

alone. With a beating heart she descended to the interview, and awaited the first word.—Conceive, then, her feelings when he addressed her as follows:

"Natalie Polensky, you know I have always taken the greatest possible interest in your welfare—tell me, now, what are your prospects for the future?"

"Sire," she replied, "I can answer you without a moment's hesitation, since to-morrow I leave St. Petersburg for Varenège, where I enter the convent, never to leave it again!"—She stopped, exhausted, leaning for support against the edge of a table.

"Sit down, Natalie, and listen to me," resumed her interrogator in a kindlier tone. "This must not be—I have in store for you pleasant prospects. You danced last night with Count Maurenosoff; if I mistake not, he still loves you, and is anxious to renew his proposals for your hand. If such be the case, I shall give you away myself, and your wedding shall be celebrated at the Winter Palace."

Natalie knew too well what this meant, the kind calm tone, and the unmistakable expression of those steadfast, determined eyes; yet she felt at the moment she could dare anything rather than consent to a union which, under other circumstances, might have gratified many a womanly weakness. In her desperation however, she took courage, and sank at the feet of the czar:

"Sire," she murmured, "hear me but once more, and you will relent. I love and was beloved by one to whom I swore more than once never to be another's. Let me—oh, let me only remain faithful to that oath—I ask no more!" The stern, impenetrable Nicholas seemed touched by her appeal, but, taking her by the hand, he said:

"My child, listen to a father. The oath you tell me of was a childish one. I doubt not he also bound himself by the like. Remember, Natalie—remember he is heir to my throne, and therefore must not, and cannot follow his own wishes and impulses. I sacrifice mine a hundred times a day for my country's welfare. All rests with you, and I cannot doubt what your decision will be. While you hold to your word, think you he will consent to break his? So, for the sake of your sovereign, of your country, of him you profess so to love I demand of you this sacrifice, bitter as it is!"

The poor girl hid her face in her hands, and almost inaudibly said: "Sire, I am your majesty's slave."

It was true what he had said—it was no high-sounding speech of merely worldly policy; for those who knew Nicholas best do believe him, however mistaken, to have been a conscientious man, who actually did duly and hourly sacrifice his private feelings to what he believed his duty. He had done so even in the present instance. By one word of imperative command he could have attained his object; but the autocrat had stooped to argument and solicitation with the young girl who bent like a reed before him.

At the betrothal, which took place immediately, and during the whole time of the splendid preparations for the wedding, Natalie lived as in a dream, nothing gave her pleasure, nothing pain. On the evening appointed for the religious ceremony, when all the guests were assembled and the bridemaids, thirty-six in number, and ministering among them the highest rank and beauty of the young nobility of Russia, were assembled in the magnificently lighted and decorated church—when the bridegroom Maurenosoff stood, looking in spite of all the repulses he had received at Natalie's hands, proud, contented, and almost happy—all eyes were turned towards the church-doors, when presently the bells began noisily to announce the approach of the bride, and in another instant, leaning on the emperor's arm, she appeared.

Never shall I forget that scene—never lose from my memory the impression of that marble face and utterly unresisting manner. If she had been in her coffin she would have looked less deathlike there than when she stood shrouded in lace and glittering with jewels staring at vacancy, hearing nothing, understanding nothing, answering as if the words and their meaning were alike indifferent. After the ceremony was concluded she received the congratulations of her friends, and even the kiss of the empress, as if so many condolences had been offered her. But nature broke down under the forced composure of the moment, and she entered her new home borne across the threshold in a state of insensibility. I need add nothing more. The emperor had judged rightly; and the marriage of the grand-duke with the present empress took place very shortly afterwards.

Within a year after her marriage, I saw the Countess Maurenosoff in her coffin; she had died giving birth to twin-daughters.

The incidents of this little narrative are well known in St. Petersburg, and will be recognised by many who will appreciate the reasons that have made me alter the names of all but the principal actors.

THE LEOPARD'S ATTACK.

