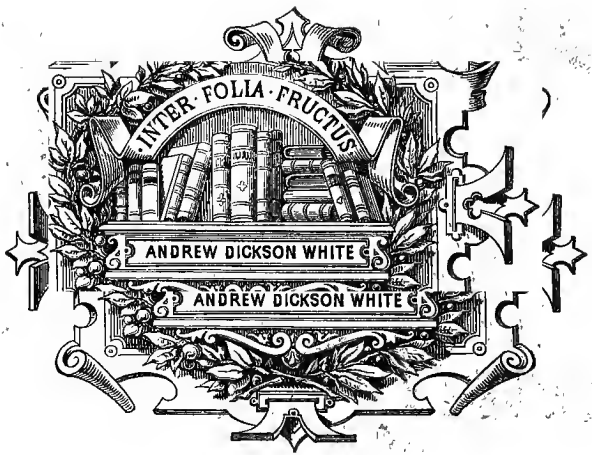
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KRILOFF'S ORIGINAL FABLES.

MORRISON AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

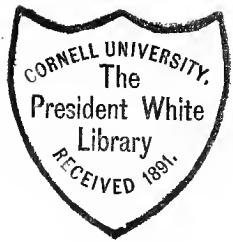
KRILOFF'S

ORIGINAL FABLES.

TRANSLATED BY

I. HENRY HARRISON.

LONDON:
REMINGTON & CO., 134 NEW BOND STREET.
1883.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PREFACE.

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In undertaking to put the fables of Kriloff into English verse, I have been stimulated and encouraged even by the very difficulties of the task, and above all induced to persevere by a profound admiration of his genius, and a conviction that out of Russia he is almost entirely unknown. Translation can in no case, I am only too well aware, come near the original work, if it be one of the highest class, and more especially if of an original and national character. Yet such translations as those of Tasso by Fairfax, and of Shakespeare in German, have nearly fulfilled that impossible requisite, and without translation a large part of the world must necessarily ignore many of the world's greatest literary productions. I cannot pretend to the skill, nay, I may say the sympathetic genius, that reproduced Tasso and Shakespeare, but I may fairly claim some amount of indulgence on the score that the language from which I have translated is far more difficult than either Italian or English to a foreigner, and that the English public generally are never likely to know as much of it as is known of Italian in England, or of English abroad.

I am not ignorant that a translation of Kriloff's fables already exists in English, but then it is in prose, and I am of opinion that the spirit of Kriloff cannot but evaporate

in prose; that verse alone, even though at a distance, can hope to reproduce something of the idiomatic humour, of the thousand delicacies of thought and style. Prose may give the bare skeleton, but nothing more. I am not criticising the prose translation to which I allude; indeed, having had the intention in my mind of translating Kriloff in verse some years before it appeared, I have purposely abstained from reading it, and I do not yet know whether my explanations of the fables agree with those of Mr. Ralston or not. I am simply giving my reasons for choosing verse. I have endeavoured, in doing so, as far as the technical exigencies of rhyme and metre permitted, to reproduce the versification of the original. This rule I consider a vital one in all verse translations. It may have some exceptions, and Connington's *Virgil* is a striking proof in point, but can one imagine Dante not in *tertia rima?* For me Kriloff belongs to a class of writers that require this imitation, provided it be kept within reasonable limits, and I will therefore shortly state what limits I have striven to observe. I may say that the general character of his versification has been followed in every instance, even to the distinguishing traits of particular fables, and that some fables, such as "The Squirrel" (No. 126), are exact reproductions. At the same time, whenever I found that I should be obliged to sacrifice the spirit to the letter, I never hesitated to change, but in such cases, if the form was not exactly Kriloff in one place, it was Kriloff in another, at least in intention, if not in effect. Kriloff's verse is always strictly iambic, and to this it will be seen I have not always adhered, thinking it becomes monotonous in English. The principal change I have made is not using the same number of double rhymes which abound in Kriloff, the Russian, with its manifold inflections and similar terminations for the

same parts of speech, being peculiarly rich in them. As the English language is decidedly poor in this respect, the change was a matter of necessity. Again, I have not scrupled to shorten lines. Kriloff's longer lines are nearly always Alexandrines, and most of his fables contain many of them, but I have frequently preferred our own so-called heroic measure of ten syllables. I must beg my English readers, if I have any, to lay any faults of versification which they detect on me and not on Kriloff, for his verse is always easy and fluent, and admirably suits itself to the subject on hand.

