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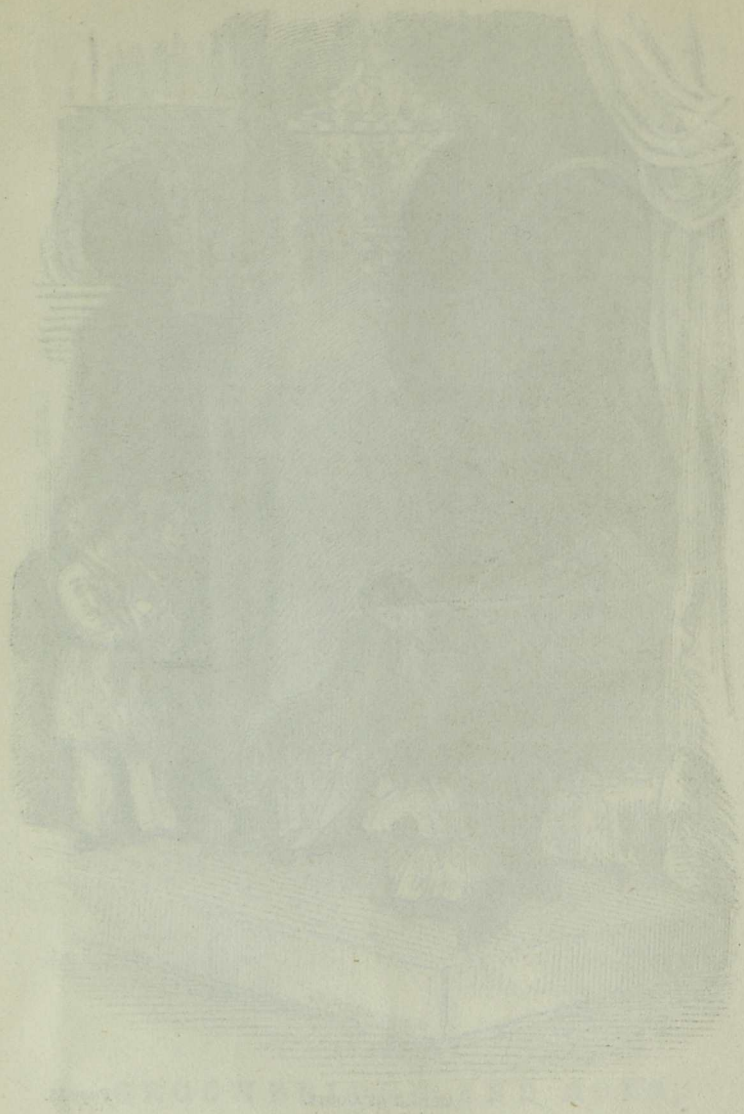
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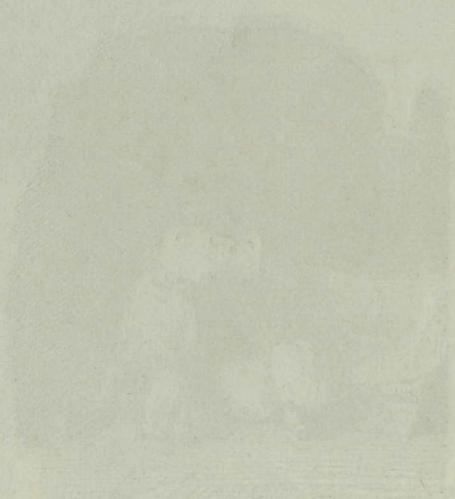
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THE

FRONTISPIECE OF THE WORK



1850

THE GREAT HALL

FRONTISPIECE

GEORGE BRIDGE AND JONES

LONDON: 1850

THE  
FOUNDLING OF THE WRECK.

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CHAPTER I.

A S H I P W R E C K .

IF our young readers will take a map of Europe, and look to the west, they will see a broad wide sea called the Baltic, stretching northward and separating the countries of Norway and Sweden from Russia. To the east of this sea is a gulf, called the Gulf of Finland, and at the extremity of that gulf, at the mouth of the river Neva, stands the city of St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia in Europe.

St. Petersburg is at the present time a populous and beautiful city. It contains so many splendid buildings, that it is sometimes called a city of palaces, but about the beginning of the eighteenth century (which is a hundred and fifty years ago,) the ground on which it stands was an immense bog, or marsh, surrounded by dreary forests. The only persons who dwelt on the then desolate spot were some fishermen who built a few little cabins near the water's edge ; but as the river at certain seasons of the year frequently overflowed its banks, and the cabins were sometimes washed away, even these few little tenements were often deserted.

I dare say most of our young readers have heard or read of Peter the Great, the celebrated Emperor, or Czar of Russia. He built the city of St. Petersburg, and called it after his own name ; but of that

we shall speak hereafter, at present we have to do with a humble individual, named Michael Kopt, who lived in one of the cabins we have spoken of.

Michael's father was a Swede, and could read and write, and was therefore far in advance of the ignorant Russian serfs, among whom he lived. Having been carried prisoner to Russia, during one of the numerous wars between the Russians and Swedes, he had been compelled to obtain his living as a fisherman. He taught his son Michael all that he had himself learned, and also brought him up to his trade. When Michael became a man, he married a young woman, the daughter of one of the same craft ; they were very poor, but they lived happily together, for Margaret was thrifty and affectionate, and Michael steady, sober and industrious. During the fishing season, Michael applied himself very diligently to his business, and with his wife's assistance, dried and salted the greater part of the fish which he caught, then, when the floods were expected, they removed to a village some miles distant, and lived on the produce of their joint labour.

One season Michael and his wife remained in the fishing-hut, a few weeks later than usual, on account of the fineness of the weather, and there being no signs of the floods. However, on the day before that fixed for their departure, a violent storm suddenly arose, and it was evident that the cabins were in danger of being swept away, either by the strong gale which blew from the sea, or by the water. Terrified by the prospect, the two or three fishermen who had been their companions hurried off, even in the midst of the storm, hoping to reach a place of safety, before the floods overtook them ; and Michael and Margaret were preparing to follow their example, when they were startled by hearing the firing of guns as from a ship in distress. The fisherman and his



wife looked at each other in deep concern, but neither spake. What could they do to assist the unhappy mariners, and the delay of one hour might be death to themselves.

