chastisement he had drawn down upon them, and Ivan obtained permission to assume the well-earned title of Grand Prince.

So completely had the centre of Russian interests shifted eastwards towards the valley of the upper Volga, that the lands of the Dniepr basin, Kiev, Volhynia, Galitz, etc., once the heart of the confederation, were now scarcely to be ranked as outlying members of it. The influences which were responsible for this gradual alienation from the main body, and for the apathy with which the Grand Princes regarded this rounding-off of their dominions, may probably have arisen from the same cause, namely, the Mongol over-mastery. On the one hand, so bound up had the East Russian princes become with the neighbouring khanates, that intercourse with Souzdal meant intercourse with Sarai, and all its attendant humiliations; on the other, the rivalries which existed in the Grand Principality and the necessity its rulers found for frequent and prolonged visits to the Mongol Court, precluded them from giving much attention to the affairs of the western provinces. Thus it fell out that, failing the arising of an exceptionally vigorous local prince, a Roman or a Mstislav, these fertile Russian lands were at the mercy of the boldest bidder. The exceptional personality was at hand, but he was not a Russian. Gedimin, Prince of Lit'uania, whom the early historians depicted as having risen from the position of a court official to that of prince by the murder of his sovereign and master, attained that dignity by the more prosaic and respectable method of hereditary succession, being son of Lutouvier (1282-93) and brother of Viten (1293-1316).[56] Under the latter the Lit'uanians had been united in large and well-disciplined armies, as the Poles and the Order knights knew well, and in the direction of both these neighbours their frontier had remained intact. This in itself was no small achievement, considering how the kindred lands of Prussia, Kourland, Livland, Estland, etc., had fallen beneath the persistent proselytising and colonising attacks of the western invaders. By Gedimin was carried into operation a policy of expansion in the detached Russian lands to the south and east,—a policy effected, like that of the Angevin kings of England in France, and of the Habsburgs in Austria, Bohemia, Karinthia, and the Tyrol, by a combination of conquest and matrimonial alliances. But it was not only by the absorption of neighbouring territory that Gedimin signalised his reign; he lifted the land which

he had inherited from the position of an obscure chieftaincy to that of a formidable State. At war nearly the whole of his reign with the German knights, he nevertheless did not permit himself to be influenced by the cruelty and treachery which accompanied their religious zeal, but displayed on his part a toleration for different creeds and nationalities which might have been imitated with advantage by other European princes. From his stronghold at Vilna, where the ruins of his castle still mantle the heights above the town, he sent letters to Lubeck, Stettin, Rostok, and other cities of the Hansa league, offering the rights and privileges of that organisation and of the town of Riga, to all artisans, mechanics, and traders who should care to settle in his principality—an invitation which was eagerly responded to. In the wars waged by him against the Order, both in Prussia and Livland, one figure is very conspicuous—that of David, *starosta* of Grodno, who appears in the Teutonic Chronicles under the picturesque title of Castellan von Garthen. It was this boyarin who held the troubled border against the incessant attacks of the Knights of Mary, and led many a foray into their territory.[57] One of the most notable of these was in the winter of 1322-23, when the cold was so severe that even the forest trees were nearly killed, and men erected inns on the ice of the Baltic Sea for the travellers to and from Germany and the nearest Skandinavian lands—this self-same winter came the Lit'uanians following hard on a raid-march of the Cross Brethren, burning and wasting from Dorpat to Memel, and returning through the bleak and frozen march-lands with great spoil of cattle and 5000 prisoners. Truly a winter to be remembered.[58] Victory did not blind Gedimin to the advantages of a durable peace with the Order, to secure which he was even ready to adopt the faith of the foes he had so often conquered.

1323

Accordingly, at his initiative, a peace was compacted between the various units which existed side by side in the East sea provinces; the Archbishop of Riga, the Bishop of Oesel, the towns of Riga, Revel, and Dorpat, the Teutonic Order, and the principality of Lit'uania, entered into a religious, territorial, and commercial treaty one with another, and Gedimin wrote to the Pope (John XXII.), to inform him that he was ready to become a Christian and to recognise the supremacy of the Holy See. Gladly did the French Pontiff prepare to receive this important lamb into the Catholic fold, and at the same time put a limit to the Teutonic conquests in the Baltic lands, and two legates (the Bishop of Alais and the Abbot of Puy) were dispatched forthwith to Vilna. But in the meanwhile Gedimin had had a lesson as to the value of "the true faith of a Christian," and informed the disconcerted churchmen that he intended to die in the beliefs of his fathers, and would have none of their religion or their Pope. "Where," he demanded, "will you find more crime, more injustice, violence, corruption and usury, than with the Christians, particularly with the priesthood and the Knights of the Cross?" Travel is said to enlarge and educate the mind, but it was scarcely necessary to come all the way from Avignon to learn that.

1324

The Order had not considered itself bound by a compact with a pagan, and, in alliance with the unwilling Bishops of Oesel and Dorpat, had burst into the Lit'uanian lands and plundered the capital, Vilna; in return for which treachery, or elasticity of honour, Gedimin sacked the town of Rositter and renounced the creed of the Christmen.[59] Catholic Europe was angry at this backsliding, if one may judge by the epithets showered on the half-saved soul; a depth of sorrowing wrath is revealed in the expressions "double-headed monster, abominable mockery

of nature, precursor of Antichrist." Much mud might they throw, bitterly might they anathematise in those far-off days, yet not thus does history remember the grand old pagan whose castle ruins crown the heights above the Vilia.

In the year of Gedimin's accession (1316) died Urii Lvovitch, of Galitz and Volhynia, who was succeeded in those fiefs by his sons Andrei and Lev respectively. Colourless princes, these latter representatives of the Roman-Mstislavitch family, known only to history by the alliance which the instinct of preservation led them to make with the Teutonic Order. That they both died in the year 1324 appears from a letter of the Polish King Ladislas to Pope John, in which that fact is mentioned; the two provinces devolved upon Urii Andreievitch, the last Russian Prince of Galicia, the last for many a hundred years who ruled Volhynia. His death (about 1336) ended the male line of his family, and left as heiress of Galitz his sister Mariya, who married the Polish prince, Troiden of Tchersk. By the marriage of another heiress, the daughter of Lev of Volhynia, with Loubart, a son of Gedimin, that province was brought into the Lit'uanian dominion, which was further extended by the succession of Olgerd (Gedimin's eldest son) to the fief of his wife's father the Prince of Vitebsk.[60] The annexation of Kiev, attributed by many historians to Gedimin, was undoubtably of a later date, as the Chronicles make mention of a Russian Prince Thedor, ruling in that city under Mongol supervision, as late as 1361.[61] Even so, the Russian lands owning the sovereignty of Gedimin—Polotzk, Pinsk, Tourov, Volhynia, Loutzk, and Vitebsk sufficiently justify his title, *rex Letwinorum et multorum Ruthenorum*, and the Grand-duchy of Lit'uania might claim to be more Russian than the Grand Principality of Souzdal, with its Slav-Finn-Turko population.

But here, under the fostering care of Ivan Danielovitch, the new Russia, the Russia of the East, was germinating amid the decay of shedded provinces and lost liberties. Pocketing his pride and leaving outlying lands to take care of themselves, the Grand Prince sought to secure for his family and for his capital a preponderance over the other Souzdalian fiefs. His first step was to secure the Church, in the person of the Metropolitan, to grace with its presence the city of Moskva; lured thither from the now unfashionable Vladimir by the erection of a magnificent new church of the Assumption (fit dedication, for had not Tver wrought her ruin on the date of that festival?) the sainted Petr not only lived, but died and was buried in the budding capital; where also the succeeding Metropolitan, Theognost, took up his residence. In cultivating the good graces of the Khan Ivan was equally successful, but he had to work hard for the attainment of his object. Konstantin Mikhailovitch had been recognised by all parties as Prince of Tver, but Usbek was anxious to possess himself of the person of Andrei, and the Grand Prince had to go seek at the Khan's behest, and bring the wanderer home. Andrei preferred to remain at Pskov rather than visit Sarai, to which place the princes of Tver, like the animals who ventured into the lion's den of the fable, went oftener than they returned. The burghers of Pskov refused to give up the fugitive, and Russia beheld the spectacle of the Grand Prince, the Archbishop Moses of Novgorod, and the Metropolitan Theognost, hurling threats, reproaches, and excommunication at the defiant republic on behalf of the Mongol Khan,—the latter weapon all the more terrifying in that it was here used for the first time. Yet the result of all this chiding and banning was not commensurate with the energy expended; Andrei sheltered himself in Lit'uania, and again at Pskov, and not till ten years later did the homing instinct lead him to submit to the pleasure of the Khan, and receive at his hands pardon and restoration (1338). In the absence of his rival, Ivan had steadily and placidly pursued his fixed policy of Moskovite aggrandisement, and gradually established his authority over the neighbouring Princes of Souzdal, Rostov, and Riazan. With Novgorod he had the usual

differences, unavoidable between a prince with high ideas of authority and a people with wide views of independence, but the restless citizens grew tired of quarrelling with a man who was always dangerous yet never struck; also they had an absorbing feud on hand with the Pskovitchi, who presumed to have a bishop of their own, instead of depending for spiritual guidance upon Novgorod. On this account the Archbishop of the latter city, the strenuous Vasili, was able to effect a reconciliation between prince and people. Thus things worked smoothly with the smoothly-working kniaz, Ivan Kalita, as they called him, from the kalita (bag or pouch) which he carried at his girdle, and from which he was wont to distribute alms to the needy. Some have unkindly suggested that the bag was intended for receipts rather than disbursements, in which case, if parsimony is to be added to his piety, superstition, and unscrupulous politics, he may well pass for a Russian edition of Louis XI.

The return of the exile Andrei, restored to his principality and to the favour of the Khan, was a disagreeable interlude in the harmony of Kalita's reign. Following an instinctive habit, he went to Sarai. Shortly after his return to Moskva, his cousin of Tver was summoned to present himself at the Horde. It did not need the pale faces of his courtiers and family, nor the ill-boding presages which their fancy conjured up, to warn the doomed prince of his impending fate; down the broad current of the Volga he drifted, to "Sarra, in the Londe of Tartarie," where "dwelt a king that werried Russie."[62]

1339

The judgment of Usbek removed the source of disquietude from Ivan's path, and the headless corpses of Andrei and his son Thedor, arrived at Tver one winter's day, grim flotsam of a perished freedom. To complete the object-lesson of their subjection, the citizens beheld the great bell of Tver removed from their cathedral and transferred to Moskva.

1341

Not long, however, did its iron-throated music soothe the pride of Ivan-with-the-money-bag, whose death-knell it tolled some twelve months later. And while they conduct the dead prince to his rest, with aid of chant and litany, wailing dirge and gleaming taper, and invocations to saints, archangels, and all the glorious host of Heaven, in different wise are they helping that other master-builder of kingdoms into the Unknown; with pagan rite, with blazing pyre, favourite horse and faithful henchman, goes great Gedimin to his fathers, to *his* dreamt hereafter, where "on the distant plain the warrior grasps his steed again." Each to his own; at any rate both are dead, and whether they ride over a boundless plain or stand by a tideless sea, in "blue obscurity" or in a "great white light," their place knows them not, and Lit'uania and Moskva must have new masters.

In both countries the drift towards cohesion and centralisation is strong, but custom is stronger; Gedimin's realm is for the present parcelled out among his seven sons and his brother Voin; the lands of Moskva are divided between the three surviving sons of Kalita, Simeon, the eldest, having the capital city and the title of Grand Prince subject, of course, to the consent of the Khan. It was a critical moment in the fortunes of the House of Moskva, when the young prince presented himself for approval at Sarai, with a respectful appeal for a renewal of past favours. The news of the death of Ivan had sent more than one kniaz in eager haste across Russia to the picturesque city on the Volga's shore; the two Konstantins (of Tver and Souzdal) hoped to undermine the Mongol support which propped up the ascendancy of

Simeon, and ruin their rival by the same means with which his father had kept them under. But the Prince of Moskva, with the treasures of the Grand Principality and the tribute of Velikie Novgorod at his disposal, was able to put his case in the most favourable light before the Khan and his officers, and the inherited instinct of almsgiving helped him no doubt to retain the hereditary dignities.

CHAPTER VI THE GROWING OF THE GERM

Never since the overthrow on the Sit had a Russian ruler been as emphatically and unquestionably Grand Prince as was Simeon Ivanovitch, yclept “the Proud.” Some of the most valuable provinces had indeed fallen away from the realm, but if the title Prince “of all the Russias,” which Simeon was the first to adopt, was little justified by the facts, at least he was, among his compeers, master of what remained. The very qualification of his powers which the over-lordship of the Khan implied, was in fact an added source of authority, for the Russian mind had come to accept the Mongol dominion with the same submissiveness, if with less enthusiasm, that it displayed towards the paternal tyranny of the Church. Supported by the double certificate of Heaven and Sarai, with the iarlikh[63] of Usbek in his hands and his compliant Metropolitan at his side, the Grand Prince stood head and shoulders above his brother princes and would-be competitors. And here may be noted an advantage which the builders of the Russian Empire possessed over the continuators of the Germanic one, and indeed over most of the princes of Catholic Europe. The Church “went with” the secular authority. In western Christendom the popes, after having entreated the services of emperors and kings as their surest agency for the destruction of the heathen religions, kicked down the ladder by which they had climbed to their high position, and convulsed Europe for many centuries by a bitter strife with the temporal sovereignties; till the up-springing of a new enemy, questioning the Divine authority of tiara and crown alike, drew Pontiff, Kaiser, and absolute monarchs together, like cattle herding in a storm. In Russia no such schism endangered the sanctity of the ruling forces, possibly because no such prosperity had been attained by either. “The palace rubbed shoulders with the Church and the monastery, and was scarcely distinguishable from them.”[64] The Grand Prince was holy and Orthodox, the Church was national and official. Ban and interdict, those bogies of mediæval west Europe, were here familiar sprites which worked at the bidding of the Grand Prince against his enemies. As the worship of the old Slavonic gods Peroun and Volos, Daszhbog, Stribog, etc. gave way by degrees to that of the One-in-Three and the dependent galaxy of saints, so did the old veneration for a crowd of Rurik-descended princes merge gradually into awe of one Heaven-born sovereign and a satellite-band of his officials, amongst whom were the hierarchy of the national Church. And in another respect the Russian rulers had their task simplified for them, namely, in the long-suffering docility of the bulk of their subjects. Here were no defiant goat-herds such as chased the might of the Habsburgs from the Graubunden Alps, no *Bauernkriegern* kindling the fires of civil war throughout an empire, no *Jacquerie* distracting an already distraught kingdom. The Slav peasant took all the added ills of life, droughts, famines, Polovtzi, Mongols, grasshoppers, and pestilences, tithes and taxes, with a fatalism he had brought with him from the East, a stoicism learnt possibly from the camel in his nomad days. A man who, in addition to the privations incidental to his poverty, will at the bidding of his Church fast “during the seven weeks of Lent, during two or three weeks in June, from the beginning of November till Christmas, and on all Wednesdays and Fridays during the year,”[65] can have little of the bread-rioter or throne-shaker in his constitution. The very placidity, however, with which he received the dispensations of Providence in whatever shape they chose to assume, rendered his allegiance a matter of circumstance rather than principle. He would accept the mastery of the Lit’uanians, for instance, as he had accepted the Mongols, as he had accepted the Varangians; like a dog of too accommodating disposition, he wagged his tail to whichever master shouted loudest, and just now the Lit’uanian princes were shouting loud indeed. Chiefly as yet among themselves. The death of Gedimin had left his country in a position

which required skilful handling, while at the same time the division of the State into eight portions precluded any one prince from having a controlling voice in the direction of affairs—an arrangement which could only lead to disaster. Fortunately for Lit'uania the political foresight and energy of her defunct Grand Duke had descended in full measure upon one at least of his sons, Olgerd of Vitebsk. He, while engaged in ravaging the Order territories in Livland, watching for an attack from across the Polish border, or casting his eyes over the tempting Russian provinces ready to fall into his clutches, saw clearly that to live and expand, to prey and not be preyed upon, Lit'uania must have a guiding hand, one head instead of many. In order to attain his eagle-soaring ambition he borrowed the habits of the cuckoo, and ousted his brothers unceremoniously from the hereditary nest. An exception was wisely made in favour of Kestout, who equalled him in energy and military achievement, and without whose help the *coup d'etat* could scarcely have been effected. Acting in concert, the brothers seized on the capital, Vilna, and re-established the grand-dukedom; by a happy division of labour Kestout became warden of the Polish and Order-land marches, leaving Olgerd to pursue his conquests and acquisitions in the south-east—an arrangement which enabled the Grand Duke to add Briansk, Seversk, Kiev, and the surrounding district to his possessions, and to retain Volhynia against the King of Poland.[66] With the Prince of Moskva pursuing a policy of cautious inaction, the only safe course open to him under the circumstances, Olgerd was able not only to stretch his dominion from a foothold on the Baltic coast to the shores of the Black Sea, but to obtain a solid influence over the governments of Smolensk, Pskov, and Velikie Novgorod. As early as 1346 he appears to have had a hold on the councils of the latter city; the posadnik Evstaf (Eustace) had spoken unwisely and not well of the great Lit'uanian,—had in fact called him a dog. The indiscreet expression reached the ears of Olgerd, who demanded the death of the offending dignitary. The Vetché armed the city in defence of the posadnik, reconsidered the matter, and ended by sacrificing Evstaf to the resentment of the Grand Duke.[67] An action so opposed to the traditional temper of the proud republic that it is only to be explained by a strong motive of political expediency. And in fact an alliance with Lit'uania was valuable to Pskov and Novgorod, both as a bulwark against German aggression and as a counterpoise to the encroaching power of Moskva. In the former relation, the resisting power of the leagued principalities of the North was severely tested by the warrior monks of the Order; able to draw unfailing supplies of men and marks from the States of the Empire, the knights had bought Estland from the King of Denmark (1347), had inflicted a severe defeat on the Lit'uanian army (1348), and later carried war and desolation into the lands of Polotzk, Pskov, and Novgorod (1367). With the help of Olgerd the Russians were able to make a diversion upon Dorpat, and peace was at length effected with the Order in 1371.[68] From this it will be seen that the Grand Duke of Lit'uania was a far more prominent figure in the land than the Grand Prince "of all the Russias." But of the policy of these two contrasted state-workers it may be said that while Olgerd built, the son of Kalita dug. Intrenching himself around the unit of Moskva, the last-named silently and persistently undermined the power of the neighbouring princes, and established his own authority on a sure foundation. Novgorod might wait; Lit'uania might wait; the Horde might wait.

Thus delving and waiting ruled Simeon, so quaintly named "the Proud," till death swept him into his cherished cathedral—a victim, possibly, to the terrible Black Pestilence which was then desolating Russia.

1353-1359

The succeeding Grand Prince, Ivan Ivanovitch, who found favour in the sight of the new Khan Tchanibek, displayed all his brother's patience without any of his policy. His weakly pacific reign marked a partial thaw in the iron frost of Moskovite supremacy, which had bound North-east Russia in its grip under the rule of his three immediate predecessors. Souzdal, Riazan, and Tver blossomed anew into independence, and enjoyed a S. Luke's summer of importance and anarchy. The Novgorodians, who had exerted themselves to obtain the election of Konstantin of Souzdal to the grand princedom, only recognised Ivan on the death of the former (1354), and were little troubled by the interference of their sovereign.[69] Their own domestic affairs were sufficiently exciting to absorb their attention; the election of a posadnik in the spring of 1359 gave rise to a fierce quarrel between the inhabitants of the Slavonic quarter and those of the Sofia ward, and for three days the hostile factions fought around the famous bridge, and were only separated by the intervention of their Archbishop and ex-Archbishop, whose combined exhortations at length restored peace to the agitated city.[70]

If Novgorod owed much to the well-directed influence of her prelates, the House of Moskva was even more indebted to the exertions and services of the Metropolitan Aleksis, who loyally supported its interests under the most discouraging circumstances. When the weary Ivan had closed his inglorious reign, when "having failed in many things," he had "achieved to die," the foundations painfully hewn out by his forerunners were almost swept away; a new Khan had arisen who knew not Moskva, and Dimitri Konstantinovitch of Souzdal entered Vladimir in triumph, with the iarlikh in his hand. Souzdal, Riazan, Tver, and Velikie Novgorod exulted in the downfall of their ambitious neighbour, and the work of generations seemed undone. Then was it that Vladuika Aleksis, seeing in Dimitri Ivanovitch more promising material than had existed in his father, took advantage of the chaos existing at the Horde—where Khan succeeded Khan in a whirlwind of revolutions—to obtain a counter-iarlikh for the young Prince of Moskva. Thus Dimitri was opposed by Dimitri, each boasting the favour of Sarai, but the Moskovite enjoying the support of Holy Church. New intrigues gave the Souzdal kniaz once more the countenance of the Horde, but Dimitri Ivanovitch dared to disregard the displeasure of a Khan who was here to-day and might be gone to-morrow; riding forth at the head of his boyarins and followers, long accustomed to be uppermost in the land, he drove his rival from Vladimir and carried the war into the province of Souzdal, besieging the capital. The Konstantinovitch submitted, and the grand princely dignity returned to the House of Moskva.

1362

Well had Aleksis earned his subsequent canonisation.

A few years later the Black Death, brought into the district of Nijhnie-Novgorod by travelling merchants, recommenced its ravages throughout Central Russia. Its victims were counted by thousands, and though the account of its sweeping effect at Smolensk, in which city there were said to remain but five survivors,[71] is probably an exaggeration, an idea can be formed of its destructive nature by the number of princes who were stricken down in a single year.

1365

The Grand Prince's brother Ivan, Konstantin of Rostov, Andrei, brother of the Prince of Souzdal, and four of the Tverskie family, were victims of the dread pestilence, more wholesale even in its work than the Mongols in the first fury of their invasion.[72] In its wake sprang up a crop of quarrels, the result of such a legacy of vacant fiefs. Boris of Souzdal having seized on

his deceased brother's appanage (Nijhnie-Novgorod), to the despite of his elder, Dimitri, the latter was driven to throw himself into the hands of his namesake and rival, the Grand Prince of Moskva, who forced the supplanter to disgorge his prey. In Tver, likewise, the death of Simeon had brought his brother Ieremiya, his uncle Vasili, and his cousin Mikhail, into competition for his territorial possessions. The last-named was pursuing in Tver the same policy of aggrandisement and centralisation that had obtained such successful results for Moskva; naturally his proceedings were watched with jealous eyes by Dimitri, the Metropolitan, and the Moskovite boyarins, who took up the cause of Mikhail's opponents and drove him more than once from his province. Mikhail invoked the aid of his wife's father, Olgerd.

1369

The great Lit'uanian, whose arms had checked the tide of Teutonic conquest and driven the Tartars from the Western steppes, who had wasted the outskirts of Revel and laid classic Kherson in ashes, marched now against the might of Moskva, his rival in the Russian lands. With him came his loyal brother Kestout, and, because he must, the Kniaz of Smolensk. The might of Moskva contracted within the high stone battlements of its Kreml, which, in the depth of winter, was too strong a hold for the Lit'uanians to attack. Olgerd contented himself with sacking the surrounding country, and carried back a spoil of cattle and church furniture as witness of his triumph.

1370

The following year, however, Mikhail, again driven from his hereditary dominions, again appealed to Olgerd for assistance, and with the first November snows came the Lit'uanian-Smolenskie host against Moskva. History repeated itself; a second time the Kreml, rising fair and glittering in its sheen of white stone and silvery frost, above the blackened ruins that lay around it, defied the force that gathered against its walls. Olgerd hovered in vain around the impregnable obstacle to his crowning triumph. Russian troops, under Vladimir Andrevitch, the Grand Prince's cousin, were gathering on his flank, those pied crows, the Knights of Mary, were croaking ominously on his northern frontier, while an early thaw threatened to impede his line of retreat through the snow-banked forests.

Under these circumstances the old warrior slacked the rigour of his onslaught and made an honourable peace with the enemy whom he could not crush.

1371

The indomitable Mikhail continued, nevertheless, to wage a fitful war with his hereditary foe, now invoking the support of Mamai Khan, the new master of the Golden Horde, now calling in the Lit'uanians, till at length, hotly besieged in his city of Tver, he was obliged to submit to the victorious Dimitri and recognise the supremacy of the House of Moskva.

1375

Secure in his own dominions, the Grand Prince was able to turn his attention to the hostile forces which weighed on him on either side. In the West the crushing pressure of the Lettish power was for a time relaxed.

1377

The Grand Duke Olgerd, “one of the greatest statesmen of the Middle Ages,”[73] the clangour of whose arms had vibrated round Polish castle and Order keep, had roused the echoes of the Moskva Kreml, and startled the pirates of the Black Sea coast, was now among “the quiet people”;[74] of his many sons, Yagiello succeeded him in the Grand Ducal dignity. Hampered by a large circle of brothers, half-brothers, cousins, and other inconvenient relatives, he set to work vigorously to weed out his superfluous kinsfolk; the aged Kestout, the companion-in-arms and faithful supporter of Olgerd, was one of the first victims of the son’s purging operations. Lured into his power, he was immured within the castle of Kreva, where he was found one day strangled; his son Vitovt escaped the same fate by a flight into the Order territory, while Andrei Olgerdovitch, Prince of Polotzk, sought at Moskva shelter from his half-brother’s hostility. Dimitri had the satisfaction of lending his support to this malcontent, as Olgerd had aided the Prince of Tver. But while Moskovite troops ravaged the Russian territories of Yagiello, Dimitri from his capital was watching the storm-clouds that had been slowly piling in the East. Nursed into their position of authority by the favour and support of the Horde, the Princes of Moskva had become too important and too exalted to continue their former humble attitude towards the Khans; like a wasp entangled in a spider-web, the Velikie Kniaz was over-big a captive to be held comfortably in the meshes of a degrading thraldom. Hence the altered relations between Moskva and Sarai, which had resulted in a series of desultory engagements, not openly avowed at the headquarters of either side, but tending steadily towards a more pronounced rupture. Nijhnie-Novgorod had twice suffered the fate of a border town in troublous times, and been laid in ashes by the Mongols; Riazan had experienced the like misfortune. On the other hand a more important collision had taken place on the banks of the Vodjha, where Dimitri had repulsed an army of raiders sent against Riazan by the Khan himself (1377). For three years the vengeance of Mamai had loomed, black and menacing, on the eastern horizon, like a slowly gathering storm that gains added horror from the unmeasurable approach of its outburst; at Moskva men watched for the horsemen who should one day ride out from the forest and clatter into the city with the news that the Hordes were coming. In the summer of 1380 the storm burst; Dimitri learned that the Khan was moving against them with a large army, that Yagiello, “who had small cause to love the Moskva Prince,” was in league with the Mongol, and that Oleg of Riazan was secretly preparing to throw in his lot with the invaders.[75] Was this to be the end of all the delving and striving? Was Moskva to lie in ruins, like another Kiev, a victim to her own renown? At least she should fall fighting. The Velikie Kniaz gathered under his standard the princes and soldiery of such Russian lands as he could command. From Bielozero, Rostov, Mourom, Souzdal, Vladimir, and other quarters, came pouring in the fractions of the first national army that had assembled in Russia since the old wars with the Polovtzi. Beneath the towers of the stately Kreml they mustered, 150,000 strong, to hail the birth of the new Empire, or, who knew, to share its ruin. Deep-mouthed clanged the bells of Moskva over the humming city, palely burned a thousand tapers before the shrines of good S. George and Mikhail the archangel; even the holy Sergie, founder of the famed Troitza lavra,[76] left his beaver-haunted solitudes to give his blessing on the high enterprise. Forth to the banks of the Don rode Dimitri Ivanovitch with his mighty army; before him went a sable banner, from whose folds gleamed the wan white Christ of Calvary; behind him came serried ranks of princes, the descendants of Rurik, save two who were the sons of dead Olgerd. On the wide plain of Koulikovo, the field “of the woodcocks,” by the blue waters of the Don, the might of Moskovite Russia crashed headlong against the strength of the Golden Horde, and fought through the red September day till wounds and weariness numbed their failing arms. Then through their ranks flashed the unpent

reserves, led by young Vladimir Andreievitch, whirled the wild charge into the Mongol hosts, swept into rout the swarthy horsemen of Asia, swelled the hoarse shouts for S. George, for S. Glieb, and S. Boris, drowning the pealing war-yells for Allah; they break, they are killed, they are conquered, the God of the Christians has wakened, the Prince of the Russias has won a new title for ever, Dimitri Ivanovitch Donskoi! Dimitri of the Don.

Possibly the result of the battle was not so one-sided as the glowing accounts of the Russian historians painted it, but the immediate effect gave fair hope for the future. Yagiello withdrew his forces into Lit'uania, and thither fled the traitorous Oleg of Riazan; the Mongols vanished across the Oka, and the enemies of Dimitri seemed melted like snow before the summer of his victory. The Russians dreamed that they were free. Not so lightly were they to be rid of these dusky wolf-eyed warriors, who teemed in the wide, arid plain-land of Asia like rats on an old threshing-floor. In the East had arisen a new star of battle to lead them in the footsteps of the mighty Jingis, Timur the Lame, "conqueror of the two Bokharas, of Hindostan, of Iran, and of Asia Minor."[77] At the Golden Horde appeared one of his captains, Tokhtamitch, who routed and hunted to death the ill-starred Mamai, and seized upon his khanate. Following on this revolution came a message from the new Khan to the Russian princes, couched in friendly terms, but requiring their presence at his Court. This was too much for the Grand Prince and his proud Moskovites to stomach, and Dimitri returned an answer befitting the victor of Koulikovo. But the defiance of the capital found no echo in the other Russian lands; not a second time did they care to face in doubtful conflict foes who were so terrible in victory, so easily recruited after defeat. Too many brave boyarins and bold spearmen had perished on the field of the woodcocks, too many gaps had been made in their ranks which could not be filled at such scant notice. Dimitri of Souzdal sent his two sons to the Horde; Oleg, pardoned and restored to his province, intrigued once more with the enemies of Moskva.

1382

Against that city marched the Khan with his Tartar army, guided thither by the traitorous Kniaz of Riazan, and bearing in his train the young princes of Souzdal. Dimitri took the prudent, if unheroic part of leaving his capital to defend itself, and seeking meanwhile to gather an army capable of threatening the Mongol flank. The flight of the Metropolitan, Syprien (successor of S. Aleksis), was not open to so favourable an interpretation. The Kreml, ably defended by its garrison, under the command of Ostey, called in the Chronicles a grandson of Olgerd, held the enemy at bay for three days; on the fourth the defenders weakly opened the gates to a ruse of the wily Khan, and the capital of the new Russia received a baptism of blood. When the invaders withdrew, bearing with them all that was worth removing, it was a silent city that they left behind them—a city peopled by 24,000 corpses, meet gathering ground for wehr-wolf, ghoul, and vampire, a wild Walpurgis Nacht for the Yaga-Babas of Slavonic lore. Nor was Moskva alone in her desolation; Vladimir, Zvenigorod, and other towns were sacked and burnt by detachments of the Mongol army. The defeat of one of these bands by a Russian force under Vladimir of Moskva checked the ravages of the invaders, and Tokhtamitch led his hordes back across the Oka, leaving Dimitri to repair as best he might the woes of his province, and to revenge himself on those who had betrayed or deserted him in the hour of his need. If his kingdom was in ruins, at least he was master of what remained; the Metropolitan was deposed, Oleg was forced to fly, and his fief, already ravaged by the Mongols, was harried anew by the Grand Prince's followers. Burning with indignation against the enemy whom he had thought crushed for ever on the banks of the Don, Dimitri had yet to realise that

he must return to the policy of his fathers, and wear again the yoke he had thrown so proudly off. Mikhail of Tver, who bore him an undying hatred, had shared neither in Moskva's triumph nor in her distress, and now was plotting openly to obtain for himself the Grand Principality. With all his losses Dimitri was still the wealthiest of the Russian princes, and a timely submission enabled him to find grace in the eyes of the Khan.

1384

A new impost was exacted throughout the land, and the young princes—Vasili of Moskva, Aleksandr of Tver, Vasili and Simeon of Souzdal—were held as hostages at Sarai. Russia awoke from her dream of liberty to find that her God still slept.