There is another important point of treatment to which I must refer. Nothing caused me greater difficulty than to decide how far I should attempt to render the essentially Russian characteristics of particular fables, and how far it was wiser to replace them by English equivalents. I soon found in practice that this was a question which decided itself. In such fables, for instance, as "The Oracle" (No. 4), the circumstances of which are by no means Russian, a substitution was necessary in the moral not to blunt the real point of the fable, and similar substitutions have been more than once employed. In such fables as "Damian's Fishsoup" (No. 32), or "The Sword-bladé" (No. 131), all the circumstances of which are essentially Russian, they have been scrupulously preserved. It is worth remark how very few of Kriloff's fables require this minute local accuracy; and the reason, if I am not mistaken, is this, that beyond the particular application of any fable, there is always a wider sense in which it is true applied to any nationality, that is, to all mankind.

This last remark brings me to my best apology for having ventured on this publication, the rare merits of Kriloff, and the universality of his mind. I have dared

to hope that these qualities will cover the defects of translation, and that some few will be found to thank me for introducing them, though at second hand, to such an inexhaustible treasury of true and noble thoughts, of sound judgment, of genial humour, and of poetical fancy.

I have not translated all the original fables, because I do not feel that I can fairly render what I do not sympathize with; and in my judgment the fables I have omitted are sensibly weaker than the rest, sometimes—a rare thing with Kriloff—through the want of a clear decided aim, and sometimes through comparative weakness of execution. For such reasons I have left untranslated twenty-two original fables. Kriloff borrowed in all thirty-eight fables, and I have translated seven of them, as specimens of his way of treating the ideas which he took from others. A reference to the list will show that most of the untranslated borrowed fables are old favourites. I thought it unnecessary to give another version of "The Fox and the Grapes," "The Wolf and the Lamb," and others of the same class. To complete the sketch of Kriloff's work, I have given a list of all the fables, and the sources of all the borrowed ones, and added a classification of the fables according to their subjects. The alphabetical index to the translated fables contains references to the best Russian edition of Kriloff, that by Egoroff, by which the original can easily be found for the purpose of comparison.

I should mention that the Russian editions of Kriloff are not printed chronologically; he purposely separated fables of the same date, and especially those relating to similar subjects, but it appeared to me that I should give a clearer view of the whole by following a chronological than an arbitrary order. In another point I have differed from the Russian editions; they all print the fables in an

arbitrary arrangement of the lines, sometimes apparently being guided by the rhyme, and sometimes by the corresponding length of line, and again both these tests are continually violated. The arrangement seems to be based on the mere look of a page to the eye, and the principle selected to please it the avoidance of all uniformity. As it was, of course, impossible to render the work all through line by line, and as the arrangement of the lines must thus any way be different, I have adopted the principle of arrangement by the number of feet, and neglected the place of the rhymes.

For my explanations of the fables, and for the chronological order, I am deeply indebted to the work of M. Kenévitch, *Biographical and Historical Remarks on the Fables of Kriloff, with Materials for his Biography*, which is acknowledged in all Russian literary circles as the best and most exhaustive on the subject. For the sketch of Kriloff's life I am mainly indebted to M. Pletneff's biography, the best critic of Kriloff, if Kenévitch himself be excepted. My authorities, therefore, have furnished me with the best information which Russians themselves possess. At the same time, whenever my conviction differs from these authorities, I have thought it better frankly to say so and to give my reasons.[1] I hope my Russian friends will not take exception to the frankness with which I have expressed, in my notes to different fables, what I believe to be the truth about things in Russia. If they should object that the picture is generally

[1] There is a work on *Krylov et ses Fables* by M. Fleury, the present French Lector of the University of St. Petersburg, to which Kenévitch frequently refers, and nearly in every instance to disagree with it. I will only ask my English readers not to look at it, unless they wish to get an utterly false idea of Kriloff, who, according to M. Fleury, borrowed nearly every fable he wrote, and especially from French writers.

too dark to be altogether true, that it leaves lighter shades of better things out of the canvas, my reply must be that the painter is in reality Kriloff himself, and his justification must also be mine; as a satirist he had to deal with the darker shades, and it has been my business to explain what I believe he meant, and not to write a vindication of Russian society. Whenever I have added any remarks of my own, going beyond the absolute contents of the fable, I have always confined myself to what I know to be facts, and to the special point raised in the fable itself. I might easily have added many things to prove that the Russia of to-day is not the Russia of Kriloff, but such considerations did not lie within my province. In some few instances I thought that fairness required a reminder of particular instances of progress, but I could not carry out such a principle through all my remarks.

