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Great Cities of the World

MOSCOW

Until Peter the Great founded the city which he named after himself on the banks of the Neva, Moscow was the sole capital of Russia, but although it is not now the official centre of the Empire, it does not lack distinction. Are not the czars crowned there, and do they not consider it essential that they should visit the city at least twice a year? The trade and manufacturing industries are important. It is thoroughly Russian, being bound up with the country's history and traditions, and the people look upon it as the holy or White Mother city. Pilgrims flock to it; shrines at which they may worship abound. Then, where else in the land can the Kremlin be rivalled? This old fort, with its triangular red brick wall, contains a number of remarkable edifices, many of which are churches.

There is, for example, that grotesque building, the Church of Saint Basil the Blessed, named after a half mad holy man who lived near. It is an architectural freak, without unity in design or coloring. It has a dozen cupolas, no two of which are alike. One resembles a sea-green pineapple, another is shaped like a huge melon; in a third one can trace a likeness to an onion. The color scheme—which isn't a "scheme" at all, as far as one can tell—is as fantastic as the construction. One dome is stripped yellow and green, another is pink and green, while a spire presents a brilliant combination of gilt, red and green. In truth, there are all the colors of the rainbow.

Almost in the centre of the Kremlin is the Bell Tower of Ivan the Great, at the bottom of which stands the Czar Kokokol, the King of Bells, the largest in the world. It weighs over 200 tons and was broken before it ever sounded. Ascend the dark, winding staircase of the tower and you find yourself among numerous bells ranging in size from the giant of sixty-five tons to a little silver one as small as your hand. If you have the patience and the skill to puzzle out the Slavonic inscriptions you will find that every one of these sounding pieces of metal has a human story connected with it. Most of them have been hung there as thankofferings for special blessings that have been vouchsafed people of days gone by.

Climbing still higher, you come to a balcony above the bells, which commands a splendid view of the city. Far below the River Moskva winds and twists through the valley like a silvery serpent. The sun, if it be shining, intensifies the color that has been thrown on with such a lavish hand. Green tiled towers, pink-walled palaces, white cathedrals and golden domes form a dazzling scene. As you gaze, you are inclined to take literally the Russian proverb which says that in Moscow there are forty times forty churches.

Moscow is picturesque, its buildings possessing a peculiar charm, not because they follow any particular style, but because they are infinitely diversified. The streets partake of the general irregularity, and are mostly narrow and crooked, with many blind alleys among them.

Easter, which is a great festival all over Russia, is observed with particular ceremony in Moscow. Pilgrims come from far and wide to be at the Kremlin on that day. A vast throng gathers on the hilltop before midnight, which ends the long Lenten fast, and a motley crowd it is. The noble in his rich garments rubs shoulders with the peasant in his sheepskin coat; the tourist, who has come mostly out of curiosity, is wedged in between the most devout worshippers. All is darkness, till at length a tiny light flashes, then the big bell, that is rung only at Christmas and Easter, booms out three times. This is the signal for a flood of sound, all the other bells joining in and making a great clamor. The bells are not chimed, so the result can hardly be described as musical. Then myriads of tiny candles are lit by the multitude of worshippers so tightly packed together, till the Kremlin seems to be as full of twinkling lights as a star-dotted sky. Great torches add further illumination, and the people form a huge procession. All is gladness and rejoicing "Christ is risen," ex-

claims a man, as he kisses his neighbor, who replies, "He is risen indeed." It is a sad thought that the sublimity and reverence of this midnight scene is followed by a day of feasting, when overeating is the rule rather than the exception, for after his six weeks of fasting the Russian has little mercy on his stomach.

Moscow is notorious for having been time after time devastated by fire. However, the last great conflagration took place over a hundred years ago. It was in 1812, six days after the battle of Borodino, when Napoleon occupied the mighty city of the Muscovites, an event which he had looked forward to eagerly and which he considered to be a very important step in his campaign against the Russians.

But if the great general exulted when, from a piece of rising ground, he caught the first glimpse of his goal, his spirits were shortly doomed to fall. The Russian army had evacuated the city; most of the inhabitants had fled; the few people who remained behind were in hiding. The conquerors marched through silent streets, past deserted houses, playing their band in the vast solitude in an attempt to keep up their spirits. In place of a deputation of prominent citizens waiting upon Napoleon to tender him submission of the city, his officers were only able to bring to him, as he stood waiting in the Kremlin, a few frightened foreigners.

