



JEWISH MARKET IN ST. PETERSBURG.

ST. PETERSBURG AND ITS PEOPLE.

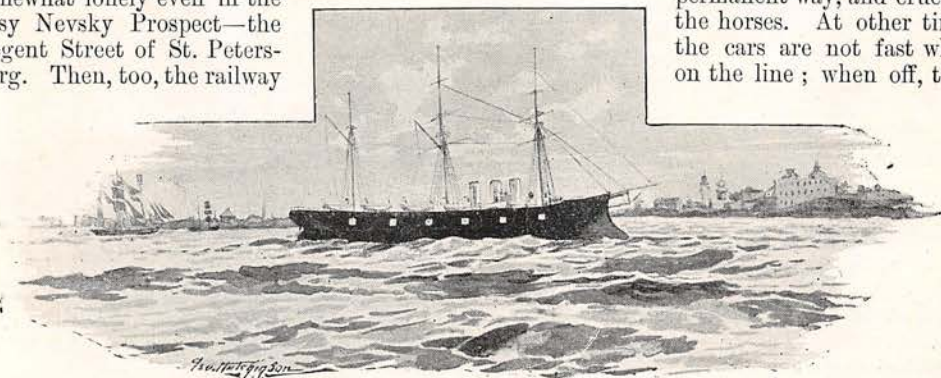
BY ADRIAN ROSS.

Illustrated by GEORGE HUTCHINSON.



ST. PETERSBURG is "a city of magnificent distances." That is perhaps the first impression made on the arriving stranger. The streets are very long and very wide; the houses are very large and liberally spaced; there are plenty of canals, and many wide arms of the great river; in fact you come to the conclusion that land was cheap when the city was built, and indeed space was cheap enough, and is still, though foundations were and are dear enough. To one accustomed to the compressed and concentrated life of London or older Paris, the ceaseless crowd of the Strand or Cheapside, there is a sense of unwonted elbow-room in wandering through even the busiest thoroughfares of the Russian capital. One who is used to the serried throngs of the City or West End feels somewhat lonely even in the busy Nevsky Prospect—the Regent Street of St. Petersburg. Then, too, the railway

stations are all strung out on the circumference of the city, or near it; tramways, though not a few, are hardly noticed in the expanse of streets, and the consistency of the soil prohibits the blessing of an underground railway, and renders the elevated variety too expensive. So the magnificent nature of the distances is accentuated by the lack of cheap means for getting rapidly over them. The Petersburger does not walk except under compulsion—his pasty complexion declares the fact; and visitors have to do as natives. The double river of omnibuses that crowd the Strand or Oxford Street is unknown in Russia. The tram-cars, as a rule, go where you have no need of them; further, they go in squadrons of three or four, and then a gap. They have also a murderous trick of taking the steep ascent of a bridge at a gallop, which is hard on rolling-stock and permanent way, and cruel to the horses. At other times the cars are not fast when on the line; when off, they



RUSSIAN MAN-OF-WAR OFF KRONSTADT.

stop altogether. Life is too short to resort greatly to tram-cars.

The visitor therefore takes a droschky. There is in general no lack of these convey-



J. S. H. TATEPUSON

AN ISVOSTCHIK, OR DRIVER.

ances. They are most like the pony-chaise of the seaside in shape, with a seat for two behind and a perch for the driver in front. The wheels are low and strong; the dirt-guards broad. Of late the droschkies have blossomed out into hoods, and not a few public ones have emulated the private vehicles and rubber-tyred their wheels. Your driver or *isvostchik* is a curious conventional figure. He may be spruce or shabby, but his costume is always the same. There is an ample blue caftan or long coat bound with an embroidered or figured belt. This attire is crowned by a curious low hat looking like an ordinary "chimney pot" that has been mistaken for an opera hat and crushed in by an unwonted greengrocer. Generally the *isvostchik* is somewhat wild of hair and beard; wild also is he in his estimate for the ride, for there is no authorised tariff; you must bargain with your man beforehand, and the Petersburg *habitué* has generally an informal fare-table of his own. If business is slack and drivers are many, a hard-hearted man can often be conveyed long distances for a

mere trifle; if in a hurry and lacking a conveyance, he may be mulcted.

The droschky goes any pace from six to twelve miles an hour—not unlike our hansom. The driver is not as a rule very skilful. He has no occasion to cultivate the dodging capacities of the practised hansomier. The average *isvostchik*, if set to drive from Liverpool Street to London Bridge in a hurry, would abandon hope of life and turn himself to religion. In his own city he has plenty of room and abuses it. He slews over the sloping cobble pavements with little care for the feelings of his fare; he takes the raised rails of the tramways at an acute angle that would threaten loss of a wheel to any vehicle less solidly built. Occasionally, broad and low as is his carriage, he contrives to upset it. In this the configuration of the roads is of great assistance. Most of them in the city are either aggressively hog-backed or slope to a central trough in order to drain off the melting snow in spring.

But it is when winter bridles the river with a foot or two of ice and carpets the roads with white that the Russian cabby has most scope. His droschky is exchanged for a sleigh, low and dark, with shafts bellying out widely from the horse's body and a big arched yoke hung with bells framing its neck. It is a pleasure to glide noiselessly along the level beaten floor of snow; but beware of the bridges, for the roadway rises steeply over the canal to leave room for the great barges to go under, and the generally convex section of the roads makes the crossing of a bridge like climbing over a hemisphere. If the driver does not take the ascent exactly in



J. S. H. TATEPUSON

A RUSSIAN PEASANT'S MODEST LUNCH.

the middle his sledge will begin to slew, then the odds are that the runner catches the kerb, and over you go. There are also the tram-lines, which are naturally more efficient with sledges than with droschkies. But nobody is hurt as a rule. The shaft swings over the horse's back, and the driver and fare tumble out and right the machine, and off again.