In conclusion, I beg to disclaim having been induced to rush into print by the advice or entreaties of friends; I have done so simply to invite the only test of all literary work, public opinion. It may easily turn out that the verdict is against me, and I must then content myself with the personal pleasure I have enjoyed in the study of Kriloff; but in answer to those who may condemn as an ambitious dream my attempt to render a great national genius in a verse translation, I will say that I would rather fail in an honest effort to do the best of which I may be capable, in order to give some true idea of my author, than gain a commonplace *succès d'estime*, and I might fail in that, by attempting what to me would always be a dry and utterly unsimilar prose rendering.

I. HENRY HARRISON.

ST. PETERSBURG, *August* 1883.

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7. Elephant in Command, .	Tchinovnicks and Peasants.
33. Fox and Marmot,	Dishonest fortunes.
42. Peasants and River, .	Official bribery shared in by superiors.
69. Village Assembly, .	Communal abuses.
74. Bear in charge of Bees,	Bribery unpunished.
78. Wolf and Shepherds,	Oppression by Tchinovnicks.
81. Fox an Architect, .	Directors of Institutions.
93. Sheep and Dogs, . .	Police and underpayment.
100. Peasant and Sheep,	Justice to the Peasants.
104. Fishes' Dance, . .	Provincial Governors.
120. Wolf and Mouse,	Provincial Courts and Judge.
127. Pike, . . .	Corruption unpunished.

FABLE.	SUBJECT.
134. Ass,	Rogues and rank.
143. Wolves and Sheep,	Tyranny over Peasants.
146. Grandee,	Governors and Judges.

c. *The Public Service.*

48. Stone and Worm,	Incapable men keep their places.
123. Razors,	Chiefs that fear clever subordinates.
126. Squirrel,	Rewarded when too late.

d. *Charity.*

55. Good-natured Fox,	Ostentatious.
59. Doe and Dervis,	True.
61. Cloud,	Ill placed.

e. *Education.*

23. Ducat,	Too many subjects taught.
39. Peasant and Snake,	Foreign Tutors and Governesses,
58. Cask,	Irreparable evils of a bad one.
86. Cuckoo and Pigeon,	Public Institutions separating children from their parents.

II. WITH HISTORICAL ALLUSION.

54. Steed and Rider,	Louis XVI. and France.
64. Dogs' Friendship,	Congress of Vienna.
87. Writer and Robber,	Voltaire.

III. WITH A MORAL OF GENERAL APPLICATION.

a. *On Critics.*

5. Eagle and Fowls,	Rise to the height of the author you criticise.
13. Ass and Nightingale,	Incapable judges.
22. Swine,	Critics that can only see faults.
68. Flowers,	Artificial talent alone touched by criticism.

b. *Pedantry and Learning.*

11. Gardener and Philosopher,	Bookworms.
38. Divers,	Science and learning.
57. Sightseer,	Minute study.
114. Swine under Oak,	Ignorance.
117. Broom,	Presumption.

c. *Friendship.*

3. Hermit and Bear,	Officious friends.
10. Fire in Grove,	Interested friendship.
17. Peasant in Distress,	No help in need.

