

mate the strength of Russia. Moscow is the richest city in Europe. Russia has real wealth, not the wealth that depends on wars and rumors of wars. Let every bank in the world break, and the planet break up in universal war: Russia would not turn a hair. Certain financiers might default; no other would suffer. The Russian Empire is a fact in Nature; the British Empire is the hysterical creation of a few Jingo newspapers. England without a navy can be starved in three weeks. Russia overpowered merely starves her invaders. General Janvier and General Février are finer strategists than my lords Roberts and Kitchener. Russia has in her own right all the things that are wanted. The "Vin exceptionnel de Georgia" which I drank to-night would be hard to match in French vintages, and it only costs ten shillings a bottle even at this den of thieves where I sup and write. If you insist on all you have coming straight from Paris, it is expensive to live; I find the local products, from hors d'oeuvres to that kind which neither toils nor spins, incomparably finer. The Christmas strawberry at the Savoy is not equal to those that you pick wild in June. The opposite contention is one of those superstitions that oppresses the newly rich, and makes their lives a burden fiercer than Solomon's grasshopper. All life ultimately reposes on spiritual truths, not on material illusions. If a man is a physician at forty, he knows by experience the simple truth of poets like Wordsworth, Burns, and Francis Thompson. A friend of mine has recently had his adequate income multiplied by five. The other day he said to me: "Till now I never knew what it was to be poor." The poor remain happy in their hope; "if they were only rich!" The rich have lost that illusion; they know riches are valueless, and they despair of life. A girl friend of mine lived for three years happily on a pound a week or less; she has come into a thousand a year, and "never has a penny to bless herself with." She even contemplates an expedient as ancient as it is unsatisfactory to eke out the exiguity of her existence. This is where the Russian scores; he steals ravenously, and flings away the spoils. He never attaches any value to money, or regards it as a standard of worth. Birth is a good deal, influence something, even sainthood, artistry, or pre-eminence in vice have value; but riches are left to the Jew. The Russian is the only rival of the Irishman as the antithesis of all that Weininger implies by the Jew — which term, by the way, has an extension quite different from that of the Hebrew race. To say so much is not to take sides in a controversy or even to admit that controversy as legitimate; as a logician, I deny that either of the contradictories A and a necessarily fall into either of the classes B or b.

In Russia I go further, and assert the identity of A and a. It is the secret of the extravagance of strength and weakness which is eternally whispered between the steppes and the sky.

V.

It is not often that Nature condescends to make a pun; here she has done so, by the constant reminder of the astounding likeness between Moscow and Mexico (D. F.). There is the same "sudden unfinishedness"; for example, between the Kremlin and St. Basil's there is a patch which has known no workman's toil. There is also the terrible rain, which makes horses stand knee-deep in water. I once saw a man thigh-deep in the Pivnaya next to the Hermitage Restaurant — the best in Moscow — bailing for dear life. There are the same great

open circles, with low crude houses on the patio system, stalls here and there, animals in unexpected places, a general air of mañana, occasional Chinese, odd drunkards reeling about in open daylight. I must also mention that eminently respectable women smoke in the street, and that both sexes refuse to submit to the inconvenience of waiting when they are in a hurry. Electric trams of surprising excellence run through roads paved with cobbles of desolating irregularity. Even minute details concur, for example, the bedrooms in my corridor run 109, 103, 108, 106, 101. The gardens and boulevards suggest an alameda rather than the Paris which they were probably intended to imitate, and the behavior of the people who adorn them goes to complete the likeness. The suburbs confirm the diagnosis, with their wooden huts and their refreshment shanties, their fields unenclosed, their sudden parks and fashionable hotels whose approaches would not be tolerated in the most primitive districts anywhere else.

And as I make these observations on the road to Sparrow Hills, my friend remarks (*sua sponte*) that it is exactly like the back-blocks in Northern Australia!

And this is 56° North! Whence comes this constant suggestion of the tropics? Except for the quality of the rain, there is rationally no striking resemblance. To me this is an unsolved puzzle, an isolated fact which I connect with no other item of my mind, much less subordinate to any general principle. But it is so strong and so remarkable that it must be set down in the record.

VI.

Pale green as the sea in certain seasons, with all of its translucence, are the twin spires and the dome of the Iberian Gate, whose facade is of the color of a young fawn, and whose windows are dappled white. Beneath each tower is a passage, and between these nestles the Chapel of the Virgin of Iberia, the holiest shrine of Russia. Most sacred is the image of the Virgin, a copy of that of the Iberian monastery of Mount Athos, a copy made according to the rules of ceremonial magic, amid fasts and prayers and conjurations. It was presented solemnly in 1648 to the Tsar Alexis Mikhailovitch by the archimandrite Pochomius. The cheek of the Virgin bears yet the mark of the knife-thrust of an iconoclastic Tartar.

The chapel is crowded with many other ikons, and the ragged-devout. Also, as Baedeker cynically remarks, *se méfier des pickpockets*. (It is delightful to find Baedeker among the prophets!) But while the interior is like all Russian shrines, an avalanche of gold, the interior is a noble canopy of that vivid blue-violet which nature so rarely produces but by way of the laboratory, starred with gold, and crowned with a golden angel, the crimson brick of the Duma on the east, and the History Museum on the west, it is a spectacle of unwearying beauty.

To me it is evident that devotion and admiration leave their object admirable. I believe that the appreciative eye can distinguish between two similar objects, one of which has been worshipped, and the other not. I believe that the human mind does leave an abiding imprint on things as much as they do upon the mind.

I almost believe that the Tower of the Saviour is the most beautiful in the Kremlin, partly because for two and a half centuries no man has dared to pass beneath it without uncovering his head, and that St. Nicholas of Mojaïsk really pro-