‘Shall we go Margaret?’ Michael at length broke the silence by saying.

‘Can we help those poor creatures?’ she asked.

‘We cannot do anything to save the ship,’ he replied, ‘but we may perhaps be of some service should any of the people be thrown upon the strand.’

‘Then we will stop awhile, and trust to God’s protecting care,’ she nobly rejoined; and as she spoke, she laid down the little bundle of clothes which she had hastily put together, intending to carry with them.

Michael now ran to the front window of the cottage, with the idea of getting a view of the vessel in distress, but he only reached the spot in time to see her go down. The wind had driven her with violence against a rock, which had made a large opening in her keel, through which the water rushed so fast, that all attempts to check it proved vain, and she sunk almost instantly to the bottom.

‘All are lost!’ exclaimed Margaret, who had followed her husband, and was now standing behind him with her hands clasped together, and her eyes raised toward heaven in an attitude of prayer.

‘Nay, dear Madgy, it is possible that some poor creature may be drifted on the shore,’ cried Michael; ‘I will at all events go and see.’

Margaret’s heart quailed with fear, lest her husband’s life should fall a sacrifice to his humanity; but she could not oppose his generous resolve, so she suffered him to go without a word of remonstrance.

As soon as he left the door, she fell on her knees and prayed that he might be protected in his perilous enterprise.

She arose in a more composed state of mind, and

then sat down to await her husband's return. Her patience was not long tried, he came in shortly after, bearing in his arms a wicker-basket bound up in a sheet of oil-cloth. The poor woman's first words were an exclamation of thankfulness for his safe return; she next eagerly inquired what he had brought with him.

'I have brought thee a child, Madgy, what say you to that?' cried the fisherman looking at her with a smile.



'A child!' she repeated.

'Yes, a brave boy. I found him in one of the holes in the rock.'

'Is he alive?' asked Margaret, drawing back the oil-cloth that she might get a sight of the babe.

‘Alive, yes ; the urchin seemed to be quite enjoying his new home.’

‘Don’t jest, dear Michael,’ cried Margaret ; ‘the mother of this poor little creature has most likely found a watery grave.’

‘True, but you will be a mother to him, wont you ?’

‘Aye, that I will,’ responded the kind-hearted woman, catching the child in her arms, and folding him to her bosom. ‘Aye, that I will, Miche, I’ll carry him myself, if you will take the baggage. But is this poor babe the only creature who has escaped ?’

‘I have reason to believe so,’ returned the fisherman ; ‘but I could not remain longer on the shore, the water flowed in so fast. We must haste now, dear Madgy, or we shall be too late.’

Margaret wanted not a second bidding, but after having hastily wrapped the babe in a bear’s skin, she and her husband quitted the hut.

## CHAPTER II.

### A JOURNEY AND A WELCOME HOME.

MICHAEL and MARGARET had, as our young readers may suppose, a very unpleasant and perilous journey over boggy land, in the midst of a violent storm too. The charge of an infant of three or four months old, of course added to their cares and difficulties; but both the fisherman and his wife had stout hearts which would not soon sink under dangers; and the Russians are naturally a hardy people. Their winter abode was the cottage in which Margaret had spent her childhood and early youth, which was still occupied by her parents, they were therefore sure of a hearty and affectionate welcome when their journey was over. The old people had been very anxious about them, fearing from their long stay, that some evil had overtaken them, so the present meeting was every way delightful.

‘We have brought some live-stock with us, mother,’ said Michael, smiling and looking significantly at his wife’s mother.

‘Live stock,’ repeated the dame, ‘why, what have you got?’

Margaret here took off the bearskin covering and displayed her little charge to view.

‘What, a baby!’ cried the old woman in a tone of amazement.

Wet and weary as the travellers were, it was not a time to keep up a jest, otherwise Michael would have let the old people guess for a while, before he told them in what way the little foundling had been thrown upon their protection, as it was, he explained all in a sentence, and then begged that they would let him have something to eat.

Margaret felt more disposed for taking rest than for sharing in the meal, so she and her mother retired together into one of the sleeping-rooms, taking the infant with them.

The storm subsided in the course of the night, but no effort could be made to rescue the shipwrecked people, even should any of them have drifted to the shore, for the river had by this time so far overflowed its banks, that the path the fisherman and his wife had so recently trodden, was not now to be seen. As there appeared but little probability that the child would ever be claimed, Michael and his wife resolved on adopting him, and treating him in every respect as if he were their own. The little fellow seemed very well satisfied with his new friends. He smiled and cooed at Margaret, in return for her caresses, and tried to imitate Michael's loud ringing laugh. With Margaret's mother too, he was an especial favourite, and even the old man was much pleased with this addition to their family,

The matter to be decided on next was, what name the little stranger should bear. Margaret was reminded by his wicker-cradle and the perils of his infancy of Moses in his ark of bulrushes, on the banks of the Egyptian river. She could not help thinking, she said, that a *mother's* tender hand had fastened him so securely in his little bed, and that a mother's prayers had saved him from a watery grave, and she proposed that he should be called by the name of Moses. However, when the swaddling-clothes in which he had been found were closely examined, an almost indistinct mark was found on one of them, which after some little difficulty, was discovered to be *Gerald*. It was therefore determined to call him by that name.

## CHAPTER III.

### A GLANCE AT RUSSIAN HISTORY.

TEN years glided away and very little change took place in the fisherman's family, excepting that the infant foundling grew up, by degrees, into a fine intelligent boy. In the long nights of the Russian winter, unless there is some kind of mental employment, time passes very wearily. Michael had so far profited by his father's instructions, as to be able to impart the elements of useful knowledge to Gerald, who was both an apt and eager scholar. His natural intelligence had thus been quickened, and his thirst for knowledge increased by the humble but useful instructions of his kind foster father. While they used to sit round the large warm stove, when they had read from the Bible or some other of the one or two books, which Michael inherited from his father, Michael would then relate incidents in the history of Sweden, or talk about the great protestant reformers—or the learned men his father had known or heard of at Upsal, his native city. Gerald was never tired of hearing about these things, and the thoughts that came into his mind when Michael talked about the famous university of Upsal, where so many people passed their time in acquiring or imparting knowledge were quite exciting, and he could not help hoping that something or other might occur that would place him in the way of acquiring more knowledge than he was likely to obtain in the hut of a poor fisherman, dearly as he loved his kind benefactors. Gerald was a good and grateful child, and desirous of doing all he could to assist those generous friends who had acted the part of parents to him.