FABLE.	SUBJECT.
41. Strangers and Dogs,	Envy.
43. Fire and Diamond,	Misused powers.
49. Finch and Pigeon,	Pity misfortune.
50. Eagle and Mole,	Listen to advice.
51. Mosquito and Shepherd,	The weak and the strong.
53. Slanderer and Snake,	Slander.
62. Ape and Spectacles,	Ignorance.
65. Peasant and Labourer,	Ingratitude.
66. Wolf and Fox,	Generous with what we do not need.
67. Mechanician,	Stupidity dangerous.
70. Starling,	Vanity.
71. Hops,	Parasites.
72. Mouse and Rat,	Cowardice.
73. Mistress and Two Maids,	Out of frying-pan into fire.
75. Mirror and Monkey,	Satire powerless against vice.
76. Lion and Wolf,	Indulgence to youth.
79. Elephant in Luck,	We praise ourselves in others.
82. Too Bad of Him,	We blame others for our own faults.
83. Fortune on a Visit,	Let no opportunity slip.
85. Funeral,	Useless rich men.
88. Comb,	Conscience.
90. Sportsman,	Procrastination.
91. Peasant and Snake,	Once dishonest, always distrusted.
92. Ant,	Provincial heroes.
94. Ass and Peasant,	Choose well your servants.
96. Boy and Worm,	Treachery punished.
98. Industrious Bear,	Patience.
103. Two Dogs,	Parasitical flatterers.
105. Fly and Bee,	Importunate guests.
109. Crow,	Unequal marriages.
110. Flint and Diamond,	Presumption.
112. Spider and Bee,	Talent should be useful.
115. Snake and Lamb,	The spiteful fear the spite of others.
118. Nightingales,	Work a willing horse to death.
125. Peasant and Horse,	Man judging Providence.
128. Cuckoo and Eagle,	Rank and worth.
135. Owl and Ass,	Ignorant guides.
136. Dog and Horse,	Humble service.
137. Snake,	Talent not enough for love and esteem.
138. Wolf and Cat,	Keep what you have sown.
140. Shepherd,	Unjustly blamed.
141. Squirrel,	Busy bodies.
142. Fox,	Grudge a little, and lose more.
144. Peasant and Dog,	Undertake too much, and do nothing.
145. Robber and Carter,	Crime committed for trifling ends.

IV. A JOKE.

56. Man with Three Wives,	Keep them all !

SOURCES OF THE BORROWED FABLES.

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SEVEN TRANSLATED.

Russian Title.	La Fontaine.	James' Esop.
3. The Hermit and the Bear, . .	L'Ours et l'Amateur des Jardins.	—
6. The Fly and the Travellers, .	Le Coche et la Mouche.	—
73. The Mistress and her Two Maids, ...	La Vieille et les deux Servantes, .	Fable 140
78. The Wolf and the Shepherds, .	Le Loup et les Bergers, . .	,, 189
105. The Fly and the Bee, . .	La Mouche et la Fourmi, . .	—
109. The Crow, ...	Le Geai paré des plumes du Paon,	,, 6
116. The Wild Goats, . .	. . . . .	,, 113

THIRTY-ONE OMITTED.†

SEVEN FROM LA FONTAINE ALONE.

2. The Capricious Spinster, . .	La Fille (found with Le Heron).
3. The Old Man and the Three Young Ones, ...	Le Vieillard et les trois jeunes Hommes.
11. The Two Pigeons, ...	Les deux Pigeons.
12. The Plague among the Beasts, .	Les Animaux Malades de la peste.
16. The Banker and the Cobbler, .	Les Savetier et le Financier.
18. Gout and the Spider, . .	La Goutte et l'Araignée.
26. The Shepherd and the Sea, . .	Le Berger et la Mer.

SIX FROM ESOP ALONE.

	James' Esop.
20. The Spendthrift and the Swallow, .	*
21. Hercules, ...	**
23. The Swimmer and the Sea, .	Fable 180.
24. The Lion and the Fox, . . .	,, 15.
25. The Bear in the Net, . .	,, 29.
27. The Boy and the Snake, . .	,, 8.

† The numbers of these fables correspond with those of the chronological list, under the heading of omitted borrowed fables.

* Not in James' Esop, but Kenévitch gives translation from the Greek.

** Not in James' Esop, but Kenévitch gives the Greek text.

EIGHTEEN FROM LA FONTAINE, WHICH ARE ALSO IN ESOP.

