Edwards, however, bawled out "Help! treason! murder! thieves!" as loud as ever he could, so they struck him with a wooden mallet, and he fell stunned to the ground. On recovering consciousness a few minutes later, he heard them say they believed him to be dead, so, making up his mind that discretion was now the better part of valour, he remained quiet.

The three men set deliberately to work. Blood placed the crown under his arm so that it might be concealed by his cloak; one of his companions pocketed the orb and the most valuable jewel of the sceptre, and the other began filing the sceptre in two so that it might go into a bag they had thoughtfully provided.

But "the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley." Just as the three were busily occupied a son of Mr. Edwards fortunately arrived, accompanied by his brother-in-law, a Captain Beckman. They exchanged a word with the man who watched at the door, and then proceeded upstairs.

Blood and his companions thus interrupted rushed out of the jewel-house, bearing with them the crown and the orb; but the sceptre, which was not filed quite through, they had to leave behind.

Old Edwards now struggled to his feet shouting more vigorously than before, "Help! Treason! Murder!" The daughter, in her best dress, rushed into the court and cried out, "They have stolen the crown!" Her brother and his companion ran as hard as they could after the robbers, and the whole Tower was soon in commotion.

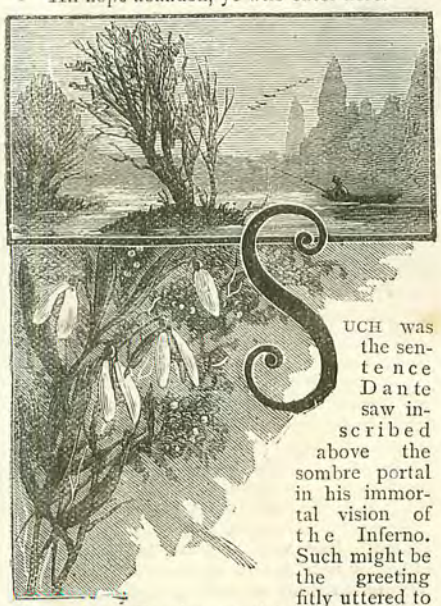
The robbers reached the drawbridge without hindrance; there the warder interrupted them, but he was got the better of. They then hurried on till they reached the wharf, and were making for St. Katherine's Gate, when Captain Beckman made up on them. A pistol was discharged at the Captain's head, but he escaped injury by stooping, and immediately laid hands on Blood, who struggled desperately. In the scuffle a few of the jewels fell from the crown, but all that were of any value were recovered and restored to their places. Blood and the man who had put the orb in his pocket were secured and lodged in the White Tower.

Blood, curiously enough, escaped punishment for this and other serious offences. It is said that he afterwards proved of considerable value to the Government in the mean capacity of spy and informer. Evelyn, not long after the date of the attempt on the crown, speaks of meeting him, and remarks on "his villainous, unmerciful look: a false countenance, but very well-spoken and dangerously insinuating."

(To be concluded.)

ELIZABETH OF SIBERIA; OR, PRASCOVIE LOPOULOFF.*

"Abbandonate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate."
All hope abandon, ye who enter here.



SUCH was the sentence Dante saw inscribed above the sombre portal in his immortal vision of the Inferno. Such might be the greeting fitly uttered to the unhappy Russian convict who crosses the frontier into the vast unvaried plain of Siberia.

Long, long has been his journey from all his heart holds dear; and now those monotonous levels, with the Ural Mountains rising grimly behind him like a giant barrier, must be the area of his uncongenial work, the scene of his unpitied death.

Few, indeed, escape from banishment, but one who did so about forty years ago, Rufin Piotrowski, has thus described a gang of outward-bound exiles:—

"The convoys I saw extended in some instances over several versts† along the road. An armed Cossack preceded the melancholy procession; then came the prisoners chained in couples by the hands or feet; then single prisoners, with their feet chained together; behind these ten or more were secured to a long iron bar by their wrists; others followed in irons. The whole convoy was surrounded by soldiers, while mounted Cossacks guarded them on either side. Perfect silence generally reigned, interrupted only by the clanking of the fetters. Deep misery or utter despair was on every face, and tears rolled down the cheeks of many of the prisoners, who wept as they dragged themselves along."

Near the close of the last century, under the reign of the Emperor Paul Petrovitch, thousands of political exiles were sent to Siberia, and in such a convoy there might have been seen an officer named Lopouloff, his wife, and infant child. His birth, which was noble, probably exempted him from performing the journey on foot, a rough carriage, called a *kabitka*, serving as conveyance for the more privileged offenders. He would also have been considered fortunate by many unhappy wretches, inasmuch as he was not condemned to the horrors of the mines, or even to hard labour, and had his wife and child to share his doom. But Lopouloff had distinguished himself in the Ottoman campaign, and had expected promotion from his sovereign rather than disgrace. The decree of his banishment came upon him like a thunderbolt, and the cause, probably some unfounded suspicion, is even now unknown.

The village of Ischim, near the frontiers of Tobolsk, was the destination of this unhappy man; and with his wife and child he occupied a hut in the colony of prisoners there. A sum of ten kopecks a day, equalling about twopence of English money, was assigned to them by the Government as their daily allowance for food, and Lopouloff supplemented it by labouring in the fields during the four fertile months of the year, or performing such work as he could get in the village, while as his little girl grew up she earned a trifle by helping the washerwomen or farmers.

Ischim lies low on the banks of a river, and is often flooded. Situated in the depression of a vast tableland, it offers little attraction of natural beauty, and to the officer and his wife, accustomed to the luxury of life in St. Petersburg and association with the rich and great, their wretched cottage and the life of drudgery seemed almost intolerable. They gazed with breaking hearts at their daughter, for whom they had dreamed of a far different lot, and whose delicate hands seemed unfitted for the hard toil of a peasant life; but the little Prascovie, remembering no other home, was cheerful and contented. Her mother, as time went on, settled down into quiet resignation, but Lopouloff could not reconcile himself to the loss of his profession, and the separation from friends and comfort, with nothing around him but misery and squalor. He petitioned the Czar for a remission of his sentence, and with the sickness of hope deferred, looked ever in vain for an answer.

As Prascovie grew older, she began to notice and to wonder at the heavy cloud that brooded upon her father's spirit. One day she came suddenly back from the fields where she had been working, and discovered her parents giving way to an outburst of grief, which was only intensified at her appearance. In a passion of despair Lopouloff lamented that he had ever had a daughter, since he must needs see her degraded to a serf. Then, in reply to her anxious questioning, he told her, for the first time, all his sad story.