To have his headquarters in that ancient stronghold brought to Napoleon a revival of the feeling with which he had first gazed upon the city. "Here I am at last," he is said to have exclaimed. "Here I am in Moscow, in the ancient palace of the czars, in the Kremlin itself." But even this triumph was short-lived. That very night fires started to break out in the city. These were so numerous that they were plainly the work of incendiaries, and when they discovered that all the fire engines had been taken away, the French realized that the Russians had planned to reduce their victory still further. Sparks even began to fall upon the Kremlin and Napoleon with his suite escaped to the castle of Peterzofsky from which he watched the sea of flames sweep over the city. The fire fed upon the stores of wines, spirits and chemicals; it was fanned by a strong gale, which carried along the heavy billows of smoke. When it was finally extinguished three-quarters of the prize for which Napoleon had sacrificed 200,000 men and stranded the remainder of 600 miles in an enemy's country had been destroyed.

For five weeks the French stayed in the ruined city, where their commander had supposed that they would at least have food and shelter for the winter. But the fire and the departure of the people cut off all chance of obtaining sufficient supplies and the severe Russian winter was coming on. Reluctantly Napoleon was obliged to begin the retreat, which was an acknowledgment of the failure of his plans.

The Russian forced the Grand Army to return along the devastated line by which they had advanced, which meant that they could obtain a very scanty amount of food. Matters became so bad with the starving soldiers that if a man discovered some flour that was half dirt and chaff in the crack of a floor in one of the deserted half-burned villages he was considered lucky.

The horrors of that terrible retreat can hardly be described. The fragments of the army marched over the vast snowy plains, swept by freezing winds, often accompanied by ice rains or blinding snow-storms. Neither the men nor the horses were shod for winter, and they would continually slip on the ice. The men who had pieces of cloth or sheepskin to wrap about their feet were fortunate; clothes of any description that they could get hold of were held around their shoulders. If a soldier fell, his comrades, half-crazed by cold and hunger, would strip from him his tattered garments before he was really dead.

The nails and even the hands of the men dropped off. A benumbed Frenchman who had dropped into a ditch asked another soldier for a helping hand. "I haven't one," was the reply—there were only stumps! However, he told

the fallen man to catch on to his cloak, and by that means he pulled him to his feet.

The bleak nights stretched to the length of sixteen hours as the days grew shorter, and the scanty fires were very insufficient to provide warmth for the army as it rested. The spot where they bivouacked at night looked like a battlefield the next day, for so many of the exhausted men were unable to rise again in the morning.

Mingled with stories of deeds done by men rendered savage by the woes of that frightful march are many tales of heroism and self-sacrifice. We read of soldiers screening Napoleon from the fury of the elements as best they could with their own bodies, so that their commander might rest and live. Instances of true nobility of character were not wanting at that time of horror any more than they are wanting in the struggle that is now going on. Stories which come to us from the front prove without question that men's natures have not become dwarfed and sordid, as some pessimists who look back with regret to the good old day would have us think.

But with Napoleon and the remnant of his men we have got far away from Moscow. The city itself suffered much less from the fire than did the Grand Army. The Kremlin and other durable structures were not consumed, while the place was cleared of numerous timber houses, and the inhabitants when they returned were wise enough to make liberal use of brick and stone in rebuilding, so the city has in a sense profited by the disaster of a century ago.

WHAT THE BRITISH FLAG STANDS FOR.

(By Arthur Mee.)

From the British hilltop, as I write, blown by the wind that comes in from the North Sea, flies the flag that stirs the world.

It is red, with the blood of heroes, it is blue with the blueness of the sea. It is white as the stainless soul of Justice. It is the flag of the brave; it is the flag of the free; it is the king of all the flags that fly beneath the sun.

The Flag's Record.

Far out into the world it has gone, far and wide to the ends of the earth, so that there is not a free land anywhere, nor a free mind under the sun, that would not suffer if our flag should fall. No enemy has ever pulled it down. It has waved on the battlefield that has made men free; it has sheltered the victims of tyrants wherever they have been; it has kindled the fire of heroes who have marched to liberty against great odds. It has been the torch of liberty that nothing could put out. It has been like a fire of freedom sweeping through the ages, or like a wind blowing out of its path whatever hindered the free marching of the human race.