Russian Title.	La Fontaine.	James' Esop.
1. The Oak and the Reed,	Le Chêne et le Roseau,	Fable 91
4. The Crow and the Fox,	Le Corbeau et le Renard,	,, 193
5. The Frog and the Bull,	Le Grenouille qui se vent faire aussi grosse que le Bœuf,	,, 36
6. The Lion at the Hunt,	La Génisse, la Chèvre, et la Brebis en société avec le Lion,	,, 95
7. The Wolf and the Lamb,	Le Loup et l'Agneau,	,, 26
8. The Grasshopper and the Ant,	La Cigale et la Fourmi,	,, 7
9. The Fox and the Grapes,	Le Renard et les Raisins,	,, 1
10. The Peasant and Death,	La Mort et la Bûcheron,	,, 134
13. The Cock and the Pearl,	Le Coq et la Perle,	,, 11
14. The Lion and the Mosquito,	Le Lion et le Mucheron,	***
15. The Frogs asking for a King,	Les Grenouilles qui demandent un Roi,	,, 115
17. The Young Crow,	Le Corbeau voulant imiter l'Aigle,	,, 132
19. The Wolf and the Stork,	Le Loup et la Cigogne,	,, 5
22. The Miser and the Hen,	La Poule aux Œufs d'or,	,, 9
28. The Lion in Old Age, / 29. The Fox and the Ass,	Le Lion devenu vieux,	,, 188
30. The Kettle and the Pot,	Le Pot de terre et le Pot de fer,	,, 106
31. The Lion and the Mouse,	Le Lion et le Rat,	,, 31

*** Not in James' Esop, but Kenévitch gives translation from the Greek.

INTRODUCTION.

—o—

KRILOFF'S LIFE.

IVAN ANDRÉEVITCH KRILOFF, the son of a captain in the army, who distinguished himself in the rebellion of the famous Pougatcheff, was born in Moscow, February 2, 1768. His father had entered the civil service and settled in Tver, where he became president of the Town Court. At his death the boy was just eleven years of age. The widow was left without a pension and without means. She contrived to get Ivan appointed as "writer" (copying-clerk) to the same court in which his father had presided. The boy had hardly received any education, but had a love for books, and greedily devoured a large box of them which his father had left. He early showed a taste for the stage, and when only fourteen composed an opera, which he sold for sixty roubles, and bought books with the money, chiefly French ones.

Their poverty brought the widow and her son to St. Petersburg in 1782, the boy obtaining a place in the service which only assured them twenty-five roubles a year. Six years later, after a life of care and want, his

mother died, and Kriloff was alone at twenty years of age. He always spoke of his mother with the warmest love, and to her alone he owed the little education which he obtained in his youth,—in fact, all he did not owe to his own unguided reading.

It was a long time before the future fabulist found out his real vocation. His time was comparatively wasted till over thirty years of age. He occupied himself with tedious tragedies and farcically satirical articles. After his mother's death he only remained in the service a couple of years, and then began the career of a journalist and printer. His *Spirits' Post*, a satirical journal, shows in a coarser and unpolished form some of that humour which afterwards distinguished his fables; in it he wrote against the abuse in the society of the day of the French language, and against the system of education then prevailing. This was followed by *The Observer*, of the same character, and that again by *The St. Petersburg Mercury*. In the latter there appeared a good many pieces of insignificant verse. In these enterprises Kriloff was assisted by others.

In the meantime he wrote for the stage. His earliest pieces, *Cleopatra* and *Philomela*, were devoid of all literary merit. A comic opera, *The Mad Family*, and a comedy entitled *The Tricksters*, were acted, as also another comedy called *The Writer in the Antechamber*. All these productions are devoid of life and reality; they are imitations of the taste of the day. Kriloff had now reached his twenty-seventh year.

For six years Kriloff wrote nothing, nor do we know much of his means of subsistence. He seems to have

passed his time in social amusements, and to have worked no more than was necessary to gain his bread, without much thought of a literary career. His self-education, however, progressed; through constant reading he became master of the French and German languages, though not to speak either fluently, and fairly acquainted with Italian. He possessed the skill of a professional artist on the violin, and used to play quartetts with the best-known amateurs of the day.

During 1800 and 1801 Kriloff served as Secretary to the Military Governor of Riga, Prince Golitzine. On leaving that post, Golitzine took Kriloff with him to his estate in the Saratoff government, half as companion, half as tutor to his children. Here Kriloff appears to have perfected his own education, a process not finished till he was thirty-seven years of age.