While mourning their relapse into a state of dependence, and involved in a quarrel with the troublesome republic of the north, the Moskovites learned a disquieting piece of intelligence; Yagiello, their formidable neighbour on the west, who held more Russian lands almost than did Dimitri, had added the kingdom of Poland to his possessions.

1386

The long succession of princes of the House of Piast had come to an end, in its direct line, with Kazimir the Great, who since 1370 had lain in a side chapel of the Cathedral at Krakow, where his effigy in red brown marble yet reclines under its fretted canopy. Louis, the Angevin King of Hungary, who succeeded him on the Polish throne, had died in the year 1382, leaving a daughter, Yadviga, to uphold her right as best she could in a country already marked by the intractability of the crown vassals. Yadviga only obtained the support of the Diet (composed of the nobles and higher clergy of the realm) by leaving in its hands the selection of her husband and consort. The choice of the assembly fell upon the Grand Duke of Lit'uania, whose election would at the same time remove a possible enemy from their eastern border, and furnish them with a protector against the hated Teutonic Order on their north. For this monster of their own creation (a Polish duke had been the first to give the knights a foothold in Prussia) was gradually squeezing them out from touch with the Baltic and displacing their authority in Eastern Pomerania. One of the indispensable conditions attached to the betrothal and election of Yagiello was that he should adopt Christianity of the Roman Catholic pattern; "no cross, no crown." The prospect of a peaceable accession to the Polish throne effected what all the endeavours, spiritual, diplomatic, and militant, of priests, popes, and grand masters had been unable to accomplish; Yagiello became the apostle prince of Lit'uania, and Catholic sovereign of Poland.[78] In his new character of a zealous son of the Church, the Grand Duke set to work to bring Lit'uania within the pale of the official religion; the pagan groves were cut down, the sacred fires that burned in the castle of Vilna extinguished, the mystic serpents killed, and the people baptized by battalions. According to a Russian historian, those who already professed the Greek faith were forcibly converted, and two boyarins who clung obstinately to Orthodoxy were put to death by tortures.[79]

If Rome swept this valuable State into her fold, the Russian Church, despite the rather depressing circumstance of a confused succession to the Metropolitan office, was not without the triumph of extending her rites over heathen lands. A monk of Moskva carried the light of the Gospel into the lorn and benighted lands of the Permians, a Finn tribe which dwelt in the northern valley of the Kama, beneath the shadow of the Ourals. Supported by the authority of the Grand Prince, he overthrew the worship of the Old Golden Woman, a stone figure with two

infants in her arms, before whose shrine reindeer were annually sacrificed; had she been more restricted in her family arrangements she might have been quietly incorporated in the new religion.

In 1389 Moskva mourned her prince, Dimitri Donskoi, who died while yet in his prime. A variant from the type of cold, stern princes who had built up the power of his house, Dimitri was a throw-back to the old light-hearted Slavonic kniaz, before the Norse blood had died out of his veins, or ever that of Turko or Mongol had crept in. And if he gained no fresh ground for Moskva, and left Tver and Souzdal and Riazan still under independent masters, at least he gave Russia a spasm of liberty and renown in an age of gloom and bondage, and obtained for his eldest son the undisputed succession to the Grand Principality.

Vasili Dmitrievitch Moskovskie, to give him his distinguishing title (since 1383 there had reigned a Vasili Dmitrievitch at Souzdal), ascended the throne under more favourable circumstances than had a few years earlier seemed probable. On the west, Vitovt, son of the murdered Kestout, had placed himself at the head of the Lit'uanian malcontents in opposition to the King of Poland, who in cultivating the goodwill of his new subjects had lost that of his old ones. Thus in that direction the threateners of Moskva's existence were at strife among themselves. In the east Tokhtamitch was contemplating a rebellion against the authority of his lord and protector, Timur, a circumstance which lifted the position of the young Prince of Moskva at the Horde from that of a humble vassal to that of a desired ally. His father would probably have taken advantage of this fact to sever once more his dependence on the Khan; Vasili turned it to a more practical use.

1391

With costly presents, and probably promises of future support, the Grand Prince bought an iarlikh which gave him possession of Nijhnie-Novgorod, a fief long since granted to Boris of the House of Souzdal.[80] Vasili was received with acclaim by the inhabitants, and Boris, deserted on all sides, had to bow to the decree of fate, represented in this instance by the iarlikh from Sarai.

1394

On the death of the ousted prince his nephews, Vasili and Simeon of Souzdal, attempted to reunite Nijhnie-Novgorod with their hereditary appanage, with the result that Vasili of Moskva seized on both provinces and drove his cousins into exile. Many and fruitless were the efforts made by the brothers to recover their lost principalities; Vasili had developed a Habsburgian tenacity in holding to whatsoever he acquired, and the ex-princes of Souzdal had in the end to acquiesce in their spoliation. Events in the West meanwhile had taken an unforeseen and not altogether favourable turn. The Teutonic Order had been placed in an awkward position by the wholesale entrance of the Lit'uanians into the bosom of the Church, which event left the crusaders no more heathen to convert; hence the joy which they shared with the angels over the salvation of their long recalcitrant brothers was tinged with resentment towards the Poles, and especially towards Yagiello. The Grand Master sulkily refused to stand sponsor to the latter at his baptism,[81] and the Order prepared, from motives of self-defence, to give active support to the pretender Vitovt, who was enabled with its assistance to continually harry the domains of his royal kinsman, till at length Yagiello, set upon by Catholics, Orthodox, and pagans alike, ceded to him the grand duchy, under the direct suzerainty of the Polish Crown

(1392),[82] an arrangement which did not bring repose either to the Order or to Moskovy. The Grand Duke Vitovt was another edition of his uncle and grandfather; his arms swept far beyond the ample limits of his principality, and under his vigorous rule Lit'uania attained her greatest extent, and perhaps her greatest power. Father-in-law to Vasili, he did not hesitate to continue the slow absorption of Russian territory commenced by his predecessors; Smolensk dropped from the feeble hands of its hereditary princes into the actual posses sion of the Grand Duke, who thus brought his dominions into contact with the principality of Tver, long the hatching-ground of disaffection to the supremacy of Moskva. Vitovt would probably have accomplished even more in the way of conquest and annexation if his ambition had not given too wide a scope to his efforts. While Vasili watched anxiously for the next move of this exciting father-in-law new troubles sprang up in the East; it seemed, indeed, as if Moskva was to reap no advantage from the dissensions of her neighbours. The vengeance of Timur the Lame had at length overtaken his o'erweening vassal, and Tokhtamitch had fled before the storm which his imprudence had raised. The conqueror did not seem disposed to confine his destroying wrath to the actual territories of the Golden Horde, but crossed the Volga and commenced to devastate the easternmost Russian lands. Moskovy quaked before the coming of another Batu; the churches were filled with wailing crowds, and the celebrated Mother-of-God of Vladimir was removed from thence to the capital.

1395

By a train of reasoning not easy to follow, to this change of quarters was attributed the sudden turning aside of Timur Khan, who diverted his destructive abilities to the razing of Sarai, Astrakhan, and Azov, and left the Russian lands without further hurt. By modern historians this retreat has been set down to other causes than the translation of the Bogoroditza; "accustomed to the rich booty of Bokhara and Hindostan, and dreaming of Constantinople and Egypt, they found, no doubt, that the desert steppes and deep forests only offered a very meagre prey."[83] However, the credit of the affair remained with the Bogoroditza, and what was more to the point, this respectable and extremely valuable ikon remained at Moskva—no mean asset, for that time and place, in the political importance of a city.

The enfeeblement of the Golden Horde seemed to the Lit'uanian Grand Duke a favourable opportunity to extend his influence in the Tartar steppes and constitute himself the heir of the dying sovereignty. Concluding for the moment a perpetual peace with the Order, against whom he had scarcely ceased to fight since his accession to the Grand Duchy, he mustered a formidable army to support him in this mighty enterprise. Poles, Lit'uanians, and Russians marched under his banner against the Tartars, and Konrad von Jungingen, as a guarantee of good faith, sent five hundred of his knights to do battle against the infidels.

1399

On the banks of the Vorskla (a tributary of the Dniepr), Vitovt came in contact with the lieutenant of Timur and suffered a disastrous overthrow, losing two-thirds of his army and seriously damaging his military reputation. Notwithstanding this victory the new master of the Horde, Koutluk Khan, had his power disputed by more than one competitor, and Vasili took advantage of this fact to discontinue payment of the annual tribute.

1408

The temerity of his action, overlooked for many years, brought on him at last the chastisement

of the Mongols, who, under the leadership of Ediger, the victor of the Vorskla, made a sudden inroad upon Russian territory. Vasili imitated the tactics of his father on a similar occasion; leaving Moskva with a strong garrison to defend the Kreml, he betook himself to the northern districts of his realm to raise what forces he might against the invaders. The assault on Moskva was weakened by the want of siege engines (cannon were just beginning to be used by the Russians and Lit'uanians), and Ivan Mikhailovitch, Prince of Tver, was summoned to support the Khan with his artillery. For once hereditary hatred gave way to patriotic instincts, and Ivan withheld the demanded assistance. The troops of Ediger ravaged and burnt far and wide over the Russian plain, and sacked many a town and village in the Grand Principality, but they could neither force Vasili into a combat nor make an impression on the walls and towers of the Kreml. A threatened revolution at the Horde made the Khan anxious to retreat, and his offer of withdrawal on receipt of a war levy was gladly accepted by the Moskovites, who were dreading a famine; 3000 roubles purchased the departure of the Mongol army, and the Velikie Kniaz was able to return to his rejoicing capital.

Hemmed in on east and west by two powerful and aggressive neighbours, with the slumbering volcanoes of Tver and Riazan ready to burst into activity at any moment within his own dominions, the politic Vasili could do little more than assert from time to time his authority over Novgorod. The republic, indeed, was at the height of its independence, and played its own game in the shifting balance of Order and Hansa, Grand Duchy, Grand Principality, and Golden Horde, which made up the round of its political compass. In 1392 it had closed a period of commercial strife by a treaty[84] with the towns of Lubeck, Wisby, Revel, Dorpat, and Riga, compacted in the border burgh of Izborsk, where "*ys gekomen her Johan Neibur van Lubeke, her Hynrik van Vlanderen unde her Godeke Cur von Godlande, van overze,*[85] *van Rige her Tydeman van der Nienbrugge, van Darpte her Hermen Kegheller unde her Wynold Clychrode, van Revale her Gerd Witte*," and "*hebben gesproken myt dem borchgreven van Nougarden*,"—the posadnik of Novgorod—and so on in quaint old low-German wording that brings to the mind a glimpse of red gabled roofs, narrow streets and quays, a whiff of salted herrings, pine timbers, and pungent stoppered drams. This treaty, concluded without reference to the Grand Prince, had been a source of friction between him and the Novgorodskie, and a further grievance was that the Archbishop and clergy of the northern city chose to be a law unto themselves rather than show a proper dependence upon the Metropolitan of Moskva. Yet another matter for complaint was the depredations of bands of free-lances from Novgorod and her offshoot settlement Viatka (an independent territory lying to the north of Great Bulgaria), who, under the name of "Good Companions," carried on a series of freebooting and piratical campaigns in the Volga valley. More than once these points of dispute led to open rupture between Vasili and his intractable subjects, but Great Novgorod was able to hold her own against the hampered efforts of the Velikie Kniaz.

Eighteen months after Ediger's winter campaign against Moskva the eyes of all Russia were turned towards the impending struggle between the rival powers of the Baltic lands, the Order and the dual Polish-Lit'uanian State. Vitovt, recovered from his reverse at the hands of the Tartars, was moving again, and had set his lance against the black cross shield of the German knights. A dispute anent the Order province of Samogitia furnished a pretext for a recourse to arms, and both sides gathered their hosts to fight out the deadly quarrel. No hole and corner combat was to decide the mastery of the Baltic basin; 163,000 men marched in the train of Vitovt and Yagiello, 83,000 rallied round Ulrich von Jungingen. At the famous battle of

Tannenberg (15th July 1410) the iron-mailed knights of Mary went down in splendid ruin before the unstayable onset of the Slavic warriors; the White Eagle of Poland and the Charging Horseman of Lit'uania gleamed on their blood-red standards over the stark and gory corpses of the Grand Master and the flower of his chivalry, 600 knights and 40,000 men-at-arms; the sun went down on the hard-fought field, where Ulrich von Jungingen and his staunch comrades held their last pale Chapter, and the might of the Black Cross Order faded into the shadows of the past.

1411

The Peace of Thorn, by yielding to the conquerors all they demanded, gave a temporary respite to the Teutons, but their power was broken for evermore.[86]

The latter years of the reign of Vasili Dmitrievitch are distinguished by a dexterous peace with the several items which threatened at every moment to combine against and crush his struggling principality. The ambition of his father-in-law, the frowardness of Novgorod, the dissatisfaction of Tver, the exacting arrogance of the Horde, were successfully ignored or adroitly played one against the other. In like manner the Grand Prince's brothers were studiously kept in the background, and the boyarins of Moskva and the allied fiefs were taught to look upon Vasili's surviving son, who bore his father's name, as future head of the State.

1425

Thus scheming and contriving went the Prince of Moskva on his way, till one winter's day the bells knelled for his passing soul, and Vasili Vasilievitch reigned in his stead.

The late prince had guided the flood of monarchical principles and hereditary right in the desired direction; his successor had to struggle for the greater part of his reign with the back-wash of reaction. Moskva had been placed by persistent effort high above the position of her neighbours, but the elements of discord and disunion lay among her own princes, and it was inevitable that the surviving sons of Dimitri should seek to annul an order of succession which passed them over in favour of a mere boy. Nor had the young Vasili the support of a strong Metropolitan to sustain him in the stormy days that were coming. The Greek Photius who held that office did not exercise in the State the same influence as his forerunners Theognost and Aleksis had done, and even in his own department his authority was not undisputed. For Grand Duke Vitovt, an amateur dabbler in religions, had established at Kiev a Metropolitan of his own, and the faithful in the Russ-Lit'uanian lands paid their homage, and what was worse, their tithes, to this unauthorised rival. Hence Vasili had to depend on the protection of the Horde and the affections of his Moskovite subjects to defend him against the ambition of his uncle Urii.

1430

The death of his powerful relative, the Lit'uanian Grand Duke, removed another possible supporter, and two years later the young prince had to appeal to the decision of the Khan Makhmet against the pretensions of his rival. By a grovelling affectation of submissiveness Vasili was able to emerge triumphant from the contest, and on his return was solemnly crowned at Moskva—the first coronation of a grand prince that had taken place in that city.[87]

The iarlikh of the Khan possessed, however, none of its old finality, and Vasili had to sustain a civil war against his uncle, and after his death (1434) with his sons, Vasili the Squinting, Dimitri

Shemiaka, and Dimitri the Red. Although, apparently, not wanting in courage or energy (both of which deficiencies have been freely attributed to him), he possessed little skill in utilising his resources, and again and again suffered defeat, deposition, and imprisonment. The loyalty of Moskva brought him through many vicissitudes, and the tables were turned more than once upon his hostile relatives.

1436

Repulsing an attack made upon the capital by Vasili the Squinting, the Grand Prince secured the person of that rebel, and supplemented the defect bestowed by nature by blinding the eyes of his hapless prisoner. The leadership of the disaffected party devolved henceforth upon Shemiaka, who became the implacable enemy of the Grand Prince, and roused for many a long year the fires of discord in the land. Meanwhile the bosom of the Church was heaving with agitation as profound as that which disturbed the State.

1437

The new Metropolitan, Isidor of Salonika, had scarcely entered into his new duties when he was obliged to set off, by way of Novgorod, Riga, Lubeck, Braunschweig, Nurnberg, and the Tyrol, to attend the great Council which was to be held at Ferrara—subsequently at Florence—to unite the two Christian Churches in one communion. The immediate cause of this drawing together of the Latin and Greek rivals was the danger which was threatening the headquarters of the latter sect at the hands of the Infidel Turk. The Ottoman dynasty, rising upon the ruins of the Seljuk Empire, had slowly but steadily engorged the provinces which made up the dominion of the eastern Cæsars. Asia Minor, Bulgaria, Thessaly, Thrace, had been assimilated one by one, and now there remained but Constantinople, “a head without a body,” to resist the hitherto irresistible invader. Without substantial and speedy aid from Catholic Europe there was little probability that the city could long maintain its defence against the Ottoman armies, and Catholic Europe could not be expected to interest itself in the fate of a community which differed from itself in so many vital points of doctrine. The sole hope for Constantinople lay in the possibility of a reunion with the dominant factor of Christendom.

1438

This was the motive power which had drawn to the Italian town men from Moskva, Trebizond, and the isles of the Adriatic, to discuss the vexed question of the genesis of the Holy Ghost, the exact degree of bliss and torment allotted to the souls of the departed, whether it was permissible to use leavened bread in the sacrament, and whether Pope or Patriarch should occupy the chiefest seat at feasts. These were the main points which separated the Churches, and on each of them the Greek prelates (Mark of Ephesos excepted) gave way—not that the arguments of the Latins had become suddenly convincing, but the looming vision of the Turk inclined the minds of the Orthodox to surrender. “Ils ne croyaient pas, mais ils craignaient.”

Foremost among the complaisant Greeks was the Metropolitan Isidor; already, before leaving Russia, he had shown a “scandalous predilection for the Latin faith”—had he not at Dorpat kissed the Catholic cross before saluting the Greek ikons?

1440

Hence on his return to Moskva prince and prelates assembled in gloomy suspicion to receive him in the Church of the Virgin, and hear the result of the council’s deliberations. The Roman

cross demurely preceding the Metropolitan, and the Pope's name cropping up in the prayers, prepared them for the surrender set forth in the Act of Council. When Isidor had finished reading the unpalatable document there was an ominous silence, amid which Vasili rose to his feet and commenced to hurl invectives at the disconcerted Vladuika. Heretic, false shepherd, corrupter of souls, the mercenary of Rome, were among the epithets applied to the would-be reformer, who was promptly bundled off to a monastery, from which he was glad to escape back to Rome. John Paleologus might, for pressing reasons of his own, tolerate this accursed change of dogmas, but the Velikie Kniaz of Moskva would have none of it, and hastened, after the example of Vitovt, to consecrate a Metropolitan on his own responsibility, without reference to the tainted source of Constantinople. Jonas, Bishop of Riazan, was chosen for the post, but was not formally consecrated till 1448.[88]

The energy and reckless daring of the Prince's character showed itself soon after in a struggle with a new enemy. On the ruins of the Great Bulgarian State had sprung up the Tartar khanate of Kazan, independent of the Golden Horde, and a source of uneasiness for Eastern Russia. In an attempt to repel an invasion of the province of Souzdal by the forces of this upstart power, Vasili, deserted by his cousin Shemiaka, could only muster 1500 men, a shadow of the mighty hosts that had followed the banner of Moskva aforetime. With this handful, however, he joined battle with the Kazanese, and fell, covered with wounds, into their hands. At the news of this disaster the enemies of the Grand Prince raised their heads throughout the land; Boris of Tver raided the possessions of the Moskovite merchants at Torjhok, Shemiaka stretched out his hand for the vacant princedom. The sudden release of Vasili by the Khan Makhmet sorely embarrassed the position of the would-be supplanter, and Shemiaka was driven to make a bold bid for the mastery.

1446

A sudden move put the Kreml in his hands, and the hapless Grand Prince, while returning thanks in the Troitza monastery for his deliverance from the hands of the Infidels, experienced the worse fate of falling into the clutches of his Christian cousin, who put his eyes out. Thus after ten years came home to roost the wrong inflicted on Vasili the Squinting, and the Grand Prince was thenceforth Vasili the Blind. This barbarous requital of an "unhappy far-off" deed was perpetrated in the names of Shemiaka, Ivan Aleksandreivitch, and Boris of Tver, and in their hands remained the person of Vasili and the possessions of the Grand Principality. The first-named usurped the Moskovite throne and enjoyed for a space the power of Grand Prince without being able to gain the affections of the people.

1447

In the darkness which had descended on Vasili Vasilievitch the loyalty of boyarins, town-folk, and clergy still burned bravely for the captive prince; the popular clamour and the representations of the Metropolitan forced Shemiaka to restore him to liberty and bestow on him the town of Vologda as a residence, and not many months had passed ere the exile came marching back in triumph to his beloved and faithful Moskva—whose dazzling walls, indeed, he might never again behold, but whose pealing bells and hoarse-shouting populace spoke music to his darkened soul. Scarred and mutilated in the long struggle, in which he had tasted the bitterness of defeats, imprisonment, banishment, blinding, the Grand Prince had triumphed over all his misfortunes, had wearied down all opponents, had won. A final victory dispelled the power of Shemiaka (1450), and three years later he died at Novgorod, not without suspicion of

poisoning. From this turning-point Vasili the Darkened reigned peaceably and prosperously on the throne he had laboured so hard to retain.

As the Moskovites settled down to their long-estranged placidity, rumours reached them of the terrible thing which had befallen the city of the Caesars; rumours which soon grew into creditable news and made them doubt but that the bottom of their world had fallen out.

Little fruit had been born of the vaunted Council of Florence; the Churches were as far apart as ever. In vain might the Byzantine Emperor and the Greek hierarchy conform with the decisions of the act of union; the lower clergy and the bulk of the populace would have no dealings with the unholy ordinance. “Better Turkish than Papish,” the motto of the Water-Beggars in a later age, would fitly have described the sentiments of the people of Constantinople at this period. Thus they fought and squabbled over their beloved dogmas, while the enemy was slowly gathering his toils around the doomed city. The Pope, mortified at the miscarriage of his plans, sent no legions rolling across Europe to the assistance of the last of the Constantines; his legate, indeed, was on the scene, arguing and expostulating, with the rhetoric which gained him applause in the council-chamber at Florence, but failed him in the cold, grim Church of the Virgin in the Kreml—for this plausible Roman cardinal is no other than Isidor, sometime Metropolitan of Moskva. But while the Pope hesitates the Sultan acts. On every side the city is beset by an army that blackens the face of the earth. Cannon and ram and scaling-ladder are plied against the massive walls and heavy gates. Day after day the assault is urged; the city is bravely defended, for the most part by foreigners—for the greater proportion of the citizens are in the churches praying for deliverance from the unbelievers.

1453

But the wonder-working Virgin, weary of well-doing, or recognising the superior insistency of the attackers, makes no move to save the holy city; the faltering wail of “kyrie eleison” is drowned by the fierce roar of “Il Allah illah Allah,” the scarlet banner of the Yeni-Tscheri[89] waves in the breach at the Gate of Romanos, the young Sultan Mahomet II. bursts in upon his prey, and Constantine Paleologus, wounded and trampled on in the rush of the victors, dies amid the ruin of his empire. The purple and gold of old Byzantium are lost in the pall of night, and the rising moon salutes another crescent that gleams forth upon the dome of S. Sophia. The cry of the muezzins peals through the startled city; the eternal speculations upon the economy of self-begetting Trinities dies away before the new dogma, “There is one God and Mahomet is His prophet.” This is the end of the Crusades; this is the fall of the Tzargrad.[90]

After the first feeling of stupefaction and regret produced by these doleful tidings had passed away, the Moskovites might gather some little satisfaction from the overthrow of their spiritual headquarters, their one link with southern Europe. More than ever isolated, the Russian principality gained in importance by becoming the sole resting-place of the official Greek religion and of Greek ideas. Not at once did Moskva realise, or invent, the pleasing idea that she had succeeded to the heritage of the Caesars; yet to her, still struggling with the competition of other cities, with Tver, and Vladimir, even with faded Kiev, it was no small gain to have her churches and high places adorned by the art and sanctified by the presence of the Greek monks and artists, sages and artificers, who sought refuge within her gates. And the last years of her Prince, the evening of his stormy day, were ones of great progress for the white city, and for the monarchy which was rising around this corner-stone. The forces of reaction seemed for the moment to have spent their fury on the person of Vasili, and his

unbroken spirit might now pursue its way unquestioned.

1456

Novgorod, long the resort and refuge of his enemies, had at last to reckon with the armed expression of his resentment; its messengers were refused hearing, its army of 5000 mail-clad knights was routed near Rousa, its posadnik was a captive in the Grand Prince's hands, his forces occupied Torjhok. Peace had to be bought by the disbursement of 8500 roubles, by submission to a princely levy, and by other sacrifices of pride and pelf. The same year died Ivan Thedorovitch of Riazan, leaving his infant son Vasili to the guardianship of the Grand Prince, who took good care of the orphan—and of his province. Viatka, that turbulent colony, which outdid its parent Novgorod in rebellion and disorder, was forced to pay a tribute to the Prince of Moskva and to respect his arms.

1459

Pskov, long time but a Lit'uanian outpost, received his second son Urii as governor. Thus the grand principality, at peace once more within itself, was beginning to quicken its dormant authority in the farthest limits of its extent.

1460

In the year 1460 Vasili paid a long and gracious visit to Velikie Novgorod, to set the seal of his sovereignty on his northernmost city and dazzle the proud republicans with his imposing retinue. Much might they marvel at this grim groping figure, who had buffeted his way through so many storms, who had wrested victory from defeat, had thwarted the designs of Pope and Council, had taught the bells of S. Sofia Novgorodskie to jangle in his honour, had made Moskva mistress over long-resisting provinces. Scarred and worn with the traces of his life-struggle, Vasili the Darkened was a meet type of the Russia he ruled over, but just beginning to grope its way into the paths of unity and dominion. When in 1462 he went to his well-earned rest, he left his son Ivan in assured possession of the sovereignty in which he had been already for some time associated. The old mad folly of dividing the hardly-cemented territories between the dead Prince's sons was still persisted in—Vasili's eyes had not been opened even by being put out—but Ivan was emphatically Grand Prince of Moskva.

CHAPTER VII THE LAST OF THE PALEOLOGI AND THE FIRST OF THE AUTOCRATS

With the accession of Ivan III. to the throne of Moskva, Russian history takes new shape and direction. This dark, watchful, brooding kniaz was but the continuator of a dynasty of like princes “of gloomy and terrible mien, whose foreheads were marked by the seal of destiny.”[91] “Time and circumstance and opportunity paint with heedless hands and garish colours on the canvas of a man’s life; so that the result is less frequently a finished picture than a palette of squeezed tints.”[92] Time and circumstance and opportunity gave Ivan the title of Great, and his principality an importance it had never before enjoyed. That he made the most of his possibilities will not be denied, but in the nature of things this might scarcely have been otherwise. The whole character of the man dovetailed into the part he was required to play.

The growth of Moskovy had been marked by a life-struggle with three hostile factors—internal disruption, the aggression of the Horde, and the aggression of the Lit’uanian Princes; the first had been nearly stamped down by the forerunners of Ivan, circumstances enabled him to deal successfully with the two latter. The Golden Horde had already, in the reign of Vasili, fallen apart into independent khanates, that of Astrakhan representing the parent branch, while those of Kazan and of the Krim Tartars bordered the grand principality on the east and south respectively. The latter khanate was wedged in between the lands of Astrakhan and Lit’uania, and Ivan was able to turn its resources to good account against both these neighbours, as a counterpoise to the concerted action which they were ever ready to take against him. With the Kazanese he carried on, in the early years of his reign (1467-69), a scrambling war, in which, if his armies more than held their own, he personally showed little courage or determination. Possibly, however, he was reserving himself for the inevitable struggle with Novgorod, on the result of which indirectly hung the question whether Vilna or Moskva should be the centre of the Russian state. “Under which King?” was undisguisedly the issue which was before the Novgorodskie at this juncture, and the answer threatened to be unfavourable to Moskva. For once the faction motives that agitated the citizens of the great republic are plainly understandable: on the one side was hostility to the growing and griping power of the Grand Prince, and a desire to seek the protection of Kazimir and the spiritual guidance of the Metropolitan of Kiev; on the other, aversion to a foreign suzerainty and a heresy-tainted Church. Since Olga had lighted the torch of Christianity in the land, since Anastasie of Galitz[93] had furnished an illumination of a different nature, women had rarely mingled in the national politics, and “*cherchez la femme*” would scarcely hold good with regard to Russian troubles. Now, however, at the head of the Lit’uanian-leaning faction appears a woman, one Martha, widow of the posadnik Isak Boretzki, and mother of two of the city notables. The encroachments of Vasili on the liberties and domains of the republic had thoroughly alarmed the citizens, and Martha’s party had little difficulty in rousing a spirit of defiance towards the new Prince, who was held to be of weaker fibre than his father. An alliance with Kazimir was openly projected, and the Moskovite agents were treated with studied disrespect. Ivan expostulated, the Novgorodskie persisted. Still expostulating, the Grand Prince set in motion a formidable array of troops; Pskovskie, Moskovite, Viatkian, Tverskie, and Tartar contingents converged on the lands of the republic, defeated and drove in the forces sent against them, and hemmed the city in on every side. Ivan, breathing peace and goodwill, wound his coils slowly round his prey, and waited. Want, the old enemy of Novgorod, began to fight against the Boretzki faction; “Ivan is at our gates, and your Kazimir, where is he?” demanded the

“younger folk,” the first to feel the pinch of famine. Couriers had been sent to invoke the assistance of the King of Poland, but the Land-Master of Livland had turned them back. And this mild-mannered Grand Prince, still breathing goodwill, had taken to cutting off the heads of the most notable of his prisoners; among others, one of Martha’s sons had been so treated. Clearly this was not a man to be trifled with; the city capitulated.

1471

Bitter were the terms to which the Novgorodskie had to submit: a fine of 15,000 roubles, the surrender of several contested dependencies, the payment of a tribute to Moskva, an engagement to hold no intercourse with the King of Poland or the Metropolitan of Kiev or any of the Grand Prince’s enemies, the annulment of the acts of the Vetché, and the recognition of Ivan as appeal judge in their civic litigation. Velikie Novgorod had found her master.

The next and most important event of an important reign was produced by an outside circumstance. The tidal wave of Islam which had swept over the cradle of the Orthodox faith, had also cut short the sphere of Papal influence, and threatened to make still further inroads on the Catholic lands of South-Eastern Europe. As Venice mourned her damaged trade so Rome sighed over her abbreviated authority and diminished Peter’s Pence. Pope after Pope cast anxious eyes around the sovereigns of Christendom to discover a possible champion against the Turk; but the days of the Crusades were over. One card there remained for the Vatican to play. Brought up in dependence on the Papal Court, and in conformity with the Latin faith, were the heritors of the dead empire; Sophie Paleologus and her two brothers, children of Thomas, brother of the last Emperor, were, body and soul, at the disposal of the Pope (Paul II.). Of the young Princes obviously nothing could be made, but by proclaiming Sophie as heiress of Constantinople a husband might be found for her who would be willing to break a lance with Mahomet for the possession of his wife’s inheritance. Ivan of Moskva, whose remote ancestors had turned their eyes so persistently towards the Tzargrad, seemed a likely candidate for the hand of the orphan exile, and an embassy from Paul sounded the Grand Prince on the subject. Ivan, whose first wife, Mariya of Tver, had died in 1467, lent favourable ear to the suggestion, and matters were satisfactorily arranged between the high contracting parties. The question of religion does not appear to have been raised as an obstacle, either by Paul or Sixtus IV., who succeeded to the Papal throne while the negotiations were proceeding. Whether Ivan’s ambassadors threw dust in the eyes of the Pontiffs, whether the latter hoped to win him, by means of his bride, over to the Latin faith, or whether the driving out of the Turk was for the moment more important than the genesis of the Holy Ghost, it is difficult to determine, but the betrothal was accomplished with the full blessing of the Church. Of Sophie the information available is curiously unequal, detailed on some points, vague to blankness on others. That, according to the chronicles, she charmed all beholders with her presence—a habit common with princesses—must be dispassionately compared with a contemporary Italian account, which likened her to a disgusting mountain of fat. That she left the Eternal City under the wing of the Pope’s legate; that she passed through Viterbo and Sienna; that the council of the latter city voted, by 124 voices to 42, fifty florins to defray the cost of her reception; that she made her way through Bologna and Nürnberg to Lubeck, and thence by sea to Revel; that she was well received at Pskov, and also at Novgorod, at which place the old bell of Yaroslav might yet salute the honoured guest; all this may be gathered from the records of the past.[94] Reared amid the warm and stately cities of Italy, with fond remembrance of the lost glories of Constantinople, there was much that must have seemed strange and wild,

perhaps desolate, in the long sledge journey through the unending snow-choked forests towards Moskva; Moskva, which, even in its winter mantle, would compare but meagrely with most of the cities the traveller had passed through. For in those days and at that moment, with its cathedral in ruins, its buildings insignificant, and its limits eked out with meadows and copses, the capital of the grand principality did not make a very brave show.[95] The solemnity of her reception was marred by an awkward incident, which showed that, however the case might be at Rome, inter-Christian bitterness still ruled strong at Moskva. The legate, it was understood, not content with flaunting his scarlet robes in the face of the Orthodox, intended to have the Latin Cross borne before him into the city. Should such things be? Ivan held high counsel with his clergy and boyarins on the subject; the majority were in favour of “shutting their eyes” when the objectionable emblem should make its appearance on the scene, but this ostrich-like expedient did not recommend itself to the Metropolitan Filipp, who declared that if it came in at one gate he should go out at another. Happily the Cardinal showed a more accommodating spirit, and, when the situation had been explained to him by the Prince’s messengers, consented to have the Cross smuggled through in a sledge. This concession smoothed over the difficulty, and the catastrophe of the whole bridal train being kept waiting for days in the snow outside Moskva till one or other of the churchmen gave way, was happily averted.[96]

1472

From the moment that Sophie Paleologus became mated with Ivan comparatively little is heard of her; her personality is swallowed up in that of the Grand Prince. But the influence of the Greek Princess can be traced in many of the important developments of this reign. Born amid the extravagant ceremonial of the Byzantine Court, and treasuring the memory of those splendid myths and vanities, the more perhaps because they were wholly lost, the exile transplanted to the rugged soil of Moskovy the ideals that had waxed to fantastic growth on the humid shores of the Bosphorus. The Velikie-kniaz of yore, moving freely among his boyarins and subjects, develops gradually into the heaven-born Sovereign, a being removed from contact with the ordinary sons of earth, withdrawn from profane touch into a Holy of Holies of pomp and ceremony. Here again Ivan was manifestly fitted to assist in working out this evolution. His cold-blooded, calculated policy, his pitiless, passionless judgment, his baleful glance, which is said to have caused women to faint, were meet attributes of a majesty that was accounted something more than human.

