

Notes from the North.

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(Continued from last week.)

The Fortress of Peter and Paul on the North side of the Neva is a place of some interest. As a fortress it is not of much military importance. It is now used as a political prison. The chief attraction is the great church, whose needle like spire rises to a height of 302 feet. In this church are buried all the sovereigns of Russia since the time of the founding of St. Petersburg, except Peter II. who was interred at Moscow. The bodies are buried in the vault; but marble tombs are erected in the church immediately above their respective burying places. Besides the Czars are interred numerous scions of the Romanoff family. The church was hung at every available point with the silver wreaths sent from all parts of the empire, at the time of the funeral of Alexander III. who it will be remembered was killed by a bomb. Near the tomb of Peter is exposed a little figure, representing Peter the Great at the time of his birth. It is 19½ inches in length the exact size of the infant creator of Russia, on that interesting occasion. A boat said to have been constructed by Peter is exhibited here. It is generally supposed that it was the work of some Dutch carpenters, although Peter may have repaired it. This solid looking craft is called the "Grand father of the Russian Navy." The real father of the Russian Navy was Admiral Greig a Scotchman, who did more for it than all the Romanoffs put together.

Armed with an order from the chief of police we visited the prison where are collected the prisoners previous to their deportation to Siberia. The building is on the outskirts of the city and stands on a dismal looking dusty site. Inside it is clean and devoid of the usual prison smell. The rooms are large and airy, and perfect quietness prevails. There were few political prisoners, as the Imperial amnesty, given at the time of the coronation, had operated as a sort of general gaol delivery of political offenders. The prisoners were clad in coarse canvas and had their hair cropped. Some were chained. They were divided into two classes, nobles, and common folk, each class having separate rooms. The distinction however ceased here and their fare and treatment, were otherwise the same. Looking at them, it did not appear that the country would lose much by their absence in Siberia. We found one woman among the prisoners sentenced for life to Siberia, whose offence was that of usury. Her methods were, to lend a rouble to a peasant for one month, on the agreement that at the end of this time she was to receive two roubles, and on default for another month, four roubles, and so on. The crime of usury is one considered very heinous in Russia, and the hatred to the Jews, seems to some extent at least, owing to their usurious transactions. We visited the kitchens, and tasted the prisoners food. Soup and brown rye bread seemed the provision for dinner. Both were of excellent quality. The officer, who accompanied us, spoke a little English, and seemed anxious to ascertain whether after what we had seen, we thought them barbarians. The matron was a very pleasant looking and capable woman. She was chiefly engaged in looking after the wives of the Siberian prisoners, who were to accompany them on their journey.

It need hardly be said that we visited the great Winter Palace, and the adjoining Hermitage. In the former we were bewildered among the great ball rooms which followed each other in almost endless succession. These rooms are all painted in white, and in some cases opened into conservatories. The Hermitage, the development of a little pavilion, where Catherine retired for recreation from the cares of state, is now nearly as large as the great palace, and contains a collection of paintings of all schools, unsurpassed in Europe, and treasures of jewels and gold and silver article, unequalled in the world. Any description of this storehouse of every thing magnificent in art would be impossible. It may be said that the arrangement is good, and every gallery decorated in perfect taste to suit its contents.

An hours sail by steamer took us to Peterhoff, the summer residence of the emperor. It is situate on a rising ground near the Gulf of Finland and commands a fine view of the sea. The Palace itself is by no means architecturally imposing, but it is remarkable for its great water works,

rivalling if not excelling those at Versailles. During summer the fountains and cascades begin to play at three o'clock daily and continue playing until seven o'clock. Many of these fountains are of great beauty and originality of design, and lend a charm to the drives through the great park, known as the English Park. The central attraction is however the great cascade, and canal lined with huge jets in front of the Palace. In the enormous park are situated several other smaller palaces which we visited. They are full of paintings and treasures of art, and although seldom or ever visited by the Czar, are kept in readiness for an unexpected visit. The lackeys are standing in the halls and stairways in full livery, ready to receive their Imperial Master. We got a hint that the Czarina might drop in for a cup of tea to one of the royal palaces in the evening of the day of our visit, but as everything about Imperial movements is kept a profound secret we did not care to wait for the bare chance of seeing her. In St Petersburg the people know nothing of the Czar's journeys, and even as to whether he is in the city or not. A Russian told us that in London they knew more about him than they did in the city. He also informed us that sometimes about an hour before the Emperors return from some expedition, the police would call at the houses on his route, and order a display of bunting.

We spent a delightful and interesting day at Krasnoe Selo, the scene of the great Russian camp. The little town from which the camp derives its name is reached by a railway drive of about an hour and a-half. It is situate near the Düderhoff Lakes, and is surrounded by a rolling prairie-like country, diversified by patches of woodland which break the monotonous appearance of the landscape. The camping ground is intersected by wide dusty roads which give a somewhat dreary aspect to the scene. Tents are seen extending at intervals, for miles and afford accommodation for all branches of the service. Sixty thousand men, were, it was told us, under canvas, and judging from the number of tents and troops we saw, these figures appeared to be correct. The whole country seemed to be alive with soldiers. Here men were seen in skirmishing order, running over the open, or firing as they lay on the ground. Parks of artillery were galloping about taking positions in various directions, and after firing disappearing behind the woods. Cossacks, hussars, and dragoons, were charging furiously in all directions, and general officers, with their staff were giving orders to their men for the discomfiture of imaginary foes. The whole scene was one of great animation and interest. The soldiers were generally in their white summer uniform, and looked strong healthy fellows. They were rather undersized, like the rank and file of the army generally. The soldiers of the Imperial Guard are usually magnificent men, but the ordinary Russian private is not by any means a large man. The uniform of the Russian soldiery is grey, with scarlet facings. The artillery wear dark blue tunics, but all have grey overcoats, which they do not discard even in the heat of summer when in dress. They all alike wear white peaked caps, except the Caucasian troops, who wear black or white lambskin high caps. The latter troops wear blue uniforms, and appear to be walking armouries. Under the courteous guidance of a colonel of the artillery of the Imperial Guard, we were conducted through part of the camp, examining the interior of the tents of the privates, and visiting their messes and kitchens. The food provided was excellent in quality, and abundant in quantity. The dinner consisted of cabbage soup, fillets of beef, brown bread, potatoes, and barley pudding. A large tumbler of quass,—the Russian beer, was dealt to each man. When the company came on for dinner they stood uncovered in the mess tent, and in soft and pleasing tones, sang a grace before beginning their repast. The officers live in log cottages, furnished by themselves, and some of these camp homes have little flower beds in front of their verandahs. As might be expected, extreme neatness prevails throughout the encampment. We were entertained at luncheon by the officers of one of the regiments of the artillery of the Imperial Guard, and nothing could exceed the hospitality and kindness of these gentlemen, who seemed desirous of exhausting every effort to make our visit pleasant. After lunch they gave us a sail on the lakes, and accompanying us to the station on our return, loaded the ladies of our