Even when quite a little boy, he tried to help his father, as he called him, in his craft. He was very fond too, of his good mother, as he called Margaret, and you may be sure they loved him very dearly.

Previous to the reign of Peter the great, the Russian empire had been far behind the other nations of Europe in the progress of civilization. Even the highest classes amongst the people were extremely ignorant, very few of them could even read or write, and they spent the principal part of their time in feasting and drinking. They had neither ships, nor sailors, and no manufacturing class of people, except a few of the serfs who worked for the sole benefit of their masters. The fine arts were unknown, and the most useful arts were very imperfectly understood. At that time Peter, shared the throne with his elder brother, Ivan; but Ivan, being only a little above an idiot in mind, was a mere cipher. Peter, on the contrary, was possessed of a powerful intellect and great sagacity, and he had moreover an enterprising spirit. One of his early acts on ascending the throne, was, to send a number of the young nobles of his court into Italy, Germany, and Holland, to gain instruction in military and naval affairs. He also sent to foreign countries for ship-builders and various artisans, but not satisfied with that, he afterwards resolved on visiting some of those countries himself, for the express purpose of learning how his own kingdom might best be benefited.

In pursuance of this plan, he, together with a few chosen associates, first went to Holland, at which place he worked as a common labourer in the dock-yards, no one but those of his own party knowing who he was. He next came to England. It was his purpose to visit Italy likewise, but a revolt amongst his people at home, and rumours that his sister Sophia was trying to make herself empress of

Russia, obliged him to return after an absence of only two years.

Having now acquired considerable knowledge in ship-building and other valuable arts, Peter began to see the advantages which would accrue to his country, by the establishment of a port on the Baltic sea, at the mouth of the Neva. There were many difficulties in the way of such an undertaking, and one of the most formidable was, the low marshy state of the land. These difficulties however, he determined upon conquering. Had the Czar attempted to accomplish the same ends by justifiable means, we should admire his forethought and genius, but as on the contrary, he carried them out by force and cruelty, every humane heart must condemn the act as one of tyranny and oppression. No seemingly desirable end can justify us in using unlawful means.

To provide workmen for the undertaking, the Emperor in the year 1703, sent bands of soldiers into the villages with orders to compel those men who were capable of labour to engage in the task. Our young friends have no doubt heard of the press gangs which were at one time allowed in England, and of the conscription in France. Well, this was a somewhat similar procedure, only instead of being forced to become sailors and soldiers, as the pressed men and conscripts were, these poor people were compelled to make roads and rear a city in an immense bog. The peasants, or serfs, as they are called in Russia, were at that period in a very degraded state. They were considered as much the property of the nobles on whose estates they lived, as any other live stock. Their houses mostly consisted of but one room. In the centre of this room was a large brick oven: in this they baked their black rye bread; and the top served for a bed for the whole family at night. Their only articles of furniture were, a lamp suspended from the ceiling,



and a rough bench or two fastened to the walls. They were clothed in sheepskins, and their food was of the coarsest kind. Bad as was their lot, however, very few, if any of them, were willing to exchange it for labour on public works of any kind, especially in such an unhealthy situation as the marshes we have spoken of. The impure air which rises from swampy ground is almost sure to bring on fevers and other disorders. Then no care was taken to make them as comfortable as the circumstances would have permitted ; no houses were provided for them to sleep in, and the tools they had given them to work with were so unsuitable and bad, that their labours were thereby made much harder than they would otherwise have been.

Exposed thus to hardships of every kind, the men, as might be expected, perished by hundreds. But these disastrous results were not allowed to interrupt the work : for as fast as they died off, others were pressed into the service and marched off to the place. In Russia the Emperor has absolute power over all his subjects : even the nobles, therefore, dared not to oppose the mandate, had they been so disposed. Among the unhappy individuals who were chosen for the purpose of filling up vacancies made by the sick and deceased, was our friend Michael Kopt. His general home being away from any of the villages, he, for some time, escaped observation ; but when strong, healthy men became scarce in the neighbourhood, he and some of his companions were pressed into the service, only a few minutes being given them for preparing, and bidding adieu to their weeping friends.

Poor Margaret was for some time inconsolable, and Gerald was almost in as much grief at seeing her suffer. He tried to cheer her by every means in his power ; but finding that she was hopeless of ever having her husband back again, he formed a resolution which our young readers shall hear at another time.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A GENEROUS RESOLVE.

AT the mouth of the river Neva were several little islands ; on one of these islands the Emperor had a hut built for himself, and a wooden house for his favourite minister Prince Mentzikoff, who was his companion in all his enterprises. It was Peter's fancy to take up his abode on that wild spot and watch the progress of the city he had planned. On another of these little islands a fortress was reared, surrounded by a rampart of earth. This fortress was the station of the engineer who directed the works, and the home of a few of the soldiers. The inhabitants of Moscow were at first jealous of the new city. They foresaw that it would, in the course of time, from its very situation, be a more desirable abode for purposes of trade than the ancient capital ; and they greatly opposed the plan, lest their dignity should decrease as well as their interests suffer ; but the Czar was not a man to yield to any, however high their rank might be ; and he persevered with his plans without regarding the dissatisfaction which was so generally expressed. The houses of the new city were at first built wholly of wood, and chiefly inhabited by foreign artisans. Peter, seeing that the Russian nobles and wealthy merchants would not of their own free-will take houses in St. Petersburg, published a decree obliging them to do so. At the same time, however, he gave orders that the houses in the best part of the city should be built of bricks and roofed with tiles. He also made a law (there being no stone-quarries in the neighbourhood) that every large vessel which

came into the port should bring thirty stones, and every boat ten, towards the erection of bridges and other public buildings. Every peasant's cart was likewise compelled to bring three stones; and by these means materials were raised free of cost for the public works.