Under the influence of the new Byzantine and Italian ideas which the Grand Prince imbibed from the inspiration of his consort and her Court followers, Moskva received new buildings and adornments, a new Cathedral of the Assumption (Ouspienskie Sobor), a new Kreml, new ordnance, new coinage. Received also new laws, new punishments; the old repugnance against taking life, expressed in the testament of Monomachus, gave way to artistically conceived executions and tortures. Heretics were put to death in a manner that the Inquisitors of Western Europe might have been proud to own—roasted gently in a cage, for example, or, if allowed to live, deprived of their unruly tongues. Knout and axe made their appearance in the penal code, flesh and blood cheapened in the market of civil life. Such were the results of the union of the last of the Caesars with the first of the Tzars. The outward expression of this alliance was the adoption on the Prince’s seals of the double-headed eagle, the arms of the defunct eastern empire; a cognisance which had, since the days of Karl the Great, been also the distinguishing device of the western empire.[97]

In his capacity of appeal judge of Novgorodian suits, Ivan found his influence over the affairs of the city daily growing stronger; an accident furnished him with the pretext for bringing the republic wholly under his authority. By a clerical error in a petition his style was written Sovereign (Gosoudar), instead of Lord (Gospodin). A nod is as good as a wink to an Argus-eyed prince. Ivan thanked the citizens for their voluntary submission and assumed the new title. Novgorod rose in angry rebellion against this last blow at her independence; the faction of Martha lifted its head anew, and the eyes of all men turned towards the King of Poland. But from that quarter came no help. Kazimir was engaged in a struggle with Matthias of Hungary on the one hand and the Teutonic Order on the other, and had, moreover, to maintain his son Vladislas on the throne of Bohemia; hence he was not in a position to court the hostility of the Prince of Moskva. Novgorod had to front alone the overwhelming forces which Ivan led against her. The Archbishop Theofil flitted backwards and forwards between the city and the Prince's camp, but saw never a sign of yielding on that impassive countenance; saw only fresh troops arriving to swell the monarch's array. The unequal struggle could have but one end. "Who can resist God and Great Novgorod?" The proud sphinx-riddle had at last been answered, and the republic perished, strangled in the toils of autocracy.

1477

As Gosoudar Ivan entered the humbled city the sovereign functions of vetché and posadnik were abolished, and the whole province of Novgorod was added to the domain of Moskva. Loaded with an enormous booty, wrenched by way of fine from the citizens, the Grand Prince returned to his capital, bearing with him as prisoners many of the merchants and boyarins of the disaffected party, and the bereaved Martha, the Helen of this smitten Troy. Bearing also a yet more notable captive, the great bell of Yaroslav, which for many a hundred year had hung like a watchful sprite in its beetling belfry, had clanged, boomed, and sobbed its summonses to council, strife, or revelry, had roused the sleepy monks in many a marsh-girt monastery, and witched with muffled echoes the seals of Lake Ilmen—this voice of Novgorod's liberty was borne away in the conqueror's train, to be hung in the new Ouspienskie Cathedral at Moskva, and eat out its life in droning solemn flatteries on Moskovite high-days. Perchance as they lifted it down from its long-accustomed tower it clashed forth one last discordant knell, a passing-bell for the soul of the great republic.

Whatever hopes the Roman Pontiffs had built on the marriage they had negotiated, they were doomed to be disappointed. Sophie Paleologus, so far from converting her husband to the Latin faith, had adopted the Orthodox religion almost as soon as she entered Russia,[98] and the decrees of the Council of Florence were worse than abortive as far as Moskva was concerned. Nor was it likely that Ivan, saddled with his own subjection to the sword of the Prophet, was going crusading against the Ottoman power in South Europe. Popular tradition, indeed, gave his wife credit for turning his energies towards the off-throwing of this same Mongol yoke, which was incompatible with the new ideas of princely dignity. The initiative, however, appears to have come from the other side. Akhmet, Khan of Astrakhan, either sensible of the growing independence of Moskva, or acting at the instance of the King of Poland, seized upon a moment when Ivan was embroiled in a quarrel with his brothers (Boris and Andrei the elder) to march against this too-uplifted vassal.

1452

Kazimir having, by the Peace of Olmutz (1479), closed the war with Hungary, was in a position

to second Akhmet's attack. The political genius of Ivan was equal to the emergency. By wise concessions he dispelled his brothers' resentment and presented a united front to the invaders, while his friendship with Mengli-Girei, the Khan of the Krim Tartars, enabled him to send the Krimskie horsemen raiding into Lit'uania—an effective counter-stroke to Kazimir's intrigues with the eastern khanate. Face to face in equal struggle with the enemy, the Grand Prince showed none of the impatient war-horse-snorting ardour which was expected of him; showed rather a spirit of misgiving and vacillation, which had to be goaded by women and ecclesiastics before it could be wound up to the necessary pitch. This unwillingness to fight need not be set down unhesitatingly to want of courage. *Erst wäge, dann wage*, the motto of a world-wise man of a later day, was the life-motive of this wary yet strenuous kniaz, and he had good reason to pause before staking the existence of his monarchy on a pitched battle with Akhmet. The disaster which befell Vitovt, and the equally unprofitable sequel to the victory of Dimitri Donskoi, warned Ivan of the risk he ran in courting a like experience. With a little patience, a little more feigned submission, Moskva would see the power of the Horde crumble away of its own corrosive action; on the other hand, the defeat of the Grand Prince's army would place his territories at the mercy of the real enemy, and the aggrandisement of the Polish-Lit'uanian crown would be a death-blow to Moskovy. For months the two armies faced each other on opposite banks of the Ougr, Ivan urged by his soldiers and by the fiery Vassian, Archbishop of Rostov, to strike a blow against the impious enemy of God, and the impious one waiting for Lit'uanian succours before attacking Ivan. At length the approach of winter froze the dividing river and left no further obstacle to defer the contest. But the final snapping of the Mongol yoke was to be effected in a manner which partook of the ridiculous rather than the heroic. Ivan gave orders to his boyarins to withdraw the army to a position more favourable for receiving the attack; the backward movement engendered a panic among the Russians, and the retreat was changed into a flight. On the other bank of the Ougr the Mongols were alarmed to find that the foe whom they had been watching so closely for months had suddenly vanished; a flank attack, a rear attack, some unseen horror, was evidently creeping upon them, and the hosts of Akhmet raced away from Moskovite soil as though all the saints of the Orthodox calendar had been mobilised against them. Ivan, like many another frozen-blooded strategist, had won by waiting, and might now turn his undivided and untrammelled energies towards the western foe.

The dynasty of Yagiello had emerged from its lair in the Lit'uanian forests at a moment when the old reigning families of Poland, Hungary, and Bohemia were dying out, and it seemed not unlikely that this new and vigorous stock would gather up the fallen threads of Piast, Arpad, and Premyslide, and weave together a powerful Slav-Magyar Empire. Already in outward appearance a considerable step towards this goal had been made. Kazimir Yagiellovitch had re-united the Polish and Lit'uanian lands under his sceptre, West Russia was entirely in his hands, Pomerellen and West Prussia had been wrested from the Order, and one of his sons filled the Bohemian throne; in Hungary his pretensions were only held in check by the vigour of Matthias Hunnyades. Against this wide-stretching dominion the Grand-principality of Moskva was pitted in a struggle as deadly as any that was waged between kindred species of life in far primæval days. And for this struggle Moskva was the more strongly equipped, despite her disparity of forces, by the solidly-wrought cohesion into which centuries of adversity had hammered her. Nor did her ruler rely for success on his own unaided resources; besides his familiar sprite of the steppes, the Krim Tartar Khan, Ivan drew into a league of suspended hostility Matthias of Hungary—the great stumbling-block to Polish expansion—and Stefan VI.,

Hospodar of Moldavia. The latter Prince, whose efforts had raised his country, almost for the first time in her chequered history, to a position of independence, and whose exploits against the Turks had gained for him, from Sixtus IV., the title of *l'Athlète du Christ*, was allied with the Moskovite princely family by the marriage of his daughter with the young Ivan, son of the Grand Prince by his first wife, Mariya of Tver. The outcome of these preparations was not open war; the two powers remained snarling at each other and watching for some favourable opportunity for attack. Ivan looked on complacently while Mengli-Girei made an inroad upon the Podolian lands and plundered Kiev, while on the other side Kazimir was believed to have incited the Order to hostilities against Moskva.[99] Ivan's forces, however, overawed the Teutons, and in another direction Kazimir's designs were frustrated; a counter matrimonial alliance, between Mikhail of Tver and a granddaughter of the King of Poland, was nipped in the bud by the Grand Prince's vigilance, and soon afterwards the Tverskie kniaz, detected in an intrigue with Kazimir, was forced to fly from Ivan's vengeance.

1485

The little principality, which had been for centuries a thorn in the side of Moskva, was swallowed up in the Grand Prince's dominions, and Kazimir had the mortification of seeing his enemy grow stronger instead of weaker as a result of this diplomatic skirmishing.

If the Polish King counted on wearying Ivan into some rash or negligent act of open hostility or wanton enterprise he knew not his man. The Moskovite never undertook a task greater than his forces were able to accomplish, or attempted to hold more than he could with safety manage. Hence his resources were never exhausted, and the long period of pent hostility was turned on his part to solid advantage.

1487

The small appanages of Rostov and Yaroslavl shared the fate of Tver and Novgorod, Viatka was reduced to submission, Perm and the silver-yielding region of the Petchora were added to the sovereignty, and Kazan, long a scourge to the Volga Russians, fell into the power of the Grand Prince. Ivan set a vassal Khan on the throne of this new dependency, reserving for himself the title of Prince of Bulgaria. A new title, indeed, was becoming necessary to describe the august being who was emerging from the cocoon state of a Prince of Moskva, and Ivan henceforth begins to style himself Tzar in his foreign correspondence.[100]

The growing power and importance of the Moskovite state, emerged from its Tartar thraldom and hallowed by its connection with the dead Byzantine past, brought it more into contact with the western world from which it had drifted so far apart. Like the hero of the Dutch romance, revisiting the haunts of early life after his protracted slumber, Russia was renewing the relations she had held with Christendom before her opium-sleep in the shadow of the Khans. The wily and patient kniaz had a double purpose to serve in encouraging intercourse with the western princes: in the first place, to seek fresh allies against the arch-enemy, Poland; in the second, to procure for his beloved capital a share of the progress and civilisation which was then illuminating Europe. Embassies and presents were exchanged with the Emperor (Frederick III.) and with the young Maximilian, "King of the Romans." The death of Matthias (1490) and the election to the Hungarian crown of Ladislas, King of Bohemia and son of Kazimir, placed Maximilian in direct opposition to the House of Yagiello, and Ivan was ready to join with the Habsburg in an attack on the common enemy.

1491

The hostilities in Hungary were, however, cut short by a peace based on one of the “family compacts” so dear to the House of Austria, and Ivan, in his turn, saw the power of his foe wax stronger in spite of his diplomatic efforts. In another and more unexpected direction the Grand Prince established relations of friendship; the Ottoman power had already stretched its grasp over Kaffa and the fertile lands of the Krim peninsula, and Mengli-Girei was enrolled among the vassals of the Sultan Bayezid II. With this pacific occupant of the Throne of the Faithful Ivan exchanged courtesies—a sorry miscarriage of the hopes of the match-making Pontiffs. Doubtless the Russian Prince saw in the Sultan a possible ally against the new King of Hungary, who might one day unite on his head the crowns of Poland and Lit’uania. Not in this direction, however, were travelling the energies of the house of Yagiello. Kazimir seemed bent on providing his numerous sons with separate kingdoms and principalities; having failed in his attempt to divide the crowns of Hungary and Bohemia, he tried to secure the succession of his second son, John-Albert, to the Polish throne, and recommended another son, Alexander, to the boyarins of the grand duchy. Having thus, in marked contrast to the life-work of his great rival, done all that he could to ensure the disintegration of his sovereignty, the King comfortably sickened of a fatal disease and passed away with the famous *moriendum ergo* on his lips.

1492

Subsequent events fell in with his testamentary wishes. The Lit’uanians elected Alexander as Grand Duke, and the Polish Diet, after many stormy sittings, recognised John-Albert as its sovereign—a recognition possibly influenced by the arrival on the scene of deliberation of 1600 armed men enlisted on that Prince’s behalf.[101]

The enfeeblement of Lit’uania by reason of its separation from Poland invited the long-nursed hostility of the Grand Prince and his faithful ally, Mengli-Girei. The latter ravaged the Lettish territories in the south, while the forces of the former harried all along the Moskovite border. Many of the boyarins and petty princes subject to Alexander passed over to the service of a monarch who was of their own nationality and religion, and the Grand Duke had to signalise his accession by buying off the hostility of Ivan with the surrender of some frontier lands.

1494

On these terms an “eternal peace” was accommodated between the two countries, and the following year a matrimonial alliance was effected between Alexander and Ivan’s daughter Elena. Whatever chance might have existed of durable concord between a weak state holding conquered territory and a strong state to whom that territory has once belonged was extinguished by the irritating stipulations with which this marriage contract bristled. Uncomfortable as a neighbour, Ivan was incompatible as a father-in-law; the safeguards which had been insisted on against any tampering with the Princess’s Orthodoxy were supplemented by minute regulations with regard to her worship, her household, even her dress. She might visit a Catholic church as a curiosity—twice; she was to eschew Polish costumes, even her cooks were of Russian selection. In fact, her Court was to be an Orthodox Moskovite oasis in the Lit’uanian desert.[102] Alexander found he had sacrificed his domestic independence without obtaining any compensating security for his dominions; the restless Hospodar of Moldavia and the Krimskie Khan continued to harry the Podolian and Galician lands, and the

Moskovites were openly aggressive towards the Grand Duke's subjects. Ivan, indeed, at this period seems to have rated the power of the Yagiellos cheaply, and to have permitted himself a diversion in the affairs of North-western Europe. Whether he had secretly nursed designs against the merchants of the Hansa League, who continued to maintain a flourishing commerce at Novgorod after the civic glories had departed from her, or whether for once his coldly-measured policy was influenced by an unpent passion, the facts scarcely indicate.

1495

The spark that roused, or gave plausible ground for, his sudden resentment against the unsuspecting traders was the torture of two Russian subjects at Revel—who were boiled to death for coining false money and otherwise misconducting themselves—coupled with an insult to the Grand Prince. Ivan revenged himself by swooping down on the famous Hanse factory at Novgorod, confiscating all the merchandise therein stored, and seizing the persons of forty-nine merchants of Lubeck, Hamburg, Munster, Dortmund, Revel, Dorpat, etc. By this raid he enriched himself with a sum computed at a million gulden, but the Hansa trade with Novgorod and Pskov was diverted to Revel and the Livlandish towns.[103] Skandinavian affairs next engaged the Grand Prince's attention, and the embarrassments of Sweden offered an opportunity for wiping off old scores with that ancient enemy. Under the administration of the Regent Sture the Swedes had broken away from the Kalmar Union, and refused to acknowledge as their sovereign Johann, Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, and King of Denmark and Norway; with this monarch Ivan entered into an active alliance, and the bleak uplands and marsh-choked forests of Finland became the scene of an obstinate war. Ivangorod, the newly-built Russian frontier fortress and the Swedish outpost of Viborg were in turn besieged by the belligerents, and the Finns experienced the calamities to which border peoples are particularly liable. Neither side gained any important advantage, and the war was brought to a sudden termination by the election of Johann to the crown of Sweden.

The influence of Byzantine ideas which had permeated the Moskovite Court showed itself in a series of sinister developments, which closely reproduced the palace intrigues for which the Greek capital had been infamous.

(1490)

By the death of the young Ivan, son of the Grand Prince by his first wife, the heirship in the direct line had devolved upon the former's infant son, Dimitri; a formidable competitor existed, however, in Vasili, eldest son of Ivan by his second marriage, and herein lay the constituents of a pretty succession dispute, in which of course the two mothers, Elena of Moldavia and Sophie Paleologus, urged with inconvenient insistency the claims of their respective sons. The law of hereditary succession was an exotic plant on Russian soil, and men's ideas were not yet sufficiently fixed to remove all question of doubt on the subject. For a comparatively newly established Court matters were carried through with remarkable correctness of detail. Plots were discovered—or imagined, tortures extracted confessions, guilty boyarins yielded up their lives on the banks of the river Moskva, Sophie and her son were disgraced, and the child Dimitri solemnly crowned as Ivan's successor. The latter decision may have been influenced by a desire to "keep in" with the Hospodar Stefan, rather than by any scrupulous regard for hereditary rights, but at least it shows how little the heirship-of-the-Cæsars idea had taken hold of Moskovite minds.

Renewed intrigues brought about a reaction, Sophie and her son were restored to the light of the Grand Prince's countenance, and another batch of executions and imprisonments, among the Dimitri party this time, restored peace and happiness to the domestic circle. Vasili was decorated with the title of Prince of Novgorod and Pskov, and the succession remained for the present a reopened question.

Meanwhile the eternal peace was showing signs of the decay to which such institutions are liable. In August 1499 appeared at Moskva the ambassador of Lit'uania, one Stanislav Gliebovitch, big with grievances against the Grand Prince. Stefan of Moldavia was threatened by the all-devouring Turk; would Ivan unite with the sovereigns of Lit'uania, Poland, and Hungary on his behalf? Why had Ivan, notwithstanding the peace, incited Mengli-Girei to raid the Grand Duke's territories? And if Alexander conceded to Ivan the title "Sovereign of all Russia," would the latter promise to renounce all claim on Kiev for himself and his heirs? To the last of these propositions Ivan returned a scornful negative. With regard to the suggested crusade he was ready to give assistance to Stefan when the latter should personally ask for it. The charge concerning Mengli, which could not be denied, was met by counter-recriminations respecting Alexander's intrigues with the Golden Horde. The irritation felt at Vilna at the uncompromising attitude of the Grand Prince towards the proposals put forward by this mission was not allowed to calm down. Ivan presented on his part a batch of complaints concerning the non-fulfilment of various items in the Princess Elena's marriage agreement, and the alleged forced conversion of the Grand Duke's Russian subjects to the Latin faith. The amenities of religion gave the finishing touch to an already overstrained situation. Lit'uania and the Russian provinces included within its political bounds swarmed with an aristocratic population of boyarin-princes, some offshoots of the prolific stock of Rurik, others descendants of Gedimin. The Russian and Orthodox among them naturally inclined towards the rising power of Moskva, while among the Letts were many who bore no affection to the Yagiellos and were disposed rather to cast in their lot with the all-conquering Grand Prince. Even the grandsons of Shemiaka were drawn back to the allegiance which their forbears had deserted; in short, all along the border there was an uprising of princes and voevodas on behalf of the Prince of Moskva.

With the melting of the winter snows both sides prepared to take the field. The Tartars of the Krim steppes turned the noses of their wiry little horses towards the west; those of Kazan pushed along the wooded valley of the Upper Volga to swell the war-bands gathering at Moskva; the Grand Prince's own horse-carls (with their quaint equipment of sabre, bow and arrows, mace, kisten,[104] and whip, and their heavy quilted jerkins) clambered on to their sturdy shaggy-heeled steeds and marshalled themselves under their respective boyarins and captains; the bulbous domes and campaniles of the magnificent-grown city re-echoed the pealing war-notes, and in wood and wold howled S. George's dogs[105] in chorus, in anticipation of the good times coming.

Neither prince commanded his army in person; each in fact was employed in weaving alliances against the other. The main body of the Moskovite troops was under the direction of the voevoda Yakov Zakharievitch; the Letts were generalled by the hetman Konstantin Ostrojhskie. All the advantage of preparedness lay with the Moskovites, who in fact had taken possession of several Lit'uanian places while the Grand Duke was still in the negotiating

stage. Alexander awoke from his chafing and peeving and yielding to find that his *parent terrible* was ensconced on the wrong side of the border, and the detestable Mengli-Girei, who hunted in couple with the Grand Prince, was careering unchecked through Podolia and Galicia; also the interesting champion of Christendom, who loved the Poles no better than he loved the Turks, was preparing to make a hostile incursion upon the same provinces. The Grand Duke on his part made overtures to the Order and dispatched couriers to Shikh-Akhmat, Khan of Astrakhan, and mortal enemy of Mengli.

July 1500

The superiority in warfare which had distinguished the Letts under their early princes seemed to have been lost at this juncture, and the first collision between the opposing forces—on the plain of Mit'kov, by the banks of the Vedrosh—resulted in a complete victory for the Moskovites.[106] The hetman and many Lit'uanian pans were taken prisoners, and there was joy in the bulb-topped city. The position of the long-time enemies was exactly reversed; the Moskovite and Tartar armies swept all before them in the open country, but the fortified citadels of Polotzk, Smolensk, Vitebsk, and other border strongholds resisted the attacks of the invaders, as the Kreml had defied those of Olgerd and Vitovt in bygone days. In the south-west the Krim hordes, led by Mengli-Girei's son, burnt Kremenetz, Lublin, and many other towns and gorodoks. Unable to make a respectable resistance to his enemies on either side, Alexander engaged himself in a feverish activity of negotiation. In January 1501 ambassadors from Ladislav of Hungary-Bohemia and Albert of Poland journeyed to Moskva on a fruitless errand of mediation. Urgent remonstrances were dispatched from Vilna to Moldavia, begging the *Athlete du Christ* to be athletic in any other direction than that of the grand duchy, while anxious endeavours were made to enlist the aid of the German Order against the victorious Moskovite. The office of Land-Master of Livland was filled at this moment by the able warrior Walter von Plettenberg, and though crippled in power and dominion since the disastrous field of Tannenberg, the knights were still a formidable fighting force. Little reason had they to love the Yagiellos, but at this moment Teutonic feeling was more inflamed against the phœnix-growth of the new Russian power that had arisen from the ashes of Mongol devastation. The Order saw the hand that armed Pskov and Izborsk against its territories; the Hansa merchants thought of the violence done to their trading rights at Novgorod; and the empire felt jealous of the rival sovereignty, owning neither Pope nor Kaiser, which threatened to make the late Emperor's fatuous monogram more illusory than ever.[107] Taking advantage of this latent hostility, Alexander was able to bring about an offensive alliance between himself and the Order, into which also entered the sovereign ecclesiastics of Riga, Revel, Dorpat, Oesel, and Pilten. This new phase of the struggle was heralded by the arrest of 200 Russian merchants at Dorpat, a belated reprisal for the affair of Novgorod. Ivan dispatched towards the Livlandish border an army of Moskovites and Pskovians, computed to have been 40,000 strong. Against this array von Plettenberg could only bring into action, at a locality 10 verstas from Izborsk, a force of 4000 knights and some irregulars. The Germans, however, were well supplied with artillery, and the noise, perhaps more than the execution, of their fire-belching implements of war caused a panic among the Russians, who fled in confusion. And here it may be remarked that the Russian warriors of that period were somewhat liable to these sudden stampedes; as a contemporary observer neatly remarks, "They make the first charge on the enemy with great impetuosity, but their valour does not seem to hold out very long, for they seem as if they would give a hint to the enemy, as much as to say, 'if you do not flee, we must.'"[108] Without straining a point it may be assumed that this liability to panic was in some measure due to the

superstitious coddling of their religion, which depicted angels and saints and Bogoroditzas as ready, on suitable occasions, to interfere with effect on their behalf; consequently if the enemy stood his ground for any length of time the disheartened warriors experienced an uneasy *lama sabacthani* feeling that all was not well with them in the desired quarter, and demoralisation ensued. The stubbornly contested field of Koulikovo scarcely furnishes the exception which "proves the rule," as on that occasion the Metropolitan had announced that victory would only be attained after much fighting.[109]

This ignominious collapse left Pskov to receive the full fury of von Plettenberg's attack, and the citizens in desperation prepared to make a more creditable stand behind their walls than they had done in the field. But the threatened blow did not fall; a pestilence of some severity broke out among the "iron men," and the army of the Order was obliged to return to quarters.

Another change came over the complexion of affairs. John-Albert had terminated an inglorious reign by a fit of apoplexy in the month of June, and on the 23rd October the Polish Diet elected Alexander to the vacant throne. This event did not strengthen his hands as much as might have been expected. The Polish pans and nobles were a turbulent self-seeking class, and were not likely to rush recklessly to the defence of Lit'uania while their new monarch stayed quietly at home and tampered possibly with their precious privileges. Ivan on the other hand, undeterred by the reverse near Izborsk, prosecuted the war with persistent energy. Employing the best possible method for heartening his troops against the Teutons, he sent them ravaging into Livland on the heels of the retreating army. Another victory was obtained over the Lit'uanians, while Shikh-Akhmet, who had made a diversion against Mengli on the east, was chased out of his dominions by the allied Moskovite and Krim forces. Thus darkly for Alexander closed the year 1501. Ivan had maintained his ground in every direction, and had inflicted grievous harm on the allies of Poland. His Russian and Tartar cavalry had raided unchecked round Neuhausen, Marienburg, and the cathedral lands of Dorpat, the autumn floods and consequent state of the roads preventing the heavy-armed knights and their heavier artillery from taking the field. With the first frosts the invaders withdrew across the border, followed by the indefatigable Land-Master, who at last was able to abandon his enforced inaction. His hastily gathered forces were, however, outmatched by the superior numbers of the marauders, and in an encounter at Helmet (25th November) the Germans were beaten back and 300 of the episcopal troops of Dorpat left upon the field.[110]

The war dragged on throughout the early months of the new year; a waiting game obviously suited Ivan's plans and there was none to force his hand. The dread of Russian-Tartar raids made the Livlander prelates and burggreves chary of sending off their lanzknechts to the support of the Land-Master, and von Plettenberg was for a long time unable either to clear his borders of the freebooting bands, or to carry the hostilities into the enemy's country. From Alexander came no help, only couriers with promises. The King was prodigal with his messengers and tireless in sketching plans of campaign for himself and his allies; the only detail which he allowed himself to neglect was the carrying out of his share of the preconcerted action. This omission placed his friends in awkward predicaments; Shikh-Akhmet was a miserable fugitive, von Plettenberg found himself facing the whole Moskovite fighting strength, except that detachment which was leisurely besieging Smolensk. Autumn witnessed a quickening of the situation. Still trusting to Alexander's fly-blown promises, the Land-Master assumed the aggressive and trained his ponderous artillery against the walls of Pskov. The burghers saw their battlements and ramparts crumble away beneath the

thundering cannonade of the mighty siege-pieces, and day by day weaker grew the defences which divided them from their bitterest enemies. But while no Polish troops put in an appearance, the hearts of the besieged were gladdened by the sight of the tossing manes of thousands of Tartar horses and the conical head-dress of thousands of Ivan's warriors. The advancing Russian host was large enough to smother the slender following of von Plettenberg, but the iron-sheathed German knights and footmen were capable of offering a stout resistance to the arrows and even the trenchant sabres of their opponents. The Land-Master withdrew his force to the shores of the Smolina Lake, where, on the day of the Exaltation of the Cross (14th September) the Black Cross warriors commenced one of the most brilliant battles of their crowded annals. For three days they held the field against the stubborn attacks of the whirlwind-sweeping squadrons; "with blood and dust," says an old chronicle, "both steed and rider were bedecked, so that none might tell the colour"; and when finally exhaustion and discouragement deterred the Russians from renewing the attack, the Iron men were able to claim the victory. But the willing horse had worked itself to a standstill; von Plettenberg was obliged to lead his scarred and weary followers homeward, and if the Moskovites were too crippled to re-commence their raids, at the same time the Livlanders were forced out of Russian territory.[111]

Meanwhile in another direction had fallen a long impending blow, no further to be averted by the eloquent epistles of the Complete Letter-writer. The redoubtable Hospodar, nursing against Poland the remembrance of recent wrongs, and profiting by her present embarrassments, burst suddenly into Galicia, and gleaned where the Tartars had harvested. Several towns fell with little resistance into his hands, and were annexed to his Moldavian dominions. Not in accord with Ivan was this invasion undertaken, for the question of the succession to the Moskovite throne had caused a rupture between the two princes. Mengli-Girei was, in fact, the pivot on which the anti-Polish alliance turned; the Grand Prince was not on good terms with the Hospodar, and the latter could not be considered as otherwise than hostile to the Turkish Sultan, but Mengli was the friend and ally of all three. The winter of 1502-3 found matters in much the same state as they had been twelve months earlier. The Grand Prince's troops had been obliged to raise the siege of Smolensk, but they still retained the lands they had seized at the commencement of the war, still held their own in the Baltic districts. A candidate for the blessings traditionally allotted to the peacemaker now appeared in the person of the Pontiff, who sought to bring about an accommodation between the contending sovereigns. The splendid profligate who occupied the throne of S. Peter was not actuated by a constitutional or professional abhorrence of bloodshed—under his pontificate the Eternal City had been a shambles rather than a sheepfold,—but for the present the smiting of the Infidel seemed to him more urgent than the harrying of the Orthodox, especially as the Orthodox seemed well able to retaliate. With an uncrushed and unappeased enemy on their flank, it was clearly impossible for the kings of Hungary and Poland and the Teutonic Order to join in the crusade by which the Borgia fondly hoped to sweep the Ottoman from Europe. Hence the apparition of this very soiled dove masquerading with an olive branch in its crimson beak.

Ivan was undoubtedly master of the situation, and was able practically to dictate his own terms, which he proceeded to do notwithstanding the clamour of the crowd of envoys and ambassadors—Papal, Hungarian, Polish, Teutonic, and Livlandish—who had gathered at Moskva. In the first place, the Grand Prince would not hear of an "eternal peace," but limited the negotiations to the arrangement of a six-years' truce (25th March 1503 to 25th March 1509). With some slight remissions the Moskovites retained the lands they had laid hands on

during the war; Tchernigov, Starodoub, Poutivl, Novgorod-Severski, Briansk, Toropetz, and others, in all nineteen towns, seventy districts, twenty-two gorodoks (townlets), and thirteen villages, were ceded by Alexander to his uncomfortable father-in-law.[112] The Livlanders, who had played so important a part in the war, were left as much in the lurch by their graceless ally during the negotiations as they had been throughout the fighting, and the conditions they were obliged to accept to participate in the truce were far from favourable. The Russian merchants were to be liberated from their prisons at Dorpat; the bishop of that see was to resume payment of an old tribute of wax and honey to the Grand Prince, and a Greek church was to be erected in the town. The Livlander prisoners were not released by the Moskovites, and against these concessions and disadvantages could only be set a clause which restricted the fishery rights of the Pskovians in Lake Peipus to the east shore.[113]

The Khan of the Krim steppes was not directly included in the truce, though Alexander innocently supposed that Ivan's ally was implicated in the general pacification; the Grand Prince privately took care to prevent Mengli-Girei from sharing this impression, and the Tartar hordes continued to disquiet the Lit'uanian provinces.