In 1806, by the advice of Demetrieff, a then famous poet and fabulist, Kriloff began to translate La Fontaine's fables into Russian verse. His success led him on to original composition in the same line, and he never after abandoned it for any other, and in the following year he made his last theatrical effort in two comedies, *A Fashionable Shop* and *A Lesson to Daughters*, and a fairy opera called *Elijah the Hero*. These pieces were acted, and for a time popular; they contain more promise than his former ones, but in themselves could never have brought him a lasting fame. For thirty years he continued to publish fables, at intervals as the fancy took him, or as an occasion occurred. In 1812 he entered the service in the Imperial Library of St. Petersburg, and

from this time forth his position was assured. The remainder of his life passed in easy and congenial work, with fits of literary activity.

In 1841, in his seventy-fourth year, Kriloff retired from the Library, and received a handsome pension. He had adopted the family of a god-daughter, and occupied himself with teaching the children. He died in 1844. His monument stands in the Summer Garden of St. Petersburg, where it is daily surrounded by the children he loved, and for whom he did so much both in teaching them and their teachers.

Kriloff received every possible honour from public bodies and from the Imperial Family. He was the friend of all the best writers of the day. His circle of friends, however, was not large but intimate, and his family circle still more restrained. His nature was kind and generous, as the relations between him and a brother, whom he supported for many years, amply prove. He remained a bachelor, and a careless one. His rooms were the ideal of disorder, and he was as careless of his person as of the rest. His greatest pleasure was to read at home. Though of a thoroughly indolent character, Kriloff was capable of energy for a special purpose. In his fifty-first year, with a grammar and a dictionary, he mastered the Greek language so as to read it with ease. He was given to whims: at any hour of the night he would dress and be off to a fire, whatever the distance; a juggler's skill having once much impressed him, he bought a supply of balls, and, shutting himself up for a fortnight, taught himself to keep up an ever-changing wreath round his head.

KRILOFF'S FABLES.

The classification of the fables already given will enable me to shorten my remarks on this part of my subject, and I am the more glad to do so, because any lengthened criticism of an author by his translator is apt to convey the impression that the latter is indirectly praising his own work. In the little which I shall here say of Kriloff's fables, I must beg my readers to bear in mind that it is intended for what they are in Russian, their value in English being a very different question, which, declining to raise, I leave to the public.

Those who take the trouble to look at the chronological list, and to compare it with the preceding biography, will no doubt perceive that Kriloff began by translating from La Fontaine, and gradually gained confidence in his own powers as an original writer. Again, the tables showing the sources of the borrowed fables, compared with the chronological list, will show that in 1818, in his fifty-first year, in consequence of the study of Greek mentioned in the biography, he began to take fables direct from Esop. The notes to the various fables will, I hope, have shown, and still more clearly the fables themselves, what I have felt fully justified in insisting on all through, his vast superiority over La Fontaine. Kriloff wrote in all one hundred and two fables, and that is a small number if we consider that he wrote during thirty years; but his laziness has been mentioned, and the chronological list will show not a few years in which he produced nothing.

The fables that have a special application to Russian

affairs prove Kriloff's ardent patriotism, his sound judgment, his fearless exposure of all abuses, and his sympathy, though belonging, by his education and literary connections, to what may be called "the old school," with all really great reforms; witness his advocacy of the rights of the serfs. His satire becomes bitter when treating of the corruption and oppression that prevailed, as in "The Peasant and the Sheep" (No. 100), "The Wolves and the Sheep" (No. 143), "The Pike" (No. 127), and "The Cat and the Nightingale" (No. 102).