The power of a leopard is wonderful in proportion to his weight. I have seen a full grown bullock with his neck broken by the leopard who attacked it. It is the popular belief

that the effect is produced by a blow of the paw; this is not the case; it is not simply the blow, but it is the combination of the weight, the power, and the momentum of the spring which renders the effect of a leopard's attacks so surprising. Few leopards rush boldly to the attack like a dog; they stalk their game and advance crouching, making use of every object that will afford them cover until they are within a few bounds of their prey. Then the immense power of muscle is displayed in the concentrated energy of the spring; he flies through the air and settles on the throat, usually throwing his own body over the animal, while his teeth and claws are fixed on the neck; this is the manner in which the spine of the animal is broken, by a sudden spring, and not by a blow. The blow from the paw is, nevertheless, immensely powerful, and at one stroke will rip open a bullock like a knife; but the after effects of the wound are still more to be dreaded too force of the blow. There is a peculiar poison in the claw, which is highly dangerous.—This is caused by the putrid flesh which they are constantly tearing, and which is apt to cause gangrene by inoculation.—S. W. Baker's Eight Years' Wanderings in Ceylon.

CUBAN SCENERY.

THE wastes of Northern Cuba are jungles of closely twining plants, gay with the myriad hues of strange, magnificent flowers, and overtopped by gigantic trees, whose trunks are not less gay with fantastic embroideries, and from whose Briarean arms hang countless veils and fringes of creeping plants the names of which cause upon the ear the same indefinite impression of savage magnificence that is made by their blended, undistinguishable forms upon the eye. All things, which to us of the temperate zones are creatures of boxes and of bales, creations we might perhaps as truly say, of the merchant and the grocer, meet us here at every turn, wild and bold in the woods; the fan-like cocoa-tree, the spreading vanilla, the parasite tamarind, the gaunt and desolate guava. The cactus no longer struggles for existence in the feeble sunshine of a three-pair back window with a Southern exposure; but swollen to the size of a scrub-oak, impedes your way with its dull, hideous prickly leaves, and flaunts its great flowers in your face. You may cool your thirst by day with the sweet clear, waters of the cocoa-nut. You may cool your heated eyes by night with such floods of golden moonlight as would have driven Shelley mad. The moon, which gives expression to the most tedious landscape, and the most unmeaning face, and converts the delight of gazing upon into a kind of frenzy, the moon makes all men Endymions in Cuba. The silence of these tropic forests is tremendous. Still are they as the seat of Saturn. No beast crashes through the undergrowth, no bird sings in the branches, no wind sighs through the mighty tops. The living creatures of that world glance noiselessly through the air, or glide stealthily beneath the heavy sounddeadening verdure. Your own voice startle you. Sublime at first, this silence soon grows insufferably oppressive. You are on the point of giving an impatient shout, when your purpose is anticipated by some hidden parrot with a shriek which pierces your very brain, a shriek mean and malicious as the cry of an imp. Saddening is the absence of song birds from the Cuban landscape. With the exception of a few visitors from Florida coast, the birds of Cuba are only gaily dressed birds of the ball-room. America, in general, has been rather ill-treated in this matter. Among the woods of our own New England, we may not hold our breath to hear as in Surrey or in Switzerland—

"The selfsame song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears among the alien corn;
Nor soar with the screeper of the ground, till
our own souls became blithesome and care-
less as that sightless song. Yet for us the clarion
of the wood-thrush rings nobly sweet
through the aisles of the pine forest, and the
Canadian whistler outpipes all already among
our stately hills, and the bubbling rapture of the
bobolink chases awhile the thoughts of death
that haunts our fatal shores. Cuba has no such
voices. Her landscape is worse than soulless.
The parrot gives it an uncanny soul, a spirit of
evil. Is there not at least an elective affinity
between scandal-mongers and parrots, between
those shrewish, furbelowed, feathered dowagers,
and their ill-tongued gossips, the Kaffeesch-
western, the unmusical human souls that love
the treasons, stratagems and spoils of social life?
The white parrot, in particular has something
positively diabolical in the tone of its voice.—
Had Ver-Vert been a white parrot, he had
never needed a trim to Lyons to corrupt him.

ROSES AND ESSENCE OF ROSES.

Certain districts in Bulgaria are entirely planted with roses. In spring, those flowery glades seem to be the asylum of happiness, for, as soon as the picking commences, the young girls so meekly dressed, usually so apathetic, are transformed into sylphs, and revel in the perfumed fragrance of the roses. Chemistry, continually progressing, no longer requires flowers to make rosewater.—Colburn's New Monthly.