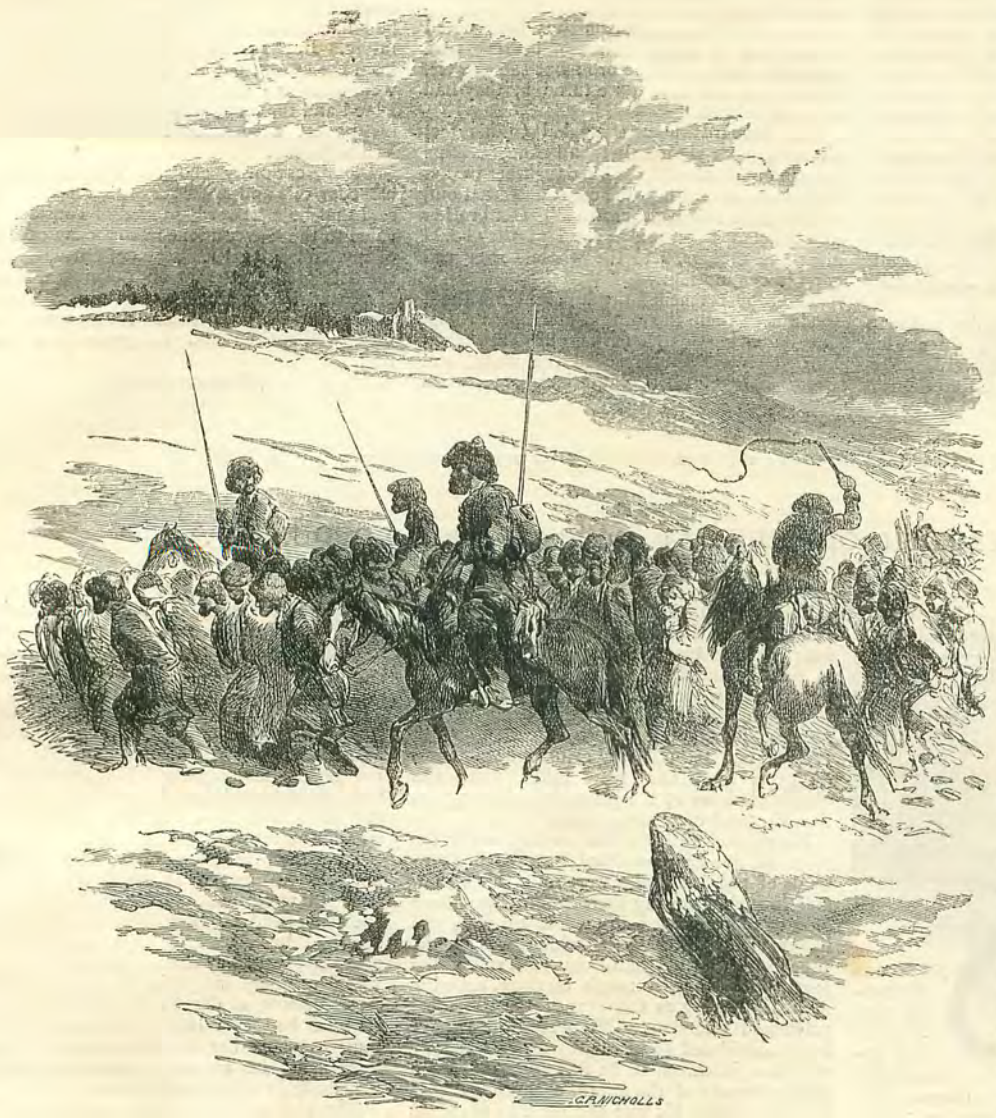
The girl was now fifteen, and must have possessed an unusual amount of courage, for the idea straightway took possession of her that she would go to St. Petersburg, and seek an interview with the Czar to implore her father's freedom.

To appreciate the seeming madness of such a project it should be remembered that sixteen hundred miles of road, crossing the Ural Mountains, lay between Ischim and St. Petersburg. Towns and villages were thinly scattered on the way, and military posts were stationed to intercept fugitives. Prascovie had no means of conveyance, and no money to procure any; during a great part of the year travelling for a lonely pedestrian would be impossible by reason of the snow and fierce cold. And these were only a few of the obstacles that attended any such scheme, for how should a poor peasant girl, without money or patrons, gain admission to the dread presence of the Czar of all the Russias?

But Joan of Arc and Prascovie were alike in one point: having resolved upon a course of unselfish action, to all appearance wild and impracticable, neither ridicule nor expostulation could divert them from their purpose; alike also in this: that religious zeal gave earnestness and enthusiasm to the process of maturing the design. Prascovie implored Heaven that she might succeed, and, like Joan of Arc, though in far different scenes,

* "Prascovie" is more generally known as Elizabeth of Siberia, after the heroine of Madame Cottin's romance, "Elisabeth, ou, les exilés de Sibérie." That story does not, however, profess to be a record of actual adventures, although the central incident is founded on fact. Count Xavier de Maistre, in "La Jeune Sibérienne" has told the story of Prascovie as it really happened, with much pathos and simplicity.

† A verst is five-eighths of a mile.



OFF TO EXILE.

she withdrew into the depths of a forest to meditate and pray.

At last, as her father sat by the cottage door smoking his pipe, she ventured to approach him with her scheme, and unfolded to him all that she had been dwelling upon in secret for months past. Lopouloff gazed at her in amazement, but let her finish what she had to say; then, taking the girl by the hand, he led her into the cottage, where her mother was preparing dinner.

"Wife," he said, in a tone of mock gravity, "I bring you good news. All our misfortunes are at an end, for here is a great lady who is going to St. Petersburg, and who will condescend to interest herself with the Emperor on our behalf."

"She had better attend to her work than talk such nonsense," quoth the mother, sharply. Then seeing that Prascovie was in earnest, and was crying bitterly, she kissed her. "Set the table for dinner, like a good girl, and then we will talk about going to St. Petersburg," said she.

One would have expected that the young girl, with her limited experience, and no knowledge of the Emperor, save as a tyrant ruling afar, and condemning multitudes to hopeless slavery, torture, or death, would listen to the voice of apparent reason, and abandon the scheme. She could not fail to hear continually of the long and dangerous way that took exiles twelve months to traverse, and no glimpse of encouragement could possibly come to her from without. She did not possess the passport without which she could not quit Siberia, and able neither to read nor write, how was she to obtain it?

For three years Prascovie nursed her plan in secret. She induced a fellow prisoner to send a written request for a passport to the governor of Tobolsk, and after six months' delay the courier brought her a sealed letter containing one. Her father angrily took it and locked it up, but she was not discouraged, and renewed her demand to be allowed to start for St. Petersburg.

The girl was now eighteen, strong, tall, and vigorous, for the bitter Siberian climate develops hardy natures. She had developed also mentally, and showed a decision and reasonableness that could no longer be laughed down. Her father and mother were aghast; they tried expostulation, argument, and entreaty, but all were as idle waves beating themselves against the rock of Prascovie's fixed idea.

It would be tedious to describe in detail the steps by which their resistance was overcome. Convinced that her health would give way if she were longer opposed, and expecting to see her soon return in discouragement, they yielded a reluctant consent to her departure. The other colonists laughed her to scorn, with the exception of two convicts, friends of her father, who, touched by her faith and hope, bade her God speed.

At the dawn of day on the 8th September the cottage of Lopouloff witnessed a pathetic scene. With a look of inspired resolve upon her face, Prascovie stood in her peasant garb ready to start, while her father and mother wept beside her. Her whole provision for the journey consisted of a silver rouble (worth a little more than three shillings), which her father had forced her to accept. The two friendly convicts had come to set her forth upon her way. Kneeling before her parents, she received their blessing, and then tore herself from their heart-broken embrace. The two friends accompanied her as far as the restrictions of the settlement would allow them, and then, with sinking hearts, watched her trudge away into the unknown land beyond.

Prascovie knew nothing of the way she had to take, save that she must travel westward. At the close of her first day's pilgrimage she found shelter in the house of a friendly peasant, but the next morning she felt weary and forlorn. The story of Hagar in the desert came into her mind, and she took courage to start forth again.

"Which is the way to St. Petersburg?" the poor girl inquired of stray passers-by, when she came to a part where the roads were divided. She was laughed to scorn. St. Petersburg! It was so far away that it was absurd to think of walking thither. Yet, by dint of persevering inquiries, she managed to keep the direct road. She obtained hospitality and shelter from cottagers in the villages through which she passed, trying as far as possible to repay her hosts by helping in the household work. To all who entertained her she must have seemed a crazed visionary, for they well knew the enormous distance of savage, inhospitable country that separated her from the Russian capital, and the winter would soon come on.

Although the summer in Siberia is brief, it is intensely hot, and the quantity of electricity developed in the atmosphere produces storms of tropical violence. "The air and the earth shake as in fear of coming destruction," says an eye-witness. One of these tempests of rain and wind swept down upon the lonely wanderer at night, and laid a tree prostrate on the road in front of her.

Prascovie, in terror, rushed into a wood for shelter, where she remained all night, soaked through and through with driving rain, while the wind howled fiercely in the tossing branches. In the morning, half dead with

cold and fatigue, with her shoes literally hanging in shreds from their encounter with water and mire, she struggled back to the road, and fortunately found a peasant coming that way in a rough vehicle. The man took pity on her, and conveyed her, in a forlorn and dripping condition, to the nearest town.

What was she to do? Her state was such that she could not proceed, both because her clothes were ruined and her bare feet were swollen. In these straits the poor girl hobbled to the church, hoping that near the edifice consecrated to the remembrance of Divine Pity human pity would come to her rescue. But as she sank upon the step a mob of children began to hoot and jeer at her. A lady, attracted by the noise, came up and questioned her; then fetched the mayor, who found, after examination of her and her passport, that she was no impostor.