There is a grand and sounding rhythm of just indignation, well sustained by the full and lengthened measure, in "The Writer and the Robber" (No. 87). There is a fund of quiet and cutting humour in such fables as "The Cat and the Cook" (No. 27), "The Mirror and the Monkey" (No. 75), "The Razors" (No. 123), and "The Quartett" (No. 16). There is a depth of poetical feeling, a choice of expression, and a lively happiness of verse, which are absolutely inimitable, in "The Pond and the River" (No. 46), "The Brook" (No. 25), and "The Bluebell" (No. 101). There is a playful ease of versification and a finished elegance in his "Flowers" (No. 68), his "Fly and Bee" (No. 105), and his "Comb" (No. 88). In nearly all his fables, instead of a dry moral coldly told, we have an animated and natural dialogue, and a mass of them are clenched, like his "Ass" (No. 134), his "Guns and Sails" (No. 124), and his "Oracle" (No. 4), by a moral which gives a double value, an increased meaning, to every preceding line. Sometimes the moral precedes, as in "The Boy and the Worm" (No. 96), and then, as

we read, we feel the thoroughness and appositeness of its application through all that follows. Kriloff's dialogue seems to me the most characteristic trait of all, and it is always simple and intensely idiomatic. He never hesitates to use plain language where the subject requires it, his "Swine" (No. 22) being a case in point.

The fables on education, charity, and friendship are examples of his tendency to dwell on different aspects of the same question, and those on pedantry and learning and on critics are further examples of this. As instances of his powers of description, I would refer to the nightingale's song (in No. 13), to the eagle on the Caucasus (in No. 24), to the storm and the wreck in "The Guns and the Sails" (No. 124), and to the appearance of the fury in "The Writer and the Robber" (No. 87).

The fables which I have given as illustrative of his character need no commentary. I will only refer to "The Sack" (No. 9) as showing the power with which he could stigmatize what is mean and ignoble, and contrast with it the delicate and even tender reproof with which he corrected a mere weakness, in the two fables that refer to women, "The Shadow and the Man" (No. 45), and "The Lamb" (No. 99).

Notwithstanding that many of Kriloff's fables are very long, and that very few are ever very short, I do not fear to claim for him the merit of brevity in exposition and conciseness of expression. It will be found, except perhaps in "The Roach" (No. 111), and in the introduction to "Fortune and the Beggar" (No. 80), that all his details fit in as a natural and necessary development of the story

to be told, and that he tells an immense deal in a few lines. A striking instance of the power which this directness gives his style, is to be found in "The Peasant and the Sheep" (No. 100). His images are always admirably suited to their purpose, as the closing comparison of "The Bluebell" (No. 101), and the ship sinking "key-like" in "The Guns and the Sails" (No. 124).

But I must close these allusions, for I am involuntarily falling into the very fault which I wished to avoid, and feel that I am furnishing too many arms against myself, and I will close by saying that the originality of Kriloff will at least be apparent, if his other qualities disappear in translation, that he has "hit the nail on the head" so exactly in a vast number of instances, that his lines have become national proverbs, and that again the chief source from which he has borrowed inspiration has been the proverbs of the people. Kriloff is beyond all question as national as he is original, and he is the crowned king of the fabulists of all languages.

KRILOFF'S ORIGINAL FABLES.

I.

The Chest.

It often happens that our brains
We rack, and take most wondrous pains
When we need only try a guess,
And use the simplest means to win success.

A new-made Chest was home to the buyer brought,
And each that saw it cried, "A work of finished neatness!"
No one could praise enough its strength and its completeness.
Into the room a knowing locksmith came;
He gave it but a thought,
And swore it was a Chest made with a secret spring:
"Just so, no lock; I'll open it all the same:
I think I ought to know this sort of thing!
Ah! you may smile and doubt,
But in a trice I'll find the secret out."
With that the Chest in hand he takes,
And turns it o'er from side to side,
Till arm, and head, and body aches;
With nails and what not is the welding tried.

Meanwhile the lookers-on begin
To laugh, and whisper that he'd best give in;
Not he, he puffs, and pants, and fills each ear
With "'Tis not there, not so, not here."
He sweats, and shoves, and tries again; at last
He's tired, and the Chest still fast;
He gives it up, it is beyond his skill;
And yet the lid may lift whoever will.

II.

The Musicians.

A MAN invited once his neighbour
To dine with him, but really sought,
As he to music gave up every thought,
To show his troop of singers well could labour.
The choir struck up; some high, some low,
Some shouting from a full-pitched throat.
The guest's ears cracked, and every note
His head made giddy like a blow.
"Excuse me, friend," said he with admiration,
"What is there to delight in here? Thy choir
Bawl rubbish to their hearts' desire!"
"Right," said the host with smile of exultation,
"They do into a false note fall,
But then, they liquor never touch at all,
And all are men of conduct far, far above their station."

