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In the present death of news, we present our readers with the following interesting view of, TOOKE'S

HISTORY OF RUSSIA.

Mr. TOOKE has had in the execution of the present work many peculiar advantages. No fythematical or fatisfactory history of Ruffia had appeared in the English language, and he has not therefore been liable to the danger of competition. He was a complete matter of Ruffian literature in its native tongue; he had access to the libraries and archives where public records were preferved, and he muft have derived very confiderable affiftance from the numerous hiftorians in other parts of Europe who have written fince the memorable reign of Peter the Great. Previous to that epoch, the fources of hiftorical information, refpecting the vaft empire of Ruffia, were few and confined. But when that great legiflator and conqueror refcued his country from ignorance, obfcurity and contempt; when he diftinguifhed it by a name among the nations of the world, the records of its glory by the bonfmyn, and memorable victories were made into its ancient ftate. The original manners of the inhabitants were inveftigated with fuccefs, and in many inftances treated with ability; events were afcertained, which were either unknown or doubtful before, and feveral perfons of prominent talents, devoted their labours to the ftudies of a fubject which fo long had been univerfally neglected. It has been fufficiently obferved by an ingenious writer: "So little were the hiftry of Ruffia known in the laft century, that when in 1689, the Greeks and Ruffians were at war, and their refpective foveraigns fent ambaffadors to meet within three hundred leagues of Pekin, on the frontiers of both countries, for the purpofe of adjufting differences, the whole was treated in the moft enlightened parts of Europe as a ridiculous fable."

The Emperor Peter, appeared foon after on the fcene, and he created a people.

The author propofes to himfelf, in the courfe of the narrative, to refolve the following inquiries: "What were the beginning of this mighty empire; what fortunes have befallen it; and how has it arrived at its prefent height?" In anfwering thefe natural and important queftions, he has faithfully reprefented the leading events that have had any influence on the empire; he has carefully depicted the manners in gradual progreffion; and he has judiciofly compriled the earlier accounts by rejecting all idle tales and legendary abfurdities, while he only notices thofe tranfactions which have been collected from native chronologifts and other primitive fources. The ancient hiftory of Ruffia, tho' deftitute of many ftriking and interefting events, poffeffes, as it is bow ever, a ftrong merit of fidelity; and Mr. Tooke does not adduce one fact of moment, for which he cannot refer to unquefionable authority.

Of the ftate of manners and culture in Ruffia, in the fixteenth century, we felect a few inftances:

"The houfes in general were of timber, and as badly conftructed as I have already defcribed them; only in Moftow and other great towns, were a few buildings of brick. This contempt for the female fex, which is invariably a characteriftic of the want of civilization, was confpicuous among the Ruffians. The women were kept in a ftate of perfect bondage, and it was thought much if a ftranger was permitted only to fee them; they did not even dare to eat often to church, tho' church going was always fuch a mighty bufinefs among thefe people, it was required that they fhould be conftantly within doors, and fhould very feldom enjoy the frefh air.

"The men of middle rank always repaired about noon to the market, where they tranfacted their bufinefs together, talked over public affairs and went to the courts of juftice to hear the caufes that were going forward. This was certainly a practice productive of much good, as the inhabitants of the towns by this means improved their acquaintance, bartered their ideas and knowledge with one another, and the patriotic affections were nourifhed and invigorated. In agreements and bargains, the higheft afleveration was, "If I keep not my word, may it turn to my infamy!"—a fyftem extremely honorable to the Ruffians of thofe days, as they held the difgrace of having forfeited their word, to be the fergeeft degradation of the man. Though the wife was fo dependent on the husband, and mafters, as we have already feen, enjoyed fuch a controul on the ranks of thofe connections and depofited it in court. If the matter broke the contract, the fervant might lodge his complaint. The fingle combat ftill continued to be the laft refource in deciding a caufe, to which the judge confented, when he knew not how elfe to determine. But duels out of court were ftrictly prohibited, and where one was killed, the fhyer was punified like other murderers. The ftrange perfonal vengeance was forbidden by the laws under pain of rigorous punifhment. The nobles were univerfally foldiers, and were obliged to appear when fummoned to war.