"You shall come home with me, poor child," said the benevolent lady, and for several days Prascovie remained with her friend, who supplied her with new shoes, clothing, and a little money.

Thus recruited, the brave girl started forth again; but her enterprise seemed more hopeless than ever. Snow often fell and delayed her, bitter cold prevailed, while a piercing wind howled across the vast steppes she had to traverse, yet she pressed on, obtaining hospitality in the villages through which she passed. Her method, on knocking at a cottage door, was first to ask for a piece of brea', then to appeal to pity by showing her fatigue, which generally led to an invitation to enter. Once within the house she would relate her story, show her passport, and win the belief that on a first encounter would certainly not have been accorded to her. She met with various kinds of treatment. Some peasants abused and sent her away; but even these would call her back on seeing her tears and evident distress. In the majority of cases she was favourably received.

One evening on arriving at a village she knocked at a cottage door, but was roughly sent away by the owner, an elderly man with an evil countenance. As she wandered down the road, hoping to find shelter elsewhere, she heard him shouting to her to come back, and after some hesitation she obeyed. Within his hut there was no one but an old woman, of still more unprepossessing appearance, and when the couple had her safe inside they locked the door and put up the shutters.

It was a gloomy interior, lit only by a few pine-boughs flaring in a hole in the wall, and Prascovie's heart sank as by the flickering light she saw the sinister gaze of her hosts fixed upon her.

"Where do you come from?" asked the old woman.

"I am on my way from Ischim to St. Petersburg."

"With plenty of money in your pocket, I'll be bound!"

"I have only eighty copper kopecks left."

"That is false!" shrieked the woman. "No one would start on such a journey with so little money."

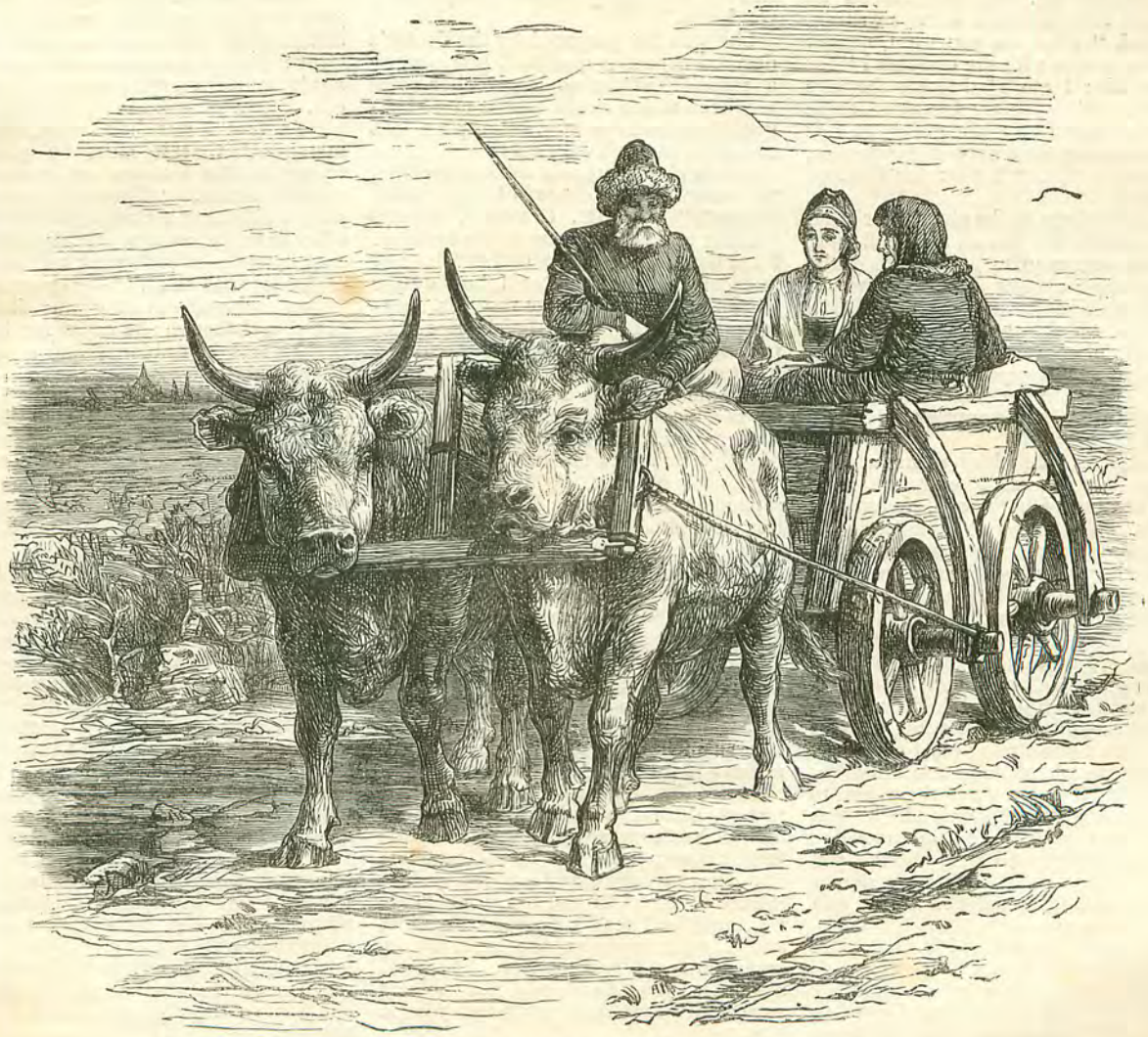
Prascovie protested in vain; they scoffed at her, and she began to wish heartily that she could escape from their hands at the sacrifice of her remaining store. *After giving her a* few potatoes, the woman advised her to go to bed.

The term is rather figurative than literal, for in Russia peasants often sleep without undressing upon the stove that fills up a great part of their single room. Prascovie climbed upon this strange roosting-place, but left her pocket and travelling-bag below, that her hosts might ransack for themselves if they would.

With a heart beating violently, the poor girl tried to sleep, but it was in vain. She lay still, however, and soon heard her hosts whispering together.

"I saw the string of a little bag tied round her neck. She must have money in it. No one saw her enter, or knows she is here," were the fragments that reached her ears. Then came silence.

"They will murder me!" *thought she.*



A RUSSIAN CART.

"They know they are safe from suspicion, for nobody will dream of asking them after me."

All at once the hideous head of the old woman appeared above the rim of the stove, scrambling up to Prascovie.

"Spare my life! I have no more money, indeed I have not!" begged the girl; but the hag answered nothing, and was not content until she had seen for herself that the little bag only contained a passport, and that Prascovie had no coins secreted about her.

The poor traveller was half-dead with fright. Locked up in a hut with robbers, neither of whom would apparently have much compunction in putting her to death, she gave herself up for lost; but after a time, finding that her hosts fell asleep and tormented her no further, she gradually dropped off into a deep slumber.

In the morning she was astonished to perceive that both husband and wife were much more cordial than the evening before. They declared they had only searched her because they believed her to be a thief; and that if she would count her money she would know they were honest. Prascovie was thankful when she was safe outside their hut, and did not stop to examine her store till she had put some miles between the gruesome couple and herself. What was her surprise to find that, besides the board and lodging they had given her, they had added forty kopecks to her purse! The girl's simple faith always accounted for their sudden change of behaviour by a direct interposition of her Heavenly Father, who, she believed, transformed their hearts towards her; and she liked to dwell on the story as a proof of Divine care. Another day, as she started for her day's journey at two in the morning, a band of fierce dogs set upon her. She actually felt the cold muzzle of one of them upon her neck, and was expecting he would kill her, when a peasant suddenly came up and drove them off. So all perils seemed smoothed away before her steadfast feet.

(*To be continued.*)

ONLY A GIRL-WIFE.

By RUTH LAMB, Author of "Her Own Choice," &c.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Bennett hurried down to the surgery she calculated that it would be untenanted, as the dinner gong had sounded a few minutes before. All seemed quiet when she reached the door, and after a brief pause she turned the handle very softly and entered. To her surprise Dr. Crawford looked up from the desk at which he was writing, and said, "What do you want, nurse? Anything amiss with the children?"