As the place at which Michael was set to work was not many miles distant from the abode of his family, he had an opportunity of seeing them occasionally, which was a pleasure denied to most of the labourers. Margaret and Gerald often went together, and though it was frequently the case that they were only allowed to speak with him for a few minutes, they were glad to undertake the journey even for that brief joy.

As Gerald was too young to carry on the fishing craft alone, he and Margaret resided wholly with her parents. Gerald helped the old man to make and mend fishing-tackle, which was now their principal means of support; and Margaret did anything she could to earn a trifle, still their circumstances were very much worse than when Michael was at home following his trade. Though Michael was naturally strong, and had all his life been used to hardship, he could not bear the labour to which he was set, so well as many of his companions. The air of the marshes was very different from the sea-breezes, but the principal cause of his sinking under his toil was, his spirit was crushed. While a man possesses a feeling of independence, he may meet difficulties and hardships with a bold front; but when he feels himself to be a slave, (and these poor people were slaves though they bore not the name,) his energies are in most cases benumbed, and his spirit is broken.

Margaret used to look very sad and often to weep, when she and Gerald returned from their visits to the works, for with the keen eye of affection she saw

what he was suffering, though he said not a word. On the contrary, when in her presence, he put on as cheerful an aspect as possible. At such seasons Gerald always tried to comfort her, 'Good mother,' he said one day, 'do not, I beg of you, give way so to grief, I am sure you will have father at home again before very long.'

'How can that be child?' she asked. 'You see the Emperor does not let any of the men give up the work until they are carried off by death. No, there is no hope for my poor Michael; for he will die before this huge city is finished.'

'Oh no, he will not die, mother,' cried the boy, 'I feel sure he will not die! You know you have yourself taught me that God takes care of good people, and I am sure father and you are good. You have taught me, too, that God hears our prayers if we pray to him with sincerity; and I have prayed very earnestly and very often that he would bring dear father back. Courage, good mother, do not weep; you will have him with you again, and that before long.'

We must now tell our young readers that Gerald had formed a determination to offer himself as a substitute in Michael's place. He made this resolution very soon after the fisherman was taken from his family; but he well knew that would not be the time to put it into practice, as he was not then eleven years of age. He hoped however, in about two years' time, to be suitable in appearance as well as strength, and otherwise fitted to undertake the task.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PROPOSAL.

THIS one idea was so constantly in Gerald's mind, that it could scarcely be said to be ever absent from his thoughts. He dwelt on it as he sat over his work by day ; he dreamed of it at night ; and he prayed constantly for the blessing of God upon it. Still he said not a word to any one, being afraid that should he do so, his plan might meet with opposition. He feared that Margaret would say he was too young to engage in such work.

When a little more than two years had elapsed, he began to think that he might make known his plan with some hope of success. He was by this time a fine tall lad of nearly thirteen. He thought the most suitable season for making such a proposal would be as he and Margaret were returning from one of their visits to the works. The state of health in which they found poor Michael, at the next visit, favoured the project. He was evidently much worn, and Margaret was almost broken-hearted when she parted from him, thinking it probable that she should never see him again alive.

As they walked home, the poor woman leaned on Gerald's arm and wept bitterly. 'Now,' thought he, 'is the time for me to name my plan ;' so, looking up tenderly in her face, he said, 'I have something to say to you, dear mother, which I hope will make you dry up your tears. I have often tried to cheer you with the prospect of a happier time, but now I think it is nearly come.'

'You mean,' said Margaret sorrowfully, 'that I and my poor Michael shall soon be together in a happier world.'

‘No, good mother, I don’t mean that,’ Gerald eagerly returned, ‘I hope you will meet together in Heaven at last; but not very soon. Oh no, I mean that you will ere long be happy together in our own home.’

‘Never, never, my dear boy,’ she cried, weeping afresh.

‘Don’t weep so, mother, but listen to what I am going to say to you,’ Gerald added, and a bright smile lighted up his intelligent face. ‘I am now a tall, strong boy—almost as tall, and quite as strong, I think, as dear father was when he was carried off; and I mean to take his place and let him come home to you.’

Margaret looked up in amazement, but she did not speak, for her feelings were too powerful to admit of words.

‘I mean,’ Gerald proceeded, ‘to go to the Czar myself. I hear that he is generally to be found, either at his cottage in the island or else overlooking the works. I am not afraid of the Czar, mother: the errand on which I shall go will take away all fear. I feel as bold as a lion—aye, and as strong too.’

‘Thou art a noble boy, Gerald,’ cried Margaret, at length finding utterance. ‘Go,’ she added, ‘and may God bless thee.’

‘You consent then, good mother, you consent?’ cried Gerald in an ecstasy of delight. ‘My only fear was, lest you should oppose my plan; but if you consent, it will—it shall be done.’

‘Nay, my dear child,’ Margaret said, ‘I am not the only person likely to oppose your plan; the Czar may not be willing to make the exchange.’

‘Surely he will,’ cried the boy, ‘surely this strong limb—holding out his right arm—can do him better service than poor father’s now weak one can do; and gratitude and affection for one who has done so much for me will nerve it for its work.’

Gerald then begged Margaret not to say anything

at home concerning his design, and that she would allow him to put it into operation immediately.

He had heard that it was the Emperor Peter's constant practice to rise at five in the morning, and he determined on seeking him at that early hour, before his attention was taken up with the business of the day. There were difficulties, however, in the way of his carrying out this purpose. The little island on which Peter made his home, was a good day's journey from their village, and as the only houses built upon it were the Czar's (which was but a mere hut,) the prime minister's and a sort of inn, where Peter and his friends mostly spent their Sundays, he was fearful lest he should not be able to get any conveyance across the water.

Nothing daunted, by these seeming obstacles, he resolved on setting out for the place the very next day.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRIME MINISTER.

LEAVING it to Margaret to explain to the old people the reason for his absence, Gerald started the next morning soon after dawn. When she saw him ready to set out, the good woman almost repented of having consented to his going ; still she made no attempt to dissuade him from his purpose. She provided him with the best food the cottage could afford, and with tears in her eyes, bade him " God speed." The day was favourable, and he tripped along with a light heart and a light step. No one, to see him, would have imagined that he was seeking to be placed in circumstances, at the thought of which many stout-hearted men quailed. He did not dwell however, on the hardships and dangers that might await him ; he only thought of how he should gladden the spirits of those who had so long acted the part of parents to him. He knew that they would be grieved to purchase their own comfort at the sacrifice of his liberty, and it might be of his health also ; but he hoped that his youth and good constitution would enable him to bear the toil for a time, ' and perhaps,' thought he, ' I may find favour in the sight of the Czar, and he may not doom me to spend all my best days at such work.'