Winter is the season for St. Petersburg. Then the opera and the theatres are in full swing; then come skating, ice-hilling and the pleasures of the Maslanitzia or Butter-Week—the Russian carnival—which falls in Russian winter, though in French or English spring. Then come out the fur-cloaks, and the dashing troikas, three-horse sledges; then do wealth or borrowing capacity cut a dash. And indeed nowhere is winter more enjoyable than in a country that is sure of it. The houses, thick-walled and double-windowed, shut out the frost; the big earthenware stoves built into the wall keep the suites of rooms at a gentle uniform warmth; thick goloshes guard the feet from the snow, and fur-lined cloaks and coats protect the body, with deep collars that can be turned up to shield all but the tip of the nose. And everyone must look out for his own nose and for his neighbour's, and warn him when he sees that organ growing white at the tip with incipient frost-bite. The



TYPE OF A RUSSIAN TRAMP.



A RUSSIAN PEASANT.

workman or peasant has his sheepskin, wool inside; the very beggar in the street will have his fur coat, like the millionaire from whom he may be begging—only there is a difference in the fur—from mangy rabbit to opulent black fox. Furs are just as dear in St. Petersburg as in London, but people know better what they are getting. Except sealskin and beaver most of the valuable furs come through Russia from Siberia. It is said that the tribute from the nomad tribes once came in furs, and that the simple hunters picked out their best sables for the Great White Czar. Alas! the furs had to pass through the hands of many officials, and at each stage they changed mysteriously in appearance, so that when they reached the Treasury, though the tale was correct, the skins were candidates for the services of the Lord High Rag and Bone Man.

In summer the city of St. Petersburg is comparatively deserted. High society is summering in the country, whether abroad or on its estates in the interior. Men of business have installed their families in wooden *datchas* or summer-houses, on the "Islands," the suburbs of St. Petersburg, or along the

Finnish shore, or southward at Tsarskoe Selo, or westerly at Peterhoff, or northward round the little circular lake at Ozerki. They themselves go in daily by train or boat to business, and come out at evening laden with provisions; and then in the long summer twilights they sit out on benches before their villa doors and smoke, or drift over river or lake in a gaily-painted and

steamer takes them up an arm of the great river, past the moored rafts where fishermen are pulling up their nets with a windlass, past great masses of foliage, with white palaces glimmering out at the end of vistas, past rows of toy houses, each with its landing-stage and bath-house, and under long wooden bridges, each with great piles driven above it to save its arches from the ice in spring.



A FISH-SELLER IN THE STREETS OF ST. PETERSBURG.

badly modelled boat; then in the morning a dip in the family bathing-shed, floating off the house, and to business again. Perhaps the merchants and shopkeepers come in by a little toy railway, or by a tramway, skirting the fields where peasant women, in shapeless dresses of bright calico, are tossing the hay, or shock-headed peasants, with red shirts like tunics belted round them, mowing with steady swing of the scythe. Perhaps a swift little

On the steamer there will possibly be a group of officers, wearing the mouse-gray cloak of English cloth that never seems to quit the Russian officer, except when he rides his bicycle. Then and then alone—out of doors, that is—does one see that the Russian uniform is dark green. Had the British army overcoat been red in the Crimean War many English and Russian soldiers would have lived instead of dying by mistake, and



A COLLECTING NUN.

before he took them out of the drawer. All have signs, save and excepting the *traktir*, or public-house, the most important of Russian institutions. Here, and in the numerous wine-shops, which sell rather the wine of the country, does the Russian of the working classes "steep himself in *vodka*." Take the steam tram-car of a Sunday or holiday—not that I advise you so to do—from the space in front of the Nicolai railway station and travel to Alexandrovsky, the manufacturing part of the town. Your progress shall be between hedges of men, drinking and drunk—mostly affectionate and polite, happily, and seldom brutal or quarrelsome—but all drunk, or nearly all. And there are so many holidays—

birthdays, name-days (or festivals of the saints people are called after), church holidays, state holidays. Each holiday is apt to require a prefatory rest and a subsequent recovery, and Sunday means Monday off and Tuesday muzzy. Fortunately *vodka* is a fairly wholesome spirit, and, still more fortunately, it requires no great quantity of alcohol to fuddle the average *moujik*. So, though on a summer holiday the parks on the "Islands" are like battlefields, strewn with motionless or wriggling bodies, and with the card mouth-pieces of cigarettes, like spent cartridges, the slain and wounded will be little worse to-morrow.

Would you sample your capital more justly than by visiting the conventional sights chronicled by Baedeker? Then take your stand at the shrine on the great Nicolai bridge. Not only will you see in a quarter of an hour types of almost every element in the huge jumble known as St. Petersburg, but you will be able to gauge the minds and views of the passers by their attitude towards the shrine. The average pious Russian will cross himself and bow to the shrine; the German man of business will not waste a glance on the mummy, as he deems it; the "enlightened" youth sidles by with uneasy smirk; the devotee goes through elaborate evolutions, and the Jew sneers as he brushes by him; the Englishman strides on and has, very likely, never troubled to look what the erection on the bridge may be.

The city is charming. It is but two days and a half from London; a handful of money and a mouthful of foreign phrases, and you are there; and being there I wish you a pleasant visit.



A FORT OFF KRONSTADT.