"No, sir; I am glad to say they are all right. It's only my faceache come on again, and I was just going to ask Mr. Armstrong for a drop of laudanum, as I want to foment it after the children are asleep."

As Bennett spoke she placed her hand to her cheek, and put on a doleful look, as if she were in great pain. Out of the surgery was a smaller apartment, which could only be entered from it. In this were kept all drugs except those of a very simple character, and Mr. Armstrong was accustomed to mix the medicines there, in order that any risk of mistake through interruption might be avoided.

He was in the drug-room at the moment of Bennett's entrance, and within hearing of her words, though out of sight. He had just completed his task, and, stepping into the surgery, he said, rather severely, "You had laudanum from me very lately. If you are wanting more, you must have used a larger quantity than was necessary."

"You are quite right, sir. I had the laudanum, and should have it now—at least, some of it—but I had the misfortune to break the bottle a few minutes since. I had put it away most carefully, as was right where there are children, for if they think you want them not to get at a thing, they'll climb like kittens to see what it is. The bottle was rolled up in some rags and a towel and put away on a high shelf, but I happened to catch the end, dropped the bottle, and smashed it to atoms."

"Where are the pieces?" asked Mr. Armstrong, suspiciously.

"Where they should be, sir—melting down in the middle of the fire. I suppose you wouldn't have me leave those on the nursery floor, or the spilled laudanum either? If you will come upstairs you can see where I have washed the floor, for it cannot be dry yet, and smell the laudanum too."

There was no gainsaying Bennett's statement, and the woman knew it. Looking straight at Dr. Crawford, she said, "May I have a little laudanum, sir? It will be quite safe in my hands, you know."

She was not prepared for the doctor's decided negative, qualified, however, by a promise that he would give her some medicine which would have a more lasting effect than the outward applications on which she relied for ease.

"It is plain that you want something to remove the cause of the pain, Bennett," said Dr. Crawford, kindly. "Come and see me later in the evening. I am hoping not to go out again, and in order to be quite free I had dinner put off for ten minutes, so that Mr. Armstrong and I might finish a rather pressing matter, and take our meal with quiet consciences."

"I am sure, sir, I would rather not be the means of disturbing you after dinner," said Bennett; but the doctor did not wait for her to finish.

"Come here at eight o'clock," he replied. "I shall not call it an interruption to look after your faceache, and, I hope, relieve it permanently."

The doctor passed out, and Mr. Armstrong waited for Bennett to follow, then locked the door with a very decided click, and put the key into his pocket. There was no tampering with that lock, as the nurse well knew, and no chance for her to purchase any drug at the shop of a Shelverton chemist without exciting suspicion, so she returned to the nursery in no very good humour.

For once, Dr. Crawford was undisturbed during dinner, and to Ida's delight he thoroughly enjoyed the meal; then accompanied her and Grace into the drawing-room, and asked for some music. "Sing for us, Ida," he said; "I have had very little music of late, and I want to make the most of my opportunity. When you have set a good example, I hope Grace will play or sing something, and Armstrong can join in a part-song."

Grace promised to do her best, but pleaded that her busy life gave her but little time for the practice of difficult pieces. Nevertheless, it oozed out that she played the organ at church and trained the village choir, not a very easy task when scarcely any of the members knew their notes so as to read the music.

"How can you teach them? Are not your ears and patience terribly tried?" asked Mrs. Crawford, on finding that Grace played the parts over again and again, until her pupils mastered them by ear.

"At first it was hard work, but I remembered that it must be quite as trying to the learners as to myself," replied Grace. "They are improving now, and I have a class apart from the other practice, and am teaching them to sing by note, so each week will make it easier for both sides."

Grace played and sang when her turn came, and though she came far behind her hostess in brilliancy and style, she attempted nothing that she could not perform, and showed that she had a fine voice, and used it with true musical taste.

Time passed quickly, and for once Dr. Crawford forgot his appointment with Bennett, until a chiming clock on the mantelpiece told him that he was already half an hour too late.

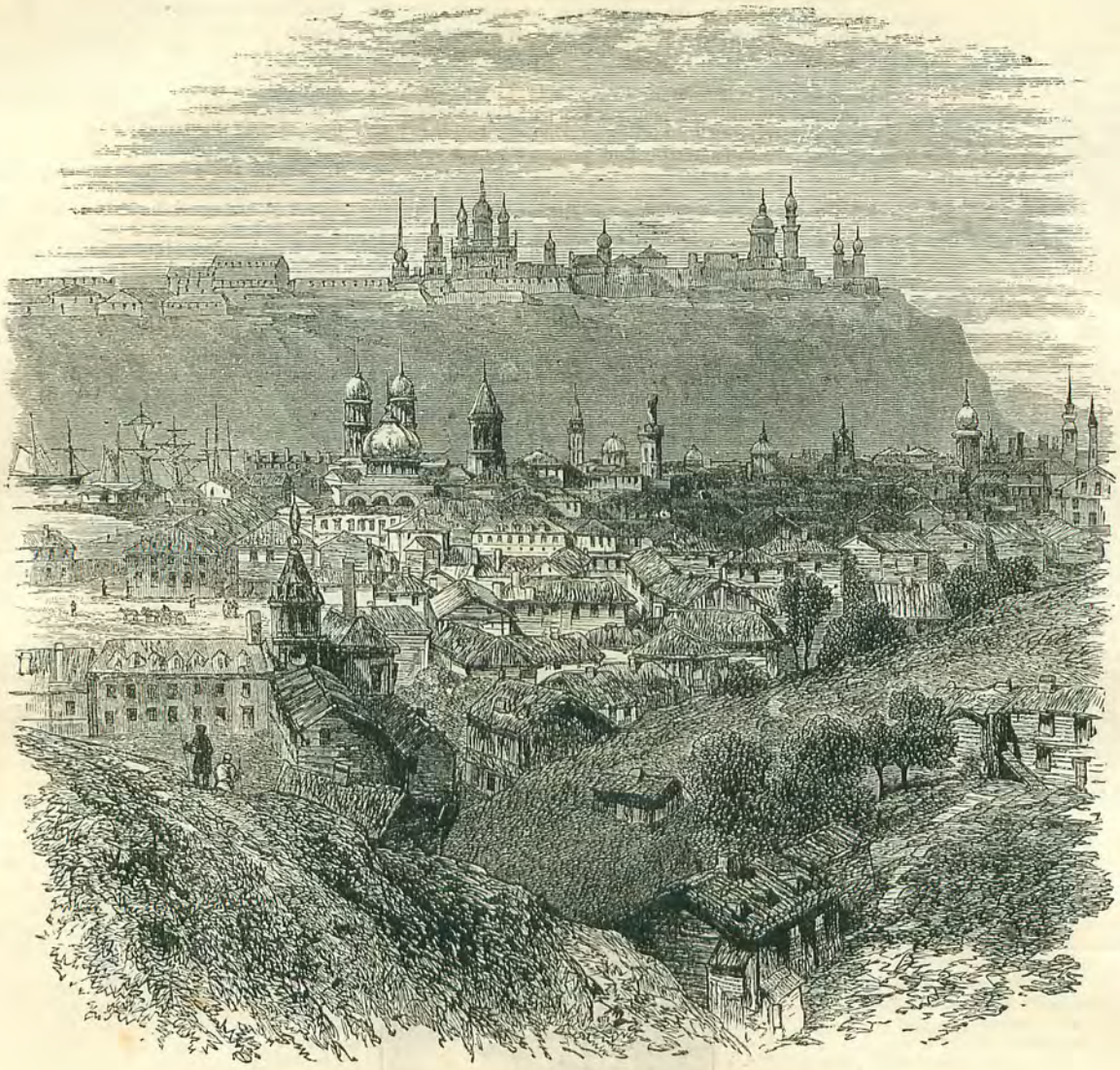
I must ask to be excused for a few moments," he said. "Bennett came to ask for something just before dinner, and I promised to see her in the surgery at eight. I shall blame you who have made me insensible to the flight of time, for not having kept my word."

Ida was surprised, and stopped her husband to ask what Bennett complained of. He told her all that had passed in the surgery, and for the first time she felt uneasy, and Jean Graham's warning came to her mind with double force.

