

Sweden was so vastly superior in the scale of civilization that she looked upon Russia with contempt. The Ottoman Empire, too, was at that time not the rickety, decrepit State which it now is, holding itself up, like the cabman's horse, only by being kept in the shafts, and ready to drop the first moment its foreign master stops whipping. On the contrary, in the very year in which Peter inherited the empire, 200,000 Turks besieged Vienna, and drove the Emperor Leopold in dismay from his capital. The Sultan was then a vastly more powerful potentate than the Czar, and the project to snatch from him the citadel of Azof, the key of the Black Sea, was one of unparalleled audacity.

"The first point was gained, and his foot at last touched the ocean. Moreover, the Tartars of the Crimea, who had been from time immemorial the pest of Russia, who had compelled the Muscovites to pay them an annual tribute, and had inserted in their last articles of peace the ignominious conditions that 'the Czar should hold the stirrup of their Khan, and feed his horse with oats out of his cap, if they should chance at any time to meet'—these savages were humbled at a blow, and scourged into insignificance by the masterhand of Peter.

"Peter then travels privately and with great rapidity to Holland, and never rests till he has established himself as a journeyman in the dockyard of Mynheer Calf. From a seafaring man, named Kist, whom he had known in Archangel, he hires lodgings, consisting of a small room and kitchen, and a garret above them, and immediately commences a laborious and practical devotion to the trade which he had determined to acquire. The Czar soon became a most accomplished shipbuilder. Before his departure, he laid down and built, from his own draught and model, a sixty-gun ship, at much of the carpentry of which he worked with his own hands, and which was declared by many competent judges to be an admirable specimen of naval architecture. Besides his proficiency, so rapidly acquired, in all maritime matters, he made considerable progress in civil engineering, mathematics, and the science of fortification, besides completely mastering the Dutch language, and acquiring the miscellaneous accomplishments of tooth-drawing, blood-letting, and tapping for the dropsy. He was indefatigable in visiting every public institution, charitable, literary, or scientific, in examining the manufacturing establishments, the corn-mills, saw-mills, paper-mills, oil-factories, all of