Short though the term of the truce was, it outlasted the two principals who within a few months of each other attained that eternal peace which in life they had been unable to compact for. Ivan, in fact, had but obtained a breathing space in which to arrange the affairs of his family and gosoudarstvo before closing his long reign of forty-three years. While the war was yet being waged he had definitely broken with the Moldavian or Dimitri party, knowing well that Stefan could neither relinquish nor Alexander forgive the loss of the towns which the former had wrested from Poland, and hence that no imprudence on his part would unite his two family connections against him. Dimitri had been stripped of his prospective title and guarded as a prisoner in his palace, while the names of himself and his mother were struck off from the prayers of the Church. This step was followed by the proclamation of Vasili as the Grand Prince's successor. The death of Elena in 1505, and of the Hospodar a year earlier, left the youth Dimitri in a forlorn and friendless condition.

In the winter of 1505 (27th October) Ivan ended his long and remarkable reign. The sovereignty which he relinquished was scarcely to be recognised as the same which had been bequeathed to him by Vasili the Darkened. From a struggling principality it had shot up into a monarchy, struggling still, but for empire, not existence. The terrible humiliating Mongol yoke, which had been such a bitter reality when Ivan's world was young, seemed now the almost forgotten bogey of a dimly-remembered past. A revolt of the Khan of Kazan, the last event of the old man's reign, served only to emphasise the fact of the altered relations between Tartar and Moskovite. Perm, the regions of the Petchora, and the vast boreal territories which had belonged to the republic of Novgorod more than doubled the extent of the Grand-principality, which had been further swelled by the absorption of Tver and Viatka, and the conquest from Lit'uania of the Russian lands east of the Sojh. The standing and importance of the Moskovite State likewise had kept pace with its expansion during this long reign, and the policy of the Kreml was a matter of interest not merely to Sarai and Riazan and Vilna as heretofore, but to Buda, Constantinople, Wien, and Rome, to Krakow, Kjöbenhavn, Upsal, and Koenigsberg.

Such was the inheritance which Vasili III. Ivanovitch received from the cold hands of his father; from his mother (who had died in 1503) he derived the reflected glory which centred in the last of the Paleologi. Embarrassments too were not wanting to disquiet the opening days of the

new reign. Besides the revolt of Kazan, the suspended hostilities with Poland and Livland threatened the future repose of the State. The alert and provident von Plettenberg was husbanding his resources against a renewal of the war, and was, moreover, receiving considerable Teutonic and Catholic support. A loan had been subscribed on his behalf by the cities of Lubeck and Rostock, and the Pope had diverted to his use a share of the receipts accruing from the sale of indulgences—an ingenious device which at the same time equipped the gentlemen of God against the heretics, admitted more souls to swell the triumph-song of Heaven, and, incidentally, enriched the coffers of Holy Church. Financial aid was also forthcoming from Maximilian, who granted to the Land-Master a three years' privilege to exact tolls from all ships entering Livlandish harbours (1505).[114] The policy of the Emperor at this moment halted between an angry suspicion of the house of Yagiello, which drew him towards a good understanding with Moskva, and a jealous solicitude for the German colony on the Baltic, which pulled him in the opposite direction. Alexander, relieved of the nightmare incubus of his terrible father-in-law, lost no time in resuming his plaints and proposals to the new sovereign. Would Vasili restore the filched territories to Lit'uania and peace to the two countries? To which the Grand Prince replied that he was willing to conclude peace on the condition that Kiev and Smolensk were ceded to him. Clearly the time was not yet ripe for negotiation.

In August of 1506 the King of Poland followed his great rival to the grave, cheered on his death-bed by the rare news of a victory over the Krim Tartars. Sigismund, another son of Kazimir, obtained the double election to the Polish-Lit'uanian throne.

Meanwhile Vasili was engaged in dealing with the defiant Kazanese, not with conspicuous success. The Moskovite army, led by the Grand Prince's brother Dimitri, after having in turn been repulsed by the enemy and victorious in a second attack, was finally taken by surprise and irremediably routed, abandoning in its flight several cannon. Preparations for another expedition were countermanded owing to the submission of the Khan. This pacification was of timely service to Moskva, for relations with Poland became suddenly strained and the truce ceased to be effective. The firefly who led both parties into the uncertain issue of open hostility was a Polish pan, Mikhail Glinski, celebrated for his recent victory over the Krim horde. Of Tartar extraction and German education, this restless spirit had attached himself to the Lit'uanian Court, where his success, or the ambition ensuing therefrom, gained him many enemies. The accession of the new king brought matters to a head, and Glinski demanded justice between himself and his detractors. Sigismund procrastinated, and the aggrieved noble went over, with all his followers, to the service of Moskva, plundering and slaying as he went. Vasili took the interesting waif under his protection, and the border regions were soon well alight with the fires of war. Russian and Tartar troops followed the beck of the stark strife-kindling free-lance, who had the satisfaction of surprising in his palace near Grodno the pan Jabrzczinski, the foremost among his calumniators. "Have I found thee, O mine enemy?" With savage glee he inflicted the death penalty on his foe, and went on his way exulting.

1508

In the month of June Sigismund appeared on the scene with a formidable army and chased the invaders out of his territory. The result, however, of the whole affair was favourable to Moskva; a peace was effected between the two countries which confirmed Vasili in the possession of his father's conquests and recognised Glinski and other disaffected Lit'uanians

as Moskovite subjects. The Order, as usual, was left to take care of itself, and von Plettenberg saw himself with some alarm standing single-handed against Moskva, with only a few more months of the truce to run. Vasili, however, raised no difficulty in the way of a good understanding with the Germanic knights and Livlandish prelates, whom it was to his interest to detach from the Polish alliance, and a fourteen years' peace was concluded on mutually satisfactory grounds.

1509

Thus the Grand Prince obtained a respite from the exhausting neighbour-war, which gave him the opportunity to resume the great work of consolidation within his own frontiers.

Delivered by the fourteen years' peace from the state of insecurity which had been almost normal with them for nearly a century, the Pskovians might possibly have looked forward to a season of tranquillity and prosperity. Tranquillity they were certainly to have, but it was to be the repose of decay, not of belaurelled affluence. The Grand Prince, also delivered from the embarrassments of a foreign war, revived the designs which had long been harboured at Moskva against the independence of Pskov. Betaking himself and his Court to Novgorod in the autumn of 1509, he summoned thither the posadniks, boyarins, and notables of the city on the Peipus to give an account of their grievances against the Governor, Ivan Obolenski, who had rendered himself unpopular. Scarcely had the deputed citizens arrived than they were arrested and shut up in the famous archiepiscopal palace, which, after having furnished a prison for many a subject-ridden kniaz, now became a place of detention for those who were under the sovereign's displeasure. Without a struggle Pskov yielded to the fate of her "elder sister" Novgorod.

1510

The vetché was dissolved and the city bell borne down from the Troitza tower. Vasili was faithfully moving in the path marked out by his predecessors.

The domestic affairs of the Grand Prince's Court were tinged, as indeed was the whole Moskovite life at this period, with a strong Asiatic leaven. Already in his father's lifetime a bride had been chosen for him by a method which recalls the wooing of a sultan or a rajah rather than that of a Christian prince; 1500 of the most eligible damsels of the realm were gathered together for inspection, and their number gradually weeded down to ten. These were medically examined, and a "selection of the fittest" was made in the person of Solomonia, daughter of a boyarin of no very high standing. By an irony of circumstance this carefully picked consort disappointed the expectations which had been formed of her, and the prophecies and flatteries which lie in wait for the birth of a royal heir were baulked of their delivery. The absence of a successor in the direct line did not ameliorate the lot of the Grand Prince's nephew, Dimitri.

Since the accession of the new monarch the seclusion of the possible rival had become a close imprisonment, and his death was not unduly postponed. In Oriental State affairs, as indeed in those of Western Europe during the Middle Ages, it is a safe axiom that the inconvenient die young. Dimitri died. Unavoidably, the chronicles of the day suggested foul play, and he would not have been the only Russian Prince of the Blood who was conducted by an expeditious "royal road" through this vale of tears.

Owing to the renewed importance of Russia in the affairs of Christendom, and the

observations handed down to posterity by the ambassadors and commercial agents who penetrated into the bleak and reputedly barbarous regions of “Muscouvie,” the appearance and life of the isolated capital in this century stands out with a hitherto unwonted clearness. Hemmed in on all sides with thick forests, from whence, down the Moskva river, was floated the timber of which the houses were mostly built, the city stood in a setting of open meadows, swarming with hares and roebuck, which were reserved for the Grand Prince’s exclusive hunting. Fields and gardens and monasteries straggled so far into the outskirts (or slobodas) that it was difficult to tell exactly where the line of demarcation lay; for besides the Moskva on one side, and the ditch-like Neglina on the other, there were “no useful defences in the shape of walls, fosses, or ramparts.”[115] The Kreml, or citadel, and in time the inner quarters of the town, were however strongly fortified. As is frequently the case in cities with Oriental characteristics, squalor and magnificence were strangely jumbled together. Mean huts and booths were interspersed with cupola-crowned churches and public buildings, which, designed for the most part by Byzantine and Italian artists, presented a quaint and not unpleasing confusion of eastern and western architecture. Despite the “forty times forty churches” which were springing up all over Moskva, the cleanliness which is supposed to accompany godliness was conspicuously absent. “This city” wrote the Imperial ambassador at the Court of Vasili, “is so broad and spacious, and so very dirty, that bridges have been constructed here and there in the highways and streets and in the other more distinguished parts.” Here, then, in this straggling wood-built metropolis, this germ-cell of the Russian Empire, dwelt the Grand Princes who were slowly evolving into Great White Tzars; amid a surrounding of cathedrals and mud, holy ikons and squalid hovels, dedicated gates and buildings topped with quaint bulbous domes and cupolas, gold, blue, and silver, moved the rulers of the Moskovite state. Hedged round with dreary ceremonial, waited on by courtiers and chamberlains and servants, clad in long flowing robes that smacked more of Bagdad than of Rome or Wien, the sovereigns of “all Russia” dwelt in a world apart from outside influences, and could only measure things by their own standard.

As in a rookery at the approach of nesting-time certain early birds may be seen quietly pursuing their constructive operations amid the turmoil and racket of their less provident fellows, so all over Europe at this epoch, amid the anarchy which attended the decay of feudalism, the work of building was in full progress. The Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns in the Empire, the Valois in France, the Tudors in England, the Moskovite princes in Russia, were piecing together the foundations of what were eventually to be the five Great Powers of a transformed Europe. In the early years of the sixteenth century it seemed not improbable that the Yagiellos would create, out of the chaos of Polish, Magyar, Czech, Lettish, and West Russian lands, a personal dominion which might crystallise into an empire. But as in a rookery, to return to the simile, certain unfortunately situated nests suffer from the plundering attentions of competing builders, so the house of Yagiello was doomed to see its carefully collected materials snatched away in the predatory acquisitions of the Austrian archdukes, the Markgrafs of Brandenburg, and the Grand Princes of Moskva. And not only had the kings of Poland fallen among thieves, as it were, but their hands were more or less tied by their dependence on the most selfish of all governing classes, an anti-monarchical aristocracy.

Between Poles and Moskovites neither truce nor treaty could long be effective, and war soon broke out anew; Sigismund had at last succeeded in detaching the Krim Tartars from the Russian alliance, or, more probably, the nomads had followed their own lawless inclinations in bursting upon the rich cornlands of Riazan, “more fertile than all the other provinces of

Russia." The event served as a pretext for Vasili to march his troops into Lit'uania and besiege Smolensk. The moment was favourable for a rupture. The King of Hungary was tottering towards his grave, and two rival parties were more than anxious to constitute themselves guardians of his youthful son and his two kingdoms. In this struggle Sigismund found himself opposed to the Austrian Archduke, Maximilian, head of the Holy Roman Empire; more formidable, perhaps, in the former capacity than in the latter. Besides this embarrassment, the relations between Poland and the military Order were, to say the least, strained. The election (in 1511) of Albrecht, of the House of Brandenburg, to the office of Grand-Master, had given new vigour to the knights, who, since the disaster of Tannenberg, had been chafing against the Polish suzerainty. With the support, moral and material, of the Emperor, the Markgraf Joachim, and the Grand Prince of Moskva, it seemed possible that this over-lordship might be thrown off.

Dec. 1512

Under these circumstances Vasili set forth in mid-winter, attended by his brothers Urii and Dimitri, by Mikhail Glinski, and numerous boyarins, and trailing after him in sledges his unwieldy artillery, served by German gunners, to undertake the siege of Smolensk. From contemporary accounts this important border city does not appear to have been very elaborately fortified, but its defences were sufficiently strong to withstand the Grand Prince's attack, and in March the invading army returned to Moskva to avoid the dangers and discomforts of the approaching thaw. In the summer of the same year Vasili reiterated the attempt with no better result; the Russians at this time were not particularly skilled in the arts of sieges. The question of the Hungarian regency and eventual succession still agitated the Courts of Wien and Krakow, although Ladislas had not yet joined the "quiet people," and in February 1514 an Imperial ambassador appeared at Moskva for the purpose of clinching a treaty between Maximilian and Vasili. The reciprocal agreement which was drawn up between the two parties is important from the fact that, in the German copy, the word "Tzar" was rendered "Kaiser"—the first occasion on which the imperial title was applied to the Russian monarch.[116]

1514

Three months later Vasili's lieutenants at Novgorod concluded a treaty with the Hanseatic League, by which commercial relations were restored to their old footing. In June of the same year the importunate Grand Prince resumed his attack upon Smolensk, and reaped the reward of perseverance. The King of Poland, who had made no effort to succour the beleaguered city, attributed its loss to treachery, and vented his chagrin on the governor, a Bohemian named Solohoub, whom he put to death. The Russian accounts give the credit of the victory to the Moskovite artillery—which ought certainly to have got its range by that time—and to the pacific overtures of the citizens, headed by their Bishop Varsonof.[117]

The loss of this important place roused Sigismund to a more aggressive line of action than he had hitherto taken. Konstantin Ostrojhski was despatched against the enemy with a force of 30,000 men; a force which, though numerically far weaker than that at the disposal of Vasili, was better equipped, better provided with artillery, and, above all, better generalled. In the latter department the Moskovites sustained a severe loss by the defection of the unstable Glinski, who, disappointed in his expectation of obtaining the government of Smolensk in return for services rendered, made arrangements for deserting to the cause of his former

sovereign. Sigismund was not loth to receive the strayed lamb back to his fold, but a misfortune, in the shape of a well-mounted band of the Grand Prince's troops, overtook the transient pan before he had reached the Polish lines. Vasili rewarded his treason with rigorous imprisonment, deeming, perhaps, that he would be more valuable as a hostage than as a corpse. The two armies now faced each other from either bank of the Dniepr; the Russians were about 80,000 strong, and had, in addition to superiority of numbers, the further advantage of being on the defensive. This advantage, however, was thrown away by the inaction of the Moskovite voevodas, who stood helplessly looking on while Ostrojhski threw a bridge across the river and safely brought over his heavy artillery.

1514

On the 8th September[118] at Orsha, on the left bank of the Dniepr, was fought a terrific battle, in which the hordes of Moskovy went down in hopeless rout before the well-armed knights and well-served artillery of the Polish-Lit'uanian army. Allowing for exaggeration, the losses on the side of the vanquished were enormous. Sigismund, in the exultant letters he despatched to Pope, Cardinals, and the Doge of Venice, announcing the victory, estimates the Moskovite slain at 30,000, and particularises a large number of distinguished prisoners.[119] The disaster to the Moskovite arms roused the spirit of the Polish faction within the walls of Smolensk. The time-serving Bishop, who had been largely instrumental in the surrender of the town to Vasili, flattered himself that he might again dispose of its destinies, and, with the connivance of several boyarins, sent an invitation to the Polish general to come and possess himself of the place. The Moskovite voevoda, a member of the princely family of Shouyskie, was not, however, a *quantité négligeable* in the city, and the wily ecclesiastic's schemes were sharply checkmated. When Ostrojhski came before the gates of Smolensk he might mark a grisly row of corpses strung up on the battlements, the centre of interest for flapping bands of crows and daws; these were the bodies of his luckless co-operators, who had been seized and executed by order of the governor, with the exception of Varsonof, whose equally guilty but more holy person was secured in a prison. The Polish hetman, thwarted in his hopes of peaceable possession, was likewise unsuccessful in an attempt to carry the city by assault, and the brilliant victory of Orsha had no more substantial result than the re-occupation of a few border posts.

1515

The death of Mengli-Girei and the accession of his son Makhmet to the Krim khanate, scarcely affected the relations between Moskva and the Horde, for the new Khan's influence had for some time been dominant. Neither Vasili nor Sigismund could count on the support or even the neutrality of the Tartar chief, who took advantage of the hostility between Lit'uania and Moskva to ravage the lands of each with perfect impartiality. Another shift in the political balance deprived the Grand Prince of a more exalted though equally unreliable ally; a new family compact had been patched up between the Kaiser and the Kings of Hungary and Poland, and Maximilian was now as anxious to compose the quarrel in the east as he previously had been to inflame it. The continued successes of the Turks could not fail to inspire uneasiness in a prince who was scheming to acquire a preponderance in the lands of south-east Europe, and the Emperor wished to engineer a powerful alliance, German, Italian, Hungarian, and Polish, against this undesirable neighbour. The idea was obviously unworkable as long as Moskva hung threateningly on the Polish flank, hence the solicitude

which the Habsburg felt to bring about a peace between the two Slav powers. For this end an Imperial ambassador, one Sigismund, Baron von Herberstein, left Germany at the end of 1516 on a mission of mediation to the Moskovite Court, where he arrived in April the following year, after a heroic journey over innumerable lakes and marshes “slippery with snow and ice,” over frozen rivers, and, towards the end, across ice rendered rotten by melting snow-water; much of the “way” lying too through a country desolated by skirmishing bands of Poles and Russians.

1517

The chances of successful negotiation were not improved by an autumn campaign which Ostrojhski carried on, with disastrous result, in the district of Pskov; the small burg of Opotchka, valiantly defended by Vasili Saltikov, held out for fifteen days against the vigorous assaults of Polish, Lit’uanian, and Bohemian troops, and was eventually relieved, on the 18th October, by two converging Moskovite forces which drove Ostrojhski off the field. Notwithstanding this side-play the Polish envoys had joined Herberstein at Moskva, and were seeking to arrange a peaceable understanding between the Grand Prince and their master. Each side put forward absurdly unwarranted claims—Vasili, for instance, stipulated for the cession to Moskovy of Kiev and Polotzk, among other places, while the Poles demanded, in addition to Smolensk, a half-share of Novgorod, Pskov, and Tver. The real bone of contention was Smolensk, and as neither party would bate their pretension to the possession of that city, the negotiations came to an abortive end in November.

If Herberstein’s efforts for the termination of the war were not crowned with success, his long and arduous journey was in other respects by no means barren of result. It is mainly owing to observations made on this, and on a subsequent embassy, that a picture has been preserved of the life at that gloomy Court, which was partly Asiatic, partly Archaic European.[120] In the *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii*, Maximilian’s ambassador set forth to the western world his experiences in the remote and desolate region beginning to be known as Muscouvie, much as an explorer in a more travelled age would retail the account of his wanderings in Central Africa. The Moskva of Vasili Ivanovitch was a curious compound of primitive Russian squalor, Byzantine splendour, the rude hospitality of feudal Christendom, and the dark and tortuous restraint of an Oriental capital. The state banquets, or rather the solemn and awful occasions when the Grand Prince invited the foreign ambassadors to dine with him and his dvoryanins (courtiers), are good examples of the conglomerate of ceremonial, simplicity, and patriarchal domesticity which obtained at the Moskovite Court. The Grand Prince and his brothers with the highest boyarins sat together at one table; at another, opposite, sat the distinguished guests of the evening, while round the hall were ranged tables for the remainder of the company. Bread was solemnly served out from the Prince’s table to such as he wished to compliment, and the feast invariably opened with the consumption of brandy and roast swans. The dishes were borne in and out by servants sumptuously attired, and in addition to brandy, mead, beer, and Greek wines were served in goblets which, like all the other appointments, were of pure gold. In such ponderous dissipations, in occasional coursing matches in his hare preserves round Moskva, in watching his foreign gunners exercise their skill with the heavy uncouth field-pieces at stated periods, and of course in elaborate religious ceremonies, did the Gosoudar of all Russia fill up the round of his private existence. The coursing seems to have been as cautious and “safe” as the Moskovite state-policy. “When the hare shows herself, three, four, five, or more dogs are slipped, and set after her on all sides; and when she is

taken, there is loud hallooing, as if they had taken a large wild beast." "Moreover, about an hundred men stood in long array, one half of whom were dressed in black, and the other in yellow; not far from them stood all the other horsemen, to prevent the hares from running through and escaping."[121]

While the Imperial negotiations had been dragging out their span of stately uselessness, Vasili had effected a diplomatic stroke on his own account. The Grand Master Albrecht, despairing of receiving adequate support from the Emperor, in his present frame of mind, against the aggressive policy of the Polish monarch, turned his eyes towards the schismatic heretic who was playing so large a part in the affairs of east Europe. The common bond of hostility to Sigismund drew together the interests alike of Grand Prince and Grand-Master, and the plenipotentiary of the latter, Dietrich von Schönberg, was able to conclude a close alliance between Moskva and the Prussian section of the Order.

1517

Various causes contributed to delay the threatened struggle between Sigismund and the knights; chief of which was the restraining influence of the Kaiser, whose narrow family policy did not at present lend itself to a war between Teuton and Pole for the possession of the Baltic provinces. The death of Maximilian, however (January 1519), removed this obstacle, and the outbreak of hostilities was only postponed by a sudden and victorious incursion of the Krim Tartars upon Podolia and Lit'uania. The respite enabled Albrecht to enlist fresh support in men, money, and material, from several quarters. Von Plettenberg raised on his behalf a considerable number of troops and a heavy contribution to the war-chest; the King of Denmark, the Elector of Brandenburg, and the Grand Prince of Moskva helped to swell the resources of the venturesome Grand-Master, while on the other hand Sigismund knitted together all the available military force of the Yagiellos to crush the insubordination of this ambitious vassal. In the last days of the year 1519 broke "the long-threatened wild war-storm over the Order-lands."[122] The Polish monarch marched against the presumptuous warrior monks with an army "twelve miles wide," swelled by Bohemian, Moravian, and Silesian contingents. Against this formidable array the undaunted Hohenzollern—worthy scion of an illustrious House—rode forth "on New Year's Day, a dark stormy winter's day," with all the following he could muster.

1520

A wild and devastating war ensued, in which whole provinces were cruelly wasted, and the skill and courage of the Order knights were pitted in unequal struggle against the overwhelming might of Poland. In the open country and in the villages and unprotected towns the invaders wrought havoc unchecked, but in the fortified strongholds the Teutons made desperate resistance. Reinforcements from Denmark helped the Grand-Master to put a better complexion on the struggle; the beleaguered garrisons of Balga and Braunsberg held out stoutly, and the Order lanzknechts were able to break into Mazovia, and requite on that province the gruesome savageries which had made a desert of the bishopric of Pomesania. At this juncture Vasili undoubtedly threw away the opportunity of his lifetime. Since the breakdown of the negotiations with Poland, his troops had waged a fitful border war with varying success.

(1518)

The neighbourhood of Polotzk had been laid waste, but an attack on that town had failed; Moskovite armies had penetrated as far as Vilna, and hunted the Lit'uanian forces before them.

(1519)

Now, however, when Sigismund was experiencing an increased difficulty in coping with the opposition of the Grand-master, and dreading moreover an attack from some of the German princes, Vasili, instead of leading an army into Samogitia, concluded with his hard-pressed adversary a six months' truce.

1520

The following year a "Waffenstillstand" for four years was arranged between the German Order and the Poles, while at the same time Moskovy was drawn aside from the western war by a recurrence of the troubles with Kazan, which indeed wore a serious aspect. The Krimskie Khan, Makhmet, had displaced the Russian vassal of the Volga Horde, and established in his stead his own brother, Saip-Girei. This defiant action was followed up by an invasion of the grand principality by the Krim Khan, who crossed the Oka and defeated a hastily gathered Moskovite force under kniaz Dimitri Bielski and the Grand Prince's brother, Andrei. The victorious Tartars were reinforced by the Kazanese, led by their new Khan, and the combined host marched upon Moskva, burning and plundering in wild unholy triumph which recalled the fearful days of the Mongol mastery. Vasili "the courageous" fled before the approaching storm. An unkind report was afterwards circulated to the effect that he hid himself under a haystack. [123] Such an accusation is not to be accepted lightly, though the Russians of that period were not given to poking fun at their sovereign. Possibly the account of Moskovite panic and German staunchness which Herberstein sets forth in his commentary is not altogether uncoloured by national prejudice. One Nikolas, a native of Spire, was placed in command of the Kreml artillery and made the necessary dispositions for withstanding a siege, but the crowds of burgers and countryfolk who had rushed into that sanctuary would have rendered a protracted defence impossible. Threatened with an outbreak of pestilence at any moment—the time was midsummer and the place Moskva—the besieged were glad to buy off the Tartars with the promise of tribute from the Grand Prince to the Krim Khan; a promise which was unauthorised and need not be adhered to. The invaders withdrew, bearing with them captives computed at the almost incredible number of 800,000. A treacherous attempt upon Riazan was foiled by the alertness of another German, "one Johann Jordan, an artilleryman ... who came from the Innthal."[124] With the receding of the Tartar waters back came the affrighted hares to their feeding-grounds around Moskva, and back came Vasili Ivanovitch to his palpitating capital, to deal out judgment upon those responsible for the disaster on the Oka. A somewhat delicate matter. The kniaz Bielski had no doubt mismanaged the whole affair, but on the other hand the Grand Prince's brother had been the first to yield to the homing instinct which sometimes asserts itself on the field of battle. Under the circumstances the only thing to do was to fasten the blame upon one who, if less responsible, was also of less exalted position, and a noble who had run a good second to Andrei Ivanovitch was accordingly thrown into prison. The matter of the haystack does not appear to have been gone into.

1522

During the greater part of the following year the Moskovite army remained in camp at

Kolomna, awaiting a fresh attack from the Krimskie, who, however, remained within the shelter of their wide-stretching steppes. Negotiations were going on at the same time with Poland, and in December a truce of five years was effected, which left Smolensk still in the hands of the Grand Prince.

The strife between Poland and the Order now entered upon a new development of great historical importance. The Roman Papacy, ever glowering at the irruption of the Faithful (or the Infidel, according to Christian label), into the domains of Christendom, sought to raise enthusiasm and money among the piously disposed princes and people of the Empire and neighbouring lands, in order to float a crusade against the Ottomans. Among the expedients for obtaining the latter commodity which met with the approval of Christ's Vicegerent, was the barter of indulgences, conducted in such wholesale manner that none but the very poor, who could not afford luxuries, were excluded from the attainment of eternal glory. Adversity and competition have an unmistakably broadening effect, and the sixteenth-century camel went through the eye of the once exclusive needle with absolute comfort, and took all its relations, dead and living, with it if so minded. The enterprising Pontiff, however, experienced the bitter perversion of fate which too often mocks the best directed efforts; not only did the traffic in souls fail in its original purpose of financing a crusade, but its injudicious prosecution among the cities of Northern Germany, where men had grown somewhat doubtful of the accumulated truths of the Church, resulted in the springing up of a new enemy, more formidable even than Islam. Without going into the dogmatical issues involved in the agitation which sprang out of the original "monks' quarrel," it is necessary to note that the "Reformation" owed much of its success to the secularising theories which it put forward, and which exercised a fascinating influence upon the princes and petty sovereigns of the Empire. The Houses of Wettin and Hohenzollern especially, lent favourable ear to the new doctrines, and the Grand-Master Albrecht, while roaming Germany in search of possible assistance against his ever imminent enemy, came in contact with the leaders of the anti-Catholic movement, from whom he imbibed principles which he immediately proceeded to put into practice.[125] The fundamental stumbling-block to a composition with Poland was the question of homage insisted on by Sigismund as due from the Grand-Master of the Order. Albrecht had made gigantic efforts to resist this obligation, and to preserve the independence of his office, but he now saw a way by which both his own ambitions and the requirements of the King of Poland might be accommodated. This was nothing less than the secularisation of the Order-lands into a hereditary duchy, dependent on the Polish crown; Albrecht, needless to say, being the proposed Duke thereof. The suggestion, which offered a solution to what had seemed a hopeless quarrel, met with approval from Sigismund, and was embodied in the Peace of Krakow (April 1525), whereby the Grand-Master was transformed "from the head of a Catholic religious order into a Lutheran temporal prince."[126] The required oath of vassalage was tendered by Albrecht and in return the King presented him with a new blazon for his new-born duchy of Prussia; "the old Order changeth," and the black cross is laid aside for a black eagle, crowned, beaked, and membered gold. In days to come, what time the white eagle of Poland shall droop its failing wings in feebleness, this sable eaglet which it has helped to hatch, grown lusty with maturity, shall snap its hungry beak in unison with the other birds of prey that hover round the doomed one. For the present, it is worthy of remark that the first political result of the religious schism which was to plunge the greater part of Europe, and especially the Empire, into a paroxysm of strife, was the closing of a long and bitter quarrel in the Baltic lands. As regards the immediate effect of the disappearance of the Order from Prussia, Moskva was

chiefly concerned in the isolation which that event entailed upon the Teutonic colony in Livland and Estland. In return for the valuable help von Plettenberg had afforded the Grand-Master during the war, the latter had already granted him complete independence from the control of the Prussian executive; hence, when the secular revolution was effected, the knights of Livland retained their organisation and temporal possessions.[127]

While Sigismund had been employed in bringing East Prussia under his domination (West Prussia was already an integral part of the Polish dominion), Vasili had composed his differences with his Tartar neighbours. Makhmet-Girei had diverted his warlike tendencies towards the subjection of the khanate of Astrakhan; Kazan, after being several times overrun and almost conquered in a series of campaigns (in which the Moskovite voevodas displayed such scandalous slackness that corruption was openly hinted at), concluded a truce of five years with the Grand Prince. The latter, meanwhile, had struck an astute blow at the prosperity of Kazan by prohibiting Russian merchants from attending the great summer fair held annually at the Tartar city, and by establishing a rival fair at Makar'ev, in the province of Nijhni-Novgorod.[128]

At a moment when the western Church was offering a spectacle of dissension and rampant heresy, Vasili occasioned a mild scandal in the Orthodox communion by consecrating his unfruitful consort to the service of heaven, and taking unto himself another wife. Twenty years of conjugal felicity had not been crowned with the desired offspring, and the Grand Prince, weary of waiting for the overdue answer to reiterated prayers, took steps to remedy the breakdown in the succession. Solomonia was bundled off to a convent near Souzdal, where she received the veil, enforced, according to current rumour, by a whipping.[129]

1526

Vasili then proceeded to espouse a second wife, selecting for that honour Elena, niece of the imprisoned Mikhail Glinski. This infraction of the Church's laws was connived at by the plastic Metropolitan Daniel, though the majority of the clergy and many of the boyarins viewed the whole affair with pious reprobation. Tradition credited the inconsiderate Solomonia with the crowning offence of mistaking the nunnery for a lying-in hospital, and giving birth to a male child; the rumour certainly existed, though it is doubtful if it had any foundation in fact.[130] Anxious days these for the Moskovite Court. The Grand Princess and her husband progressed wearily from shrine to shrine, invoking the good offices of various saints who were supposed to have influence in the matter, and distributing alms and donations with a lavishness wholly foreign to Moskovite finance, which suggested a conviction that heaven was open to bribery and was only standing out for its price. At length, after three years of patient expectancy, the much-prayed-for infant arrived "on the 25th August 1530, at seven in the morning," accompanied by a rousing thunderstorm.[131] The city of Moskva rejoiced with its sovereign at the birth of the heaven-sent child, to whom was given the name of Ivan. The succession was further ensured by the begetting of another son the following year.