Communications.

RUSSIAN WEALTH AND RESOURCES.

Under the head of "News from Russia by way of New York," an article occupying two closely printed columns appears in the London Times of the 26th December, taken from the N. York Herald. The Editor of which is evidently a Muscovite sympathiser. It commences by announcing the arrival by the steamer Atlantic of Colonel Tal. P. Shaffner direct from Russia, where he has been travelling five or six months. This being his second visit to that country, &c. The Editor then goes on to say that "He has been charged by the English Papers with being in the pay of the Czar, and that he is bound by pecuniary obligations to support the interests of Russia; but the real object of those charges, which, it is deserving of particular notice, have been made against nearly all Americans who have spoken favorably of Russia, is to throw discredit on their statements and by doing so to conceal the actual condition of things in that country from the world. Their object, however, has become so apparent that their accusations are entirely disregarded, and the public mind in this country has, from the frequent mistatements, intentional or otherwise, of the British Press, at last come to regard their account of the war with distrust and suspicion."

Judging from these strictures on the British Press, we are somewhat disposed to infer that the Editor himself is under some slight pecuniary obligations to his patron the Czar! Perhaps, like the Times he has also his paid and talented correspondent in the Crimea, who can gainsay all that the Britisher writes. If so he is doubtless at Prince Gortschakoff's elbow, and it would ill become him to write aught in our favor. But apart from the propriety of the thing, he has possibly the bump of caution sufficiently developed, not to expose himself to the tender mercies of Russian opinions as to the liberty of the Press. If ignorant of the fact, he would soon learn, perhaps to his cost, that "To think as much as you please, but say as little as you can" is a maxim—which if somewhat used in all free and enlightened States, is still a part and parcel of Russian Law. However, as regards this matter we must allow the Editor of the New York Herald to enjoy and express his own opinions. They are doubtless well grounded. But as regards Colonel Shaffner, what proof has he advanced to clear him of the charge of being a paid emissary of Russia?

We shall now refer to Colonel Shaffner's remarks:—he says—speaking of the nobility—"There is only one sentiment among them, and that is a determination to carry on the war so long as there is a rouble in the treasury or a man to shoulder a musket." This is precisely our opinion, and has been from the first. Nothing short of the capture of Cronstadt and St. Petersburg will induce the Czar to yield one iota of his pretensions. All his pretended acquiescence to negotiate is merely to gain time. Again—"No difficulty whatever is experienced in executing the orders of the Emperor, &c." This we are satisfied is perfectly correct, for he must be a bold man who would dare even to question the propriety or justice of the Czar's dictum. But we beg leave to differ with the Colonel when he asserts that all this zeal and alacrity proceeds from pure amor patriæ, or devoted loyalty. "So slight has been the draught on the agricultural population by the raising of new levies, that it will not in the least diminish the next year's produce." This is a bare assertion; wanting the important item of figures to substantiate it. That vast levies have been raised, the Colonel cannot, we presume, deny. If so, from what other source can they be drawn? But another item which we beg leave to remind him of, is the transportation of troops, provisions and munitions of war—how is all this effected? by the iron horse or balloons?—We opine that the peasants are the carriers, consequently both men and cattle must be taken. Will not this diminish the next year's produce of grain?—Why not assert at once that miracles are wrought by the only orthodox Church, and that a merciful Providence has permitted that the land should yield a tenfold increase.

Colonel Shaffner then proceeds to enter into details on the gallant and protracted defence of Sebastopol, its fortifications, &c., and contradicts, not only the correspondents of the various London Journals, but even the Despatches of the Allied Generals. "The trophies he says, which were found by the Allied Army after they had captured their dearly earned prize, and about which they made such a parade were the used up cannon, and the piles of balls which they themselves fired into the City, and which the Russians had intended to recast to the size of their own guns. They also found powder, but it was some which had been placed in the mines, and which became so damp that it would not explode. It is not true that they got large quantities of clothing and provisions, for every thing of value had been removed several days before the evacuation. It is also worthy of notice that the Russians had constructed three bridges instead of one, and that, although their sick and wounded were left behind, yet the allies did not dare to prevent a

portion of them from returning to carry them over to the north side." Now from Colonel Shaffner's statement it does not appear that he himself was an eyewitness of all these startling facts, and as he does not give up his authority we shall suppose that he derives his information from the Prince, Commander-in-Chief or even the Emperor himself. In either case, we beg leave to assure him that our own personal experience of Russian veracity would induce us to place far greater reliance on the statements of the Times Correspondent, individually, than on those of either of the two worthies we have named. What was the reply of the great Iron Duke relative to one of the late Emperors diplomatic frauds—"How could I have supposed that the fellow was such a liar." What a compliment for God's Vice Regent on Earth.

