

## THE SWALLOWS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF DEBRANGER.

A convict who toiled in the mines of the north,  
Thus spoke to the swallows that flew o'er his  
head:

"Welcome, thrice welcome, dear birds of the  
summer,  
Who tell me the reign of the winter is dead.  
Did Hope plume your wings that you flew thus  
to find me,  
Perhaps from my fatherland over the sea?  
As on light wing and free you hover above me,  
Oh, say, of that land are you speaking to me?"

"There is a dear valley, where oft in my child-  
hood  
Light-hearted and happy I wandered in play,  
Culling bright flowers from the plain and the  
wildwood  
With frolic and laughter beguiling the day.  
In a fairy-like pond, half hid by the moun-  
tains,  
White water-lilies of old used to be;  
As on light wing and free wing you hover above  
me,  
Oh, say, of that vale are you speaking to me?"

"May be as a fledgling, you first ried your  
pinions  
'Neath the eaves of that roof under which I was  
born;  
Where my mother still thinks of the joy who has  
left her,—  
Ah, thinks of him often, and thinks but to  
mourn.  
Weeping, she listens to each passing footfall,  
And half-hoping, whispers: 'Perhaps it is he.'  
As on light-wing and free wing you hover above  
me,  
Oh, say, of her love are you speaking to me?"

"How fares my sister?" Perchance she is mar-  
ried!  
As joyous she stood by the altar with pride,  
Saw you the lassies and lads of the village  
Who hastened to greet her, the blooming young  
bride?  
How fare my comrades? Live they yet in that  
hamlet,  
Whose hearths and whose roofs in my dreams I  
still see?  
As on light wing and free wing you hover above  
me,  
Oh, say, of my friends are you speaking to me?"

"Or come you to fill me with gloomy forebodings?  
And tell me my friends are all scattered and  
fled;  
That a stranger inhabits the cot of my childhood,  
That my sister is homeless, my mother is  
dead?  
Shall I nevermore see them, or hear their dear  
welcome?  
From these torturing chains shall I never be  
free?  
As on light wing and free wing you hover above  
me,  
Oh, say, of such ills are you speaking to me."

L.

## The Black Sea Navy.

Mr. Reed, C. B., the member for Pem-  
broke, is now in Southern Russia, where he  
has reached Nicolaieff. Of that place and  
of some of the Russian ironclads he gives a  
description, of which the following is an  
abridgment:—"Since the fall of Sebastopol  
twenty years ago, Nicolaieff has been the  
principal station of the Imperial Navy in the  
Black Sea, but the Treaty of 1856 so greatly  
reduced the naval force of Russia in the  
south that a superficial glance at the town  
and port suffices to show that the very ex-  
tensive accommodation of the place, in the  
form of naval buildings and appliances, is  
out of all proportion to present require-  
ments. I much misinterpret, however, the in-  
dications which I have observed here, and  
on the way here, if Nicolaieff is not destined  
to become hereafter a much more impor-  
tant place, in a naval sense, than it now is.

On passing yesterday into the broad es-  
tuary of the Boog between Kimburn and Ot-  
chaboff, I noticed that a midwater fortress  
is being constructed on a very large scale  
between those two points. The river itself,  
as we ascended it, was found defended at  
points evidently well chosen with reference  
to its channels and to its natural and artificial  
obstructions, with extensive earthworks  
armed with powerful modern ordnance in

abundance. In the port of Nicolaieff itself,  
was lying frowning at anchor, among a half-  
dozen small vessels of the Imperial Navy of  
the usual type, that most remarkable of all  
modern engines of naval war—it is idle to  
speak of *Monadsnoks* and *Devastations*, and  
Popoffka as ships—the first circular iron-  
clad, of Russia, the *Novgorod*. The putting  
together of this vessel at Nicolaieff, and the  
complete construction of the second of her  
kind at this port, are tangible evidences of  
the important uses to which this well pro-  
tected, because the dockyard, or the Ad-  
miralty, as it is here called, not only has its  
approches defended, as already mentioned,  
but it likewise has the advantage which  
results from the river making a large sweep  
away from Nicolaieff as it is approached,  
and returning to it behind the shelter of  
elevated ground. In point of fact the dock-  
yard is not on the Boog at all, but on the  
Jugul, just before that river at its deepest  
part flows into the far larger stream. The  
Boog is a magnificent river, as may be read-  
ily inferred from the fact of the Imperial  
Government establishing its greatest south-  
ern naval port nearly fifty miles from its  
mouth.