"The Boors till the end of this century were ftill not bound to any particular mafter. The Boor ftill paid the grounds of a nobleman for a certain time, on ftated conditions. Either he got a part of the harvefl and the produce of the cattle, a portion of the land, &c. or he worked five days for the matter, and on the fixth was permitted to till a bit of ground ceded to him by his matter. At the expiration of the ftipulated time, he might either quit the contract to the other, the Boor remove to another mafter, and the matter difmifs the Boor that did not fuit him. Hence, however, inconveniences arofe, particularly on the eftablifhment of a regular army, when a nobleman no longer went to battle with his people and maintained them, but a fum was levied on the inhabitants of the nobleman's eftate, and the nobleman paid a ftipulation tax impofed. The nobleman paid for his lands and the Boor for his houfe: but as the Boor lived here perhaps to day, and fhifted after in another part of the empire, he might caufe a diminution of the taxes to the government by changing his place of abode. This inftitution likewife excited great murmurs, becaufe the matter might eafily find means of enticing away Boors from another. In order to remedy thefe difagreeable confequences, Czar Fedor, on the advice of Boris in 1595, fo had the ftrolling about of the Boors, and reiterated the interdiction in 1597. Boris, however, afterwards refufed to the Boors the exclufive privilege, fo that the matter appeared to lead to vaffalage. Schuifkoy refolved to take a middle path between the old regulation, when the Boors were entirely free, and the more recent one, by which they were bound to a certain piece of land, and to one matter forever. But in his turbulent reign nothing was brought to effect, and a fyftematic vaffalage of the peafantry was now gradually fet forward on Ruffia, at a time when this blot upon humanity was effaced in the other countries of Europe, namely at the beginning of the 17th century.

"That the vaffalage which was permitted towards the clofe of the 16th century, and at the opening of the 17th, had not a beneficial effect on the culture of the country, but that it rather had a very prejudicial influence on it, is fo manifeft as to need no proof. The activity and induftry which the introduction of fo many foreigners into the country was intended to raife, would be naturally checked and impeded to an extraordinary degree by the permitted fubjugation of the Boors into fhavery, as the natural fpirit again be deweefled." We fhall pafs over the ancient hiftory of Ruffia to come to the reign of Peter the Great; and every one, we are certainly confident, will, from the confideration that the great events of that period and the character of the Czar, are too generally known to require illuftration of his good or bad qualities; fome anecdotes, which are new, will prove interefting to the reader. The violence of the Czar cannot be excufed; his cruelties ariofe out of no paffion, and Mr. Tooke ftrongly remarks, that "he fometimes did things which in any other man would have paffed for acts of infanity." The mind recoils with difgufl and horror from the following inftance of barbarity:

"The firft infurrection occafioned by the general order to all the Ruffians to leave off the cuftom of wearing the beard, was followed by the execution of eight thoufand perfons, and for containing fuch a great number of victims, the Czar made choice of a fpacious fquare, adjoining to his houfe, of Preobrajinfko, three verfts from Mofcow. The place was furrounded by paliffades, through which it was eafy to fee what was paffing within the inclofure, where after placing a great number of baths and blocks, the wretches condemned to lofe their lives were made to kneel at them. Several executioners were immediately employed in cutting off heads: Peter, himfelf, with an ax in his hand, fet the example to the executioners. Moft of the Czar's courtiers were forced to imitate him, and Menchikoff, boafted afterwards, that it was he who had cut off the greateft number of heads. A boy of about 12 years old, came and laid his head on the fatal block; the prince inftead of chopping off his head, took him by the arm and pulled him away. The boy without faying a word, went and placed himfelf at another block; the Czar perceiving this, advanced towards him, refed him up and put him away again, precifely afterwards the boy returned to fubmit himfelf again to be the ax; the Czar then angrily afked him, why he perfifted in wifhing to have his head cut off? "Thou haft cut off my father's head, my brother's head and the head of all my relations who were no more guilty than I am," faid the boy "why fhould'ft thou not cut off mine?" Peter made no anfwer, but ordered the boy out of the inclofure, threw down the ax and went away. When Mr. Perinty was at the court of Peter the Firft, as ambaffador from Pruffia, that prince invited him to a grand entertainment, and after having drunk a very great quantity of wine and brandy, he fent to fetch from the prifons of Petersburgh 20 of the Streltitz; then at each bumper he ftruck off the head of one of thefe wretches. He propofed to the Pruffian ambaffador to exercife his dexterity upon them; but the ambaffador declined the barbarous offer. What a fpectacle! Peter, in the midft of his cups, ftrikes off a king himfelf, with cutting off the heads of a fcore of his unhappy fubjects, while his courtiers were getting drunk with wine, and fymphathizing the ferocity of fuch fingular party paftime."

