

SOME RUSSIAN PALACES.

TAISKOE-SELO, MADE FAMOUS BY CATHERINE THE GREAT.

Its Magnificent Banquet Hall, Ball-Room and Other Features—Peterhoff Palace and Its Many Beauties—A Relic of Peter the Great.

BY WILLIAM ELLEROY CURTIS.

The most beautiful place in all Russia is the park which surrounds the famous palace of Catherine the Great at Taiskoe-Selo, although the palace itself, so far as the exterior is concerned, is an architectural nightmare; and, as one author remarks, presents almost every fault that an architect should avoid. There is no comfort in any one of the imperial residences, and a great deal of bad taste everywhere, but nowhere is there so little comfort and so much bad taste as at the favorite residence of Catherine, although nearly as much money was spent upon it as upon the Winter Palace or the Hermitage.

None of the palaces, not even the Hermitage, is so closely associated with the times of Catherine the Great as Taiskoe-Selo, and there is no other example of her extravagance so vivid. The vast pile is a monument to the unbridled waste of a woman who did not know the meaning of either morals or money, but gratified every whim at the cost of the treasury and the happiness of her subjects.

The palace grounds cover 2,000 acres, beautifully laid out, filled with statuary in marble and bronze, and even now require 600 men to keep them in order. A large triumphal arch stands in the park by Alexander I., after his return from France, and there are other ornaments erected by all the sovereigns since the time of Elizabeth, who selected the place for a royal residence and built a portion of the present palace. There is a large lake, with a beautiful bath-house in the shape of a mosque, with a golden roof and tiled with white tiles. There are gilded fountains in boats and barges. One portion of the grounds is laid out in the Chinese fashion, with curious Chinese bridges, and an absurd Chinese village, which is occupied by the families of the gardeners. There is a museum filled with armor and other trophies of war, mostly captured from the Mongols and Eastern khans.

Catherine's Banquets.

There is a pavilion in which Catherine used to give banquets to a long, narrow room, enclosed by glass, with a wide portico supported by granite pillars extending around it.

Here Catherine used to gather the poets, painters, actors, and five hundred other royal guests, and see them quarreling with one another, while she laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks. Taiskoe-Selo was to her what Sans-Souci was to Frederick the Great of Prussia—a hospital, an asylum, a banquet hall, and a hermitage.

I saw here the great chair in which she used to leave herself reclined when she got so fat she could not walk, and there is a little table upon the side of it on which the court jester, a little dwarf, used to stand and accompany her on her rides. In one part of the pavilion are the card-rooms where the company retired after dinner and gambled till morning, and Catherine's splendid card table is there still, with the top, at least, fixed in diamonds, covered with pearls as large as the end of your finger. There are more than two thousand of them, the attendant told me, and of course the table is almost priceless.

The Relic of Peter the Great.

The grounds about the palace are extensive and shaded by some beautiful trees. The location is much superior to that of Taiskoe-Selo, as it lies upon the Gulf of Finland, and the palace has a magnificent prospect. Since the time of Catherine it has been the habit of the sovereigns to illuminate the grounds once a year on the birthday of the Empress, and we happened to be in Petersburg to see this illumination, which is always the grandest of the summer, and the grandest I ever saw or expect to see. Nearly two hundred years' experience in illuminating the grounds, an ambition on the part of the artists in charge of the pyrotechnics to exceed each other, and an unlimited amount of money, for the Czars never care what it costs, have made the annual illumination of Peterhoff the finest in the world.

Compared with the fountains which we have seen in the parks of Versailles, but are more expensive and unique, the lights, myriads of them, were introduced behind or under the water, so that the cascades and the streams and the spray seemed to be reflected from a secret of fire. Mirrors were introduced in some magical manner to intensify the effect and repeat the illumination. I have no words to describe this remarkable arrangement. I never saw or heard of it before, and do not now know how it was done. The reader may imagine, if he can, streams of water as large as one's body thrown fifty feet in the air, and in their fall breaking into millions of beads. Then imagine lights so arranged as to send their rays across these millions of beads, with mirror to multiply their intensity, every drop of water appearing to the bewildered spectator like a pearl of fire or a melting star. Then at intervals, lime-lights with colored glass were introduced, which made each drop of water red, or blue, or green, or purple. The result cannot be described or imagined. It must be seen. The visitors to the fountains are treated to an illuminated fountain at the Grand Union Hotel, and know how beautiful it is. Perhaps they can imagine something of the result if that little illumination should be spread over acres at an ocean of water used.

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in the air, and then falls shivering into millions of pearls to a marble basin below. From the Samson fountain to the sea leads a basin or canal, each side of which is a row of fountains that when in operation look like poplar trees, and are as tall, some remarkable effects.