The doctor did not wait for his wife to ask any further questions, but after a few moments of perplexed silence she addressed Grace, who was the only person left with her.

"Bennett made no complaint when we were in the nursery half an hour before she went to the doctor. Did you think she was looking ill?"

"Having never seen her before, I



TOBOLSK.

ELIZABETH OF SIBERIA; OR, PRASCOVIE LOPOULOFF.

CHAPTER II.

THE winter had now fairly set in, and a violent snowstorm detained Prascovie nearly a week in a village on her route.

When the snow had hardened and the sledging season had begun, she would fain have started forth on foot, but the peasants in whose hut she was staying assured her it would be certain death, and she would never be heard of more if she ventured upon the vast frozen steppes without guide or conveyance. Just then a convoy of sledges bearing provisions to the town of Ekaterinburg for Christmas happened to halt in the village, and the drivers offered Prascovie a place.

Here was good fortune! but a difficulty presented itself. She had no sheepskin pelisse to protect her against the cold.

Thick fur is an absolute necessity for the traveller in those bitter regions. Prascovie wrapped herself in one of the mats used for covering goods, and journeyed thus for four days, but when the sledge stopped to change horses she lay benumbed, unable to stir, and with one cheek frostbitten.

Clearly she could not continue in such a condition. The drivers of the sledges clubbed together and tried to buy her a sheepskin cloak, but no one in the lonely hamlet would part with this necessary of life, fearing lest he could not replace it. In the dilemma one of her companions hit upon an expedient.

"We will lend her our pelisses in turn, or she shall take mine once for all, and you must each lend me yours for a little while."

This was done, and Prascovie sped snugly over the snow towards Ekaterinburg, while one of her kind conductors gave up his coat at every verst.

At the foot of the eastern slope of the Ural Mountains lies Ekaterinburg, while a vast unvaried plain stretches away beyond the city. Prascovie was now four hundred miles from her home. How bewildered the peasant girl, penniless and roughly clad, accustomed to the life of a remote village, must have felt in the streets of the town!

"You had better apply to Madame Milin," quoth the landlady of the inn whither the friendly peasants conducted her; "she is a most benevolent dame, and will very likely help you."

Prascovie set forth to obey this advice, but went first to church. It was Sunday morning; she had never seen so many people gathered together at one time, and her strange costume and intense earnestness in devotion attracted some attention from the congregation. After the service a lady asked her who she was and whither she was going in the town. Prascovie told her.

"Madame Milin is not so benevolent as you suppose," said the stranger. "You had better come with me."

Dismayed and bewildered, Prascovie knew not what to do.

The lady, seeing her distress, said, "Well, I will show you her house: there it is, close by, but come with me if she does not receive you."

Prascovie knocked at the door, and inquiring of the servant "if Madame Milin were at home," discovered that the stranger, smiling behind her, was no other than Madame Milin herself.

"Oh, I knew Madame Milin *must* be good!" cried the girl, gratefully kissing the lady's hand. And the belief was justified,

for her benefactress gave her a home during the whole winter, and taught her to read and write. Her parents, imagining in the hopelessness of their perpetual exile that she could never rise to any higher position than that of a peasant drudge, had neglected to teach her anything.

Prascovie passed a happy winter in the society of benevolent, refined people, and the comfort of a well-to-do home, both of which advantages she enjoyed for the first time in her life. Her health, seriously shaken by the hardships she had undergone, was improved by care and nourishment; but her mission was never absent from her thoughts, and early in the spring she implored Madame Milin to let her set forth again upon her pilgrimage. Her patroness saw that the devoted daughter really possessed the "faith that can remove mountains," and did all she could to help her. She gave her letters of introduction to friends in St. Petersburg, provided for the needs of her journey, and placed her under the care of a merchant who was bound for Nijni Novgorod.

Prascovie and her conductor travelled northwards by water for some time, and then left the boat to cross the Ural Mountains, intending to resume their voyage on the other side when they reached the streams that flow into the Volga. Unhappily, the merchant fell ill on a mountain pass, and was obliged to remain behind in a little hamlet while Prascovie pressed on alone. She reached the European side of the mountains in safety, and then took passages in the cargo-boats trading to Nijni Novgorod. She had many rough experiences on her way. Once she was flung overboard, together with two other passengers, by the sweep of an oar, and narrowly escaped drowning, while the immersion added to a severe cold that she had never lost since the night in the forest.

At last the brave girl disembarked at Nijni Novgorod, the largest town she had ever seen, where she knew of no one to whom she could apply for shelter or help. Madame Milin had taken it for granted that she would have the merchant still with her as escort, and had charged him to make all necessary arrangements for Prascovie's journey to St. Petersburg; but she found herself alone and forlorn in the midst of a crowd. Here was a solitude more terrible to her than the solitude of the Siberian steppes. She was six hundred miles from Ekaterinburg, and had as yet only about half accomplished her journey to St. Petersburg.

Where should she find refuge? Above her on a hill stood a church and convent, whither she ascended to pray. The church seemed deserted, but from behind a grated screen came the sweet voices of nuns chanting the vesper hymn. The soothing strains thrilled and comforted the desolate girl as she listened.

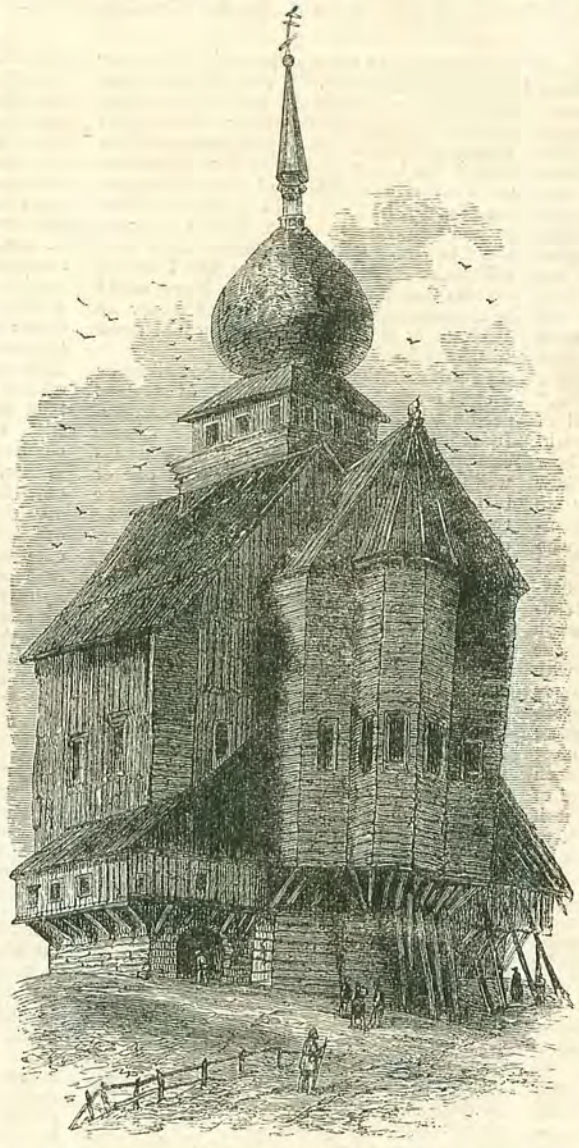
When she went forth again the view from the church door arrested her attention. The rays of the setting sun were striking down upon a vast plain, where the waters of two great rivers, the Oka and the Volga, reflected the glowing radiance. The city, situated at the confluence of these streams, lay below her at the height on which she stood.

A feeling of oppression at the vastness of the scene and her own loneliness came over her; for the first time her heart failed her, and she burst into tears. She hurried back into the church, where a nun accosted her kindly, saying it was time to close the doors.

"Pray give me shelter for the night in your convent," implored Prascovie.

"We do not lodge strangers," answered the nun; "but our mother, the abbess, may give you alms."

"That I do not require," said Prascovie, showing a purse in which she kept the remainder of Madame Milin's gift. "I only beg for shelter this night."



A RUSSIAN CHURCH.

The nun was touched with pity, and took the girl to the abbess, who gave her gracious permission to remain. She was quickly surrounded by the good sisters, who drew from her an account of all her adventures and the aim of her long and perilous journey. The effect that her simple story, told with unstudied eloquence, produced upon them was most impressive. They overwhelmed her with caresses, and the superior obtained from her a promise that when her mission was accomplished she would take the veil. This had long been Prascovie's intention, and she soon fixed upon this convent as her future home.

