

**RUSSIA, BY A RECENT
TRAVELLER: A SERIES OF
LETTERS, ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED
IN 'THE CONTINENTAL REVIEW'**

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CHARLES HENRY PEARSON

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MERCHANT AND CLERK.
(From a Russian Caricature.)

RUSSIA,

BY A RECENT TRAVELLER:

A SERIES OF LETTERS,

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN "THE CONTINENTAL
REVIEW."

Revised and Illustrated.

"Tis wonder
That an invisible instinct should frame them
To royalty unlearned, honour untaught.

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WILLIAM FRANCIS GRAHAM,
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R U S S I A.

INTRODUCTION.

FOR many years I had felt a great desire to visit Russia. The mere circumstance that the whole width of country between the Pacific and the Baltic—between the Frozen Ocean and the Black Sea—should be inhabited by one nation, speaking one language, owning one faith, and subject to one sovereign, appeared to me of singular interest. A residence of two summers in Bohemia made me acquainted with the fact that nearly half the subjects of the Austrian empire are rather Russian than German by affinities of language and thought, and by political sympathies. Even my scanty studies in Bohemian literature were sufficient to show me that the nation which commenced reform in Europe, and stood single-handed for thirty years against the world, was still inferior in its real powers to none among the peoples of Western Europe. It became, therefore, a new problem whether or not a third civilization was to rise, and a third development to be added to the Roman and German influences which Europe has undergone. From all I read of Russia I felt

convinced that, even judging it from the Slavonic point of view, it was still many years behind France and England in the essentials of national life; but I was also inclined to believe that it was capable of growth. Naturally, therefore, I watched carefully the strong reaction in favour of internal reforms which appeared to be occupying the nation after their mad but heroic struggle in the East.

In the summer of this year I found myself at liberty for a few weeks of vacation; and a friend, to whom I mentioned my intentions, offered to accompany me. I went before him to St. Petersburg, in order that I might pick up a little of the language for conversational purposes, as I only knew it very imperfectly from books. Every one at St. Petersburg told me it was hopeless to think of venturing without a courier into the interior. I was puzzled to understand the difficulty, and made an excursion to Old Novgorod; at once to see a famous Hanscatic city and to try my powers. On my way there I travelled with two Russian gentlemen, who repeated all the objections that I had heard before:—I should find no decent room to sleep in; there was nothing fit to eat in the hotels; the landlords would certainly cheat me; and, at the end, I should have seen nothing. In fact, they appeared to regard a traveller in Russia much as we look upon one who explores Africa or the backwoods. Nevertheless, when I arrived at the town, I found a good, roomy, and

clean hotel ; on the whole, better, I think, than German inns out of the beaten track. My dinner was very good, and my bill very much more moderate than the charges made in the English boarding-houses in St. Petersburg. As for the town itself, I had never till then seen a true Russian city ; and I felt that all my journey was repaid me. Kremlin, cathedral, churches, bazaar, and market-place, were all new to me, and all had the indescribable stamp of a separate civilization.

When my friend came out we lost no time in starting for the interior. We went first to Tver, and there took our places in a steamer down the Volga. Kazan was the farthest point we reached ; and we stopped, both in going and coming, at Nijni Novgorod, where the great fair was going on. Altogether, we spent eight days on the steamers alone ; and the hearty good-nature and kindness of the Russians among whom we lived went far to make us forget that we were strangers. Besides this, thanks to our friends in England and Russia, we had introductions in every place we visited. From Nijni Novgorod we went across country in a tarantasse to Moscow. Our only excursion from Moscow was to see the Troïtsa Monastery, which lies about forty miles distant on the road to Yarosloff. Dreading the long and dull journey by the high road to Warsaw, we came back by way of St. Petersburg. Altogether, I was nearly two months in the country,