In another basin the jets are so arranged in the center and on the sides as to form the Russian coat-of-arms in water. There is another peculiar effect produced by arranging little brass tubes about the diameter of a lead pencil, and of different lengths, which is twelve or fourteen feet high, and the base of about twelve feet square. This, when illuminated in the manner in which I have described, with lights of different colors, is worth seeing to put it very mildly. Just imagine, if you can, a pyramid of purple water, or green or gold or crimson. But the greatest curiosity of all, in the way of fountains, is a great tree of bronze. Every limb and branch is a conduit, every leaf a jet; and when the water is turned on the effect is most remarkable.

The first fall of fairy water scenes—here and there magnificent jets, sometimes two or three feet in diameter; then fountains that throw spray over marble nymphs, and cascades in the most fantastic manner. There are fountains with floating flowers and foliage plants in the center, like floating gardens, statuary of bronze and marble, artistic arbors, and kiosks, some of iron and brass, and every possible form of shrubbery and flowers.

Within the park at Peterhoff is a memorable place known as Montpelier, a low Dutch-looking cottage which was the summer home of Peter the Great, and in which he spent much time in study, apart from all the world but his peasant wife who cooked his meals for him. It was here that the restless, imperious spirit rested—the only place where it found rest. Here he would bury himself for weeks, at a time, as much alone as if he were in the midst of a forest, and it was a forest then. The cottage contains a fine collection of paintings, being examples of the best Dutch masters, which Peter collected in his visit to Holland.

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One room is filled from ceiling to floor with the portraits of 800 Russian maidens, each in a different posture. This was one of the freaks of Catherine. Count Rotari, one of her lovers, was a fine portrait artist, and, during of him, she ordered him to travel through the empire and paint the picture of every pretty girl he saw. In one room at the Peterhoff Palace are the results of his life work, for Catherine never permitted him to return to Petersburg. Here are two portraits of Catherine, opposite each other in the apartments she once occupied. In one she appears stark naked; in the other she is in the coronation robes and wearing her imperial crown. She was a queer woman.

On the broad flight of stairs which leads to the palace at Peterhoff the Czars Paul, the husband of Catherine, the man who brought her from Germany to ride over the Russian people, was stripped of all his clothing but his shirt by Count Orloff and other of his captors, and taken to Petersburg to die.

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dearly fond of a certain rug-bush, ordered that no one should pluck flowers from it but herself. To enforce her order she asked the commandant of the guards to put a sentinel there to warn people away. The order was executed and never revoked, so each morning, summer and winter, for more than a hundred and twenty-five years, in time of war and in time of peace, in storm and sunshine, when the palace was empty and when it was full, this sentinel was sent to his post. He died, and another took his place, and then another, until the reason for the order was forgotten, and no one knew why the soldier was there. But he was still kept at his post until the investigations of the curious poster being reported to the Czar the order of Elizabeth was revoked.

The Palace with a Tragedy. There is a beautiful drive through what is called the English garden, so called from

its having been laid out by an English architect to the palace of Oranienbaum, the scene of some of the most tragic episodes in Russian history. The palace was originally built by the notorious Prince Mentenkoff, the factotum of Peter the Great, called in his time "the little Czar," because of his influence with Peter, and the manner with which he exercised it. It is said that his extreme subservience to Peter was the cause of his rapid advancement and his influence at court, for he used to let Peter kick and beat him like a dog, and did all his dirty work. His influence continued through the short reign of Peter's widow, Catherine, who ordered her son and successor on the throne, Peter II., to marry Mentenkoff's daughter; but he refused to do so, and as soon as his mother died went the favorite, daughter and all, to Siberia, and confiscated the property his father had given the Prince.

Now Peterhoff the Czar has a small private palace, in which he often resides in summer in preference to the larger and more showy one. It was formerly the residence of one of his uncles, and was purchased by the present Czar. While the imperial family are there the court resides at Peterhoff. There is still another private palace called Gatchina, and the family are often good deal. While I was in Petersburg the Czar was at Peterhoff, and the King of Greece and his family were occupying Gatchina.