But her journey was destined to be put off for awhile. The fatigue and exposure borne by the heroic girl produced their natural effect, and she was seized by an illness that confined her to her bed for many weeks, during which time the nuns nursed her tenderly.

On her recovery she was detained yet longer in the sisterhood. Between Nijni Novgorod and St. Petersburg extends a vast tract of level, low-lying country that is sometimes inundated in the summer by the melting of the winter snows, and that, in any case, Prascovie was not strong enough to traverse on foot, while her means were insufficient to allow her to take a private carriage. She therefore awaited the snow season, when, by the kindness of the lady abbess, she started in a covered sledge with other travellers for Moscow, two hundred and fifty miles further on her way. From the same friend she obtained a letter of introduction to a Moscow lady, who had influence at St. Petersburg.

Swiftly and uneventfully Prascovie sped over the snow towards Moscow, where she was at length kindly welcomed by the abbess's friend. This lady gave her a letter of introduction to a princess in the Russian capital, and provided for the final stage in her journey by securing for her a seat in the carriage of a merchant who was travelling thither.

In this luxurious and easy way Prascovie's pilgrimage, which had begun so roughly, was completed, eighteen months after her departure from Siberia. With indescribable feelings she entered St. Petersburg. Here, at last, she was within reach of the object of her heart's desire! But the wife of the merchant, her escort, in whose house she found a kindly home, showed not the slightest faith in the success of her mission to the Czar; and, in fact, a trifling circumstance enough delayed the accomplishment of her purpose.

It was February when Prascovie reached St. Petersburg, and the ice that all the winter long holds the River Neva in iron fastness was just on the point of breaking up. No one is allowed to cross at this time, and as the ladies of rank, to whom she had letters of introduction, lodged on the opposite bank, our heroine was obliged to put off her visit to them. In the meantime, she was advised to get a petition drawn up and to have it presented to the Senate by one of its members, a proceeding unlikely in itself to succeed, and rendered more so by the irregular manner in which the petition was framed.

With this useless document in her hand, the poor girl haunted, day after day, the steps of the Senate House. Timidly she saw the grand personages in uniform, armed with swords and gay with decorations on their breasts, pass and repass her. At first she dared not offer her petition to one of them, and when, at last, she ventured to do so, she was repulsed as a beggar. The only kindness she received was from an official who gave her a five-rouble note, but would pay no attention to her statement.

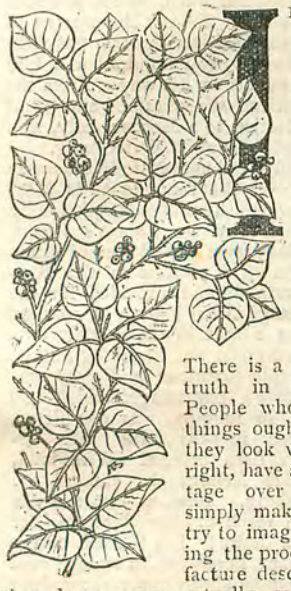
The floating blocks of ice on the Neva melted gradually away in the bosom of the flood, and the last obstacles in the way of the heroic daughter were soon to melt away likewise. Easter came; the spring sunshine

gladdened all hearts; "Christ is risen," was on every tongue. Prascovie felt the reviving influence of the scene, and new hope arose within her. The bridge over the Neva was replaced by this time, and the merchant's wife drove her to the house of Mme. Milin's friend, Mme. de L——, to whom she presented her letter of introduction. "I had heard from Mme. Milin about you," said the lady; and her husband kindly interested himself in the case. He had a relative of influence at court, through whom he promised to appeal direct to the Emperor. This, he said, would be far more likely to be effectual than approaching the senate with a petition. And Prascovie's letter of introduction from the abbess at Nijni Novgorod now gained her an invitation from the Princess T—— to come and take up her abode in her palace. Success at last seemed near at hand.

(*To be concluded.*)

OMELETTES, AND HOW TO MAKE THEM.

By PHILLIS BROWNE, Author of 'The Girl's Own Cookery Book.'



In the life of a great Englishwoman, just published, her biographer says that "she was an excellent housekeeper, and her excellence was partly attained from knowing how things ought to be done." There is a great deal of truth in this remark. People who know how things ought to be, how they look when they are right, have a great advantage over people who simply make a guess, and try to imagine, after having the process of manufacture described, though they have never actually seen what the result is. This is particularly the case with omelettes. For years authorities in cookery have been telling us that omelettes are delicious, inexpensive, elegant and wholesome; indeed, that they supply one of the most wholesome ways of cooking eggs; that French people use them every day, and never tire of them; that the varieties are endless; that if you can make one sort you can make fifty; that though a certain knack is required in making them, and though failure in them is much more frequent than success, yet that they are very easily made; that they are most convenient preparations, because they can be so quickly prepared (indeed they must be quickly prepared if they are to be good, and it has been said that an omelette should not only be made, but should be eaten also, in the space of three minutes). All these assertions are true, and yet omelettes are not at all common in England. English cooks seem afraid of them. I was most astonished the other day to hear a lady, who is, I know, exceedingly clever in cookery, and whom I have for years been accustomed to regard as an oracle, say, "We had company the other day, and I hired a French cook to prepare dinner for us. He proved to be so obliging that I asked him to teach me how to make omelettes, and he did so. I was surprised to find how easy they are. I shall never be afraid of them again." I should have soon have suspected this lady of being afraid of boiling an egg as of making an omelette. I feel sure that the timidity so frequently felt about preparing omelettes arises from the fact that few English cooks have seen them when properly made.

It is impossible for me in writing about omelettes to give the girls of our cookery class a sight of one. All I can do in this direction is to advise them to be on the look-out, and to take advantage of any opportunity that may arise in this direction. If they know a clever cook, ask her to make an omelette for them, or if there should be any cookery classes held where omelettes are to be prepared, let them attend the lesson and learn for themselves. Or, if occasions of this kind should be quite out of reach, let them try to make an omelette once or twice, from the directions I am now about to give. It is quite possible that they will make one or two failures, but I should say also that it is almost certain there would be ultimate success, and if once they saw an omelette as it should be they would never mistake it for the future.