"The second Popoffka—which designa-  
tion the Emperor of Russia has applied to  
Admiral Popoff's circular ironclads—is to be  
named after her distinguished inventor, and  
on approaching the town yesterday, one  
would have soon seen, if he had not been  
already aware of it, that her launch was to  
be celebrated as a great event in Nicolaieff.  
No less a personage than His Imperial  
Highness the Grand Duke Constantine,  
brother to the Emperor, President of the  
Council of the Empire, and Lord High Ad-  
miral of the Imperial Navy, was to be  
present, and suitable preparations for his  
reception were obviously in progress. His  
Imperial Highness is one of those excep-  
tional men who, by the greatness of their  
natural powers, the breadth and depth of  
their knowledge, and the zeal with which  
they devote themselves to the public ser-  
vice of their country, compose the strength  
and insure to a great extent the durability  
of the Imperial form of Government. Out-  
side the naval services of Europe the Grand  
Duke Constantine is well known as one of  
the most remarkable public men of Europe,  
for his wide acquaintance with the nature  
and operation of those forces which urge  
forward the civilization of the time; his  
influence upon the progress of Russia in  
some of its most meritorious advances has  
been palpable and universally recognized;  
but it may perhaps be questioned whether  
his accomplishments as a sailor and his  
intimate acquaintance with the practical  
progress of naval science are equally well  
known. Yet so great are these that it may  
fairly be questioned whether the Russian  
Navy does not at this moment, under his  
auspices, exhibit more spontaneous intel-  
lectual activity than any other navy of Europe.  
Of course, it will be easy for those to ques-  
tion this who judge only by material and  
immediate results, because Russia is unable  
to expend upon her navy those vast sums  
which alone can in these days insure the  
rapid increase of naval armaments. More-  
over, Russia is steadily endeavouring to  
develop its own means of producing ships  
and guns, and prefers at times to wait even  
for a year or two rather than substitute for  
this policy the readier method of resorting  
to other countries for the satisfaction of all  
its requirements. Later on, either in this  
letter or in a future one, I shall give more  
or less direct proofs of the thoughtful  
activity of the Russian Navy and this is un-  
questionably the fruit of that encourage-

ment which all the best men of the Russian  
Navy receive from its Imperial head. And  
what makes this fact the more significant  
and important is the circumstance that the  
encouragement of naval progress, in the  
higher sense of that term, does not stop with  
the Lord High Admiral, but receives its  
highest expression in the person of the Em-  
peror himself. The frequency with which  
His Majesty publicly manifests on the  
New his close interest in naval matters is  
well known, and since I arrived here I have  
heard of another example of it in the fact  
that only a few days since at Sebastopol, in  
the south of the Crimea, the Emperor ex-  
pected the *Novgorod*, and made a trip to  
her to enable him to form his own judg-  
ment upon her.

"I have availed myself of a spare hour or  
two to visit the Popoffka *Novgorod*. Hav-  
ing a tolerably intimate acquaintance with  
the ironclads of our own and other navies,  
I certainly would, after seeing these Popoffka,  
advise Colonel Strange and other gentlemen  
who consider that the building of ironclads  
in England should be stopped to suspend  
their opinion on the subject until they have  
given some consideration to these Russian  
vessels. If armour is to be abandoned, it  
must follow that our officers and men must  
be sent to fight our enemies with unprotected  
steam boilers and powder magazines be-  
neath their feet ready to blow them into  
fragments if penetrated only by a single  
shot or shell. Nothing but hard necessity  
will justify this, and that necessity can only  
arise after all reasonable means of carrying  
armour have been exhausted. In consider-  
ing this subject, I wish to give the fullest  
value and significance to the fact that the  
*Tangard* has been sunk by a ship exactly  
like herself, and by a single blow. Of  
course I can only hope, as indeed I believe  
that in a naval engagement, with due pre-  
parations made the facts disclosed at  
the court-martial respecting the state of the  
water tight doors, the delay in closing them,  
the circumstances that the communication  
between the engine room and the boiler  
room—a matter absolutely essential to our  
safety—was too long delayed, and so forth,  
would not be possible. I also hope that  
the particular locality and circumstances of  
the blow of the ram in this ship had much  
to do with the danger and difficulty of the  
case. Still our naval constructions, like  
our other public works, must, in a primary  
sense, be the results of public confidence,  
and it cannot be doubted that such a loss as  
that of the *Tangard*, following the accident  
to the *Mistolec*, has seriously shaken public  
confidence in our navy in more sense than  
one, although in the case of the *Tangard*  
our loss is balanced by the demonstration  
of the tremendous power of that ram with  
which I insisted upon furnishing every  
ironclad ship of my design. Here again,  
however, we have in this very power of the  
ram, cause for most thoughtfully consid-  
ering what is to be the future development  
of ironclad construction, and that cause is  
enhanced by the further reason which arises  
from the increase in the power of the gun.

"Now the first thing of which I became  
profoundly convinced when I closely ap-  
plied my thoughts to the design of ironclads  
was the absolute necessity of setting to-  
gether aside in such ships the usual form  
and proportions of steam vessels. I found  
that long ironclads were blunders in every  
sense, involving comparatively little  
armour, light guns, great size, great ex-  
pense, great unwieldiness, and great exposure  
every form of above water and under water  
attack. The moment I entered upon this  
therefore I brought down the length of