An admission and an assertion, for we must thus qualify them, in the above quotation, deserve a passing word or two. We are told that "everything of value had been removed several days before the evacuation, and then that the sick and wounded were left behind!" Or, in other words, that the Russian General set a far higher value on military stores than on the lives of his unfortunate countrymen. The former could not easily be replaced, the latter were a useless, troublesome and expensive encumbrance, and had better be left to the mercy of an infuriated but victorious enemy! Verily Colonel, you have reason to be proud of your Prince protégé. Is this what your countrymen have to expect at your hands should you ever lead them to battle? But the assertion which follows proves that Colonel Shaffner is not only a faithful chronicler of great events, but that far greater reliance can be placed in his statements than in those of the mendacious correspondents of the London Press, or even of the Allied Generals. "Yet the allies did not dare to prevent a portion of them from returning to carry them over to the north side." Did not dare! Well, well! Certainly some men stick at nothing! Such an impudent, bare-faced assertion, not only convinces us that the man who made it must be in the Czar's pay, but induces the belief that Russian blood flows in his veins.

The next assertion of Colonel Shaffner's which we shall make bold to challenge is that wherein he states that "the very domes of some of their churches are of gold." To which he might as well have added, and studded with diamonds of the first water! "All is not gold that glitters." Colonel, we think you must have labored under some optical delusion! You say some, why not enumerate those particular churches? We have also been in Russia, and have seen the domes of churches covered with copper. The similarity of colour in the two metals doubtless accounts for the error.

We are also told "there is no lack of means." "When it is considered that all the money which is expended for the war is still kept in the country, and only passes from the possession of one Russian to that of another, there appears to be little reason to believe in the assertion of the allies, that Russia is already in an impoverished condition." "The effects of the war are scarcely perceptible." The manufactures have been increased, and those of iron particularly are at present in a more flourishing condition than before the breaking out of hostilities.

In a word, Colonel Shaffner would fain make it appear that the resources of Russia are inexhaustible—that she is invulnerable—that the war has not and cannot affect the prosperity of the Nation in the slightest degree, and that the allies are the only sufferers—All of which may be highly gratifying, and appear perfectly correct in the eyes of the Editor of the N. York Herald, and all Russian sympathizers. But they forget that they are bare assertions unsupported by figures to substantiate their truthfulness. We shall therefore attempt to supply the necessary statistics in order to prove who is likely to suffer by the War.

In 1841 the number of ships which sailed from the various Russian Ports was 4604—whereof only 312 left in ballast. Of this grand total 913 were Russian bottoms against 1484 British and 54 American—the balance being divided between the other nations and States of the world. The total amount of exports in the same year was 74,817,163 Silver Roubles—the value of the silver Rouble being about 8s. 2½d. Sterling. The Imports being 64,336,067 silver Roubles. Here then is a balance of trade in her favor of 10,481,096. The chief articles of Export are Grain, Hemp, Flax, Timber, Tallow, Cordage, Linseed, Furs, Iron, Copper, Pitch, Tar, Bristles and Wool. Now what becomes of all these when all her Ports are blockaded. It has been stated that cattle being so abundant and transit cheap during the winter, she finds an outlet for her Produce through Prussia. This is undoubtedly the case to a certain extent. But when we consider the immense number of men and cattle required for the conveyance of Warlike Stores &c. &c., it is evident that the means of transit at the disposal of the trading community must be very limited. In addition to the actual injury inflicted on Russia by the total annihilation of her export Trade by sea, the Government is deprived of one of its most important resources in the shape of Import and Export Duties. Port charges on Shipping &c. At least half a million Sterling