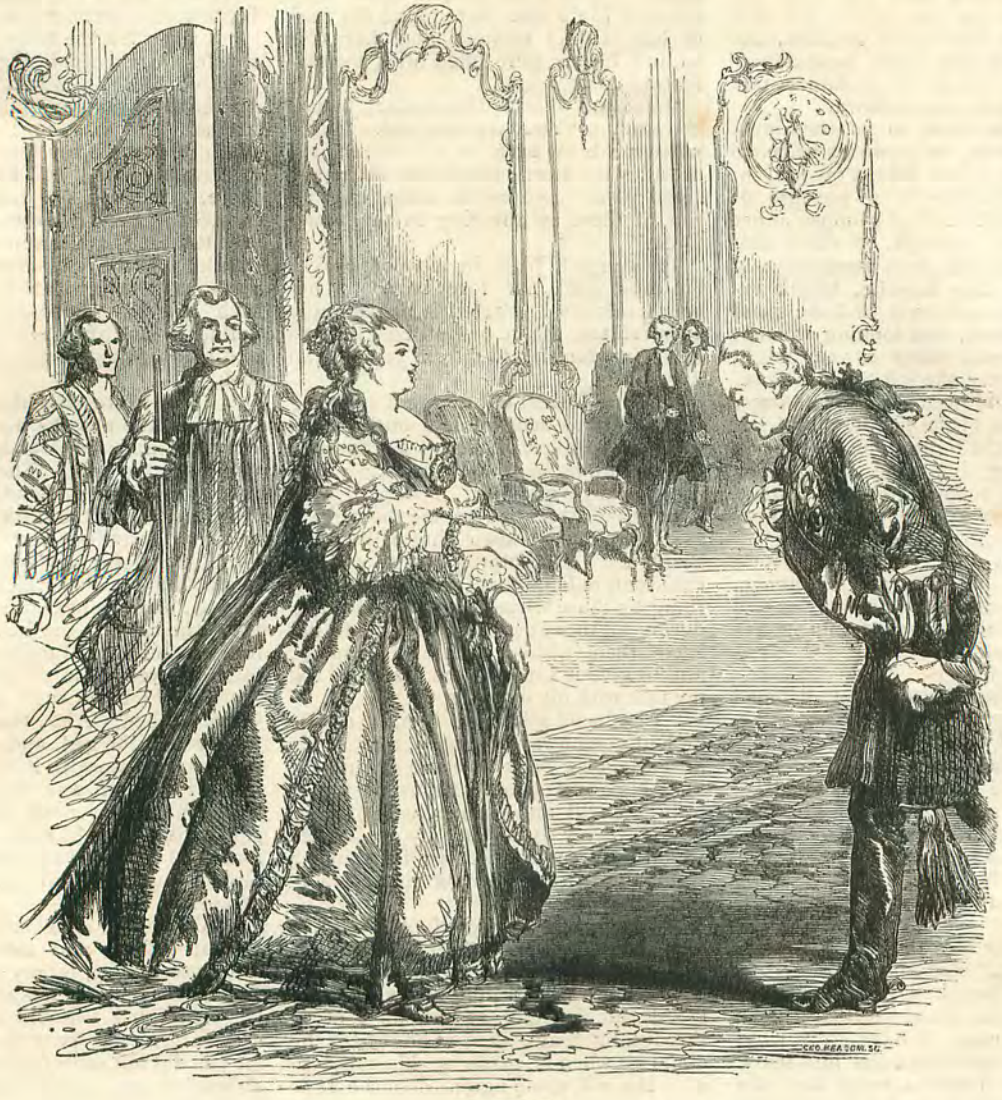
In this case they would find it best to make a small omelette to begin with, so that there need not be much waste if there were failure. Indeed, small omelettes are so much more easily made than large ones, that it is always well for beginners to commence with one or two eggs only. The French generally allow two eggs for each person, and these would be quite enough to experiment on. On this account the pan used should not be too large, because the eggs are not supposed to spread all over the pan as they do in a pancake; they are intended to be kept together and to form a thick, light oval-shaped cushion, the size and shape of half the pan. For three or even four eggs, therefore, the omelette pan should not be more than six inches in diameter, while for two eggs a still smaller pan will be sufficient. These small pans are now sold of different sizes at every ironmonger's, and they cost only a few pence. Indeed, they are offered for sale so much more frequently than they once were, that one cannot help thinking that the making of omelettes is better understood among us than it used to be.

A very important detail concerning these omelette pans is that they must be kept for omelettes only; indeed, it is almost impossible to make an omelette satisfactorily in a pan which has been used for all sorts of things. One reason for this is that an omelette pan should never be washed; it should simply be wiped dry. If it is washed, the next omelette fried in it will stick, and it is a great point in making omelettes to keep them from sticking. If through accident or forgetfulness the pan should have been washed, or even if a new pan is to be used, it must be doctored by leaving a little fat, made exceedingly hot, in it, then pouring this away, and wiping the pan out quickly and briskly with paper until it is clean and bright. Omelette pans are made of copper, enamelled iron, tin, and earthenware, and they should be shallow and round, as well as small. Above all things, they must be perfectly clean from rust and dirt. Experienced omelette makers generally, I think, become attached to one particular pan, and prefer using it to any other. I suppose the explanation is that they have used this same pan successfully a few times, and get into the way of associating it with their success. I expect that their fancy leads them to take care of it, and thus it is kept in good condition.

Strictly speaking, a plain omelette ought to consist of nothing but eggs and flavouring. This flavouring may be varied indefinitely, all sorts of suitable ingredients being added, provided only that they are cooked or else need no cooking, for it cannot be expected that in the short time the eggs take to cook more solid food will be rendered eatable. Thus, when meat, such as game, bacon, kidneys, or fish are added to omelettes, the meat should be cooked separately, chopped small, then introduced deftly into the centre of the omelette, and covered with the egg, or else it should be mixed with the beaten eggs before cooking. Of course, the omelette is then named after the distinguishing addition. Thus when it is said that fifty varieties of omelettes are made, nothing more is meant than that fifty different additions may be put with the eggs. Thus we have asparagus omelette, bacon omelette, green pea omelette, kidney, lobster, mushroom, oyster, tomato omelettes, and many other sorts. *Omelette aux fines herbes* is omelette to which minced herbs, and perhaps a suspicion of finely-chopped shalot, has been added; *omelette aux confitures* is omelette with jam; *omelette au naturel* is nothing but plain omelette; *omelette au rhum* is made by mixing a glass of rum with the eggs, then sprinkling sugar on the dish, and at the moment of serving pouring a glass of rum over and setting on fire, as brandy is set on fire for Christmas pudding. This is considered a very superior dish.

M. Gouffé, who, as everyone knows, is a great authority in cooking, advises that the eggs in omelettes should not be over-beaten. He says that by so doing nothing is gained, and that the omelette is rendered watery. Other authorities, equally deserving of honour, say that the eggs should be well beaten, as this is especially needed to make the omelette light. I recommend girls not to overbeat certainly, but at any rate to beat the yolks and the whites together lightly, so that they may be thoroughly mixed before being turned into the pan. A mistake which English cooks frequently make is to cook the omelette overmuch. When properly done, the inside is quite soft and almost liquid, while the outside is firm enough to hold it together and keep it compact. An omelette must on no account be left standing in the dish after it is ready, but must be eaten immediately. No matter how light it is when finished, it will be heavy when cold.

We will suppose now that we are going to make a small omelette with two or three eggs. First, we must remember to have everything ready to our hand. If we get half through the business and then have to run off to fetch a knife, a spoon, or a dish, we are certain to come to grief; indeed, the dish which is to receive it should be very hot. Break two or three eggs into a basin, beat them lightly with a fork, and put with them some sugar and any suitable flavouring. Essence of vanilla is very good. Melt an ounce of butter in the omelette pan. When it is very hot, so that it froths all over, put in the eggs, and with a spoon or fork work the mixture lightly



AT COURT.

ELIZABETH OF SIBERIA; OR, PRASCOVIE LOPOULOFF.

CHAPTER III.

WITH a heart beating high in terror and in hope, Prascovie approached the magnificent palace of Princess T——. She curtsied low to the gorgeous lackey who opened the door, supposing that he was a senator of very high rank indeed. The spacious, brilliantly-lighted *salon* into which she was ushered, with its groups of elegantly-dressed men and women scattered here and there, produced upon her a feeling of intimidation and awe; she had never seen anything like it before. Tremblingly she approached the princess, an elderly lady sitting at cards with three other personages, and fumbled for her letter of introduction.

All eyes were turned upon her; in her confusion she could not at once find the abbess's letter, and she heard laughing whispers from some of the younger guests. The nervous trepidation she endured was more formidable than many a bygone hardship by land or water; but the princess spoke kindly to her.

"You are a good girl and a devoted daughter. I will not forget you," said the great lady; and she signed to an attendant to take charge of her.

Prascovie was now installed in the palace, but found the life irksome and embarrassing, and seemed to come no nearer to the accomplishment of her heart's desire. She began to feel like a bird in a gilded cage.

At last release came. While she was staying with the merchant's wife on her first arrival at St. Petersburg, the Chancellor of the Empress Dowager had heard of her, and he now sent to inquire further into her case. She repaired to his house, charmed and astonished his wife and himself by the story of her adventures, and obtained a promise that he would present a request on her behalf to his Imperial mistress.

The answer was favourable beyond Prascovie's hopes, for the Empress signified a wish to see her at six o'clock the same evening. When the Chancellor made this known to the girl, she grew pale and faint; then, raising her eyes to heaven, she cried, "My trust has not been in vain!"

"What would my father say now, if he knew before whom I am going to appear? How delighted he would be!" she exclaimed, as she drove that evening towards the Imperial Palace with the Chancellor. She was still in her ordinary simple dress, and had no knowledge whatever of court etiquette, but with modest bearing she presented herself before the Empress-mother in her private apartment, and told her story with sincerity and homely pathos.

The Empress was deeply touched. Prascovie dwelt upon the justice of her cause, and asked, not the pardon of her father, whom she believed to be innocent, but the revision of his sentence.