The remainder of the reign of Vasili presented no important features beyond a recurrence of inconclusive hostilities with the Krim Tartars, and occasional diplomatic intercourse with Constantinople. While yet, comparatively speaking, in the prime of life, Vasili was attacked with a leech-baffling malady, which declared itself when he was on his way to the autumn hunting at Voloko Lamsk.

For reasons of state it was desirable that the sovereign's critical condition should be kept from the knowledge of the general public, and especially from the foreign ambassadors. Therefore the suffering monarch was sledge-borne in a painful journey to Moskva, at a season when the falling snow and young ice rendered travelling laborious and unsafe. With the exception of his brothers, Urii and Andrei, Mikhail Glinski—restored to liberty and princely favour—and a few boyarins, none were admitted to the Grand Prince's presence, but the rumour of his mortal sickness soon spread. The dying man played to the end his cold impassive game of statecraft, and his last hours were employed in arranging safeguards and regulations for the government during the minority of his successor. As the third day of December drew to a wintry close the crowds gathered in the streets and stood round the silent palace, and that night no one slept in Moskva. Dark-robed ecclesiastics emerged from their retreats and swarmed into the house of death like vultures swooping upon a dying beast. And as the huddled crowds watched and waited without, a curious scene was being enacted in the grim bed-chamber. With notable exceptions, it had been the custom for Russian Grand Princes to receive on their deathbed the tonsure, monastical habit, and a new name; this custom the Metropolitan wished to adhere to in the case of Vasili, while Prince Andrei and another layman desired that he should die, as he had lived, a sovereign and not a monk. At midnight, while prince and boyarin were endeavouring to snatch the black neophyte's robe from the Vladuika, and while the latter solemnly and vehemently cursed them "in this world and the next," Vasili Ivanovitch drew his last breath. It was the first time in the course of his career that he had shown any impatience. Hastily they thrust the all-important garment on the corpse, and called it Varlam; but the baptismal name had a clear minute's start. The great bell of Moskva boomed out to the watching multitudes the news that their sovereign was dead. A new day dawned, and another reign had begun.

During the reigns of Vasili and Ivan the Great a new factor in Russian history comes into notice, and afterwards develops into no little importance. This was the appearance in two distinct localities, which may be roughly designated as the lower basins of the Dniepr and the Don respectively, of organised bands of "steppe-folk," who were neither exactly Russian nor Tartar, nomad nor settled, and who were known under the vague appellation of Kazaks, or Kozaks. The name "has been variously derived from words meaning, in radically distinct languages, an armed man, a sabre, a rover, a goat, a promontory, a coat, a cassock, and a district in Circassia"; an equal uncertainty hangs over the origin of the race, or rather races. Perhaps the clearest account of the etymology and ethnology of the Kozak is that given by a Russian author in a history of the peoples of the Don region. "Kazak signifies alike volunteer, horseman, freebooter. Malo-Russians, mingled with remains of peoples known under the common name of *Tcherni Kloboukie*, under the name of Kazaks, constituted one people, who became to all intents and purposes Russian ... their fathers dwelling from the tenth century in the neighbourhood of Kiev, were themselves already almost Russian. Increasing more and more in numbers, maintaining among themselves the spirit of independence and fraternity, the [western] Kazaks organised a Christian republic, and established themselves between the lower basins of the Dniepr and Dniestr, building villages and fortresses."[132] The causes which drove these Slav and Turko outcasts into the wild steppe-land and scarcely accessible islands of the Dniepr, and welded them together in an origin-obliterating union, were first the Mongol invasion, and secondly the gradual establishment of irksome and far-reaching central authorities both in Moskovy and Lit'uania. The absolutism of the one monarchy, and the

Catholic persecution of the other, sent men in search of liberty, to swell the ranks of those whose fathers had fled from the insecurity and degradation of a Tartar-haunted land. Similar causes—hostility to the surrounding khanates and impatience of the certain taxes and doubtful protection of the Moskovite government—were responsible for the existence of the Don Kozaks, among whom, however, there was a strong Tcherkess (Circassian) strain, while the Russian element was proportionately weaker. But the great factor in this double evolution was undoubtedly a physico-geographical one. The nature of the steppes themselves, those vast-stretching, level, grass-grown wolds, spread in seeming endlessness under the boundless sky, those solitudes where a man and his horse might lose themselves from all pursuit, called as irresistibly to the lustre after freedom as ever the Highlands of Scotland to the Saxon-hating Kelts, or the Tcherni-Gora to the unconquered Slavs of the Balkan coast. And having lured, it held, and holding, moulded. The Kozak and his wiry steed became as much a part of the fauna of the great Russian plain as the wolves, the hawks, and the steppe-eagles that hunted and roamed throughout its wide expanse.

SKETCH MAP of GRAND-PRINCIPALITY of MOSKVA with GRAND-DUCHY of LITHUANIA and BALTIC PROVINCES.

CHAPTER VIII IVAN GROZNIE

The lapse of 500 years found the principles of settled hereditary government in much the same condition in Russia as they had been when the infant Sviatoslav succeeded to the throne of Kiev under the guardianship of his mother. Despite the fact that two of the late Sovereign's brothers were yet living, Elena Glinski assumed the regency on behalf of her three-year-old son, supported by a knot of boyarin-princes, whom the circumstances of the time suddenly threw into prominence. The over-shadowing figures of the last two Moskovite monarchs had almost obliterated the fact that there were persons of importance in the land besides the members of the princely family. Now a whole crop of nobles emerges from the background, like a ready-made second chamber from the brain of an Abbé Sieyés. Ivan Oblenski, an offshoot of the House of Tchernigov, the Bielskis, the Glinskis, and the Shouyskies, form the aristocratic nucleus round which revolve the intrigues and faction vicissitudes which seem the natural accompaniments of queen-mothers and minorities. Necessarily the Princess Regent had a lover, in the person of Oblenski, and equally as a matter of course, the latter had personal enemies. Of these he proceeded to dispose with all expediency; Urii Ivanovitch, uncle of the Grand Prince, suspected of plotting against the Existing Order of Things, was lodged in a state dungeon, where he died of hunger some two and a half years later.[133] A more celebrated, if less august victim was the kniaz Mikhail Glinski, who had expostulated with his niece anent her unseemly intimacy with Oblenski, and was thrown into prison, where he "died unhappily."

1534

From which it would appear that the old saying concerning the unwisdom of intervening between husband and wife might be applied with equal truth to a less recognised connection. Andrei Ivanovitch, Vasili's remaining brother, took fright at the irreverent procedure of the Regent and her favourite (who caged Princes of the Blood as unconcernedly as though they were linnets or human beings), and stole off one day, with all his household and retainers, towards Novgorod.

1537

The farther he got from Moskva the more his courage rose, and ere long he had drifted into open rebellion against the boyarin-wielded authority. Numbers of disaffected landowners sped to his support, but the gates of Novgorod remained shut and the Oblenskie were hard upon his track with the best-mounted Moskovite cavalry. Andrei surrendered without striking a blow, and was escorted back to the city of his deep dislike, leaving behind him at intervals along the Novgorodskie road the swinging corpses of thirty of his adherents. His remaining followers died by torture or in prisons, and the latter fate disposed of the last surviving son of the great Ivan.

Meanwhile the success of Elena's regency had justified the means taken to retain it. Vasili's death had encouraged the King of Poland to renew with threatening insistency his demands for the restitution of the territories conquered by the late Prince and his father; refusal on the part of Moskva led to hostilities in which the Lit'uanian forces were unable to obtain any advantages, and a prolongation of the truce, on the terms "as you were," ensued (1537). A skilful balancing of the conflicting interests which agitated the Krim and Kazan Hordes maintained the Moskovite peace in those directions, and a renewal was also effected of the

truces with Sweden and the Livlander knights. Nor was the inner administration of the regency wanting in beneficial activity. The Kitai-gorod of Moskva (after the Kreml the most important quarter of the city, containing the houses of the boyarins and the principal bazaars and trading stores) was surrounded by walls and towers which added greatly to the security of the capital. [134] Vladimir, Tver, Novgorod, and other provincial towns were newly fortified and in some cases rebuilt; the state coinage was also put upon a more satisfactory footing. Under these circumstances the severities and loose morals of Elena Glinski might well be overlooked by her subjects. Her greatest offence was yet to come. She died.

Ap. 1538

Of poison, said many-tongued rumour, on which the only rational comment must be the useful Scotch verdict, “not proven.” Her untimely death left Oblenski in precarious possession of the supreme authority, which his enemies were already preparing to wrest from him. Foremost among these was the veteran Vasili Shouyskie, nick-named “the Silent,” the head of an important Souzdalian family. For seven days lasted Oblenski’s regency, and then himself and his sister were seized and thrown into prison, where the fashionable death-by-starvation awaited them. The silent Shouyskie assumed the regency, which he held till his decease in the October of the same year, when it passed to his brother, Ivan Shouyskie, who displayed his newly-acquired power by packing the Metropolitan Daniel off to the cloister, and installing in his place Ioasaf, *hegumen* (abbot) of the Troitza monastery. Hard and brutal was the rule of the Shouyskies; “fierce as lions,” bemoaned the Pskovskie chronicle, “were the voevodas, and as wild beasts their people against the peasants.” The only check on the absolute supremacy of the dominant family was the ever-present apparition of the kniaz, Ivan Bielski—Ivan and Vasili were fashionable names among the Moskovite aristocracy of that period—who was a formidable competitor for the possession of the regency. Bielski justified the nervous apprehensions of the Shouyskies (who had kept him in prison for several years and only released him at the intercession of the new Metropolitan), by taking advantage of the disaffection bred by their arrogance to oust them from the head of affairs. As Regent his rule was milder and less overbearing than that of the kniaz he had supplanted, and a firmer front was shown against the Tartars of Kazan and the Krim Horde, who were continually devastating the frontiers. Possibly the increased activity was rather forced by their side, for in the year 1541 both Hordes set themselves in motion against Moskva. The Krim Tartars brought a formidable force into the field, augmented by cannon, musketeers, and some squadrons of Ottoman cavalry—the first warriors of that nation who had fought against the Russians. The double danger stifled for the moment the bickerings of the Shouyskie and Bielski factions, and the Moskovites found themselves strong enough, when thus united, to repel the incursion of both Hordes. Safa-Girei and the Kazanese were chased out of the neighbourhood of Mourom, which town they had fruitlessly attacked; Saip-Girei, confronted by a powerful army on the yonder bank of the Oka, dared not attempt to force the passage, and retired to the Don. The jealousy which existed between the leading boyarins made it impossible for the Russians to follow up their advantage by a campaign in Tartar territory, and Ivan Shouyskie turned instead to his own advantage the employment of the troops which the war had placed at his disposal. Secretly supported by many of the notables of Moskva, and openly by those of Novgorod, he resolved upon a bold bid for the recovery of his ascendency.

1542

On a dark night in January Petr Ivanovitch Shouyskie rode into Moskva with a picked body of soldiers from Vladimir, and before morning the Kreml was in his hands. Bielski was seized in his bed, and the Metropolitan was disagreeably awakened by showers of stones hurtling through his windows and weapons hammering against his door. The chief of the Church barely escaped with his life to the shelter of the Troitza, an unpleasant exercise for an early morning in mid-winter. At daybreak Ivan Shouyskie entered the city and resumed his old position of authority.

[199]

Bielski and the Metropolitan were sent off to safe keeping at Bielozero, the lonely stronghold on the waters of the lake of that name, where the Grand Princes' treasures and prisoners were securely stored away.[135] This time Shouyskie took good care that his rival should not emerge from prison to trouble him, and the soul of Bielski put on immortality.[136] A new Metropolitan, the second who had been nominated by the Shouyskies, was elected to fill the place of the shifty Ioasaf, who had leisure, in the seclusion of the Kirillov monastery at Bielozero, to reflect on the unwisdom of being all things to all men in sixteenth-century Moskva. The Novgorodskie had supported the *coup d'etat*, and their Archbishop Makarie was rewarded with the vacant post. In the meantime, while these various Ivans were ruling the State and crushing one another in turn, how fared it with the other Ivan in the background? The much-prayed-for princeling had not, since the death of his mother, spent a very happy or altogether comfortable childhood. The chief boyarins and their followers appear to have treated their Sovereign with a curious mixture of neglect, disrespect, and superstitious awe. Surrounded exclusively by the partisans of whichever faction happened to be uppermost, the friendless orphan could only brood in silent resentment over the wrongs he sustained at the hands of his temporary masters. The rude-mannered, tyrannical, gold-greedy Ivan Shouyskie was an especial object of his dislike. A letter written by the monarch in after days to Prince Andrei Kourbski, comments bitterly on the fact that though, in the lifetime of the Princess Elena, Shouyskie had possessed only one cloak, green silk trimmed with marten fur, "and that a very old one," during his regency he was able to have cups of gold and silver fashioned him, with his initials graved thereon.[137] The despotic jealousy of Shouyskie and of his supporters in the State Council robbed the young Ivan of friends as well as treasure. For one of their number, a boyarin named Vorontzov, the Prince had betrayed a marked partiality, a dangerous compliment, which brought down on the recipient's person the practically-expressed dislike of his fellow-councillors. In solemn conclave, and in the presence of Prince and Metropolitan, the angry men of State fell murderously upon the courtier whom the Sovereign had delighted to honour, and Ivan's entreaties, backed up by those of Makarie, could scarcely obtain a mitigation of his fate to one of exile and imprisonment. The amusements of the boy Prince, besides religious devotions, at which he was an adept, and the more legitimate forms of hunting, consisted in chasing dogs and cats over the battlements of the Kreml, and in wild gallops with his allotted companions through the streets of Moskva, in which the old and unwary were ruthlessly trampled underfoot.[138] The days of his repression were, however, drawing to a close. The fearsome Regent Ivan died in 1543, and left a commission of his sons and relatives to replace him. But the reign of the Shouyskies was doomed. The manly exercise of the chase is a valuable school for inculcating self-reliance and a will to overcome the obstacles of life. It was straight from a day's sport in the woods of Vincennes that the grand young Louis, whip in hand, strode in upon the Parliament of Paris and quenched it with an epigram; it was after the autumn hunting at Voloko-Lamsk that Ivan Vasilievitch first showed his teeth and gave

evidence of that cold-blooded severity which was to gain for him the distinctive adjective “Groznie” (Terrible). At Moskva, where the Court had assembled for the festival of Noel, the Prince suddenly accused the ruling boyarins of misgovernment and abuse of their powers; many had been guilty, but he would content himself with one example. Calling to his kennel-men he bade them seize Andrei Shouyskie and throw him to the dogs. Out into the street they dragged the unhappy man, and there, before the mute, disconcerted boyarins and the long-time Shouyskie-ridden citizens, the Prince’s hounds worried the offending kniaz to pieces in the reddening snow. “The little tin gods” had missed “the hour when great Jove wakes”; Andrei Shouyskie paid dearly for the oversight. The youth of Ivan still necessitated a regency, and his mother’s relatives, the Glinskies, next came into power; but from the day of the red Noel no liberties were taken with the young monarch. His new counsellors, indeed, encouraged him in his savage inclinations, and the chronicles give instances of callous brutalities inflicted upon Russian subjects by both Ivan and the Glinskies. A party of Novgorodskie arquebusers, who had interrupted one of the Prince’s hunting expeditions with importunities respecting their pay, were punished for their presumption by being tortured to death, and a similar ghastly fate awaited some petitioners from Pskov, upon whom was poured blazing spirits, which ignited their hair, beards, and clothes.[139]

When Ivan was in his eighteenth year he celebrated with much pomp and circumstance the double event of his coronation and his marriage with Anastasia, daughter of Roman Zakharin-Koshkin, member of a family which had migrated from Prussia to Moskva in the fourteenth century.[140]

Jan. 16, 1547

In the hallowed Ouspienskie Cathedral the Metropolitan crowned him with the title of Tzar, which was here used for the first time at the coronation of a Russian ruler. The old style of Velikie-kniaz dies out from this moment, and as the customary chant, “*In plurimos annos*,” swells through those dim frescoed arches, the old order seems to pass away with the wafted incense fumes. A new figure is borne into Russian history amid the striking of bells and shouting of a myriad throated multitude. The Tzar comes!

The fact of Ivan’s coronation caused no immediate change in the government of Russia, which continued to be directed by the “Vremenszhiki,” or men-of-the-season, that is to say, by the Glinskies. That their administration was iniquitous to an insupportable degree may be gathered, not only from the possibly exaggerated accounts of the chroniclers, but from the fact that long-suffering Moskva was goaded to the brink of revolution. Ivan amused himself with his religious hobbies and other less respectable diversions, and only assumed the part of Sovereign when he wished to “make an example” of some offending subject. The purging of Moskva from the vampire brood that afflicted it, and the simultaneous “reformation” of the young Tzar, form a curious episode in the history of this time. The summer of 1547 was signalised by disastrous conflagrations in the capital, the first of which broke out on the 12th April; the last and most serious occurred in June. The flames on this occasion reduced to ashes a large portion of the Kreml, the Kitai-gorod, and the outer town, and destroyed 1700 of the adult inhabitants, besides children, “who were not counted.” Amid blazing streets and rolling smoke-clouds, falling roofs and crashing cupolas, panic and anarchy reigned supreme. The populace, rendered unreasonable by terror and hatred, loudly denounced the Glinskies as the authors of the calamity; in particular, Anna Glinski, Ivan’s maternal grandmother, was

accused of sprinkling the streets of Moskva with a decoction of boiled human hearts, which apparently possessed inflammable qualities unknown to science. Urii Glinski, the Tzar's uncle, was seized by the enemies of his party and slain in the sanctuary of a sacred building, and the infuriated townsfolk penetrated into the country palace at Vorobiev, whither Ivan had retreated, with a demand for more Glinskies. At this moment a thing happened which, in the accounts of the earlier Russian historians, recalls Edinburgh before the battle of Flodden. A "holy man of Novgorod," one Silvestr, appeared on the scene and quietly annexed the soul of the Tzar. The people had attributed the conflagrations to the Glinskies; more critical and dispassionate examiners have been inclined to suspect the Shouyskie faction of complicity in the matter. Silvestr, however, put a different complexion on the affair and announced that the partial destruction of the town and burning of the 1700 inhabitants and unenumerated children was the work of God. As he supported this theory by producing "visions," there could be no further doubt on the matter—none, at least, with Ivan, who saw the visions.[141] The conscience-stricken young man, convinced that the Glinski administration was as unpopular with heaven as it was with the Moskvitchi, since such heroic measures had been taken to displace it, surrendered himself, body and soul, into the hands of Silvestr, who, needless to say, made a clean sweep of the Vremenszhiki and replaced them with his own friends. Without ruthlessly disturbing the halo of romance and sanctity which has been fastened upon the man of Novgorod, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the monk was an old acquaintance of Ivan —who was a frequent visitor to all the religious establishments within his reach—and took advantage of the popular excitement and general disorder to upset the palace intrigues of both the Glinski and Shouyskie factions. That Silvestr, and the equally nebulous layman, Adashev, whom he associated with him in the new government, exercised a restraining and beneficent influence on the young Prince may well be believed; with an opposition of watchful and resentful nobles in the background, circumspection was essential, and Ivan, who had seen a consuming fire, an angry populace, and a frowning Providence threatening him on all sides, was likely to be a docile pupil. For the time. The austere and monkish repression of the latest Vremenszhiki was the finishing touch necessary to perfect the education of the Terrible Tzar.

The early part of Ivan's reign, and the whole of the preceding one, are characterised by the recurrence at irregular periods of a deliberate campaign against Kazan. The Russians seem to have borrowed the tactics of the wolves which inhabited their steppes and forests, and to have leisurely and persistently wearied their quarry down, without caring to rush in and dispatch it. Again and again did the Tzar summon from the far corners of his dominions an enormous army, trail forth his ponderous siege-pieces and sacred banners, take an affecting farewell of his capital, and march upon the Tartar city. The wooden walls were relentlessly battered down, the garrison reduced to the last extremity, and then the Moskovite hosts would return home in good order. The walls were easily rebuilt and the Kazanese would pursue the even tenor of their way. It would almost appear as though the Russians were loth to irrevocably destroy the only enemy against whom they warred with any comfort. A more feasible explanation is that the Kazanese supplemented their feeble defences by a judicious outlay of the metal which corrupts, and that some of the Moskovite voevodas did not return empty-handed from these abortive expeditions. In 1552 Ivan determined to set once more in motion the huge army which had been left quartered on the frontiers of Kazan, a locality which had had a demoralising effect on the troops, many of whom had shaved off their beards to please the Tartar maidens who for the time being under-studied their wives, "to prove," remarked a scandalised messenger from the Metropolitan, "by the indecent nudity of your faces, that you have shame

to be men." Familiarity had bred contempt, and the dwellers in the city by the Volga's shore scornfully refused to open their gates at the approach of the 150,000 footmen and the 150 cannon which the Tzar brought against them. The Moskovites prepared for a long and obstinate resistance, and by way of a beginning erected and dedicated three pavilion churches in their camp. Events justified their expectations; the Kazanese held out stoutly against both the assaults of the besiegers and the offers of the Tzar. August and September passed in continual sorties and battles without the walls, skirmishing attacks by the Kozaks in the tzarskie army, and mining operations by the German engineers. The overwhelming forces and superior artillery which Ivan was able to bring against the city at length beat down the heroic defence, and the triumphant Moskovites put their stubborn and still resisting enemies to the sword. The Tzar is said to have been moved to tears at the sight of so many Tartar corpses; "they are not Christians," he observed, "but yet they are men." The reduction of Kazan was an event of the first importance in Russian annals. It marked an epoch. "The victory of Ivan the Terrible is the first great revenge of the vanquished over the vanquishers ... the first stage reached by European civilisation in taking the offensive towards Asia."[142] Prudence suggested that Ivan should remain on the scene of his conquest until his authority over the neighbouring districts was assured; a desire to return to his capital in the full flush of triumph prompted him to disregard more solid considerations. He was still very young. The newly-acquired territory was therefore left under the united protection of the Christ, the Virgin, the Russian intercessory saints, and Aleksandr Shouyskie. Ivan, on his homeward way, received the welcome intelligence that his wife had given birth to a son, the Tzarevitch Dimitri, first of a series of Ivanovitches so named. The prolonged rejoicings, banquetings, and thanksgivings which ensued at Moskva were followed by a disagreeable sequel; Kazan, despite the august protection under which it had been left, rose in revolt, and the Russian ascendency was seriously imperilled.

1553

The Tzar's health at the same time broke alarmingly down, and another long minority seemed to threaten the State. The boyarins and princes, summoned to take an oath of allegiance to the infant Dimitri, showed a strong reluctance to bind themselves down in the manner required; the succession of Ivan's child to the Tzardom would mean a Romanov regency and a repetition of the faction intrigues which had attended the early years of the present reign. Urii, the Tzar's brother, appears to have been a weakling in mind and body, too feeble even to decorate with the divine attributes of monarch; in Vladimir Andreievitch, the Tzar's first cousin, however, there existed a possible candidate for the throne, and even Silvestr and Adashev hesitated between the claims of the hereditary and collateral succession. The oath, whatever its value might be, was exacted from the unwilling courtiers, but Ivan's recovery prevented the necessity of testing it. The convalescent Tzar, in spite of the remonstrances of his advisers, set off on a course of shrine visiting, taking with him his unfortunate offspring, who was scarcely of an age to stand such energetic piety. In fact he died on the journey. The pilgrimage of Ivan was, if the chroniclers and some of the later historians are to be believed, disastrous in another fashion. Among the religious establishments visited was the Piesnoshkie monastery, wherein was caged an interesting prisoner. Vassian, Bishop of Kolumna in the reign of Vasili, had been deprived of his episcopal office during the time of the regencies on account of his evil life; now, in the decrepitude of age, he is represented as harbouring with unquenched passion the unholy frettings of a sin-warped mind. Ivan desired an interview with the hoary reprobate; perhaps after a course of devotions among a community of irreproachable saints,

living and departed, he was attracted by the rare personality of a sometime bishop who was no better than he should be. The monk-with-a-past seized the grand opportunity to poison the monarch's mind against his boyarins, his relations, and his subjects, and Ivan drank in with greedy ears the vicious counsels of the unhallowed recluse. It is a fascinating picture, the aged priest who had eaten his heart out in helpless bitterness these many years, and chafed against the restraint of his prison-cell, given at last one deadly moment of revenge in which to work a superb evil against the society that had mishandled him. And as the Tzar went out from his presence a changed man, might not the ex-prelate have flung a crowning blasphemy at his heaven and chanted exultingly *nunc dimittis*? Ivan, indeed, in the hands of the chroniclers, is a creature easily swayed; a monk from Novgorod tells him to be good, and he straightway abandons the wrong-headed sins of his wayward youth and becomes an exemplary monarch, till a monk of Piesnoshkie gives him dark and evil counsel, and sends him forth upon the world with a cankered, blood-lusting soul.

The Tzar's return to health was accompanied by a return of Moskovite prosperity. Another Tzarevitch, Ivan, replaced the dead Dimitri; Kazan was gradually Kozaked into submission, and received a bishop as a mark of special favour. Another conquest equally important was achieved without bloodshed. The Astrakhanese having insulted the envoys of Moskovy, a small but well-equipped army was sent against them, with the result that this khanate, once the head-country of the redoubtable Golden Horde, acknowledged Ivan's sovereignty and yielded equal rights in the Volga fishery to his Great Russian subjects.

1554

The Nogai Tartars, occupying the intermediate steppes, submitted at the same time to the Moskovite dominion, and the Russian state, still cut off from the Black Sea, to which in the tenth century it had given its name,[143] wriggled its way down to the Kaspian.

The acquisition of the two Tartar sovereignties, while giving increased importance and security to Ivan's dominions, and opening up a valuable trade with Persia and other eastern countries, did not tend to make Moskovy less Asiatic, or bring her closer into the European family. The Tzar's political ambitions turned naturally towards the west. With a sagacity equal to that of his most celebrated successor, and in opposition to the advice of his counsellors, he wished to find a free outlet for communication with the great Empire-Republic (which, though decaying in organisation, was at this moment so instinct with life), and with Europe generally. The death of Sigismund of Poland (1548) and the accession of his son, Sigismund-August, had scarcely affected the grudgingly pacific relations between the two countries, though their common grievance against the Krim Tartars seemed to warrant the hope of a more cordial understanding. With Sweden the Moskovites waged one of those short inconclusive wars, in which neither party seemed to have any definite object in view, beyond the fact that they "lived unhappily" as neighbours.

1557

A forty years' truce concluded the hostilities between these ancient enemies. It was about this time that some adventurous merchant-seamen of the city of London "discovered" Moskovy, by way of the White Sea, and opened up a commercial and diplomatic intercourse between the two isolated nations who were one day to come face to face with each other on the roof of the world. The country, however, towards which Ivan's thoughts were chiefly turned was the

uniquely governed Baltic land, comprising Estland, Livland, and Kourland, and the adjacent islands of Dago and Oesel. The extinction of the Prussian section of the Order had necessarily weakened the Livlandish branch, and the spread of Lutheran ideas had further added to the confusion which reigned throughout the Baltic burghs. Nowhere, perhaps, in Europe did bishops wield such extensive temporal powers, and the fact that local opinion ran strongly in the direction of the reformed principles and of secularisation made the immediate future of these districts a very open question. Ivan had a solution of the difficulty which he was not loth to put into practice. A grievance he undoubtedly had against the Livlanders, who had hindered his intercourse with the Hansa League and prevented free immigration of artificers and craftsmen from the Empire into Russia. Consequently he suddenly bethought him of the clause in the original truce with von Plettenberg, whereby an annual tribute from the town of Dorpat had been agreed to, and promptly lost sight of. The Tzar reminded the Livlandish envoys of this unremembered pledge, and refused to renew the truce until the arrears had been paid in full.

1557

The representatives of the Land-Master and the sovereign bishops argued and promised, but they did not pay, and Ivan prepared for war. Von Fürstenberg vainly endeavoured to rouse his subordinates and coadjutors to a sense of the coming danger. The Bishop of Dorpat hastily declined the offer of a few companies of lanzknechts, whose loosely disciplined habits he well remembered; he had forgotten the Russians.

1558

In January three divisions of Moskovite, Tartar, and Tcherkess troops, under the command of a Glinski, a Romanov, and an erstwhile Khan of Kazan, rode into the Order territory and wasted Livland and Estland to within four miles of Revel.[144] The outskirts of Dorpat were burnt, and the invaders returned from this preliminary winter campaign with a heavy spoil of cannons, church bells, treasure, and captives. A contemporary account accuses the Tartars of fiendish cruelties upon the hapless inhabitants who fell into their clutches; among other fantastically devised tortures, men were fastened on to the ground, holes punctured into their sides, and gunpowder poured therein, which being ignited, sent the victims into shreds.[145] Ivan’s object in sending war and desolation careering through the land was to bring the various factors which composed its government into subjection to his authority, as the Prussian State had been brought under the sovereignty of Poland. The Livlanders still imagined that peace might be bought, and at a Landtag held at Wolmar in March it was resolved to send envoys to the Tzar with an offer of 60,000 thalers. Ivan refused to receive the ambassadors, and the chances of reconciliation were still further lessened by an outbreak of hostilities between the opposing fortresses of Narva and Ivangorod, the former of which was captured by the Russians. The war recommenced with renewed vigour on the part of the invaders; the defending forces were too hopelessly disorganised to offer an effective resistance to the Moskovite attack. Churchmen and Ordermen, nobles and burghers, blamed each other mutually, and the luckless peasantry (who since their conversion to Christianity by the Sword Brethren had scarcely been surfeited with the peace and goodwill which had been officially promised them) suffered at the hands of all. Dorpat, Neuhausen, Ringen, and many other strongholds fell before the assaults of the Moskovites, and Ivan’s troops extended their ravages into Kourland. But meanwhile significant events had been taking place at the headquarters of the Order. Von

Fürstenberg had resigned his office to a younger man, Gotthard Kettler, and this new chief had inaugurated vigorous measures whereby to save, if possible, some fragment from the ruin of the rapidly dissolving anachronism which had held together for over 300 years. The Kings of Poland, Sweden, and Denmark were appealed to for assistance, and a more spirited opposition was shown to the Tzar's voevodas. A half-hearted irruption of the Krim Khan, Devlet Girei, into Moskovite territory towards the close of the year did not materially weaken Ivan's grip upon the struggling provinces, but in the following May, through the mediation of the new King of Denmark (Frederick II.), an armistice of six months was granted to the distressed Livlanders.

1559

Kettler, the Archbishop of Riga (Wilhelm Hohenzollern), and the various representatives of the Order, the cathedral lands, and the cities sought to turn this respite to good account. Like vultures swooping down from an empty sky, the agents of the neighbouring northern powers appeared suddenly on the scene now that they understood that the Baltic Bund really meant dying. The Empire, torn and exhausted by the religious warfare which had attended the progress of the Reformation, was unable to take effective part in the obsequies of its detached colony. Other interested waiters upon Providence, however, there were in plenty. Magnus of Holstein, brother of the King of Denmark, was elected successor to Johann Munchausen, Bishop of Oesel and Wiek, who was willing, for a substantial recompense, to evacuate a bishopric which had become neither Catholic nor safe. Revel and the Estlandish barons turned their eyes Swedenward, while in September an alliance was formed between Poland and the expiring Order, which showed in which direction Kourland and Livland were likely to fall. The truce came abruptly to an end in the midst of all these schemings, and the Order knights fought their last campaign amid depressing circumstances. The strongly fortified town of Fellin, in which ex-Master von Fürstenberg had entrenched himself, was captured—or bought—by the Moskovite voevoda Kourbski, and another disaster overtook the Cross warriors at Ermes, where a whole detachment was surrounded by an overpowering force of the enemy and all who were not slain taken as prisoners to Moskva. The Tzar who had wept over the dead Kazanese did not on this occasion permit his triumph to soften his feelings towards the wretched captives, who were flogged through the streets of the capital with whips of wire and then beheaded.[146] Hatred and fear of the Tartar-tinged and autocratic Moskovite sovereignty, heightened by acts such as this, drove the Baltic folk more speedily into the arms of the various foreign powers who were able and willing to absorb them. Oesel had already come under Danish influence; in June 1561 Erik XIV. of Sweden (who had succeeded Gustavus Vasa the preceding September) took Estland formally under his protection. Sigismund-August completed the partition by taking over from the Order Kourland and as much of Livland as was not in the hands of the Russians.