Then the mastery of herself which a cat shows when, having been caught in a position from which there is no escape, she calmly sits down to face out the threat of a dog, is a marvelous thing. Everybody has seen a kitten on a street doorstep attacked by a dog ten times her size, as apparently self-possessed as if she were her mistress' lap. If she turns tail and runs down the street, she is lost; the dog will have a sure advantage of her. Even as it is, if he could get up courage enough to seize her on the spot, he would be able to make short work of her. It is a case of life and death; but the whole air and attitude of the cat is one of pure and confident bravado. "You dare not touch me, and you know it," is what the position tells the dog. But she is intensely on her guard, in spite of her air of perfect content. Her legs, concealed under her fur, are ready for a spring; her claws are unsheathed; her eyes never move for an instant from the dog; as he bounds from side to side, barking with comical fury, those glittering eyes follow him with the keenest scrutiny. If he plucks up his courage to grab her, she is ready; she will sell her life dearly. She is watching her chance, and she does not miss it. The dog tries Fabian tactics, and withdraws a few feet, settling down upon his fore-paws, growling ferociously as he does so. Just then the sound of a dog's bark in the next street attracts his eyes and ears for a moment; and when he looks back, the kitten is gone! He looks down the street and starts wildly in that direction, and reaches a high board fence just as a cat's tail—a most stony tail for such a little cat—is vanishing over the top of it. He is beaten; the cat showed not only more courage than he had but a great deal more generalship.—Boston Transcript.

Satisfied. It takes a good deal to disturb the equanimity of a thoroughly well-ordered mind, as the following incident illustrates:

Old Aunt Sally Pratt, all her life a resident of a certain New England village, was one day sitting by her favorite window in an upper chamber of her house. The afternoon was warm and Aunt Sally suddenly dropped asleep. The window was open, and ten minutes later, the old lady fell forward and, to the horror of several persons who saw her, she fell out of the window to the ground below. When picked up at the window and said calmly:

"Well, well; I often set at that window 'n' wondered how it'd feel to go a tumbler out of it, and now I know. Well, well, well! Queer how things do turn out sometimes."

The fact that she had turned herself out of the window gave her no concern, although she narrowly escaped being killed.

She Wanted Everything to Match. Little Flossy was visiting her papa's sister, a maiden lady, in the country. The child was painfully impressed with the sameness and primness of everything, and one day asked: "Aunt Maria, what makes you have everything all alike?" "Because I like to have everything match," replied the aunt. "Was that what mamma meant when she told papa that you were trying awful hard to make a match with every old widower in town?" asked innocent Flossy.

The greatest span of a cantilever bridge is that of the Forth Bridge, which will be finished in October, 1889. It has two of 1,710 feet each. Its extreme height will be 361 feet above high water, and foundations going ninety-one feet below high water.

Young veal may be told by the bone in the cutlet. If it is very small the veal is not good.

FOR THE LADIES.

A HALF-HOUR CHAT WITH OUR FASHION DAUGHTERS.

The Latest Fashions Discussed, and Suggestions Made in Relation to Becoming Toilettes—Ever Fickle Fashion's Demands and Requirements.

[NEW YORK CORRESPONDENCE.]

There is a radical change for the smaller, and therefore the better, in winter bonnets to be worn at church, at the theater and in other places of assemblage, where outspreading millinery has so long been a nuisance. Women who this time last year sought a head-covering for the genuine protection it would afford them were in despair. The folly of fashion was carried to a still more ludicrous and inartistic extreme by the brims, which were out of all proportion to their absurdly high crowns and face trimmings. This season all the exaggerations are modified. The bonnets shield the back of the head almost entirely, which the horse-shoe style of last winter did not. The bonnet is now really a bonnet, and not the toy head-gear that it was. But it must not be imagined that the visual obstructiveness of millinery is abated, because, unfortunately, a good proportion of our women will go into audiences wearing hats instead of bonnets; and here are pictures of brand-new hats that are fully as big as their predecessors. These are hats of bows, and are something entirely new. A walk through Broadway and Fifth avenue would not to-day disclose half a dozen examples of them, for they have only just been brought over from London, and are barely yet adopted into vogue by our foremost dressers. It will be seen in the two models sketched that they are peculiar in having their broad brims turned up all around, and in being surmounted by wide, loose bows of cloth, which sway and flap in December winds like the sails of a bark. Feathers and flowers and rib-

bons are not to be put on them, and if there is any other ornament than the bows it consists, as in the first picture, of a whole bird.

There are often sharp talks by sympathetic persons upon the fashion of wearing birds as ornaments, but I do not suppose it will have the slightest effect upon those who imagine that it is chic to walk or drive about the streets with a disordered little mass of feathers, beak and claws, perched in an impossible position upon a head-dress which is already several inches too high. The mother birds are killed, they say, and the young left to die of starvation because certain women insist that it shall be so. Yet how gentle, and sympathetic, and tender those very women pretend to be when it suits their convenience. That a nineteenth-century woman is so utterly selfish, so hopelessly without brains or feeling, and so incapable of learning even the very element of humanity, that she must have birds to adorn herself with at any cost. This terrible indictment against rich women is far too sweeping. They are simply thoughtless, and to put it tersely, led by the nose by the milliner. She tells them birds are the fashion, therefore they wear birds, but I believe honestly that the majority of them have a sort of vague idea that the bird is made somewhere, just as lincifer matches, bead trimmings and buttons are made. If they could only be persuaded that the fashion was an ugly

thing, they would be wiser. There is a yellowish-red shade which, as the season advances, will be used with gray for children's dresses. The new color par excellence for the little ones is a decided tone of brown with red in it, and the style of cut is purely Diorella.

