

tion, and attains the highest pitch of oppression in the lowest degree of the nation, in the relation of the serfs to their masters. There it prevails in a double form. Two things are equally to be dreaded by the serf—namely, the love of cruelty and the cruelty of love. The first is the common lot of all slaves; they are treated slightly, and with contempt; they occupy the first place among domestic animals, their superiority to which secures them no other privilege than that of being usually the first on whom the master's ill-humour vents itself. This, however is the least unbearable condition of their existence. Knowing nothing better from the cradle to the grave, the old saying that "custom is second nature" applies to them in all its beneficent force. The blind man is not annoyed by the glare of the sun; the insensible man feels no pain; true, that the former cannot enjoy the cheering radiance of the luminary, nor the latter experience the vivifying emotions of joy. But a slave must have neither eyes nor heart; for were they opened, how long would he be a slave? Therefore, does the *love of cruelty* maintain him in his brutalized state. *That* may be bearable! but the other thing—the *cruelty of love*—is not so. This latter shows itself in Russia in a form which, in your country and in all other countries, so far as I have become acquainted with them by study, is not only unknown, but undreamed of."

THE SERF'S STORY.

"The Russian, sir," continued my companion ("and, believe me, I am inspired by no false patriotism; for I cannot love my country when its '*vertrakte*' laws have destroyed the whole happiness of my life), the Russian has the softest and tenderest heart of any in the world. Even you, who are a foreigner, may easily judge of that by his extraordinary affection for children, an affection unparalleled in any other country. Now, he who loves children has assuredly a tender and impressible nature. But the misfortune here is that children do not for ever remain children. With their childhood disappears the love they have inspired, and the child who has been brought up by strangers as their own, lulled in a dream of security and affection, suddenly awakes, with all the feelings of manhood, and with a strong sense of its rights, to find himself a slave, a serf, degraded to the condition of a brute, and ten times more miserable than those of his class who, brutalized from their cradle upwards, have never known the worth and dignity of man.

"This '*cruelty of love*' frequently leads Russians of high family to take into their family, as so-called adopted children, unfortunate little creatures who have been so unfortunate as to attract their attention and rouse a fleeting interest. Their mode of adoption is this: they impose upon the infant all the duties of a child to its parents, without conceding to it in return any of the claims which such relationship would give it. They load it with the kindness, the love, the care of real parents, and bring it up as their own child, so long as a child it remains. From the day that their real condition is disclosed to such children, their future fate constantly impends over them, like the sword of Damocles, suspended by the silken thread of their master's caprice, which at any

moment may annihilate them, or, which is still worse, *cripple* them for life.

"Such is the lot of those whose misfortune it is to awaken a master's cruel and capricious affection;—such was my terrible lot."

Visibly a prey to deep emotion, the priest paused for a moment, pressed his hand upon his forehead, and then, in calm and self-possessed tones, continued his narrative.

"My father was a serf, the son of a farmer on an estate near Kasan, and was permitted by the count, his master, to take service in the town, upon paying a yearly *abrok* or fine, in lieu of the labour he was bound to perform. He obtained employment in the household of a rich goldsmith, and there occupied his leisure in drawing, for which he had a natural taste. One day he surprised his employer by the exhibition of a beautiful arabesque design. The goldsmith, struck by his ability, released him from his menial duties, and took him as a pupil into his workshop, where his talent, backed by unwearied assiduity, soon converted the dull peasant into a highly skilled artist.

"He had reached his five and twentieth year, when his constant intercourse with his master's daughter, a charming girl of eighteen, resulted in an ardent mutual attachment. He asked her hand of her father, who, not unnaturally, annexed to his consent the one condition, that the serf should become a freeman. This condition could not be complied with. The count obstinately refused to liberate his vassal; all that entreaty could wring from him was the promise that, without absolute necessity, he would not withdraw him from the town. This did not satisfy the old goldsmith; but he could not long resist his daughter's tears, and the lovers were united. A year of perfect happiness flew rapidly by; then came the war with France; my father's younger brother was taken for military service, his father died, and he himself was summoned by his owner to manage the now deserted farm. On his brother's return from the army he was to be at liberty to go back to Kasan. But his brother never returned, and the poor artist, the cunning worker in gold and silver, was condemned to follow the plough, whilst his freeborn wife sat beneath a serf's roof, nursing me, her infant son. In their sadly altered circumstances, I was my parents' only consolation. My mother's love and care delighted to adorn her 'jewel,' as she called me, with all the finery to which she had been used in her father's house. She passed her time in dressing and decorating me; and the fame of my beauty spread through the hamlet till it reached the ears of the countess, who desired to see me. My proud poor mother decked me out like a lamb for the sacrifice, and took me to the castle. The countess, who was passionately fond of children, found me charming, and declared her intention to do my parents the honor of adopting me. In vain my mother wept, implored, and raved in despair at the prospect of losing her son. I remained crying upon the countess' lap, my mother was forcibly turned out of the castle. Proud and happy had she entered it; humble, despairing, and with death in her heart, she turned her back upon its walls.

"I soon forgot what I had never properly known. My earliest recollections are of brilliant