Mar. 1562

The former province was erected into a hereditary duchy dependent on the Polish crown, and bestowed upon the ci-devant Master, Gotthard Kettler, who was transformed into Duke of Kourland; the ecclesiastical lands of the Kourlandish bishopric of Pilten, however, "went with" the territory of Oesel, which also comprised the church-lands of Wiek in Estland. Riga remained for the present a free city, depending more or less upon Poland, and the archbishopric was extinguished on the death of its last prelate, Wilhelm Hohenzollern, in 1563.

[147] Thus passed away in violent dissolution the strange anomalous time-honoured Baltic Bund, that missionary outpost of western Christianity and civilisation, which had crammed its commerce and its Christ swordwise down the throats of the Liv tribes, had led an existence of intermittent strife with its neighbours and within itself, and dying, left a legacy of two hundred years' warfare behind it.

Ivan, in killing the Order, had not reaped unmixed benefits from his destructive efforts; he had advanced the Russian frontier in a direction in which expansion was most needed, but he had seen a large accession of territory fall to his hereditary enemy, Poland, and his other hereditary enemy, Sweden, had obtained a foothold south of the Finnish gulf—two circumstances which did not bode peace on his north-west frontier. At Moskva meanwhile troubles were brewing. The Tzar had probably never forgotten or forgiven the part Adashev and Silvestr had played when their sovereign seemed little better than a dead dog, and his consort had since that affair nourished open enmity against the two advisers. Their opposition to the war with Livland, in place of which they would have preferred a crusade against the Krim khanate, still further nettled Ivan, and the Vremenszhiki might plainly perceive that their "season," which had set in amid the glowing ashes of a burnt Moskva, was drawing to a close in the winter of the Tzar's displeasure.

(Aug. 1560)

The death of Anastasia (who had erewhile presented her husband with another son, Thedor, and a daughter, Eudokiya) did not improve the monarch's temper, and the fallen favourites were glad to leave the unhealthy neighbourhood of the Court. Adashev was sent in the capacity of voevoda to the newly acquired fortress of Fellin, and the man of Novgorod relapsed into the obscurity of the cloister. Their rule had been ambitious, austere, and paternal to the point of irritation, and they left behind them a circle of disparaging courtiers who helped the Tzar to remember how arrogant his disgraced counsellors had been in the past, and to realise how dangerous they might be in the future. It was darkly hinted at the Kreml that Anastasia Romanov had died in the prime of life and health, and that she had been the enemy of the Vremenszhiki. Ivan himself raked up real or imagined grievances against these restrainers of his violent youth, and before long the frown of the Tzar was followed by a stroke of his far-reaching arm. Adashev was removed to a prison at Dorpat, where he died six months later—by his own hand, said his enemies; Silvestr was sent to contemplate the abstract to the music of "the ice-fields which grind against the Solovetsky Monastery on its savage islet" in the White Sea—a favourite storing-place for inconvenient churchmen, as Bielozero was for lay offenders.

A new circle of favourites and boon companions sprang fungus-like around the stern-grown Tzar, but for the future they ceased to try and control his goings; if they could avoid being trampled on they counted themselves lucky. The Basmanovs—Thedor, the son, "with the face of an angel and the heart of a devil"—were among this sinister throng, which also included Maluta Skouratov, "readiest of all to minister to his depraved inclinations and shameful lusts."[148] Ivan, after the punishment of Silvestr and Adashev, was seized with remorse—for wasted opportunities. He might have been so much more savagely exemplary than he had been. It was not yet too late to remedy the omission; Adashev had been disposed of, and the recluse could not well be dragged forth again and re-sentenced; but there were others. The gravest political fault that must be laid to Ivan's account is that his cruelties were occasionally

stupid. In the instance of his first experiment at a reign of terror he selected as principal victim of his unappeased wrath Daniel Adashev, brother certainly of the late minister, but one of the few reliable voevodas with the army in Livland. The exact ground on which he received the death-sentence—beyond the fundamental one of blood-relationship with a fallen idol—does not transpire, but the fault was apparently a comprehensive one, as with him perished his youthful son, his wife's father, his brother's wife's brothers, and his relative Ivan Shiskin, with wife and child.[149] At the same time was put to death, on the double charge of sorcery and affection towards the Adashevs, a woman of Livland, a convert to Orthodoxy, who had come to Moskva with her family, the interesting name of Magdalin, and a reputation for piety. The first perished with her. Other victims of the Tzar's dislike or distrust were sent either to their graves or to Bielozero, and then the "young man's fancy" lightly turned to "thoughts of love." Envoys were sent to the King of Poland suggesting the marriage of Ivan with one of Sigismund-August's sisters as a basis of peace between the two countries, but the negotiations fell through. The question of Livland had added another item to the many vexed points which made a durable reconciliation impossible.

Aug. 1561

The offended wooer haughtily turned his back upon possible western brides and allied himself with a beautiful Tcherkess maiden, of a princely house, whom he caused to be Christianised and baptized at Moskva under the name of Mariya. Towards the close of the following year Ivan assembled an immense army with which to give practical effect to his resentment against Poland, and in January 1563 led his troops in person against Polotzk. Probably no previous Russian prince or voevoda had ever been at the head of so imposing a host; its fighting strength was computed at 280,000 men, another 80,000 accompanied the huge baggage train, and 200 cannon bumped in their sledges over the frozen snow. How such a multitude of men and horses was maintained in the frost-bound and much ravaged border province of Polotzk it is difficult to surmise. Fortunately the siege was not of long duration; the old capital of the House of Isiaslav surrendered to the mighty host which encompassed it, and Ivan was able to add the title of Grand Prince of Polotzk to his already fatiguingly imposing designations. His return journey to Moskva was a repetition of his earlier triumph after the fall of Kazan. As on that occasion, he was met with the pleasing intelligence that his consort had presented him with a son (Vasili).[150] The infant continued the parallel by dying when a few weeks old. Another death happened in the tzarskie family towards the end of the year, Urii, the weakling brother, dropping quietly out of existence at this time. Makarie, the Shouyskie-elevated Metropolitan, died on the last day of the year, "leaving behind him the blessed memory of a prudent pastor."[151] As he had lived in peace with the various Vremenszhiki and with Ivan himself, the prudence cannot be gainsaid.

1564

Athanasie, the Tzar's confessor, was elected to the vacant post, which he probably found less onerous than that of keeper of his Majesty's conscience.

A truce of six months had been accorded to Sigismund-August, notwithstanding which both Moskovites and Poles (the latter with the assistance of the Dniepr Kozaks) mutually harried each other's lands. The Polish ambassadors who came to Moskva in December 1563 put forward the usual inflated demands for Pskov, Novgorod, and other integral Russian possessions; scarcely likely to be yielded to a country which had just lost a valuable province.

Ivan's diplomatists countered these extravagant proposals by equally unreasonable claims, and the futile negotiations—which more resembled a Dutch auction—were broken off in January.

1564

The renewal of active hostilities brought disaster upon the Moskovite arms; in the ill-fated neighbourhood of Orsha Petr Ivanovitch Shouyskie, in command of a large Russian force, was surprised by the hetman Nikolai Radzivil and completely defeated. Among the many conflicting accounts of this battle it is impossible to estimate what was the proportionate loss of victors and vanquished, but it is fairly evident that the Moskovites abandoned their cannon and baggage train to the enemy, that they were pursued by moonlight through brakes and swamps, and that Shouyskie lost his life in the battle or the flight. According to some writers his body was found in a well. The consequences of this defeat were not weighty, but Ivan was at the same time confronted with the defection of one of his most important voevodas, Aleksandr Mikhailovitch Kourbski. This boyarin, who held command of the troops in Livland, had been a companion-in-arms of Daniel Adashev, and was well disposed towards the Vremenszhiki who had had so grim a downfall. As Moskovite generals went, he had been energetic and fairly successful, though at a battle at Nevl he had been worsted by a much inferior Polish force. The cruelty and tyranny which were making the Tzar daily more breathlessly interesting to his courtiers roused apprehensions in the mind of Kourbski, who suddenly took the resolution to transfer his services to the cause of Sigismund-August. The letter or declaration in which he informed the Tzar of the reasons which had driven him to take this step was couched in terms of Biblical reproach, and upbraided the tyrant with having shed the blood of innocent men and slain the mighty ones of Israel. Kourbski was pleased with this composition and expressed his intention of having a copy of it buried with him. Ivan, who was not so pleased with it, drove his iron-tipped staff through the foot of the messenger who had brought it, and kept it there while he read it; and it was a long letter. An extraordinary correspondence ensued; Ivan hurled at his departed boyarin reproaches, scriptural texts, sarcasms, and fragments of classical history. Why to save his miserable body had Kourbski stained his immortal soul with treachery? What, he wished to know, would happen to Kourbski's soul "on the day of awful judgment"? How had he dared to say that the throne of God was surrounded by his (Ivan's) victims, against the authority of the Apostle, who said that no man could see God? Heretic! "You tell me that I shall never again see your Ethiopian face. O Heaven! what misfortune for me!" And let him place his letter in his coffin, thereby proving that he was no Christian, since Christians loved to die in forgiveness and not hate. "Written in our residence of Moskva, in Great Russia, the 5th of the month of July, the year of the world 7,072."[152]

The passing over of Kourbski infused new vigour into Sigismund-August's war measures. Devlet-Girei, who had been on the point of concluding an alliance with Moskva, was suddenly induced by Polish gold to make an inroad upon Riazan; Kourbski and Radzivil led a large army against Polotzk, and hostilities were actively prosecuted in Livland. Nothing, however, resulted from this triple attack; Riazan was heroically defended by the Basmanovs, father and son, until reinforcements arrived to drive the Tartars back into the steppes. Polotzk equally defied the Polish arms, and the Moskovites on their part captured the Lit'uanian fortress of Ozeriszh. In Livland neither side could claim a decided advantage.

Had Ivan at this crucial moment gathered together the formidable resources at his command and led his army against his old hereditary enemy, enfeebled by the rule of a weak and aristocracy-fettered king, and involved, moreover, in a quarrel with Sweden, he might have achieved a conquest more splendid and important than those of Kazan and Polotzk, and have wreaked on foreign foes his consuming lust for blood. But suspicion, the Nemesis of tyrants, had already commenced to haunt the dark mind of the Tzar, and he cared not to risk his sacred person in the hands of possibly traitorous boyarins. His warped imagination peopled Moskva with treason-mongers and conspirators, secret adherents of Kourbski and of the disgraced Vremenszhiki. Promiscuous arrests and judicial murders had not increased the gaiety of the capital, and Ivan glowered round upon gloomy and anxious faces with a sense of injured and threatened majesty. One morning in December boyarins and citizens saw with a feeling of uneasy alarm the Kreml square crowded with sledges, in which were piled crosses, ikons, church and domestic furniture, State treasures, and the various paraphernalia necessary to a peregrinating Tzar. The Terrible was about to desert his capital on the eve of the festivities of Noel. Escorted by a troop of horsemen, and accompanied by his family and favourite courtiers, Ivan Vasilievitch Groznie swept out of Moskva before the eyes of his silent and wondering subjects. This portentous *Hegira* halted at the Aleksandrovskie sloboda, a village some 107 verstas (86 miles) from the capital, where the Tzar set up his Court afresh. The unknown is proverbially the dreaded. All Moskva shivered at this mysterious departure. Clergy, boyarins, and townsfolk asked themselves what boded the winter flitting of their sovereign; they had not long to wait for an explanation.

1565

On the 3rd January came a New Year’s message from Aleksandrov to the Metropolitan, and another to the merchants and people of Moskva. The burden of both these epistles was, that during Ivan’s minority and under the administration of Silvestr and Adashev the interests of the State had been neglected and its coffers plundered; that Moskva still swarmed with a brood of disaffected and rebellious boyarins, and that whenever the long-suffering sovereign wished to mete out justice to the guilty, the Metropolitan and clergy interfered to screen them from their well-deserved doom. Hence the sorrowing Tzar had resolved to shake the dust of an ungrateful capital off his feet, or in other words, to leave the white-built but black-hearted city to simmer in its own iniquities. The effect of this announcement was general panic and consternation, as Ivan had probably intended it should be; a deputation of clergy, boyarins, merchants, and townsfolk, headed by Pimen, Archbishop of Novgorod, waited upon the Tzar in his retreat at Aleksandrov and humbly implored him to return to his desolate capital and to deal with the evil-doers as seemed best to him. Ivan graciously relented and made a solemn entry into the city on the 2nd February. If the chronicles are to be credited, the change of air and scene had done him little good as far as bodily health was concerned, and the people were appalled to behold the ravages which two months’ absence had wrought on the person of their sovereign, who now appeared before them “a gaunt, bent man, with dull eyes, matted, unkempt hair, and a gloomy fierceness stamped upon every feature.”[153] Certainly this Tzar gave his subjects plenty of excitement. As a conqueror he had retaken possession of Moskva, and a new batch of regulations marked his return to the head of affairs; most notable of these enactments was the institution of a personal body-guard, chosen from the ranks of the courtier boyarins, and originally fixed at 1000 strong (afterwards raised to 6000), to whom was given the name of Opritchnina, or select legion. These satellites and creatures of the Tzar fulfilled the duties of guards, police, and special messengers, and became the agents for such

cruelties and extortions as Ivan could not superintend in person. They carried at their saddle-bow a broom and a dog's head, to signify that they swept treason out of the land and devoured the Tzar's enemies; the terror they inspired among the unfortunate people upon whom they were let loose earned for them the name of "Kromieshniki," "of the outer darkness," or literally "outers." Another new departure was the commencement of a palace outside the walls of the Kreml; an unaccountable whim, unless Ivan feared to be shut up like a rat in a trap among a people whose patience might one day give out, and who might hunt for a Vasilievitch as on a memorable occasion they had hunted for Glinskies. For the present the Moskvitchi were huddled like sheep in the corner of a pen, watching with nervous interest the movements of the personage who might be said to embrace the double part of shepherd and wolf. No time was lost in getting to business; in the month of February a batch of victims was selected to inaugurate the new days of personal rule—a dark festival, in sombre, gloomy, and terrible setting, and not as yet common enough to have lost the thrill of expectancy. A list of names stalk spectre-wise across this ugly page of Moskva's history, as the bearers of them walked to their doom under the gaze of a blood-frozen multitude. Aleksandr Gorbati, who at least had fought for the Tzar "from Kazan to the field of Arske," and his son Petr, who at the age of seventeen could not have been steeped very deeply in treason, died together under the executioner's axe. Four other enemies of the Tzar's repose suffered by the block; for a fifth was reserved a more ghastly punishment. Kniaz Dimitri Shaferov expiated his real or imputed crimes by a slow death by impalement. All day long, it was said, he lingered, bearing his pain heroically; and Church and Tzar looked on impassively at a deed more meanly cruel than that monk-taught tragedy, the memory of which they bewailed every Good Friday. To the credit of the Metropolitan, be it said, that having not the courage to thwart his sovereign's sacrificial bent, he retired from an office whose merciful functions he might no longer wield, and withdrew into the Novo Spasskie monastery. Germanus, Archbishop of Kazan, was pitched upon to fill the vacant post, but Ivan quarrelled with him before the ceremony of consecration had time to take place, and the old man escaped thankfully back to his former diocese. The Tzar then nominated Filipp, hegumen of the Solovetski Lavra, who unwillingly assumed an office which could not fail to bring him into disastrous contact with the Terrible and his unbearable Opritchniki.

Ivan divided his time between the capital and the Aleksandrovskie sloboda, which latter place he transformed into a peculiar hybrid settlement, half fortress, half monastery, in which he led an equally peculiar life. A whim or a superstitious fancy caused him to garb himself and his boon companions with the titles and even the robes of monks, but the religious routine of this strange establishment was no make-believe. Matins and masses and vigils were here observed, perhaps more regularly than in most Russian monasteries of that day, and by none more punctiliously than by the Tzar-abbot; a fearful and wonderful being, if contemporary reports have not grossly lied, grovelling in abject fervent worship before the chapel altar at one moment, and gliding out to superintend the fiendish torture of some wretched captive at another, returning "radiant" and comforted—grotesque and scarcely credible, yet supported by the facts that are available. While the baboon-hearted sovereign passed his days in a blended medley of piety and savagery, buffoonery and State affairs, his familiar sprites, the Six Thousand, infested Moskva and a large portion of the country districts like a devouring pest or an army of occupation. Princes, boyarins, burghers, all who were not connected with the Elect Legion, were liable at any moment to be insulted, plundered, or maltreated by the light-hearted and light-fingered Opritchniki, and redress from the Tzar there was none. Houses and lands

were ruthlessly filched from unoffending subjects in order to provide for the wants and luxuries of the favoured legionaries.[154]

The new Metropolitan, a man of firmer fibre than his immediate predecessors, inevitably clashed against the drifting forces of oppression and State anarchy which bore athwart him, and incurred the disfavour alike of Tzar and Opritchniki. Previous to his consecration he had made a half-hearted attempt to procure the suppression of the latter, and in return they hated him with a thoroughness which boded his ultimate destruction. Throughout his ministrations in the gloomy and splendid temples of Moskva the grinning dog's head must have been ever before his eyes, and the renewed cruelties and executions with which the Tzar terrorised the capital made a rupture daily more imminent.

During these inward developments of Ivan's reign a curious languor had crept into the foreign relations of the country. It seemed as if the three north-eastern powers were gorged and torpid after having assimilated within their maws the decayed carcase of the Baltic Bund. The Swedish raven and the Slav eagles sat inertly blinking at each other, or indulged in desultory sparring over the remains of their banquet. Perennial embassades, solemnly and sumptuously upholstered, trailed to and fro between Moskva and the Lit'uanian capital, and concurrently Kozaks and razboyniks (moss-troopers) kept alive the smouldering embers of war. As a matter of fact neither of the three neighbour nations was in a position to engage in a vigorous foreign campaign. In Sweden Erik, second monarch of the House of Vasa, was undoing the good work of his father and sowing the whirlwind which was shortly to sweep him from his throne. In Poland the line of Yagiello seemed likely to come to an end with the childless Sigismund-August, and men looked anxiously or selfishly forward to the prospective troubles of an open succession; for the most part selfishly. In Russia Ivan, who might have reaped splendid profit from the embarrassments of his rivals, seemed bent rather on warring upon his own subjects. His hatred of the boyarins may legitimately be explained by the recollections of his dreary and friendless youth, and of the torturing anxiety of his sick-bed, when loyalty ran cold and men turned their backs upon the seemingly setting sun. And yet the prime mover in that incipient treason appeared for long to have escaped the jealous fury that bore so strong a sway in the Tzar's breast. Vladimir Andreivitch, who had put himself forward as his cousin's under-study, was for many years the object of caresses rather than openly shown resentment. Fiefs, palaces, commands, and other compliments were showered upon him, as though to remove the possibility of further disaffection. But there are more ways of killing a cat than by choking it with cream. Ivan one day summoned his relative to visit him at Aleksandrovskie, and rode forth to meet him with a band of ever-useful Opritchniki—and some poison.

1569

Vladimir, accompanied by his wife and two children, was intercepted at a little village on the road, where all four were forced to drink of the Tzar's hospitality—a beverage which needed no digestion.

Whatever object Ivan may have had in selecting a man of Filipp's disposition for the office of Metropolitan, he soon laboured to displace him therefrom; "there is no law to say such things as may disgust the ear of kings," and Filipp had been, for a Russian churchman, tolerably outspoken.

(1568)

The uncompromising Vladuika was arrested, arraigned on some raked-up charge relating to his monastic life, deposed from his office, and immured in a cell of the Otrotch monastery near Tver. Here in the following year Maluta Skouratov helped him to die; Ivan has the credit of having added a martyr to the Orthodox calendar. Kirill, hegumen of the Novinski monastery (Moskva) replaced Filipp in the Russian primacy.

Despite the passive and unresisting temper with which the Moskovites seem to have endured the tyranny of their sovereign and his satellites, Ivan was never free from apprehension on the score of treason. The carefully-guarded seclusion of his life both at Aleksandrov and at the capital betray his nervous fears in this respect, and even more unmistakable is the drift of the correspondence he had with Elizabeth of England on the subject of a possible asylum in that country. In the last years of Edward VI. the English navigator Richard Chancellor, of “the Mystery Companie and Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers for the Discoverie of unknown lands,” had stumbled upon Moskovy while searching for a northern passage to India and China, and diplomatic and commercial relations had been opened up between the two countries. The Queen responded graciously to “the deare most mightie and puissant Prince, our brother, great lord Emperor and greate Duke Ivan Basily of all Russia,” promising a sanctuary for “the free and quiet leeding of your highnes lief ... and that it maie be laufull for you to use your Christian relligion in such sorte, as it shall be best like you.” Besides, the letter went on, a place should be appointed for the prospective fugitive and his Court “as long as you shall like to remaine with us,” adding, however, “upon your owen charge.” The Tudors were not given to quixotic extravagance.

Russia it has well been said is the country of contrasts, and the reign of Ivan furnishes some curious anomalies of administration. Of all the strange fruit to be borne under the circumstances of time and place—in the Moskovy of the sixteenth century—a States-General was about the last to be looked for. And yet this was indeed the apparition which the violent control-impatient Tzar called up to advise him on the purely administrative question of continuation or termination of the Polish war. In the summer of 1566 came to Moskva an unwonted assemblage of boyarins, higher clergy, small proprietors, merchants, and townsfolk, 339 in all, to deliberate on the matter which had been submitted to their decision. Sigismund-August had abandoned his demands for the restitution of Smolensk and Polotzk, and was willing to unite with Ivan in a scheme for driving the Swedes out of Estland and partitioning that province and Livland amicably between the two Slav powers. The East-Russian monarch did not jump at these favourable proposals, but insisted that Riga, Wenden, Wolmar, Ronneburg, and Kokenhausen should be added to his share of Livland. Possibly his object was to harass Lit’uania by a prolongation of the war, in the hope that, on the death of Sigismund-August, the electors of the grand duchy might be driven to put a term to their country’s sufferings by bestowing their suffrages on their most formidable neighbour; as the Poles had done in the case of Yagiello. The King refused to make the required concessions, hence the deadlock which the Russian Diet was called together to discuss. The assembly unanimously concurred in refusing to abate the Tzar’s demands upon Livland, which appeared to them extremely reasonable. Thus the old Slavonic custom of violently disposing of a minority was not called into requisition; had the unanimity been the wrong way Ivan would probably not have shrunk from a heroic treatment of the case. Whatever hopes the Tzar may have entertained of detaching Lit’uania from the Polish crown were dispelled by the political stroke which Sigismund-August effected a few years later; by the Union of Lublin, signed, after many a stormy sitting, on the 1st July 1569, Poland and Lit’uania were definitely bound together in a

dual but indivisible realm. The question of the succession to the double throne still remained open, but it was scarcely likely that the turbulent and almost independent nobles of the Polish provinces would turn their thoughts towards the grim despot of Moskva, charm he never so wisely. Ivan, however, in obstinately refusing to conclude peace on any but the most exorbitant terms, and confining his military operations for the most part to unimportant border skirmishes, was pursuing the time-honoured Moskovite wolf-borrowed policy of wearing down an adversary by persistent untiring attack. Even more hoary and respectable with the sanction of age, dating indeed from the days of Sviatoslav Igorovitch, was the happy-go-lucky neglect of the southern and eastern possessions of the gosoudarstvo, which were generally left with no better protection than those with which nature had surrounded them. South of Moskva nothing matters, might have expressed the indifference with which the Russian statecraft permitted its outlying districts in this direction to be continually overrun by marauding armies.

1569

In the year of the Lublinskie Union a Turko-Tartar invasion, having for its nucleus 17,000 troops under the command of an Ottoman pasha, entered the steppe-lands of the Azov basin to prosecute what might be considered a holy war against the Infidel conquerors of Kazan and Astrakhan. With the idea of bringing the Mussulman lands watered by the Volga into closer touch with Azov, and thereby with the water-way to Constantinople, the Turkish plan of campaign included the gigantic project of uniting that river with the Don by means of a canal. Neither this undertaking nor the meditated swoop upon Astrakhan was seriously prosecuted, and the invaders seem to have gathered alarm from the awful stillness of the solitudes into which they had penetrated, and to have seen Moskovite armies stealing upon them where only the foxes and the steppe-eagles sought their prey amid the waving grasses. The Tartar auxiliaries gradually dispersed and the famine-wasted troops of the Sultan re-embarked at Azov without having encountered human enemies other than the skirmishing bands of Tcherkess warriors who had harassed their retreat.

Permanently at war with Poland, never safe from the hostility of the Krim Tartars, and threatened with the aggression of the great Mohametan power of South-East Europe, Ivan seemed to find among his own subjects enemies more punishable than any who menaced him from without. Moskva and Aleksandrov had been the scene of many a nightmare deed of cruelty; many an action of injustice and oppression had been perpetrated by the fiend-hearted Opritchniki in the country districts; but now something on a larger scale was to be attempted. The “episode of Novgorod,” one of the most terrible events of a terrible reign, is introduced by some of the earlier historians in a somewhat fantastic manner. One Petr, a native of Volhynia, who had suffered for some offence at the hands of the Novgorodskie authorities, revenged himself by calumniating the city rulers in the too susceptible mind of the Tzar; his story was that a letter, addressed to Sigismund-August, and signed by the Archbishop (Pimen) and the leading inhabitants of the city, offering to transfer their allegiance to the Polish monarch, had been hidden behind the image of the Mother-of-God in the Sofia Cathedral at Novgorod, where it was eventually found by a confidential agent dispatched by Ivan from Moskva.[155] Why a letter intended for the King of Poland, and presumedly of some urgency, should have been placed, and left, in such a curious position, is not very apparent. That such treason was actually meditated is at least possible. Novgorod, clinging to the memory of lost liberties and departed glories, may not unnaturally have turned wistful eyes towards any protector who might save her from a dynasty which, in the person of Ivan III., had wrought her such lasting

injury, and in the person of his grandson threatened her with further oppressions. The morbidly suspicious mind of the Tzar would not be without apprehension on this score, and in this case there is no reason to presuppose that evidence, real or concocted, was an essential preliminary to preventative action. In the autumn of 1569 the incriminating letter is said to have been found. In December the Tzar, with the Tzarevitch Ivan, his favourite boyarins, and an army of Opritchniki, set out on a punitive expedition against Novgorod and the neighbouring towns. Like a python encoiling its prey this strange peregrinating “bed of justice” moved towards the devoted city, leaving an ugly streak of blood and desolation in its track. Klin, a small township near Tver, was the starting-point of the red carnival. What exact offence the inhabitants had committed in the eyes of their sovereign it is impossible to say, since they could scarcely have been suspected of complicity in the alleged treasonable correspondence with Sigismund-August. The Tzar, however, let slip his “peculiars” on them, and murder and pillage became the order of the day. “Houses and streets were filled with corpses, and neither women nor children were spared.”[156] Hence onward, at Tver, Torjhok, Gorodnya, and in all the villages as far as lake Ilmen, the same scenes of blood and rapine were enacted; the roads leading to Novgorod were strewn with dead bodies.[157] It was during this grisly progress through the dark snow-swathed pine-forests, where the ravens watched over the frozen corpses, and the wolves feasted on what the Kromiesniki left behind them, that Maluta Skouratov turned aside to the Otrotch monastery and transacted his business with the ex-Metro politan Filipp. Truly the frosts of winter seemed to have got into men’s blood and all feelings of mercy and goodwill to have evaporated at the festivals of Noel. To the Novgorodskie, awaiting the arrival of this dread visitation, tidings kept pouring in which might well have roused them to the defiance of despair, and armed them against their fate.

Jan. 1570

The Opritchniki had already drawn a cordon round the slobodas and outskirts of the city, and were ransacking the numerous monasteries which studded the sandy plain, putting to death such of the inmates as showed the least sign of opposition. But there was no Martha to organise resistance, no Mstislav the Brave to step in between Novgorod and her doom. When Ivan, accompanied by his son, courtiers, and a formidable body-guard of Strielitz, made his entry into the terror-stricken city, he was met on the famous Volkhov bridge by the Vladuika Pimen at the head of the clergy and principal citizens, with the cross and sacred banners displayed. The miraculous ikon, which had repelled the attack of the Souzdalskie besiegers, failed to turn the heart of the Tzar, and the Archbishop’s quavering blessing was refused. Novgorod was given over to slaughter and pillage and Pimen himself was spared only to perform antics degrading alike to his manhood and his office. For six weeks the city and its outskirts was a continued scene of confiscation and wholesale execution; numbers of the inhabitants were flung into the Volkhov, at a point near the bridge where its waters never freeze, and so many were disposed of in this way that lake Ladoga is said to have been tainted by the carrion. The total number of the victims has been variously computed, contemporary accounts fixing the death-roll from 2770, “besides women and common folk,” to the maximum and probably enormously exaggerated figure of 60,000.[158] In a curious and appallingly suggestive register, preserved at the Kirillov monastery, in which Ivan used to keep a reckoning of his victims and apparently apprise his God of their dispatch, there is the following entry: “O Lord! give peace to the souls of 1505 of Thy servants, Novgorodians.”[159] The number of unburied corpses was sufficiently great to cause a pestilence, which rounded off the Tzar’s act of vengeance. After having denuded the celebrated Cathedral of its bells,

vessels, ikons and other treasures, and destroyed cattle, grain, and whatever could not be conveniently carried off, Ivan called together the wretched remnant of the citizens and graciously asked for their prayers on behalf of himself and his family.

Then, in the middle of February, he departed towards Pskov, leaving the silent city alone with its dead. A romantic, but not necessarily romancing, element runs through the account of Ivan's dealings with Pskov. Sharing in the conjectural guilt for which Novgorod had been so mercilessly chastised, the Tzar had devised for the city on the Peipus a similar punishment. Halting at one of the monasteries without the walls, on the eve of his intended assize, he was moved by hearing the bells of all the churches and religious houses around toll at midnight, in funeral anticipation of the threatened butchery. His feelings were still further worked upon by the appearance on the scene of a local celebrity, one Nikolai, half-hermit, half-charlatan, who offered him meat, and on being indignantly rebuked—it was Lent—boldly accused the Tzar of feeding on human bodies. This stark, uncanny being, in the vigorous words of Sir Jerome Horsey, an adventurous Englishman who visited Moskovy several times in various capacities, "with bold Imprecations and Exorcismes calling him Blood-sucker and Deuourer of Christian flesh, swore by his Angell that hee should not escape death by a present Thunderbolt, if he or any of his did touch the least childs haire in that Citie."[160] It is not improbable that this madman and fanatic may have made a strong impression upon a kindred spirit, and the unusual occurrence of a thunderstorm in February, which the chronicles relate, would have added to the Tzar's superstitious uneasiness. Of the existence of this "sorcerer"

Horsey gives evidence at first hand: "I saw this Impostor, a foule creature; hee went naked Winter and Summer.... His Holinesse could not endure me," he adds, which, as the Englishman was openly sceptical as to his supernatural powers, was not wonderful. Whatever may have influenced the Tzar to an unwonted deviation into humanity, he suddenly stayed his avenging hand and returned to Moskva with his Opritchniks, his Court, and the captive Archbishop. That he was in any way satiated with cruelty does not appear, as in the same year he treated the capital to a blood-carnival on a grander scale than any it had yet witnessed. What gave added alarm to this new reign of terror was that no one was safe from implication, for the Tzar's own seeming favourites and the most trusted of his creatures were arrested one after the other. The Basmanovs, father and son, Viskovatui, the Treasurer Founikov, Athanasie Viazemskie, Ivan Vorontzov, and scores of other princes and boyarins were pounced upon and hurried off into safe keeping, while sinister preparations went forward in the great square of the Kitai-gorod. On the 25th July all was in readiness; eighteen gibbets and a large cauldron suspended over a glowing furnace, with other implements of punishment, met the Tzar's eye as he rode with Maluta Skouratov and other yet surviving favourites on to the scene of execution. But one important item was lacking; where were the onlookers? The great square was deserted, for the Moskvitchi had hidden themselves away from the alarming spectacle which the Gosoudar had prepared for them; there was no knowing where the matter would stop. Ivan sent his soldiers to summon his subjects to the show, and even went in person to beat up the skulking citizens, who flocked with quaking hearts to the various coigns of vantage round the Red Place. The audience having been secured, the prisoners were marched out in a long file to the scene of their punishment. The crowd, scanning the wan faces of the victims, missed that of Viazemskie, who had died under torture, and the Basmanovs were also absent. A crowning horror was reserved for them. But see, the Tzar speaks.