In his way to the island where the Emperor's humble court was kept, Gerald passed the spot where Michael's cottage had once stood, the spot where he had been rescued by his kind guardian from a watery grave. The view of this place, and the recollections it called forth, seemed to give him new strength and spirit for his undertaking and though wearied with his journey, he went on even brisker than before.



Some of the fishermen's huts were still occupied, and Gerald stopped at one of them to inquire his way. One of the men directed him, supposing him to be the bearer of a message from some person in authority; for he took the precaution to keep his plan secret from every body, lest the telling it should by any means mar its success.

It was nearly dark when he reached that part of the river's banks which faced the island, but late as it was he resolved on trying to get over that night. While he was standing considering what would be the best means to adopt, three men came within sight, and jumped into a boat which was moored hard by. Gerald ran eagerly down to the beach, calling loudly to attract their attention, 'May I ask, whither are you going my friends.'

'We are servants of his excellency, Prince Mentzickoff, and are going to his house,' replied one of the men.

'Will you row me over with you?' asked Gerald, at the same time holding out a small coin.

'Have you any business with his excellency?' inquired one.

'My business is with the Czar, but I should be glad to see Prince Mentzickoff first, if I could get admittance to him,' Gerald replied.

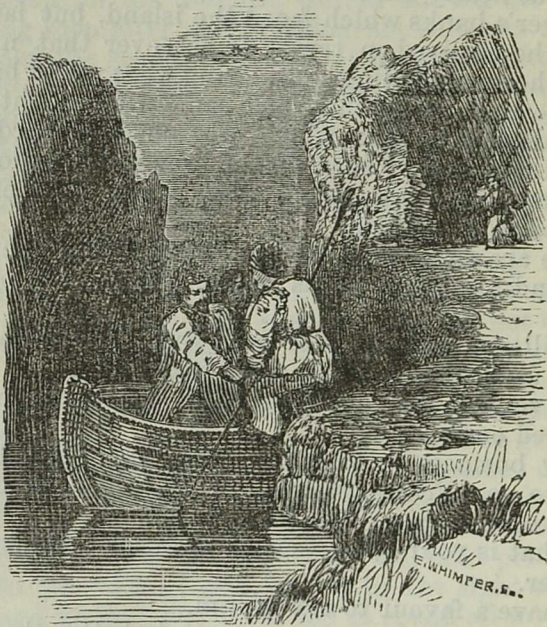
'What is your business with the Czar?' demanded another.

'I have a favour to ask of him.'

'If that's the case, you cannot do better than get his excellency to introduce you,' rejoined the first speaker; 'come hasten into the boat, we must not tarry, or we shall be put into too hot an oven, and so repent of it.'

This speech of the man's had reference to the prime minister's origin. Mentzickoff was, when a boy, in the service of a pastry-cook at Moscow, and he first attracted the attention of the Emperor by

the humorous manner in which he sang a song extolling his master's pies. Peter offered him a menial office in his household, but afterwards discovering that he had a genius for military affairs, he placed him in his army, where he rose rapidly. This young man was one of the Czar's companions on his journey to Holland and England.



As the men rowed the boat across the river, one commenced a song, and the others joined in chorus. The Russian people are noted for their love of music, and they generally lighten their labours by singing.

On reaching the island, they conducted our hero at once to the house of the minister.

The house of Prince Mentzikoff was very superior to the one occupied by his sovereign, for Peter took pride in demeaning himself when he was in the mood

to do so ; still it was but a rude affair, as our young readers will no doubt think when they hear it described.

It consisted of a number of wooden beams, so prepared as to fit readily into each other. Lattices and shutters for windows were also made to fit in, and these detached pieces could be packed up and carried to any place that the owner chose to reside in. Most of the houses in the towns and cities of Russia were, at that time, so constructed ; and ready-made houses were common articles of merchandise in the public markets. The furniture of these dwellings was as rough and portable as the outside ; a few shelves and some wooden benches were fixed to the walls, and a few tables were added. The benches served for bedsteads as well as for seats, and when these houses were put up in the country, it was seldom that they afforded the luxury of a bed.

Little ceremony was used at that period, especially in such a retired place, and Gerald was introduced at once into the presence of the Prince. Mentzikoff was seated on one of the benches, having a table before him, on which stood a bottle of spirits and a large horn cup. He had evidently been drinking rather too freely, which bad practice, though sanctioned by the example of the Czar, and the custom of the country, was a new spectacle to our hero, who had always been accustomed to see sobriety in his humble home.

‘What is your business with me?’ the Prince somewhat roughly demanded as Gerald advanced.

‘Will your excellency do me the favour of introducing me to the Czar before he leaves the island in the morning,’ Gerald said, at the same time making a low bow.

‘For what purpose do you wish to be introduced to his Majesty?’ Mentzikoff abruptly asked.

‘Please your excellency, I have a favour to request.’

‘What, boor? Dost thou think to enter the Czar’

service? Thou art a dainty lad for thy station, but thou'rt not quite to his mind I fancy.'

'I do wish to enter the Czar's service,' Gerald replied; 'my request is that he will let me labour on the public works.'

The minister looked up as if doubting whether he heard aright:—'Art thou in earnest, boy,' he demanded, 'or art thou jesting with me?'

'I would not take the liberty to jest with your excellency,' Gerald replied: 'indeed my errand is not a matter for jest. I am in earnest. I wish to take the place of a man who has been more than a father to me.'

'Ha!'

'One Michael Kopt, once a fisherman on the Neva, has been upwards of two years upon the works, but his strength is failing, he can now be but of little use to his Majesty, and I have a strong arm.'

'Come hither at the dawn of day,' said the Prince.

Gerald again bowed, and was about to leave the room, when Mentzikoff calling after him said, 'Bid my servants find thee a lodging and a meal,' and added, 'come hither at the dawn, I'll take thee to the Czar myself.' Here he turned aside to re-fill the horn cup and quaff off another draught of spirits.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CZAR.