INFANT cloaks are made of soft white cashmere or Henrietta cloth, trimmed with faille, and are wadded and lined in delicate tints of Bengaline silk. The yokes are formed by means of the smocking stitch, and are thus made to fit the neck nicely.

AN exquisite tea-gown, the property of the ruddy-haired siren, Jane Hading, is of delicate lime-green silk, brocaded in velvet leaves of a darker tint, and falls away from a petticoat of Bengaline silk of lighter shade. Bands of Russian sable trim the gown from collar to hem, and the sleeves widen at the wrist and fall in deep points half way down the skirt. This is worn over a wrinkled coat-sleeve of the Bengaline to match the skirt. A pointed hood at the back is bordered with fur and a full vest of Bengaline silk falls over the belt.

A CHARMING house dress is of India silk in Russian red. The skirt is deeply smocked on one lap with gold thread, having the effect of a golden network. The drapery falls away from this on either side in long, loose folds gathered slightly here and there with red watered ribbons embroidered in gold thread. A silk blouse matching the skirt in color is smocked with gold, and has a broad band of embroidered ribbon fastened behind with many long loops and ends falling upon the skirt. The shoes worn with this costume should be of red leather.

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There is a yellowish-red shade which, as the season advances, will be used with gray for children's dresses. The new color par excellence for the little ones is a decided tone of brown with red in it, and the style of cut is purely Diorella.

INFANT cloaks are made of soft white cashmere or Henrietta cloth, trimmed with faille, and are wadded and lined in delicate tints of Bengaline silk. The yokes are formed by means of the smocking stitch, and are thus made to fit the neck nicely.

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The quality is, of course, stouter and heavier than that used in gloves of the same kid, but in appearance they are the same. These slippers come in drab, black, brown, fawn tint, and blue, and will doubtless be the great furore for full-dress occasions the coming season. Satin slippers and ties in all the delicate shades which cannot be matched in kid as well as bronze kids in different styles of ornamentation, will also find their way upon the dance floor as they have heretofore, like old stand-bys. The Adonis shoe, which represents the time of classical cos-

tumes, is an article which must give ease in dancing, as it looks so comfortable and well adapted to the ordinary as well as peculiar foot. A handsome low shoe is the bronze sandal slipper, ornamented with large steel or gilt buckles on huge bows of ribbon over the instep. A novelty in ties for fancy dress balls is brilliant red kid as vivid as the most highly polished coral. A combination of smocked kid tops and patent leather tips, or boxings is represented in the Adonis shoe for dress purposes.

Shall we have in shoes what is already a freak in gloves—that is, mismatched pairs? The fashion of wearing gloves of different colors on the two hands has reached us. However it came about, the Parisians have enthusiastically accepted the novel fancy, and from all appearances odd gloves will be absolutely de rigueur this winter, not only in Paris but on this side of the ocean as well, for they have been worn on several well occasions already. One can excuse silly fashions if they produce a good effect, but it is difficult to see that we shall gain anything whatever by giving ourselves the appearance of having one hand and arm of our own and one belonging to some one else. One has often heard of the reluctance of some folks to permit one hand to know of the other's doings, but this is the first time that these indispensable members of our bodies have been distinctively clothed.—Chicago Ledger.

Fashion Small Talk. A GREAT many black hats and bonnets are worn.

ARMURE silk is the latest fancy for brides' dresses.

LACE is the favorite trimming for evening dresses.

BRIGHT plaided stuffs are combined with plain ones in little girls' dresses.

With high frocks of velvet or cashmere, little girls wear very deep, round-collared collars of white lace or cut-work embroidery.

ALTHOUGH cutures are less voluminous, the hair is still piled on the top of the head, while a few light curls fall over the forehead.

VALANQUEZ is the name of a new lace made of silk with a torchon edge, suggestive of maltese in some of the patterns, but outlined with cord in all the prominent parts of the design.

THE newest La Tosca sticks have a cavity in the top, in which a pen, ink, pencil and a roll of paper are carried. The head of the stick is screwed on to keep these articles and writers' utensils in good shape until needed.

The mingling of pure vivid reds, blues, greens, yellows and purples with medium and two-tone shades of these colors along with the grays, drabs, olives and browns, gives a marked individuality to this winter's fashions.

The swellest of all well accessories to a bridal procession is a pair of handsomely dressed pages, each carrying suspended from the arm by a broad ribbon a satin shoe filled with flowers to match those held by the bridesmaids.

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