

Germany, around the fiords and amid the snows of Scandinavia. From these then rugged regions, issued forth the brave forefathers of the now polished nations of Western Europe. Midway between the haunts of the Tartar, and Teutonic races wandered the filthy hordes of Sarmatia. On the wide plains which lie within the boundaries of the Volga and the Vistula they found ample scope for rapine and war. In the centre of this immense country, over which for dreary ages had rested thick clouds of impenetrable darkness, were laid in the ninth century the foundations of the Muscovite rule. Ruric, a Scandinavian chieftain from Jutland it is said, inspired by the same love of spoil, and of conquest which prompted his daring race, at that period, to seek wealth and fame in distant adventures, migrated with his brothers and their followers to the land of the Russ. By energy and cunning this warlike chief in 862, established himself as Czar of Russia. His descendants occupied the Russian throne for more than seven hundred years. During this long period, and for a century longer, Russia was almost unknown to the progressive nations of Europe. Immersed in barbarism and superstition there was but little in common between her and those nations which had risen upon the ruins of the Roman world to a high eminence of superstition and science. But during less than two hundred years, under the early princes of the house of Ruric, the Russians, descending the Dnieper in numerous vessels of rude construction and diminutive proportions, four times in vain assaulted or attempted to capture Constantinople. Always baffled in their main object, they yet inspired with terror the effeminate Greeks, who trembled behind the walls of Constantine, alarmed by the prophecy that in the last days the Russian should possess Constantinople.