The different revolutions are defcribed and accounted for with great clearnefs, and we are fatisfied that the author has not beftowed more attention on the gradual progrefs of commerce, literature, arts and manufactures. His fketch of the city of Mofcow forms the moft interefting part of his work, and is one of the moft perfect accounts of the ftate of a metropolis, in all its various branches, with which we are acquainted by any traveller in ancient or modern times. Among the ufeful inftitutions in Mofcow, that which provides for foundlings is entitled to particular notice. "The foundling-houfe fhows the humane concern of the univerfity. This beneficial foundation is continually increafing in ftability and extent—a fufficance partly owing to the wife and well digefted plan on which it is formed, but partly likewife to the rare felicity of having had at its head, almoft without exception, prudent and upright governors. The habitations of the foundlings, their overfeers, teachers and nurfes, the church, the magazine, breweries, bake-houfes and kitchens, bathing rooms, hofpital ward, and nurfery, form altogether a little town, and the circumference of all thefe buildings comprifes above three verfts; thefe feveral buildings are fubftantial, commodious and well fituated. Near the church on which they ftand, at the confluence of the Youfa and Mofkwa, is damp and marfhy. The internal difpofition is excellent; the greateft cleanlinefs and order every where prevail; the infirmarian is every thing neceffary for a burgher to know; the utmoft attention and care in regard to the health of the children, are the ftriking characteriftics of the inftitution. The Empreffs takes upon her the chief infpection of the foundling hofpital, and under her, Count Sievers directs the whole, an active and liberal nobleman, known in Europe chiefly by his embafly to Poland during the Diet of Grodno. Under him is a council, confifting of a chief director and three wardens. This council expedites every thing relative either phyfically or morally to the eftablifhment. In fubordination to it are the cenfors, the cenfors and the principal accountant, is fufficiently clear, from the names of their office. The funds of this inftitution are a lombard, a tax upon all public entertainments, as plays, Vauxhalls, &c. and upon cards, which are ftamped at the foundling houfe. Thefe two taxes are very productive. The houfe too has feveral plantations, in which the work is performed moftly by the foundlings.

"Over the girls is a chief infpectrefs, under whom are other infpectrefs and nurfes; the boys and girls are kept carefully feparate. Both the one and the other fex are divided into different ages; each of thefe ages has its peculiar employments, paftimes and leffons. The inftruction in the fciences and languages is conducted by tutors, both with boys and girls, but always apart. The latter are taught the feminine arts by women, and every age has an infpectrefs and nurfe, as the divifions of the boys have their overfeers and nurfes. The whole number of foundlings is upwards of five thoufand. At every hour of the day and night, children are admitted, without the leaft objection or enquiry. Nothing but a ticket is required, intimating whether the child is baptifed or not, and if it has, fignifying the name it received. Here are alfo wards properly fitted up for lying-in women, who are delivered by expert midwives, free from all expence.

"It is not to be defcribed how much this convenient inftitution is frequented; not only the fruits of forbidden intercourfe are delivered by high and low, but alfo numbers of indigent married perfons, fearful that they may not be able to provide food and education for their children, commit them to the care of this charitable inftitution, where they are not only maintained, but brought up to become ufeful members of fociety. Since the firft eftablifhment of this hofpital, a period of more than forty years, not one inftance of child murder has been detected in Mofcow.

"A fchool of trade and commerce is connected with this eftablifhment, which owes its foundation to the generofity of a wealthy proprietor of iron mines, the late Prokopy Demidof. A capital of 200,000 rubles was the fund which he prefented for its eftablifhment. In this fchool a hundred fons of poor merchants are maintained, and taught from their earliefl youth the mefteefs of the counting houfe and the fciences of commerce. Several merchants houfes in Mofcow have already been fupplied with able clerks from this inftitution."

It appears that the Ruffian ftage, is not a contemptible a fhrine, as it is generally thought in this country. Many of the performers at Mofcow are allowed to poffefs diftinguifhed merit, and uncommon attention is paid to the machinery, decorations and coflume of the theatre. We alfo learn that the popularity of Kotzebue's muftc has been raifed to a greater height than it was in London and Paris. The native dramatic writers do not however feem to be numerous.

"Among the pieces reprefented, the original are fcarce, moft of them being tranfcripts from the French and English, particularly the former. The moft favourite be fefide the Mehnih and Shitzchikh, which have been already mentioned, are the Newfkoe the Brigadier, both by Von Wifin and Dimitri Samoiyenetch the falfe Dmitri by Kheraffkof. This laft is a tragedy, the plot of which is taken from the Ruffian Hiftory. The two pieces are comedies, and admirably paint the national manners.

"The tranfations that have been attended with fucceffe are this Theatre, are Emelia Galati, Miffi Sarah Sampfon, Mira Van Barnhelm, Clavigo, Beverly, Marianna, and above all the dramatic productions of Kotzebue, Menfchenhafs and Reue, (performed in England under the title of the Stranger) the Papapoy, the Kind der Leib, Poverty and Generofity, and the School of Vice, which have become the favorite pieces of the Mofcovite public. There have