Her Majesty promised to bring the case before the Czar, and with words of encouragement dismissed her, first giving her a purse of two hundred roubles.

"She has been to court!" ran from lip to lip that evening in the palace of Princess T——. Prascovie felt herself suddenly placed upon another level; the guests who had not dreamt of speaking to her while she was only a humble, unnoticed *protégée* of the great lady, now showed lively interest in her concerns. As for her own feeling, she thought she must have been dreaming when she awoke the next morning, until she convinced herself of the truth of her good fortune by looking at the money the Empress had given her.

This was only the beginning of success. A

few days afterwards, the Empress-mother caused a pension to be assigned to her, and promised herself to introduce her to the Czar and reigning Empress. It would be difficult to describe Prascovie's emotions when the day for this interview arrived. She was about to enter the presence of an omnipotent sovereign over vast domains, whose decree was life or death to multitudes, and upon whose word hung the future of her father and mother. She was conducted through hall after hall of the imperial palace, all vast and splendid, till in a small room at the end she found the Emperor and Empress.

Here was, at last, the man, to supplicate whose pity she had travelled nearly two thousand miles and braved incredible hardships!

Fortunately for her, Alexander I., Paulovitch, who had now succeeded his father, Paul I., was gracious in his manner, generous in his impulses. In the shrinking girl before him he saw an example of intrepid resolve and daughterly affection he could not but appreciate. Perhaps, also, he was touched by the thought that the humbly-clad suppliant, with her imperfect education, would, under ordinary circumstances, have been leading a soft, luxurious life as a maiden of rank and fashion at St. Petersburg.

The Empress spoke kindly to Prascovie, and bade her state her case, which she did in her usual modest, gentle manner, pleading for the revision of Lopouloff's sentence.

"Your request is granted," said the Czar; and, turning to an attendant, he ordered that a present of five hundred roubles should be given her. Prascovie's heart was too full to utter thanks as she withdrew.

The Minister of the Interior was ordered to investigate Lopouloff's case, and meanwhile Prascovie explored the wonders of St. Petersburg. She was taken by two ladies of the court through the imperial palace, and did not recognise the apartments through which she had passed on her audience of the Czar, so great had her preoccupation been on that occasion. On being introduced into the throne-room she was overcome with emotion.

"That is actually the Emperor's throne, that I feared so much when I was in Siberia!" she murmured; and the thought of the wonderful manner in which she had at last been confronted with the symbol of that dread power caused her to fling herself on her knees before the empty throne and to kiss the steps, while her eyes streamed with tears.

At last the Minister himself informed her that the ukase for her father's release was despatched to Siberia, at the same time asking her if she had any further favour to demand for herself. She thought at once of the two prisoners who had encouraged her project and tried to help her with their little all.

"If His Majesty will grant me anything further after having overwhelmed me with happiness by my father's release," said she, "I would beg for freedom for two friends of mine." She then gave the names of the prisoners to the Minister, who obtained the Czar's consent to the unselfish request. The decree for their liberation was despatched a few days after the other.

And now Prascovie found that her success made her a sudden favourite in the society of St. Petersburg. Everyone was talking of the brave girl who had come so far and dared so much, and her head might easily have been turned by praise and popularity. But she seems to have been of a singularly transparent and ingenuous character. Gentle, firm, and of sound sense, she remained unspoiled in the midst of flattery, and took a naïve pleasure in listening to the conversation of people wiser than herself. She had never forgotten her vow to enter upon a conventual life, and shortly after the despatch of the decree for her father's release she left St. Petersburg for Kiew, where she took the veil.

From Kiew she travelled to Nijni Novgorod, intending to establish herself in the convent there with her friend the abbess; and as that town is on the high road from Siberia, she hoped to obtain news of her father.

After Prascovie's departure, Lopouloff and his wife had become intensely anxious about her fate, and as months rolled on their depression increased. They gradually lost all hope of seeing her again. The accession of Alexander I., which set many prisoners free, brought no news of deliverance to the unhappy little colony at Ischim; and the poor father and mother, bereaved of their only child, sunk into wretchedness and despair.

One day a special courier was seen coming along the road towards the officer's hut. "He will not stop here; all our good fortune is for ever gone," thought Lopouloff. But the courier paused before his door, and handed him a special missive. Could it be? Yes, it was the Czar's order for his release, enclosing a sum of money for his expenses to Central Russia. Almost fainting with joy, unable to believe the good news, Lopouloff and his wife fell on their knees and gave thanks to God for the marvel their daughter had accomplished.

And now all was stir and excitement in the little village. Congratulations on the possession of so heroic and persevering a daughter, as well as on the prospect of freedom, were lavished on Lopouloff by those whose own exile appeared all the more bitter by contrast with their comrade's good fortune. Especially were his two poor friends dejected at the thought of his leaving them, though they unselfishly strove to rejoice in his happiness. He tried to comfort them by a gift of part of the money he had received for his travelling expenses, but they refused to receive it.

The last evening before Lopouloff's departure had come. The two prisoners spent it with him; they felt they could not bear to see him and his wife depart from Ischim on the morrow, and bade them a heart-broken farewell when they parted for the night. For with the disappearance of the parents of Prascovie, a lingering spark of hope that they too might be released died out in the breast of the unfortunate exiles. They returned in deep dejection to their own wretched hut, and sank upon a bench in hopeless silence.

Suddenly, voices and steps were heard outside; a thundering knock came at the door, and a well-known voice cried, "Open! open! my friends. Pardon has come for you also!"

Unable to believe the good tidings, the exiles rushed to admit the messenger who, guided by Lopouloff, and escorted by a crowd of inhabitants, bore the decree announcing their release. A letter from Prascovie, containing two hundred roubles and explaining all, was enclosed. The scene that followed is indescribable, for the revulsion from despair to joy was almost more than the prisoners could bear. Loud were the praises on all hands of the devoted daughter and the faithful friend.

And now the true story of Prascovie's adventures is nearly at an end. When she arrived at the convent of Nijni Novgorod, her father and mother were already there to meet her, though she knew it not. "What news have you of my father?" she cried to the abbess. In reply, she was led into the waiting-room, where Lopouloff stood with his wife. Passionate joy, unspeakable gratitude, marked the meeting between the parents and their child.

Prascovie did not survive for many years the happy completion of her mission. The hardships she had undergone, especially her exposure to cold, had planted within her the seeds of consumption. During these last years she is thus described: —

"She was of medium height but shapely figure; her face, surrounded by a black veil which concealed her hair, was of a pure oval. She had deep dark eyes, an open brow, a certain melancholy tranquility in her glance, and even in her smile."

From all around her she won the tenderest regard, and it was a source of much grief when the fatal nature of her illness was known. After lingering in a gradual decline for a few years, she passed away on the 8th December, 1809. So peaceful was her end that the nun who was kneeling beside her knew not when she ceased to breathe. Prascovie was gone, but she left behind her the remembrance of filial tenderness, steadfast courage, that will endure.

LILY WATSON.

THE END.

TOWN GARDENS.

By DORA HOPE.

HAT a damp, dreary-looking place a town garden generally is! There is a smell of mouldiness and soot pervading it, instead of the sweet odours of flowers, and a chill seems to strike through one from the overgrown paths and deserted beds.

Let us imagine a little garden of the kind familiar to most of our town readers. It is an oblong space, as wide as the house, and about twice as long, and surrounded by tolerably high walls. At the bottom of the garden, piled against the wall, is a dirty black heap of brick or stone, called the rockery. Down each side there is a bed two to three feet wide. A strip of grass fills up the middle, and between it and the beds there is a path covered with asphalte or gravel, more or less overgrown with grass, and the whole place is chiefly useful as a playground for cats, and, in poorer neighbourhoods, also as a drying ground for clothes.

And yet there are many little gardens in the midst of the soot and smoke of our great towns, and with everything against them in the matter of position and soil, that are not only a pride and pleasure to their owners, but that would absolutely put to shame some of their country relatives which have good soil and sunshine in abundance.

These little gardens thrive partly on account of their very smallness, which makes almost every inch valuable and worth attention, and partly, too, because their owners are really fond of flowers, and having no woods or lanes within reach, do not mind a