GERALD was true to his appointment, and he found the Prince prepared to receive him. But few words were exchanged ; Mentzikoff beckoned him to follow, and they proceeded together to the Czar's hut. It is an odd fancy for an Emperor to live in such a place when he might live in a grand palace, thought our hero ; however, he wisely kept his thoughts to himself.

Peter had been put out of temper the night before, by meeting with some trifling opposition to his wishes and plans ; and the minister, though a very great favourite with his sovereign, was not quite sure that even he could get a hearing at that time. He had taken a fancy to Gerald, however, and he was determined to do all he could to serve him. Bidding him, therefore, wait without till he called or sent to him, Mentzikoff entered the Czar's hut alone.

Peter was up as usual and busy with his plans for the new city. The Prince did not, therefore, at once state the object of his early visit, but quietly listened to all his sovereign had to say. After a while, however, he ventured to lay the business before him.

The Emperor's brow darkened and became more and more contracted as the Prince proceeded. 'What were the boors made for but to serve their country in that way ?' he fiercely asked.

'True, Sire ;' returned the Prince, 'but this poor man is it appears unable to serve his country by manual labour any longer, and as the youth is so

desirous of taking his place the exchange will be for your Majesty's benefit.

'Bring him hither,' was the Czar's abrupt rejoinder.

Gerald was the next minute ushered into the presence of the Emperor.

'Come here, boy,' he cried in a loud stern voice.

Gerald obeyed, but without shewing any signs of alarm.

'Thou'rt not Russian?' the Czar added, surveying his person with a scrutinizing glance.

'I know not to what country I belong, Sire,' the youth replied; 'I was shipwrecked on the coast hard by, and I owe my life and everything else I possess to Michael Kopt.'

'And who is Michael Kopt?'

'Sire, Michael Kopt is the man whose place in the public works I wish to fill.'

'Thou art of too slight a make for such work, boy,' cried the Czar.

'Nay, I have a stronger arm than I may seem to have, Sire; and if anything can nerve it for the work surely gratitude will do so.'

'By what name art thou called?' demanded the Emperor.

'My name is Gerald, Sire.'

'And how many years ago was it that thou wert shipwrecked on these shores?'

'It was a little more than twelve years ago, Sire, I was then an infant of only a few months old.'

'And you have never heard anything of your parents or friends?'

'Never, Sire. The river was at that time beginning to overflow its banks, and I have reason to believe that I was the only person who escaped the wreck.'

The Czar mused for a few moments, then snatching up a piece of parchment from the table before him,

he wrote a few words upon it, and gave it into the hand of the minister.

‘Give the boy that, Mentzikoff,’ he said; ‘let him present it to the master of the works, and his request will be promptly attended to.’

The Prince handed the parchment to Gerald who took it with a countenance radiant with delight. He could not speak, but making a low obeisance first to the Czar and then to the minister, he withdrew from the royal presence.

As may be supposed, our hero lost no time in returning to the cottage with the joyful news of his success. But much as they all loved Michael, Margaret and the old people could scarcely rejoice in the thought of his restoration to his home when his liberty was to be purchased at such a cost. To the grateful boy, however, every task seemed light, and even his humiliation appeared honourable. Nor was this a delusive idea, for the most laborious employment derives dignity from a noble motive.

The different circumstances under which Michael and Gerald commenced the same task made a wide difference in their feelings when engaged in it. With the former it was compulsory, with the latter it was voluntary. Michael felt himself to be the unwilling servant of a tyrannical master. Gerald overlooked the fact of working for the emperor in the animating idea that he was conferring a benefit on those who had done so much for him. He had moreover the delightful consciousness that his sacrifice of self met with the smile of his Father in Heaven. Nor did Gerald repent of the noble sacrifice he had made, when the first excitement was over, and he came to endure the severe, and in some instances, unexpected hardships it had brought upon him. He not only commenced his work cheerfully, but continued to pursue it with the same happy spirit. His joy and thankfulness were unbounded when he

received intelligence that Michael was gradually recovering his health under Margaret's careful nursing. At length the good woman herself came to visit him, bringing the news that her husband was now so nearly restored that he hoped to be able to walk as far himself ere long. Gerald thought, however, that it would not be wise for him to come, lest it being known that he was again capable of labour, he should be pressed a second time into the service, and his fears were not without foundation ; for where there is a despotic government, the humbler classes of the people are looked upon as little better than machines, made for the sole purpose of executing the plans of those in power.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### A GREAT AND UNEXPECTED CHANGE—OUR HERO IN MOSCOW.

WHEN Gerald had been about six months at his new employment, to his great surprise he was one morning told by an inspector of the works, that an order had just come from the Emperor signifying that he was to be sent immediately to Moscow.

This intelligence created a little alarm in the breast of the youth, for he could only suppose that he was suspected of having committed some offence. Conscious, however, of having discharged his appointed duties with faithfulness, he asked the officer whether he were sure that he was the person mentioned in the royal letter.

‘The person signified is called by the name of Gerald Kopt. His person is described, and the description answers exactly to you.’

‘I am called by the name of Gerald Kopt,’ the youth replied, ‘and if the Czar commands me to go of course I must obey. Indeed I have no objection to going. But should my mother come here and miss me, who will let her know whither I am gone?’

‘I will engage that your mother shall be told all that we know concerning you,’ replied the officer.

‘Many thanks for that kindness,’ cried Gerald, looking gratefully in the man’s face, ‘I am now ready to attend the Czar’s orders.’

Could Gerald have divested himself of the idea that he might be going as a culprit to be tried for an unknown offence, he would have been delighted with the journey, for he had long had a strong desire to see more of the world.

The distance from St. Petersburg to Moscow, which is upwards of four hundred miles, was a formidable journey in a country where the roads were bad, and there were very few inns. At a subsequent period the Emperor Peter had good roads made between the large towns, and inns and posting-houses were built upon them. Canals were also dug to connect the great rivers, and there were many improvements of a similar kind; but these things were the work of considerable time. Some of them were only just commenced at the period of which we are speaking.