Raising his voice that all might hear, he demanded of the people of Moskva if the tortures and

executions they were about to witness seemed to them just? They did, they did. No shred of hope could the doomed men grasp from that hoarse murmur of servile approbation. Like beaten gladiators, reading their fate in the upturned thumbs and hard faces of the onlookers, they stood unfriended before that vast multitude. I.H.S. has taken the place of the S.P.Q.R., but fifteen hundred years have not materially removed Christian Moskva from the ethic-level of pagan Rome. Up to the mounted monarch was led the first victim, Viskovatui, whom Ivan accused of treasonable correspondence with the King of Poland, with the Sultan, and with the Krim Khan, emphasising his accusations by slashing the boyarin's face with his whip. Bound, gagged, and hung by the feet, he was forthwith hacked to pieces; Maluta Skouratov, descending from his horse, sliced off an ear by way of a beginning. Founikov was dispatched by alternate drenching with boiling and iced water, and "expired in horrible torments." Others, to the number of about 200, were put to death in various manners, the Tzar himself having the credit of impaling one old man on his lance.[161] On what evidence, if any, these men were found guilty of treason and disloyalty it is impossible to know, but this at least may be remarked, that, enjoying as they did the Tzar's favour and patronage, they had scarcely a motive for wishing to overturn or undermine his authority. The executions on the Red Place, renewed after an interval of a few days, were not the only outlet for the monarch's anger or blood-thirst; other evil deeds are related of this reign of terror, this running amok of a human being among his unresisting fellows. It was said that Ivan forced Thedor Basmanov, the "angel-faced," to kill his own father: a ghastly deed which did not save the perpetrator from a death by torture, and which at least need not be unreservedly believed in. Torture was also meted out to the widows of some of the most distinguished of the victims of the Red Place, and eighty were said to have been flung into the Moskva river. Such a glut of corpses defied expeditious or thorough burial, and for many days and nights the inhabitants of that horror-haunted city witnessed packs of dogs crunching and tearing human bones and flesh in the dry ditches beneath the Kreml walls and in the open spaces of the Kitai-gorod. Some of the bodies appear to have found their way into the tzarskie fish-ponds, and carp and pike grew bloated on the rich banquet.[162] And amid the gloom and stifled wailing the dread author of it all, the man of terror and blood and punishments, prostrates himself daily in the holy places, bumping his forehead on the pavement before the sacred ikons. Splendid triumph of the Nazarene! Oh glorious irony! The great Orthodox Tzar, conqueror of Kazan and Astrakhan and Polotzk, master of the lives and liberties of his trembling subjects, bows in abject worship before the picture of a woman and a little child.

Amid the seemingly indiscriminating severities with which Ivan cowed the inhabitants of his principal cities, his mind was engaged in the conduct of a dexterous and well-thought-out foreign policy. The same year that witnessed the episode of Novgorod and the butchery in the Kitai-gorod was signalised by a long-laboured truce (to run for three years) between Moskovy and Poland.

1570

The growing expectancy of a vacancy of the Polish-Lit'uanian throne had no doubt something to do with this reconciliation. That Ivan seriously put himself forward as a candidate for that extremely limited and curtailed monarchy seems to be the case, judging from the significant instructions which his ambassadors received, to keep strict silence, when in Poland, on the subject of the Tzar's domestic tyrannies.[163] Equally surprising, but nevertheless credit-worthy, the Tzar was not without a party among the liberty and license-loving Polish nobles, many of

whom, particularly at Warszawa, were said to be adopting Moskovite costume in view of a coming dynastic displacement. His adherents were chiefly among the *szlachta*, or small nobility, who numbered in their ranks many of the Reformed persuasion. At this period Protestants and Orthodox were lumped together in Poland, under the common designation of Dissidents, and suffered equally at the hands of the dominant Catholics. Hence many members of the Diet were more alarmed at the prospect of an Austrian, or other Jesuit-ridden king, than at the possible unmanageability of the Moskovite Tzar. While awaiting the drift of events in Poland, Ivan set in motion a course of action by which he hoped to drive the Swedes out of the Baltic provinces. His idea was to enlist the sympathy and support of the long-suffering Livlanders and Estlanders by setting up a puppet king who should govern the old lands of the Bund, under the suzerainty of Moskva. The title of King of Livland, offered, according to contemporary report, successively to ex-Master von Fürstenberg and the Duke of Kourland (by both of whom it was declined), was eventually accepted by the ambitious but effete Magnus of Holstein, Duke of Oesel and Wiek.

(1570)

Magnus paid a visit to Moskva—in some trepidation, for the city was getting an unhealthy reputation—and returned with the Tzar's proclamation of his new dignity, backed up by five-and-twenty thousand Russian troops. With this force and his own German guards, the Holsteiner advanced upon Revel, which, however, held out against both his wiles and his assaults; the latter he discontinued after a siege of thirty weeks' duration (16th March 1571), burning his camp-works and withdrawing his army into quarters. This rebuff settled the fate of the vassal "kingdom." In another direction Ivan's foreign policy had been equally unsuccessful—in an attempt, namely, to cultivate friendly relations with the Ottoman power. The embassy which he sent in 1570 to Constantinople, to congratulate Sultan Selim on his accession, was coldly received, and a demand put forward for the relinquishing of the Russian sovereignty over Kazan and Astrakhan. The uneasiness which the Tzar felt with regard to the possibility of a forward Mussulman movement was increased by news which was brought to Moskva in the spring of 1571 of a warlike activity among the Krimskie Tartars. Whether instigated by Turkish influences, or by the anti-Moskovite party in Poland, or whether acting on his own initiative, Devlet-Girei was certainly preparing for an inroad upon Russian territory, and Ivan hastily assembled an army of 50,000 men, which he posted, under the leadership of several voevodas, along the banks of the Oka, where the enemy was expected to pass. The invading force, said to be 120,000 strong, eluded this first line of defence and bore straight upon Moskva. The Tzar, who might with the forces at his disposal have held the Tartars in check till the army of the Oka came up on their flank, fled, as his father Vasili had done, as most of the Grand Princes of Moskva had from time to time done under similar circumstances, and sheltered himself at Rostov, leaving the capital to its fate. Weakened and dispirited by this desertion, the force which had raced back from the Oka and arrived at much the same time as the Krimskies made no attempt to defend the slobodas and outlying quarters of the city, which were set on fire by the Khan's orders. Ignorant, probably, of the strength of the Russian garrison, and fearing to be taken unawares by a reinforcement from the north, the Tartars made no further move upon the city, and indeed the rapid spread of the flames made pillage impossible. With the exception of the stone-built Kreml, nearly the whole town was destroyed, and the loss of life, though probably enormously exaggerated by contemporary writers, was undoubtedly very great. "Then might you haue seene a lametable spectacle," writes an English traveller twenty years later, "... the people burning in their houses and streates, but

most of all such as laboured to passe out of the gates farthest from the enemie, where meeting together in a mighty throng, and so pressing euery man to preuent another, wedged themselves so fast within the gate, and streates neare vnto it, as that three ranks walked one vpon the others head, the vppermost treading downe those that were lower: so that there perished at that time (as was sayd) by the fire and the presse, the number of 800,000 people, or more."[164] Or less. Another Englishman, Sir Jerome Horsey, bears witness to the fact that numbers of the inhabitants, plunging, with all their removable valuables, into the river, to escape from the flames and the Tartars, sank beneath its waters, and that long after the bodies had been disposed of, it was a fashionable amusement to drag the river bed for submerged treasure, adding significantly, "I my selfe was somewhat the better for that fishing." Satisfied with the striking and easily-accomplished chastisement which he had inflicted upon the half-dreaded, half-despised enemy, the Khan withdrew his Hordes, carrying with him immense numbers of captured Moskovites, and pursued at a safe distance by the tzarskie voevodas. Ivan, returning to his desolated capital and dreading a renewal of the struggle with an antagonist, formidable in himself and possibly a forerunner of Turkish hostility, began to reckon on the necessity of purchasing peace by the surrender of Astrakhan. While, however, the victorious Tartar was plaguing him with taunting messages and importunate demands, the Tzar diverted his mind to the consideration of a more pleasing matter. His second wife Mariya had died in 1569, and he had for some time contemplated a renewal of the marriage state. The present seemed to him a good opportunity for carrying out his project, and the usual preliminaries were set in motion. The selection of a mate for the Russian Gosoudars was conducted on a thoroughly democratic principle, and any young woman of healthy and pleasing appearance might aspire to the honour of becoming Tzaritza. On this occasion over 2000 of the likeliest maidens of Moskovy were brought to the Aleksandrovskie Sloboda, and the Court doctors and midwives helped the monarch to make his choice, which fell upon a young girl of Novgorod, Martha Sobakin. Either the work of selection was badly done, or the Tzar was particularly unfortunate, or the bride met with foul play, for she died before the marriage ceremonies were well through. Needless to state the thwarted widower inclined to the last alternative, and several persons were put to death on suspicion. The proverb "one funeral makes many" certainly applies to the decease of a Tzaritza in sixteenth-century Moskva. A batch of boyarins and voevodas were ordered to execution the same winter (1571), on the charge of having been in league with the Tartars, and doubtless some such suspicion was a deciding factor in Ivan's supine flight before the invaders. Some were impaled, others knouted to death, others poisoned.[165]

Whether this sanguinary example had the effect of encouraging "*les autres*," or whether the damage sustained by Moskva from the Tartar brands stung the Russians to exceptional effort, a renewal of the invasion by the Khan met with a determined and successful opposition.

Aug. 1572

An enormous army of Krim and Nogai Tartars, reinforced by troops of Yeni-Tscheri and other Turkish soldiers, pushed across the Oka, but was encountered and decisively defeated by a Moskovite force of inferior numbers, under the command of Kniaz Vorotinski and Ivan Sheremetiev. The slaughter was heavy and the issue of the day swept away all question of withdrawal from Astrakhan, and gave Moskovy a long immunity from trouble with the steppe-folk. Ivan, who, while the attack threatened, had been seized with a desire to visit the northern districts of his dominions, returned from Novgorod to share in the general rejoicing. In the early

part of the year he had scandalised and embarrassed the heads of the Church by taking unto himself a fourth wife, Anna Koltovskoi; after having accomplished this breach of the Church's law he still further disturbed the spiritual fathers by announcing his sin to the Synod then sitting for the election of a Metropolitan in the place of Kirill, deceased, and demanding absolution. The Vladuikas, torn between love for their precious dogmas and a natural and earnest desire to fall in with the Tzar's wishes, yielded finally to the stronger sentiment and hallowed the union. In order to prevent other less privileged persons from imitating the Tzar's example, they hastened to "menace with a fulminating anathema those who should dare to enter into a fourth marriage." Antonie, Archbishop of Polotzk, was elected Metropolitan.

While Moskva was yet quaking in anticipation of another visit from Devlet-Girei, an anxiously awaited event had taken place in the grand-duchy of Lit'uania.

1570

At Knyszyn, near Grodno, on the 7th July, had passed away the amiable Sigismund-August, "last of the Yagiellos." Instantly the states composing the Polish kingdom were plunged into the modified anarchy of an interregnum, and various aspirants to the kingly title, starting suddenly into the foreground, added to the general confusion. The internal differences which complicated the election of a successor to the defunct monarch were succinctly stated in the correspondence of a French diplomat, who informed his Court "there are four sorts of discords and different principles which greatly retard the election, which are: of the Lit'uanians with the Poles, of Great Poland with Little Poland, of the barons with the rest of the nobility, and of the Catholics with the Protestants."[166] The faction of the Szlachta, or small landowners, was more or less identical with the Great-Poland party, while Little Poland was the stronghold of the higher magnates; this line of demarcation was further accentuated by the personal rivalry of Uchanski, Archbishop of Gniezno, who led the former party, and Firley, Grand Marshal of the realm, who headed the other. Add to this the fact that the Protestants were divided into more or less hostile camps of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists, and a fair idea will be gathered of the field wherein the agents of the several candidates were to ply their arts. Of the princes who placed themselves, or were placed, in competition for the throne of the Yagiellos, the one whose claims stood forth most prominently was the Austrian Archduke Ernst, second son of the Emperor (Maximilian II.). The Habsburgs, who had already absorbed Bohemia and were almost as firmly established in that part of Hungary which was not occupied by the Turks, had on every possible occasion contracted matrimonial alliances with the Polish royal House, and hoped to add the Lekh kingdom to their family dominions. The candidature of the Archduke was backed by the imperial influence and had, moreover, the support of the Papacy, whose agent, Cardinal Commendone, was working to secure his election. On the other hand there were considerations which made his success by no means a foregone conclusion; the great body of the Protestants would unite in objecting to a monarch whose family traditions were bound up with Roman Catholic supremacy, and many of the Poles were apprehensive that an Austrian connection would involve them in a war with Turkey, a thing they were particularly anxious to avoid. Above all, he personified German intrusion, an element naturally distasteful to the Polish national spirit. The same dread of a foreign war which weakened the chances of the Archduke was the strongest factor, especially with the Lit'uanians, in advancing the Moskovite candidature. The term of truce had nearly run out and Ivan had clearly let it be understood that an unfriendly election would mean renewal of war. That the Tzar, as sovereign, might be a worse affliction than as a hostile neighbour was a contingency partly

provided for by the jealous restrictions of the *Pacta conventa*, which he would be required to sign preliminary to his coronation. The idea of the Moskovite party in Lit'uania was, however, to elect the weak and more easily handled Thedor, Ivan's second son, rather than the father. None of the Protestant princes who put themselves forward—John, King of Sweden (brother-in-law of the late Sigismund-August), Stefan Batory, Voevoda of Transylvania, and the young Duke Albrecht-Freidrich of Prussia—were strong enough to command the confidence even of their co-religionists. A further candidate there was, however, from an unexpected quarter. Henri de Valois, Duke of Anjou, brother to his Most Christian Majesty of France, and favourite son of Catherine de Medici, was a young gentleman who was casting about in various directions for an opening suitable for the development of his ambitions, and whose relations and acquaintances were exceedingly desirous to see him settled. Charles IX. was anxious to have this too brilliant brother removed to any sphere other than the kingdom of France, already in a sufficiently electric condition, a wish which was shared by Coligny and the Huguenots; while Catherine nursed the proud hope of seeing all her sons decorated with the kingly title. Monsieur himself was least enamoured of the project. From the Polish point of view he made an ideal candidate; belonging to a powerful House, which was neither German nor Moskovite, he was strong without being dangerous, and the good understanding which existed between the Louvre and the Porte would be an excellent guarantee for immunity from Turkish aggression. Nor was the Catholic bias of the Valois an insuperable obstacle to his election. The Prince who hunted Huguenots with such apparent zeal had in his boyhood dallied with the principles of the Reformation, and in later life seriously considered the project of placing himself at the head of the Protestants of the Low Countries.[167] He was in fact a thorough opportunist, and would probably hold, like his namesake of Navarre, in similar though reversed circumstances, that a kingdom outweighed the significance of a mass. His interests were actively pushed by the ambassador dispatched from France for that purpose, Jean de Montluc, Bishop of Valence, and the hesitancy of the Emperor and uncompromising attitude of the Tzar smoothed the way for his election. The news of the "happy and holy enterprise," which had been carried to a successful conclusion in the streets of Paris in the small hours of the 24th August, was not received in Poland with the same complacency with which it was hailed at Rome, and the French candidature received a severe check. For months the name of the Duke of Anjou was in evil odour among the electors, and the sleepless efforts of Montluc were directed to the task of whitewashing his employer from the red stain of S. Bartholomew. The long-drawn-out proceedings which delayed the Diet of election, and which gave Poland an entirely new constitution, altering the whole course of her history, also gave time for the feeling against the Valois to die down; the French agents made good use of the respite and the Anjou cause steadily gained fresh adherents, till on the eve of the election scarcely any other candidate was seriously considered.

1573

Thus it came to pass that, by an irony of fate, the stormy sittings of the Diet of Warszawa, which lasted for the greater part of April and May, resulted in bestowing the Polish crown on the prince who, of all the competitors, least coveted it. And in fact the hotly-contested prize, as it came out of the long interregnum, was scarcely a brilliant possession; "it was not the heritage of the Yagellos intact that the Bishop of Valence would have to take back to the brother of Charles IX., but a crown despoiled of a part of its privileges, and, under the title of king, nothing in truth more than the life-presidency of a republic."[168] The terms of the celebrated *Pacta conventa*, to which every succeeding king would be required to give his

adhesion, were, among others, that the king should have no voice in the election of a successor; must respect the religious liberty of the Dissidents; must neither undertake a war nor impose taxes without consent of Diet; nor marry nor divorce a wife without the same sanction; and that no foreigners should hold any public office.

A throne pent in with such conditions would scarcely be attractive in the eyes of the tyrant of Moskva, and Ivan seems to have used his influence less to promote the candidature of himself or his son than to secure the election of the Austrian Archduke. That he should be anxious to have the Empire for a near neighbour might appear strange; his real concern was lest a good understanding between a Franco-Polish King and the Sultan should lead to his own undoing. It was perhaps, however, an indirect effect of the influences of the free election on the banks of the Vistula that led the Tzar to disband his feared and hated Opritchniks (1572). While the Poles were yet in the throes of settling the procedure of their Congress, Ivan took advantage of the settled state of affairs in his own dominions and the embarrassed condition of his neighbours to make a further attack on the Swedish garrisons in Estland. With an army of 80,000 men he burst into a land whose inhabitants were complacently engaged in celebrating the festival of Christmas week, and changed the scenes of carol and carousal into those of litany and desolation. Wittenstein was captured after a brief resistance, during which the Tzar's abiding favourite, Maluta Skouratov, lost his life. His fall was avenged, according to the Livlandish chronicles, by a holocaust of the prisoners, Swedes and Germans, who were burned alive on a pile of faggots.[169] A fit and seemly deed, if true, for the man who had exchanged with the Emperor Maximilian sentiments of pious horror at the affair of S. Bartholomew. Further Moskovite successes, and one of those wordy correspondences in which the Tzar revelled, were followed by a curious truce with Sweden, to run for two years (July 1575 to July 1577), and limited in scope as well as in duration, since it was only to effect a suspension of arms between the neighbouring provinces of Novgorod and Finland. Estland was still to be disputed at the sword's point. For mysterious reasons of his own—possibly to lull German and Danish susceptibilities—Ivan continued to place Magnus of Holstein, his vassal "King," in the forefront of his Baltic policy, and the unwilling Princeling was carried off to Moskva to be solemnly wedded to Mariya, daughter of Vladimir Andreivitch. Having made her an orphan the Tzar might well think it incumbent on him to provide her with a husband, but Magnus was scarcely overjoyed with a dowry of some inconsiderable presents and the government of the township of Karkus—to which dimensions his kingdom had shrunk.

1575-6

The campaign in the Baltic debatable lands resulted in a further strengthening of the Russian foothold in that quarter; Pernau was stormed and taken with a loss of 7000 men; Helmet, Ermes, and other places in Livland surrendered to Ivan's voevodas, and the stronghold of Habsal, in Estland, fell into their hands. From his western neighbours the Tzar had met with no opposition in his sea-ward course; the Poles, after the prolonged and elaborate labours of their king-choosing, had been again confronted, under extraordinary circumstances, with the dangers and difficulties of an interregnum. Never more than half reconciled to the eastern exile which his restricted Polish sovereignty entailed, Henri de Valois no sooner heard that he had succeeded to the crown of S. Louis (his brother had died on the 30th May 1574) than he fled precipitately from the kingdom over which he had reigned for barely seven months. Once more the shadow of the Habsburg loomed over the land, and there seemed indeed no suitable candidate with which to oppose the Austrian nomination. The Papal, Imperial, and Moskovite

influence, as well as that of the Archbishop of Gniezno and the principal senators, pointed in the same direction; the Szlachta alone held out against the Archduke and his father. The Habsburg hopes were destined, however, to be again falsified, and a new rival sprang up against them in Stefan Batory, Voevoda of Transylvania. This vigorous prince, whose high qualities had secured him his sovereignty on the death of the last of the Zapolya dynasty, speedily became the favoured choice of the Szlachta and Dissident party, and, as a vassal of the Ottoman Empire, his election would guarantee the Poles from Turkish hostility. On the other hand they were threatened with the Tzar's displeasure if they did not elect either Maximilian or his son, the Archduke. To the Poles, if not to the Lit'uanians, the Moskovite was a lesser bugbear than the Turk, and the popular vote was for Batory. The Archbishop and the Senate adhered to the Austrian cause, and the Diet (held at Warszawa, December 1575) resulted in a double election. The battle was not necessarily to the strong, but the race was undoubtedly to the swift; in April of the following year the dilatory Habsburg wrote to inform his brother of Moskva that "we, in December last, with great glory and honour, were elected to the kingdom of Poland and grand duchy of Lit'uania." Ivan replied to Maximilian that he congratulated him on his election, but had since learned that Stefan Batory was at Krakow, crowned, and married to the Princess Anne Yagiello (sister of Sigismund-August). Stefan had shown as much hurry to arrive in his kingdom as Henri had displayed in escaping from it, and his accession was an accomplished fact; the death of the Emperor in the ensuing October removed the chance of a civil contest.

1576

The new King, though brought up under Catholic influences, was supposed at the time of his candidature to be of the Protestant communion; he adapted his religion, however, to harmonise with that of the majority of his subjects, and of the wife whom it was politically expedient he should marry, and during his reign was the protector of the Jesuit party in Poland.[170] To Ivan and to Russia his elevation boded trouble, and the Tzar appears to have realised the danger and to have taken a bold but well-considered step to meet it. While Stefan was engaged in breaking down the armed resistance of the burghers of Dantzig, who would have none of him, the forces of Moskovy were sent in overwhelming strength into the Baltic provinces, and stronghold after stronghold wrested from Swede and Pole alike. Even the Holsteiner and German troops were treated as enemies—Duke Magnus was in temporary disgrace—and the country-folk were in some instances punished with brutal severity, flogged, burned alive, and in other ways made to suffer for the obstinate resistance of a foreign garrison. As a display of armed strength and resolution the campaign would have been valuable had it been followed up by a demand for a definite peace with Poland, coupled with a threat of immediate invasion of that country. Ivan had sufficient troops at his disposal to have overrun Kourland and parts of Lit'uania and to have forced peace or an unseasonable war upon Stefan. Instead of which, after having roused against himself the enmity of all the interests involved in the mastership of the disputed provinces—Swede, Pole, Dane, and German—he suspended hostilities and returned to Moskva, there to renew the bloody process by which he periodically thinned out his circle of boyarins and courtiers.

1577

Mikhail Vorotinski, the conqueror of Devlet-Girei, and one of the most illustrious of the Russian voevodas, was tortured nigh unto death on a charge of sorcery, and died while being

conveyed to Bielozero. Leonidas, successor to Pimen in the archiepiscopate of Novgorod, was sewn up in a bear-skin and worried to death by hounds. Other noted Moskovites were executed in various manners at the same period. While the Tzar's seemingly blind rage was striking down some of his most capable voevodas, his adversary was straining every nerve to ensure success in the coming struggle. Drawing as exhaustively as was prudent on the resources of his kingdom and grand duchy, Stefan at the same time applied for external support in many directions; from Transylvania came troops, from Brandenburg cannon, from Sweden active co-operation, while the Pope and Sultan individually blessed the enterprise. In August 1579 the storm burst; the King, having formally declared war on Ivan, marched upon Polotzk, and the decisive moment had arrived when it would be seen whether the new-grown Russian gosoudarstvo would be able to maintain its high-water mark of western expansion, or whether all it had gained during the embarrassments and weakness of its neighbours would be lost at the first recoil. The composite army of Stefan probably consisted of better fighting material than any the Tzar could send against him, but the advantage of numbers and resources lay overwhelmingly with the Moskovite. Allowing for the large detachment which it was necessary to keep in the neighbourhood of the Oka to guard the capital from a possible Tartar attack, Ivan had still sufficient forces wherewith to have returned again and again to the relief of Polotzk, and to have extended the war at the same time into undefended parts of Lit'uania and Polish Livland. This plan was indeed partially put into operation; 20,000 Asiatic horsemen were dispatched into Kourland, and reinforcements were sent to the Russian garrisons in Livland and Ingermanland (which was threatened by the Swedes). But the scheme of campaign stopped short at this point; the constitutional timidity of Moskovite war policy asserted itself, and Ivan remained with the bulk of his army in deplorable inactivity at Pskov, while Polotzk and the neighbouring stronghold of Sokol, bravely defended but perseveringly attacked, fell into the hands of the invader. The harrying of the provinces of Sieversk and Smolensk wound up the Polish campaign for the year. Accustomed to winter warfare, the light troops of Moskovy might have taken advantage of the cold season to have inflicted retributive damage on their enemies, but the Tzar, thoroughly alarmed at the military vigour of this upstart opponent, wasted his opportunity in fruitless negotiations and in soft answers which failed to turn away wrath. Stefan, having allayed the grumblings of his barely tractable subjects, marched in the ensuing summer against Velikie-Louki, which, after a spirited defence, was carried on the 5th September.

1580

Throughout the winter the war continued in the Baltic lands, where Poles, Swedes, and Danes —Magnus had early thrown off his allegiance to Moskva—captured several places from the Russians. Ivan, who had retired to the gloomy sanctuary of his beloved Aleksandrov, continued his proposals for peace in a correspondence with Stefan, which gradually assumed an angrier tone. "Man of blood!" breaks forth this astonishing letter-writer, "remember that there is a God."

Amid the troubles pressing upon him from without, the sovereign still found time for marrying and giving in marriage.

(1575)

The bride for whose espousal he had obtained the dispensation of the Church had proved sterile, at least she had not increased his family, and she was, like his father's first wife,

dispatched to a convent, while another Anna replaced her; on this occasion the episcopal blessing was not asked for.

1580

Now, while the flames of disastrous war were blazing over the lands which a century of patient effort had reclaimed from the west, Ivan celebrated at Aleksandrov his nuptials with Mariya, daughter of the boyarin Thedor Nagoi, and those of his second son, Thedor, with Irena, sister of the voevoda Boris Godounov.

The insatiate Stefan continued to employ both pen and sword against his hard-pressed adversary. In a letter rejecting Ivan's renewed offers of peace, with which he prefaced a new campaign, he taunted the Tzar with his ill-sitting correctitude; "You reproach me with having mutilated the dead; it is false, but certain is it that you torture the living." Entering thoroughly into the style and spirit of Ivan's controversial essays, he further recommended him to re-read the fiftieth Psalm in order to acquaint himself with the duty of a Christian. The Tzar had found his match.

1581

As in the two preceding years, the month of August brought with it Batory, thundering his cannon this time against the walls of Pskov. The reputation of the great captain had drawn to him warriors from many lands, and the white-eagle standard flapped in the van of an army, 100,000 strong, mustering in its ranks Poles, Letts, Magyars, Austrians, Kourlanders, Prussians, Lubeckers, Danes, and Scots. The ancient city on the Peipus shore, which for many a stormy hundred years had been a bulwark of the Russian land against the aggressions of the west folk, opposed a heroic resistance to the mighty efforts which were made for its subjection, and the flood of Polish conquest received a timely check. The stupor of fear and helplessness which seemed to have settled down on the Tzar and his voevodas neutralised to a great extent the effect of this stubborn defence; the Swedes captured Habsal, Narva, and other places of less importance in Estland, and later, led by de la Gardie, one of those brilliant soldiers with whom France periodically fascinated the world, penetrated into Russian territory and took Ivangorod, Yam, and Kopor'e.

Jan. 1582

Soon after these disasters Ivan effected a ten years' truce with Batory, a composition being brought about largely by the diplomatic efforts of Pope Gregory XIII., who was fascinated, as many an astute Pontiff had been, with the prospect of alluring Russia into the Catholic fold. The terms of the truce were ruinously disadvantageous to the gosoudarstvo, and Ivan could scarcely have been forced to sacrifice more if he had staked and lost a series of pitched battles against his foe. Velikie-Louki was restored to him, but Polotzk remained in the hands of the victors, and Livland, snatched piecemeal from the Teutonic knights and contested inch by inch for a quarter of a century, was yielded at one wrench to Poland. The patient and persistent efforts of a long reign, the dogged struggle towards the shores of the Baltic and free intercourse with Western Europe, were relinquished as the price of a temporary and uncertain peace, and the Moskovite Empire was thrown back upon itself, like a conquered Titan thrust down into his chasm. And in another direction Ivan had with his own hand fatally shattered, in a fit of unrestrained passion, the dynastic hopes and strivings which had been advanced and safeguarded with such ruthless severities. Side by side with the gloomy Tzar in his later years,

partaker of his amusements and debauches, sharer of his labours of State, had grown up the young Ivan Ivanovitch, designed to carry on the holy line of Moskva when his father should be no more. And in one respect at least he had shown himself an apt pupil; he had already married three wives “without having been a widower.”[171] It was no part of the Moskovite theory of government that the Princes of the Blood should expose their sacred persons in the forefront of their country’s battles, and the young Ivan does not appear to have departed from the prevailing custom of passive aloofness; the humiliations and losses which the Russian State was suffering at the hands of Batory stung the Tzarevitch, however, into a desire to show a bolder front to the oppressor, and he requested his father to let him lead an army to the relief of Pskov, then the centre-point of the Polish attack. A natural and proper request, under the circumstances, but to the suspicion-haunted old Tzar, on that fatal November day, it was the bursting-in of the dreaded summons, “the younger generation knocking at the door.” Wildly he accused his son of desiring to supplant him, wildly struck at him with his terrible iron-tipped staff; Boris Godounov, rushing in to save the Tzarevitch, received most of the blows, but one had crashed upon the youth’s head, which would never now wear the crown of all the Russias. The heavy thuds suddenly ceased and a wail of anguish rang through the silent palace: “Unhappy me, I have killed my son!” The terrified attendants, rushing into the chamber, found the wretched father weeping over the body of the dying Tzarevitch. In one moment of blind fury the primeval ape-instinct had leaped forth and had destroyed the weaving and toiling of a lifetime of specialised effort. Ivan Ivanovitch died a few days later (19th November 1581) from the effects of the blow, and Greek monks at Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria chanted subsidised prayers for the repose of his soul. As in the preceding generation, the next heir (Thedor)[172] was a weakling, and the Tzar’s mad act had opened up the possibility of his throne passing to one of the boyarin families upon whose repression so much savage ingenuity had been expended. The dreary outlook with which the old man was confronted may have largely influenced his supine surrender to Polish demands, and the equally humiliating truce with Sweden, effected a year later, by the terms of which not only Estland, but Narva, Ivangorod, Yam, and Kopor’e were left in the possession of the victors.

1583

Moskovy was still further shut in from the sea, and the Peipus, which had been a Russian lake, became a natural barrier between three converging monarchies. One ray of success and aggrandisement pierced through the miasma gloom that shrouded the Moskovite land and gathered thickest around the tzarskie palace. In the last quarter of a century which had witnessed the opening up of far scarce-dreamt-of regions by daring European explorers, the century of Cortez and Pizarro, of the bold sea-captains who shed lustre on “the spacious days of great Elizabeth,” the Russian Tzarstvo was swollen by the haphazard conquest of the vast Sibirian “province;” a province which “comprises about a thirteenth part of the globe, and is almost 3,000,000 square miles larger than the whole of Russia in Europe, including both Poland and Finland.”[173] Nor was this huge region of the north, this “land of the long nights,” as the Chinese had called it in the remote past of their history, a barren and unprofitable possession; mines of salt, copper, and silver, forests stocked with valuable fur-bearing animals, and watered by navigable rivers and large fish-yielding lakes, and in some districts tracts of fertile arable land, compensate for the awful desolation which spreads over the greater part of it during the long winter. For many centuries the Russians had tapped at the outer fringe of this unexplored wilderness, and the enterprising folk of Novgorod had brought some of its produce into their markets; the later Grand Princes had put forward claims to a

shadowy sovereignty over the principality or khanate of Sibir (a town on the Irtuish), and Ivan himself had kept an eye on this *ultima Thule* of the Moskovite forests. The Stroganovs, descendants of a merchant family of Tartar extraction who had settled in the oblast of Perm, were granted powers of administration over as much territory as they could reclaim from the tribes on their frontier, and a system of patient pioneering was carried on for some twenty years. The happy idea of utilising the restless military energies of the Don Kozaks, who were a scourge alike to their Tartar and Russian neighbours, in more thoroughly exploiting the Sibirian country, occurred to the administrators of the Moskovite outpost; an invitation was sent to a band of these freebooters, who had made their own country too hot to hold them, to turn their weapons against the “infidels” who were resisting the encroachments of the White-Russian traders.