It is not true that there has never been a stain upon our flag. We are poor, frail, human creatures; and the nation is merely all of us together. There have been dark days and bad days in the story of our land. But it is true that this flag of a thousand years is the noblest friend of all mankind that the eyes of a man can look upon.

In all the strivings and yearnings of multitudes of men it has been on the side of everlasting right. In all the long story of the rise of nations it has been on the side of freedom with honor. In the coming up of the world from barbarism to civilization it has been on the side of humanity. It has cleansed the world from many a foul blot; it has hurled down many a blood-stained power; it has sent many a monstrous crown and sceptre rattling to the dust; it has sown the seed of human freedom, not as in a garden or a little plot of earth, but generously and widely in a boundless land, for all mankind to reap.

The Flag that is Loved Wherever it Floats. Across the hot desert sands of Egypt, over the broad veldt of South Africa, through the spacious hushlands of Australia, in the young British Dominions of North America, over the rich cities of India, the sheltering flag floats as the sign of human freedom, and wherever it floats it is loved and cherished as we love and cherish the things that are all in all.

We have seen what lies behind it in the years that have gone. We can run

through the years, in our fancy, and see the striving and fighting, the winning and losing, the labor and sorrow, the long, long hoping, the bitter disappointment, the fall that endured and the patience that conquered. But we can never see the end, for end there is none. The final victory of a nation never comes; it is always coming. We mount higher and higher, we march forward, we win our conquests; but the end lies always further on.

The Spirit of Liberty.

So our flag flies, of the ages past into the ages to come. It knows no time; it is always, in the sunshine somewhere. And it carries through time, waving in the skies for all mankind to see, a message of goodwill to all who are free, a message of hope to all who are in chains. It bears from age to age, as if it were the very breath of it, the everlasting spirit of mankind. Nothing is so true as that it flies for nothing less than that it stirs the hearts of men when they see the red, white, and blue. It is the sign and token that the spirit of liberty lives upon the earth; it is the assurance to the world that mankind shall be enslaved no more. The spirit of the flag is nothing less than that. It stands for what these islands have stood for like a rock throughout the ages, for the right of liberty and truth to march wherever they will, hand in hand unhindered.

What Has it Done?

This flag that the North Sea wind is blowing—what has it done for you and me? This flag that an alien hand is threatening—what has it done for all mankind? It has opened the gates of the world to all; it has opened the door of the human mind.

When the tyranny of Spain was at its heights, when her ships drove other countries from the sea and the inquisition gripped the human mind as in a vise the ships that broke her cruel power flew England's flag. It was Francis Drake, stirred to the depths by the insolence of Spain, who laid the tyrant low. It was little England, little then indeed—who shattered the man who had sentenced every protestant in Holland to be put to death. It was Francis Drake—he who climbed a tree in Panama and discovered the Pacific, and prayed that he might sail that sea in an English ship—who took our flag around the world.

The Message of the Flag.

It flies for all those things that have built up, out of the warring peoples of Alfred's day, the great ruling race of the world. It flies for the spirit that runs through the wool and texture of the English-speaking race.

It flies for the government of the people, by the people, and for the greatest number.

It flies for liberty for all who are able to use and will not abuse it, and for guiding all others along the road that leads to it.

It flies for the open door—a fair field and equal rights for all nations.

It flies for the gospel that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and that men shall not be slaves.

It flies for humanity in all things; for the stopping of cruelty everywhere, for kindness to animals, for the love of little children.

It flies for the honor of the spoken and the written word.

It flies for throwing open as wide as can be the field of human knowledge.

It flies for spreading as wide as can be the field of human happiness.

It flies for letting the truth be free as life itself.

It flies for the toleration of every man's opinion, be it right or pursuit.

It flies for the unselfish pursuit of the good of all mankind.

It flies for the peace of the world, which no nation ever longed for more.—My Children's Magazine.

With the transfer of the Central Prison from Toronto to Guelph, the name of the institution has been changed. It is now known as "The Ontario Reformatory," and its aim will be to reform criminals rather than to punish them. Dr. J. T. Gilmour remains as the superintendent.



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