On their way to Moscow the party passed through the town of Novogorod, the seat of the earliest government, and afterwards so noted as a republic. Gerald was greatly pleased that he had an opportunity of visiting this place, for Michael and his father-in-law had told him something of its ancient history. How about the middle of the ninth century, Rusic, a Norman pirate chief, when cruising about the Baltic with his followers had sailed down rivers and through lakes till they came to this city, which was then a mere cluster of wooden huts inhabited by barbarians, and how the Norman had made himself master of the place, assumed the title of Grand Duke, and laid the foundation of the present powerful and extensive empire of Russia.\* Many legendary tales were told of the adventures of these wild Normans, and most of these adventures were associated with the city.

On reaching Moscow our hero was so interested in the place as to forget the painful circumstances under which he was visiting it. The city was at that

\* Igov, the son of Rusic, afterwards made Kirow the capital of the country; but Novogorod was for a considerable time a place of importance, and the chief city of a republican state.

period enclosed with three walls ; one built of brick, surrounded that portion called the Kremlin, where the Czar's palace and the residences of the chief of the nobility stood ; another built of stone, took in a larger extent of the city ; and a third formed of wood, enclosed the suburbs. On the banks of the river Moskwa, which runs through the city, were a number of wooden huts, the public baths. These baths were constantly frequented by the inhabitants, as bathing was at that time a religious ceremony amongst the Russian people. The poorest classes never failed to attend the baths at least once in the week.

It was Palm Sunday when Gerald and his companions arrived, the place was consequently in a state of universal excitement. The bells too were ringing merrily. Moscow was famous for the size and number of its bells. To present a large bell to a church was considered by some a very pious act, therefore almost every new sovereign had a bell cast larger than that which had been given to the city by his predecessor.\* Palm Sunday was a day on which a very grand festival was always held. The religion generally professed in Russia is according to the Greek Church, which is very similar to the Roman Catholic religion. At that time the church was governed by persons called Patriarchs, who were something like the Popes. The Patriarch lived in Moscow, in a palace adjoining that of the Emperor where he kept a court, and lived in as much state as the Czar himself.

On the festival of Palm Sunday the emperor always walked to church, gorgeously arrayed in a

\* The Empress Anne, the daughter of Ivan, who reigned soon after Peter's death, presented a bell to the city of Moscow which weighs 432,000 pounds, and is the largest bell in the world.

dress made of cloth of gold, two princes holding up his train. He was followed by a grand foot procession consisting of the whole court splendidly attired. Behind the nobles were a number of the chief citizens and lawyers, each having a branch of willow, to represent palm, in his hand, and beyond these were the guards of the palace. In this procession the Patriarch always rode beside the Emperor, who held the bridle of his horse, and he was the only person mounted, excepting the guards.

Our hero and his companions met the procession as it was just leaving the palace, and they stood for a while to watch it pass. Gerald's associates were delighted at having arrived in time to witness it, and Gerald was himself pleased with the sight, for he had never seen anything of the kind before. But looking on it as a religious festival he could not help feeling pained. These men he knew were about to fall before images and offer up prayers to saints and angels, and they would afterwards spend the sacred hours of the Sabbath in feasting and drinking ; for no religious festivals were at that time held in Russia without feasting and drinking to excess. Happily for our young hero he had been taught a purer faith. The Bible, Michael's best inheritance from his father, had not been made such poor use of, as to allow Gerald to imbibe the superstitions, and practice the foolish ceremonies of the Russians.

## CHAPTER IX.

### OUR HERO AT THE COURT OF PETER THE GREAT.

ON entering the palace Gerald was at once taken to a comfortable apartment, and supplied with refreshment. 'Surely,' thought he, 'the Czar has some kind intentions respecting me, or he would not give orders that I should be treated in this manner;' and he was much relieved by this thought. Having finished his meal, he was conducted by a domestic or slave (for all the domestics in Russia were slaves) to one of the baths prepared for the household, and then to a wardrobe, from whence a handsome robe was given him to put on in the place of his sheepskin garments. He was further told that he would most likely be summoned to attend on the Emperor in the evening.

The robe in which Gerald was arrayed was of dark green cloth, trimmed with fur. It was loose and flowing, only confined round the waist by a leathern girdle, in the manner of the dresses of the east. This kind of dress was in fashion in Russia at that time, though Peter afterwards, with some difficulty induced the Russian nobles and citizens to give it up, and adopt the costumes of England and France.

The change was certainly a great improvement to our hero's appearance; and he began to wonder what all this would lead to.

With evening the expected summons came, and Gerald was conducted by a superior officer of the household to the royal presence. The Emperor was not now, as when our hero first saw him seated on a rude bench, but on a throne of state. He did not wear the gorgeous robe in which he had attended

the church in the morning, for that was held sacred to the occasion, but he was dressed in one equally splendid. A number of nobles and ladies elegantly attired, stood on either side of the throne, and the blaze of light which was thrown upon the company by means of the brilliant chandeliers, gave the whole scene a dazzling aspect.

The Czar and his suite were greatly amused at observing the wonder and admiration which marked the expressive countenance of the youth, as he entered the grand saloon. Gerald's thoughts, were not however, long so occupied, he was too much interested in ascertaining the object of his summons there.

'Ha! my lad,' exclaimed the Czar, in a familiar tone, as Gerald bowed low before the throne, 'I've not forgotten you, you see. Well, how did you get on at your new work?'

'I hope, Sire,' Gerald replied with modest dignity, 'I hope, Sire, I did my duty, and to the satisfaction of your Majesty's officers.'

'I've heard nothing to the contrary, at all events,' said the Czar, 'but what say you to leaving off that sort of work, and taking to something else? Have you become so fond of it that you desire to end your days at it.'

Gerald could not help smiling at this question. 'Nay, Sire,' he replied, 'I did my work cheerfully, because I felt it to be my duty to do so, and I had moreover, an animating motive, but I should rejoice to be engaged in some employment better suited to my taste.'

'What employment would be suited to your taste?' the Emperor asked. 'Would you like to be a soldier?'

'A soldier's profession would not be quite suited to my taste, Sire,' Gerald replied.

'Why? it is thought to be the most honourable calling by many of my subjects. I am a soldier, myself, but I wish not to put a restraint on your

inclination—nay, should you prefer following some useful art, I would give you all encouragement. My nobles here know that I patronise the useful arts, and have set them an example by working at some of them myself.’