1579

The Kozaks, headed by a chief named Ermak, responded readily to an offer which promised them full indulgence of their fighting and marauding instincts, with the additional advantage of official sanction. They were outlaws most of them, and would have been put to lingering deaths if they had strayed into the clutches of Moskva, and the Tzar was highly scandalised at their employment in his service; he showed himself, however, to be of a forgiving disposition when, with a few hundred followers, the intrepid Ermak had conquered for him the vast north-eastern province.

1581

The Kozak chief, still struggling to hold and extend the territories he had won, received as a mark of Ivan’s approval a cuirass which had once adorned the monarch’s person. As if symbolical of the ruin which so often attended the Tzar’s favour, the present was the contributing cause of Ermak’s destruction; plunging one night into the waters of the Irtuish, to escape from a surprise attack of his enemies, the weight of the armour bore him down, and he sank in the icy flood. Ivan’s reign had opened auspiciously with the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan; it closed with the acquisition of Sibiria, by which Russia made her first giant stride into Asia.

Oct. 1583

Amid the state and domestic troubles which shadowed the Tzar’s old age, and while he was endeavouring to bring about a marriage between himself and one of the English aristocracy (Lady Mary Hastings), the woman who was still his wife presented him with another Dimitri—a puny princeling, born surely in an evil hour, whose ghost was to haunt the land for many a woeful year. A few months later Ivan’s health began to fail, and when, from the Red Staircase of the great palace at Moskva, he observed a comet in the winter sky “of which the tail had the form of a cross,” he beheld in it the presage of his death. Sickening rapidly, he expired somewhat abruptly, while engaged in a game of chess with one of his courtiers, on the 18th March 1584.

The great death-dealing Tzar was dead himself at last, the child that had been so fervently prayed for had gone back, in the fulness of his years, whence he had come. They tonsured the grim corpse that frightened them still, and called it Jonah, in the name of the Kirillov monastery; but they buried it as the Orthodox Tzar, Ivan Vasilievitch, in the Cathedral of Mikhail the Archangel, amid the striking of the great bells of the Kreml and the sobs and

lamentations of the people.

Among Russian historians Ivan IV. has found apologists as well as writers who have held him up to execration and condemned his statecraft and his cruelties alike. Even while examining critically the evidence against him on the latter score, the result arrived at is that he was probably as “terrible” as he is painted. Chronicles and historical accounts were still largely in ecclesiastical hands, and scant justice would be done to the memory of a man who had married six or seven wives. The Church might forgive his hates, but never his loves. Nor can the evidence of Kourbski be accepted as unbiassed in the matter of Ivan’s character. Other contemporary witnesses there are, however, whose testimony points in the same direction, and who were in no way interested in libelling the Tzar. Horsey, who was on terms of good fellowship with him, wrote, “The Emperour liueth in feare, daily discouers Treasons, and spends much time in torturing and execution.” A Venetian attached to the Polish Embassy at Moskva in 1570 described the Tzar as “the greatest tyrant who has ever existed,” and mentions a delinquent voevoda being thrown to a savage bear, “kept for that purpose.” The cruelties and oppressions practised by the Russian monarch were widely commented on during both the Polish elections, and the reports largely militated against his candidature. Finally the document in the Kirillov monastery, in which the Tzar complacently prays for the souls of 3470 of his victims, would, if authentic, show that the extent at least of his executions has not been exaggerated. Nor is this gloating savagery, blended as it was with a rational and understandable policy, difficult to comprehend. Ivan the Terrible was the outcome of a long line of Moskovite princes, men who had been actuated by one ruling idea, which idea was in him so developed and specialised that he was nothing short of a monomaniac. The idea was that Moskovy, and God, and Gosoudar were scarcely distinguishable entities, bound up in indissoluble bonds. With the substitution of other countries, other sovereigns in other days have fallen into the same confusion. Jealous, awe-inspiring, pain-inflicting, terrible—such was the conception of a God among peoples in most parts of the world, such was the character which came naturally to the holy, Orthodox, Moskva-bred Tzar. The religious side of Ivan’s nature was always prominent; his prostrations in the churches, his zeal in monastic regulations, the pious reflections which formed so remarkable a part of his correspondence, the solemn forebodings over Kourbski’s soul, were all indications of a mind steeped in dogmatic belief.

Grim and dreary, mean and monstrous, as the Moskovy of this period seems, with its Aleksandrovskie sloboda, its gibbets, axes, impalements, and boiling cauldrons, its man-devouring hounds and blood-splashed bear-dens, its Kromiesniki and dumb driven population, its gutters running red and carp growing bloated on human flesh, and above all, everywhere, those glittering crosses; yet not in Eastern Europe alone could “such things be.” A brilliant writer, drawing his materials from the history of mediæval Italy both before and after the Renaissance, has “pictured the awful and beautiful forms of those whom vice and blood and weariness had made monstrous or mad: Filippo, Duke of Milan, who slew his wife, and painted her lips with a scarlet poison that her lover might suck death from the dead thing he fondled; ... Gian Maria Visconti, who used hounds to chase living men, and whose murdered body was covered with roses by a harlot who had loved him; ... Ezzelin, whose melancholy could be cured only by the spectacle of death, and who had a passion for red blood as other men have for red wine; ... Sigismondo Malatesta, ... the Lord of Rimini, whose effigy was burned at Rome as the enemy of God and man, who strangled Polyssena with a napkin, and gave poison to Ginevra d’Este in a cup of emerald;”[174] ... these examples, garnered from one corner of

Western Europe, show that humanity and inhumanity are sometimes convertible terms under sunny Italian skies, as well as amid dark pine-forests and snow-piled wastes. The century which produced the Moskovy of Ivan the Terrible was not barren of sinister deeds in other parts of Christendom, and Russia was at least free, perhaps by very reason of its stifling autocracy, from the horrors which attended the great religious upheaval in the West; when Paris and the French provinces were glutted with Huguenot blood; when Alva was dealing out “confiscation, imprisonment, exile, torture, and death” to the Protestants of the Netherlands; when the Calvinists of Geneva were burning Servetus alive for “heresy” and roasting men and women to death for “witchcraft”; when Calvin himself was suggesting to the Lord Protector Somerset that both Catholics and Protestant sectaries “alike well deserve to be repressed by the sword”; and when, in Northern Germany, banishment and—in the case of the Chancellor Crell—the scaffold were being employed by the Lutherans to stamp out Calvinism.

S. Solov’ev, E. A. Solov’ev, Polevoi, Schiemann, Karamzin, Pember.

CHAPTER IX THE GREAT BOYARIN

When the people of Moskva became sufficiently familiar with the fact that their terrible Gosoudar was dead and safely buried, even if their imagination could not picture him, as his son had, in his coronation speech, solemnly assured them, “transformed into an angel,” they began to take stock of the men who had replaced him in the government. The effete and placid Thedor was supported by a Douma (Council) of five. Of these Ivan Petrovitch Shouyskie, member of a family which had tasted the sweets of power and drained the dregs of disgrace in the early years of the late reign, had won new consideration and honour by his celebrated defence of Pskov; Mstislavskie was another Rurik-descended boyarin-kniaz; Bogdan Bielskie represented the last of Ivan’s Vremenszhiki; Nikita Romanov was important as maternal uncle of the new Tzar, and Boris Godounov, descendant of a Tartar family Christianised in the fourteenth century,[175] stood nearest the throne from the fact of being brother to the Tzaritza Irena.[176] The Douma, thus constituted, did not long retain its original formation. A sudden popular commotion in the capital took the form of an ugly rush towards the Kreml; the Kitai-gorod was overrun by a surging mob of many thousands, scarcely to be held back by the strielitz from forcing the gates of the citadel. Mstislavskie and Romanov, fronting this tumultuous gathering and inquiring the nature of its demands, learned from a thousand throats that the blood of Bogdan Bielskie was in request. A compromise was effected; the offending boyarin was removed from the Council to the comparatively harmless post of Governor of Nijhnie-Novgorod, and the Moskvitchi returned to their houses. Whether this was a spontaneous ebullition, a reaction from the passive endurance under Ivan, or whether it was set afoot by the Shouyskie family, who had considerable influence among the merchant class, and were not unused to such machinations, it strengthened the hands of the one man whose authority dwarfed that of Romanov, Shouyskie, and Mstislavskie alike. Godounov was a man capable of grasping to the full the advantages which his position as kinsman of a weak, easily-ruled sovereign gave him, and he was of sufficient merit to labour for the welfare of the State as well as for his own interests. The latter were by no means neglected; immense territorial possessions in the Dvina district and along the valley of the Moskva, certain State revenues and other desirable perquisites swelled his yearly income to the estimated total of 93,000 roubles,[177] and he was reputed to be able to bring 100,000 men into the field.[178] But the man who swayed the councils of the Tzarstvo and stood behind the puppet-monarch Thedor was far removed from the ordinary type of Vremenszhikie, and the internal and foreign affairs of the realm suffered nothing by the transfer of administration from Ivan IV. to Boris Godounov. His predominance checked, if it did not altogether repress, the boyarin struggles and intrigues which the weakness of the Tzar invited, and at the same time the man who was practically Regent had the address to govern as though with the co-operation of the whole Council. One of the first acts necessitated by the political circumstances of the Court was the removal or banishment of the Tzarevitch Dimitri, with his mother and the whole clan of the Nagois, to Ouglitch, a town some 90 verstas from Moskva. Here they remained in a state of repressed disaffection, biding their time till the day when the young Dimitri should succeed his half-brother and the Nagois should dispossess the Godounovs. This was a factor which Boris had always to reckon with, and which perhaps forced his statesmanship out of the legitimate groove of throne-serving. That his ascendancy would be accepted without a struggle by the other members of the Council was scarcely to be expected; Romanov died in 1586, and soon after Mstislavskie drifted over to the Shouyskie faction, in opposition to Godounov. That intrigues would be set on foot against his authority

was extremely probable, but whether a definite plot existed or not, one was at least "discovered," in which the two counsellors and several other boyarins were implicated. The offenders were dealt with in a spirit of moderation which had been long foreign to the Court of Moskva; Mstislavskie entered the Kirillov monastery at Bielozero, others of his party were imprisoned or banished to distant parts of the realm. The Shouyskie, enjoying the protection of the Metropolitan (Dionisie), survived the storm which swept away so many of their colleagues. Meanwhile the Regent's diplomacy had been exerted to defer, for the time being, hostilities with any of the four states—Turk, Pole, Swede, and Tartar—which permanently threatened Russia with aggression. With Sweden a prolongation of the truce for four years was effected in December 1585; the Krimskie khanate was weakened by civil war and dynastic revolutions, and little was to be feared from that quarter. The chief danger lay with Poland, and Batory was only held back by the controlling hand of the Diet and the protests of the Lit'uanian landowners from renewing his profitable campaigns against Moskovy. Under these circumstances it was with feelings of relief that the Council of State, sitting at Moskva, heard, on the 20th December 1586, of the death of their enemy, which had taken place eighteen days earlier (13th December according to the new reckoning of the calendar, initiated by Pope Gregory and adopted throughout west continental Europe, by which Russian—and English—time was left twelve days behind). The death of this prince reversed the whole position of affairs between the two coun tries, and instead of living in constant apprehension of fresh inroads upon their territory, the Moskovites were able to entertain the prospect of an advantageous union with the neighbour State. For the third time Thedor had a chance of securing the Polish crown by election, and Godounov hastened to support his candidature with more vigorous measures than had been employed on the former occasions. The Russian party, both in Poland and the grand duchy, had gained strength since the last interregnum, and the Regent was able to offer terms of a nature likely to appeal to many of the electors. A perpetual peace between the two Slav powers would allow of a vigorous and hopeful opposition to Ottoman aggression, and the troops of Moskovy, including Kozaks, Tcherkess horsemen, and Tartars from Eastern Russia, would be placed, free of charges, at the disposal of the Poles. Moldavia, Bosnia, Servia, and Hungary would be wrested from the Sultan and incorporated with Poland (an arrangement to which the Kaiser might have had a word to say), and Estland would be snatched in like manner from Sweden and annexed to the Lekh kingdom, except Narva, which would be Moskovy's modest share of the spoil. Moreover, the rights and liberties, as well as the taxes and revenues of Poland, would remain in the hands of the Senate. Neither of the alternative candidates—the Archduke Maximilian, brother of the Emperor, and Sigismund, son of King John of Sweden and of a Yagiello princess—could hold forth such tempting inducements. The imperial Habsburg family was held in cheap estimation on account of its failure either to defend its hereditary dominions against the Turks, or to exert its authority over the Protestant princes of Northern Germany, and the Emperor himself was alluded to as "great only by title, rich only in debts." The Archbishop of Gniezno, who had at one time and another supported the Valois and Habsburg parties, on this occasion exerted his influence on behalf of the Rurikovitch. An anarchical assembly which met near Warszawa in July (1587) under the name of a Diet, but which resembled more a triple-divided camp, was reduced to some degree of order and coherence by the adoption of badges distinctive of the various candidates. The partisans of Thedor displayed a *shapka* (conical Russian head-gear), those of Maximilian an Austrian cap, while the sea-power of Sweden was typified by a herring—presumably salted. The shapka carried the day by a large preponderance, and nothing remained for the agents of Thedor but to satisfy the final stipulations of the Polish Senate. Besides the demand for a

certain sum of money down, which would have been conceded, the obstacles to a ratification of the election were seemingly trifling; but they were insuperable. Thedor would not consent to be crowned at Krakow, to put the title King of Poland before that of Tzar of the Russias, nor to dally in any way with the Roman Catholic religion. Without these concessions the Poles refused to bestow their suffrages on the Russian prince, and their choice finally fell on Sigismund Vasa, whose election brought the crowns of Poland and Sweden, Moskva's two hereditary enemies, into the same family. That Godounov should have declined to bargain further with the Polish electors on behalf of Thedor does credit to his foresight; for the Russian sovereign to have accepted the crown under the limitations and conditions imposed by the Senate would have been to surrender at the outset to the turbulence and independence of the western Slavs, and possibly to weaken his hold upon his own spell-bound subjects. He would have ruled over the Polish palatinates as nominally as Rudolf over the free cities of Northern Germany, and the infusion of the ideas of the western commonwealth into Moskovite minds would have been pouring new wine into old bottles with disastrous result.

The Regent, disconcerted by the submission of all the parties in the Diet to the accession of the Swedish prince, managed to avert a possible outbreak of hostilities between the countries which had so nearly been allied by compacting for a truce of fifteen years.

While dealing with the precarious foreign affairs of the country and superintending the domestic administration, Godounov had to fight hard to maintain his own position.

Thedor had inherited from his father, if nothing else, a weakness for all that appertained to religion, and the greater part of his existence alternated between devotional exercises and the safe amusement of watching bear-fights. Over a mind so constituted, a priest of high position would naturally have a good chance of obtaining a dominating influence, and the Metropolitan was quite willing to play the part of another Silvestr. The only obstacle to this ambition was the Tzar's brother-in-law, who brooked no competitor for the tzarskie favour. Hence between Regent and Vladuika lurked an animosity which drove the latter into the arms of the Shouyskie party. Thus a powerful league of the clergy, boyarin, and merchant interests (the latter were hand in glove with the Shouyskie) was formed in Moskva against the Godounov rule. Boris derived his power in the first place from his connection with the Tzar through the Tzaritza Irena, and it was the aim of the malcontents to break this important link on the ground of the latter's alleged sterility, and to wed Thedor instead to a Mstislavskie princess. The Metropolitan favoured the scheme—Ivan the Terrible had evidently stretched the consciences of his clergy on the marriage question beyond retraction—but the vigilance of the Regent dragged it prematurely to light. None of the conspirators were molested for their share in the intrigue, but the Mstislavskie princess was compelled to become an abiding inmate of a convent. The real or alleged discovery of a plot against the throne, presumably, since some of the Nagoi family were implicated, in favour of the young Dimitri, gave an excuse for the long-deferred vengeance of Godounov. Ivan Shouyskie, the defender of Pskov, was dispatched to Bielozero, Andrei Shouyskie to Kargopol; both, it was said, were afterwards strangled in prison. Thedor Nagoi and six of his companions were publicly executed, an example meant, no doubt, to strike terror into the disaffected at Ouglitch. Batches of the Mstislavskie were forced into religious houses, and many other boyarins were exiled to various parts of the gosoudarstvo—some to Sibiria, the first detachment of a long procession of political offenders which has never since ceased to wend its way from Russia into the "land of the long nights." The Metropolitan was deposed and his place filled by Iov, Archbishop of Rostov.

Godounov was for the time master of the situation. His enemies were either dead, or deported, or devoted, in various monasteries scattered up and down the country, to a course of religious seclusion, if not of blessed meditation. Only at Ouglitch, growing up among the Nagoi colony, was the child who must surely one day exact a heavy retribution from the man whom he was taught to—omit from his prayers. Unless he should happen meanwhile to cut his throat in a fit of epilepsy.

A renewal of the war with Sweden drew together, at an opportune moment, the discordant forces which threatened at times to dislocate the machinery of government. The time-honoured Moskovite foreign policy, like the wolves' hunting to which it has been already compared, derived its strength from its patient persistence, rather than from any brilliancy of rapid conception or swift action. At peace for the time being with Poland, and not anticipating trouble from the Khan of the Krim Horde, Godounov took up the threads which had dropped from the nerveless hands of the failing Ivan, and returned to the struggle for an opening into the Baltic. The truce with Sweden having expired without either country being able to come to terms, Thedor prepared, in January 1590, to lead the huge army which had been collected from all quarters of his dominions, part of the way at least towards the Estlandish and Finnish frontiers. The presence of the sovereign was to some extent necessary to maintain order and harmony in an army which included among its leaders a Mstislavskie (in chief command), a Godounov, and a Romanov, besides other jarring elements. The Tzar, however, did not venture his person farther than Novgorod, from which point the Russian host diverged upon its double destination, one body marching across the frozen Neva, the other directing its course towards the disputed fortresses of the Ingermanland province. Yam was carried by assault and a force of 20,000 Swedes defeated outside Narva, which place was then invested. To save this important stronghold, the representatives of the King of Sweden concluded a hasty truce, to run for one year, ceding meanwhile Ivangorod and Kopor'e to the Tzar's voevodas (25th February). This sudden forward movement on the part of Moskovy aroused the alarm and suspicion of the Poles, whose young king especially felt bound to make a diversion on behalf of Sweden; hence ominous mutterings filtered through to Moskva from Krakow, and the Dniepr Kozaks (who had been organised into regiments by Stefan Batory) began to commit depredations along the Lit'uanian border. A Polish embassy which arrived at the capital in the autumn, after adopting a somewhat aggressive tone, finally renewed the truce between the two countries for a term of twelve years. The Swedes were likely, however, to renew the struggle in the north in the coming spring, having refused to yield to the Russian demand for the cession of Narva and Korelia, and there were rumours afloat of a simultaneous outburst of hostilities on the part of the treacherous Krimskie Tartars. While Moskva was thus threatened with a double attack, a mysterious and appalling tragedy had happened at Ouglitch.

1591

At noon on the 15th of May the inhabitants, alarmed by the furious beating of the bell at the Nagoi Palace, rushed into the court to find the Tzarevitch Dimitri with a gaping wound across his throat, and his mother and some servants shrieking over his yet warm corpse. The palace and town had been for some time haunted and overlooked by agents of the Regent, who naturally wished to keep himself informed as to the course of events in this hotbed of sedition and intrigue; naturally also the popular imagination fastened the presumed murder on these Godounovskie emissaries, who were seized and put to death, together with their servants and one or two suspected citizens and a woman "who went often to the palace;" in all some dozen

persons. The aggrieved and excited populace easily persuaded themselves that Boris Godounov had planned and caused to be executed this catastrophe, and many historians have unreservedly endorsed their judgment, though, apart from the fact that Dimitri's death could not have been otherwise than a joyful relief to the Regent, it is difficult to see what evidence there is to connect him with the crime. The murder of a Tzarevitch, the last heir in the direct Moskovite line of the holy House of Rurikovitch, was not an event which could be passed over without inquiry, even if the alleged instigator were a boyarin in high Court favour; an investigation was necessary in any case, but it is at least worthy of notice that the man selected to preside over the collection of evidence and to sift the whole matter at the place where it occurred was Vasili Shouyskie, brother to the princes of that family who had suffered imprisonment and death at the hands of Godounov. The report drawn up by this kniaz, who could scarcely be otherwise than the enemy of the man whom the popular voice condemned, entirely exonerated both the Regent and his supposed agents, and declared the Tzarevitch to have killed himself in a fit of epilepsy, to which he was subject. The subsequent massacre was laid to the charge of the Nagois. The theory put forward by Kostomarov that Shouyskie, "a cunning and pliant man," conducted the investigation and distorted the evidence in a manner which would win him the favour of Godounov in order to avoid unpleasant consequences to himself, seems under the circumstances scarcely plausible. The death of Dimitri left Boris more or less in the position of a claimant to the throne of the Russias, and he would be more than ever an object of jealousy and suspicion to the princely families who had the blood of Rurik or Gedimin in their veins. Hence Shouyskie, however guarded in the language of the report he was called upon to make, would hardly go out of his way to bias the judgment of Court and country in favour of his enemy and rival. Between the verdict of the men who had carefully examined the evidence relating to the affair and the wild accusations of an angry and disaffected people there was a wide divergence. Historians have for the most part endorsed the latter. Whatever the truth of the matter, a murderous retribution was meted out to the people of Ouglitch for the slaughter of the Regent's agents; many of the Nagois were exiled or imprisoned, and Dimitri's mother was forced to enter a convent, while numbers of the inhabitants were executed or sent beyond the Ourals. Ouglitch was reduced almost to a desert. The same summer which witnessed the death of Dimitri Ivanovitch saw Khan Kazi-Girei stealing out of the sun-parched steppes towards Moskva at the head of a large and rapidly-moving army. The best troops of Moskovy were far away in the north, watching the movements of the Swedish generals; others had to be brought in all haste from the encampments along the Oka to defend the capital from this sudden, if not altogether unexpected attack. The slobodas surrounding the city were hurriedly fortified and the outlying monasteries transformed into fortresses. The Tzar, contrary to precedent, remained at the Kreml, and was witness of the magnificent battle which ensued under the walls of Moskva, and which recalled, while it lasted, the classic struggles on the plains of Troy. The defence was superintended by kniaz Thedor Mstislavskie and Godounov, the latter of whom understood the difficult science of working in harmony with men who were his personal enemies.

4th July 1591

Although the issue of the day's strife was not of a decisive nature, the Khan had no stomach for further fighting, and fled precipitately back to his own country, arriving at Baktchisarai with scarcely a third of his army. The ignominious failure of this invasion checked any disposition which Sigismund may have had for annulling the truce with the Tzar of Moskovy, whose voevodas were now free to give their undivided attention to the scrambling hostilities which

had broken out in Finland and in the neighbourhood of the White Sea. The war dragged on in these wild and bitter regions without any very decisive action enlivening the general torpidity of its course; the failing health of King John of Sweden made him anxious to obtain at least a suspension of arms, and negotiations were set on foot for that purpose previous to his death (November 1592), which resulted in the conclusion of a two years' truce (each side to retain what it then held) in January 1593. The external peace which Russia for the moment enjoyed was clouded by the apprehension which was naturally felt at the accession of Sigismund Vasa to his father's kingdom, an event which bound Poland and Sweden into a dual monarchy and made the acquisition of a Baltic outlet more than ever a difficult task for Moskovite statecraft. The apprehension was, however, soon allayed. The union of crowns was by no means followed by a union of hearts, and the close relationship into which the two kingdoms—one aggressively Lutheran, the other preponderatingly Catholic—were drawn only served to bring to the surface the animosities of race and creed which existed between them. Sigismund, who was Catholic by religion and more or less Polish in his sympathies, had a powerful Lutheran rival in his Uncle Karl, Duke of Sudermanland, and the Skandinavian kingdom was more likely to be involved in a civil war than to fight hand in hand with Poland against Russia. Under these circumstances the truce between Sweden and Moskovy was supplemented (18th May 1595) by an "eternal peace," the former power ceding, besides Yam, Ivangorod, and Kopor'e, Korelia with the town of Keksholm.[179] It was probably the clearing of the atmosphere in the north which emboldened Godounov, while lulling the Ottoman Court with proffers of friendship, to send a substantial contribution to Kaiser Rudolf in furtherance of the half-hearted crusade by which he was attempting to dislodge the Turks from Hungary. A magnificent consignment of the rich fur-products of the Sibirian forests,—sable, marten, beaver, black fox, and other skins, in scores of thousands, valued at 44,000 roubles,—was spread out in twenty rooms of the imperial palace at Prague for the edification and astonishment of the courtiers and merchants of the old Bohemian city (1595). The inevitable clashing of the Ottoman and Russian powers, only deferred on account of the manifold embarrassments of both, made it desirable that Moskva should be no longer dependent in ecclesiastical matters on the Turk-tolerated Patriarch at Constantinople, and it was perhaps partly on this account, partly with the view of gratifying the Russian clergy and his partisan, the Metropolitan, Iov, that Godounov in 1589 secured the promotion of the Primate to the office of Patriarch of Moskva, with four Metropolitans (Novgorod, Kazan, Rostov, and Kroutitsk) under him. A more lastingly important stroke of internal administration, effected by the Regent at this time, also fell in with his private ends in addition to safeguarding the interests of the State. This was the abolition of the "Ur'ev den," or S. George's day, on which the peasants had been wont to decide for the ensuing year whether they would remain with their present masters, or migrate, literally, to fresh fields and pastures new. This right of annual "betterment" had lately shown a tendency to work in one direction; the opening up of Sibiria and the greater security from Tartar raids which the agriculturalist of the south of Russia now enjoyed drew the peasants in steady streams from their accustomed grounds, and the small proprietors, the military backbone of the gosoudarstvo, who were unable to offer the privileges and immunities which the richer landowners held forth, found their estates gradually drained of the labour which alone made them valuable. Godounov grappled boldly with the situation; he issued an edict which forbade the serf to change his master, and thus by one stroke bound the peasant to the soil and the grateful small landowner to his party.

The dynastic hopes of the house of Moskva had been fluttered in 1592 by a report that the

Tzaritza was in a condition which might well be termed interesting, since the birth of an heir was of such vital importance to Russia; Irena did indeed bring forth a daughter, who was baptized with the name Theodosia, and died. This was the last expiring flicker of the paling torch of the Ivanovitch dynasty. On the 7th of January 1598 Thedor himself expired, leaving his vacant throne somewhat vaguely at the disposal of his widow, the Patriarch, the Regent, and Thedor Romanov. “In the person of this vague and virtuous sovereign,” sums up a French historian, “the race of bloody and violent men of prey who had created Russia was extinguished.”[180] For the first time in her political history Russia was fronted with an interregnum. The widowed Tzaritza, the only remaining representative of the sovereign authority in the eyes of the people, made the void still more pronounced by retiring with her brother into the New Monastery of the Virgin, which hallowed retreat promptly became the centre of anxious solicitations and political manœuvrings. As Irena Godounov would do nothing to remove the deadlock, Boris Godounov became indispensable, and the Patriarch, with the assent of the principal citizens, offered him the crown of Monomachus and, as far as he was able to speak with authority, the sovereignty of the Russias. Boris wisely deferred the choice of a Tzar to the decision of a representative gathering of the Moskovite States, a step which, while it gave his enemies a longer time to develop their opposition, would place his election, if carried, on a surer foundation. The Sobor which assembled at the capital in the month of February was composed of 474 members, of which 99 were clergy, 272 of the boyarin and landowner class (of which 119 were small proprietors), and the remainder starostas, deputies from the provincial towns, and representatives of the merchant bodies.[181] With the clergy and small proprietors the Godounov interest was predominant, and men of all sections were conversant with the ability and energy which the Regent had displayed in dealing with the foreign affairs of the country, left by Ivan in such unpromising plight. There were many boyarins whose pedigrees gave them a more legitimate claim to sit on the throne of Rurik, but none who inspired such confidence as did Godounov. The latter was unanimously elected to the sovereignty, and only stimulated the popular voice by affecting to hold back from the proffered dignity.

1598

On the 21st of February, amid the striking of the 5000 bells of Moskva’s many churches, the Patriarch went forth at the head of his clergy, followed by the greater part of the inhabitants of the city, and bearing the ikon of the Mother of God of Vladimir, towards the monastery of the Virgin; Godounov met this imposing outpour with another procession, bearing the less celebrated but equally adorable Mother of God of Smolensk. Satisfied of the solidity of his call to the throne, he at length put aside his hesitation and allowed himself to be proclaimed Gosoudar and Tzar of all the Russias. In effect nothing was changed, except that he ruled in name what he had already ruled in fact; on the other hand, however, if he exchanged the position of Vremenszhik for that of sovereign, he lost the authority which even the weak Thedor had been able to impart to him—the authority of a time-honoured “legend.” With the Russians legend and ideal counted for more than an apprenticeship of capable public service, and greater homage was paid to an Orthodox sovereign who hid from the enemy under a haystack than to a voevoda who died fighting superbly for his country. Crueller tortures were inflicted upon brave and blameless men in their midst than any for which sixty generations of Jews were held accursed, yet it was the inflictor and not the victim who was accounted holy, and worthy to sleep beneath the wings of the archangels. Boris, with all his record of past services and recommendation of present ability, with all his benevolence and dexterity, could

count on nothing more than the makeshift loyalty of his subjects.

His first action after his election, before even his coronation had taken place, was one which bespoke alike vigour and calculation. A rumour, possibly not without some foundation, but such as was current at Moskva every summer, credited the Krim Khan with designs for an immediate invasion of Russian territory. Boris did not wait for more exact information, but forthwith assembled from all parts of the gosoudarstvo a splendidly equipped army which was estimated at 500,000 men. This demonstration of potential fighting power and resource not only awed the Khan into good behaviour, but served as a hint to the Swedes and Poles that the new sovereign of Russia, albeit of comparatively humble origin, was not a factor to be despised in the affairs of North-eastern Europe; it fulfilled too another purpose, that of bringing the voevodas, boyarins, Tartar vassals, and Kozak hetmans from distant parts of the realm into immediate contact with their new ruler. The development of the quarrel between Sigismund and his uncle Karl, which gradually became a struggle between Poland and Sweden, freed Moskovy from the danger of attack from either power, and had Boris been able to wholly shake off the cautious traditions of his predecessors and enter into aggressive alliance with one or other of the combatants, Riga or Revel might have fallen into his hands and the coveted eye-hole into Europe have been secured. The Tzar, however, clung too faithfully to the old policy which had borne so little fruit. Nothing but sheer force would move the Swedes out of Estland or the Poles out of Livland, and nothing short of compulsion would make the inhabitants of these provinces receive the Russians as saviours; yet the same blind of a vassal kinglet which had failed disastrously in the case of Magnus was tried again, with a Swedish prince, Gustav (son of the late Erik XIV.), as its figure-head. Gustav created no enthusiasm among the Livlanders—who were not in a position indeed to show any—and ended by inspiring disgust in his patrons at Moskva. It is probable that Boris was merely staying his hand while Poles and Swedes fought out their domestic quarrels, and hoped to profit by the exhaustion which such conflict must necessarily entail by plundering both parties. The opportunity never came. Little by little the sovereign became aware that he was scarcely possessed of the love of the people for whom he had done so much; the clergy were offended at his suggestion of founding a university, the citizens were aggrieved that he introduced skilled foreigners, who were so badly needed to reorganise the sciences and a