‘My inclination, Sire, has always been to pursue a studious life,’ Gerald ventured to say.

‘Ha!’ exclaimed the Czar, ‘I am now founding a university in Moscow, would you like to enter it?’

‘That is what I desire above all things, Sire,’ Gerald replied with great earnestness.

‘Your desire shall be gratified then,’ cried the Emperor, ‘I wish to serve you, but I had another object in bringing you here. I took notice of the account you gave me at our former meeting of your singular deliverance from shipwreck, and I think I have some clue to the discovery of your family.’

Gerald looked up more earnestly than ever. ‘To enable me to discover my kindred, would indeed, Sire, be conferring on me a favour beyond any other,’ he exclaimed with great energy.

‘Can you write?’

‘Yes, Sire,’ I can write, though but indifferently. My good father, Michael Kopt, taught me to write to the best of his ability.’

‘Good—make out a clear statement then of all you know concerning your earlier history, in writing—be very particular as to dates, and send the document to me. You may withdraw now. My servants will attend to your comfort and provide you with anything you ask for.’

‘Oh! Sire,’ exclaimed the youth, bursting into a flood of tears, ‘I can find no words to express my gratitude. But my heart thanks you a thousand-fold.’

Peter was naturally a stern man, and not easily moved, but he could not witness the youth’s emotions without feeling something like a response.

Gerald still lingered at the foot of the throne. 'Will your Majesty pardon me if I ask the addition of one favour more,' he at length said, 'it is, that I may be permitted to send a messenger to my friends to let them know that I am here safe under your Majesty's gracious protection.'

'Aye, if that will afford you pleasure,' returned the emperor, smiling, and he waved his hand in token of an adieu.



## CHAPTER X.

### A HAPPY DISCOVERY.

THE slave who waited on Gerald, told him that he had orders from the Czar to take him to any part of the palace and grounds he might wish to see. He was told also, that if he would like to see the city, and the public buildings, he should have an escort from the Emperor's own guards.

Our hero gladly availed himself of these offers, and thus spent several days very pleasantly. He previously, however, complied with the Czar's request regarding the particulars of his early life.

It was but little that he knew of the matter ; but that little he stated with great clearness, both as respected time and place. Nor did he fail to avail himself of the license given him by the Czar to send to his friends. He wrote a brief account of all that had passed since his removal, and cheered them with hopes of ere long seeing them again under happier circumstances than when they had parted last.

Gerald had been at the palace about a week, when he received a message from the Emperor, bidding him prepare himself for an interview with a lady who, he said, had taken a great interest in his story. The officer who delivered the message further informed him that the lady, whose name was Madame Koski, was the widow of a Polish noble who had been personally attached to the Czar ; and that having lost her property in Poland, she was now living on a pension which was allowed her by the Emperor.

Our hero listened to these particulars with great

eagerness ; for he could not help thinking that this lady was in some way connected with his family and that her interest for him was owing to that circumstance.

‘ It is possible,’ he said to himself, ‘ that I am of Polish origin :’ his cheek grew flushed and his eye kindled at the thought. He had occasionally heard portions of the history of that brave and interesting people ; and from some cause which he could not quite account for himself, he felt deeply concerned in all that related to them. The Emperor of Russia and the renowned King of Sweden, Charles XII., had long been contending for power over the Poles ; and the principal question relating to that unhappy country seemed to be, which of the two should be their master.

At one time the Czar gained the ascendancy for the King of Poland, Frederick Augustus, who was also Elector of Saxony, was his friend and ally. Again Charles XII. became the superior in power, and Frederick Augustus was then obliged to abdicate the throne of Poland and retire to Saxony, and Stanislaus Leczinski was chosen in his room—a measure which gave no satisfaction to the declining nation.

Gerald awaited the arrival of Madame Koski with intense anxiety. At length the door of the apartment was slowly opened, and a lady dressed in the Polish fashion appeared, leaning on the arm of a female domestic. She glanced hurriedly at Gerald, who immediately rose and bowed. She then motioned with her hand for the attendant to withdraw, and entered the room alone.

Madame Koski was still in the meridian of life ; but ill-health and deep grief had whitened her hair and left such marks upon her countenance that she had the appearance of being rather advanced in years. She entered the room with a trembling step,

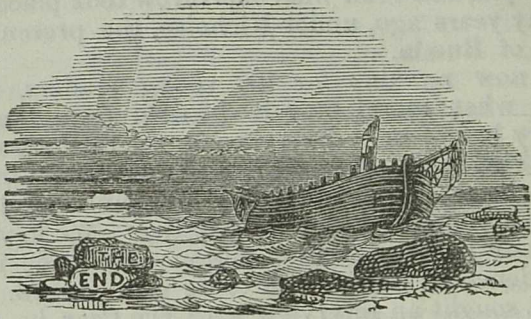
above related events took place, Peter the Great once more gained ascendancy over the Poles, by a victory he won over his rival Charles the Twelfth. In consequence of this victory, Stanislaus was deposed and Frederick Augustus was restored to the throne.

Most of our young readers are no doubt aware that Poland is no longer a kingdom, but a Russian province. Subsequently to the period of which we have been speaking, the fall of the Polish nation was rapid, and their final overthrow took place about twenty years ago, under Nicholas, the present Emperor of Russia.

It now remains for us, young readers, to inquire what moral may be learned from the little history before us. Every book we read should do something more than amuse the fancy and interest the feelings. It should inform our minds and teach us some valuable lesson for practice. We have seen that our hero's generous action was made in the Providence of God to lead to its own reward. Had he not sought an interview with the Czar he would not have discovered his mother. Again we may observe, that circumstances do not affect the conduct of individuals so as to prevent the possibility of their performing noble deeds. The fisherman and his wife practised generosity and kindness of the highest order, lowly and poor though they were ; and the seemingly disadvantageous situation of the boy who was cast upon their bounty did not prevent his achieving a truly heroic action. Think not, therefore, that your circumstances, whatever they may be, shut you out from the exercise of exalted virtues, for there are no circumstances, however unfavourable, which exclude the performance of generous and self-denying deeds.

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 province. This country to the period of which we  
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