For my part, I say: rather drink, and show
That that, which you profess, you know.

[Kriloff has been reproached for the moral of this fable, but that he did not intend to favour drunkenness is evident from the praise which he received for it from Gogol, and it is quite in accordance with the practical side of the Russian character. Gogol says that Kriloff knew well, that a man of capacity could be easily led to a reasonable and moderate life, but felt deeply the many instances he saw around him of men pretending to what they were utterly wanting in.]

III.

The Hermit and the Bear.

ALTHOUGH a service is, when needed, dear to all,
The way to render one but few men know;
May none of us into a fool's hands fall!
More dangerous an officious friend than e'en a mortal foe.

A lonely kinless man once lived, apart
From cities, in a forest deep,
Whatever praise a hermit's life may reap,
Loneliness does not suit full many a heart,
Our joys and sorrows sweet it is to share.
You'll say: "But then, the mead, the forest's gloom,
The hills and streams, the verdure and the bloom?"
—"All excellent, deny it those who dare!
But all in time will tire, with no one whom
To speak a word to." Thus quite weary
Was now our Hermit of a life so dreary,

So off he sets into the woods, to find
Some one with whom he can acquaintance make,
Whom with him to his hut he'll take,
That is not of the bear or wolfish kind.
It happens, though, that a great Bear he meets.
What was there to be done? To lift
His hat politely to the Bear, who greets
Him with extended paw. They make a shift
In this way to be introduced,
And then make friends
So fast, they cannot be induced
To part, or think that friendship ever ends.
What all these days, which they together passed
While this their friendship happily did last,
They talked about, if they beguiled the way
With tales, or let their conversation run
Into some anecdote or racy fun,
Up to this time I cannot say.
The Hermit oftenest was mute,
And Bruin born a silent brute;
So that their dirty wash at home was done.
But let that pass, the Hermit's greatest pleasure
Was that God gave him in his friend a treasure.
Bruin he'd stand by, without Bruin pined,
Nor could he praise his Bruin to his mind.
One hot day out the two friends went,
On wandering through meads and groves intent,
O'er dales and many a hill;
And, as with bears in strength man matches ill,

The Hermit sooner than the Bear got tired,
And could not keep the pace required.
This seeing, Bruin spoke thus to his friend:
"Lie down a while, and take some rest,
And if thou sleep, it may be best;
And I my time in guarding thee will spend."
The Man, not given to dispute, lay down, yawned deep,
And instantly was fast asleep.
Meanwhile the sentinel was not at ease;
A fly the sleeper's nose did tease;
His paw swept o'er the face;
He looked,—another place—
'Twas near the neck; driven off with blow the third,
Again it settled on the nose;
And thus kept on for hours, escaping from all blows.
At last poor Bruin, without a single word,
Seized in his massive paw a great rough stone,
Sat on his hams, and, hardly drawing breath,
Thought to himself—"I'll have thee, meddler,'sdeath!"
Then, watching till the fly had reached the frontal bone,
With all his strength, upon the brow the stone he dashed!
The blow was deftly aimed, the skull was smashed,
And Bruin's friend for long did lie there all alone.

—o—

[This fable is taken from La Fontaine, who himself borrowed it from an Indian tale translated through the Persian. The idea of killing the man while driving off the fly, and the moral attached to it, is common to the original, La Fontaine, and Kriloff, but all the circumstances of the action, and the way of telling it, are Kriloff's own. By comparing it, even in its English dress, with La

Fontaine's "L'Ours et l'Amateur des Jardins," the added life and humour given to it by the Russian fabulist will, I think, be seen. The character and lonely life of the Hermit is much more in keeping with the story than the politeness of La Fontaine's Gardener. Again, La Fontaine supposes the man to be frightened, and to dissimulate his fear, while Kriloff treats the strange friendship as if it were a natural thing.]

IV.

The Oracle.

A WOODEN god stood once within an ancient fane,
And all his answers showed prophetic inspiration;
His wisdom gave good counsel to the nation,
His services were rendered not in vain,
For all his robes, by those to him beholden,
Were made one mass of silver, where not golden:
Deafened with prayers, half stifled with the scent
Of sacrifice, the god beneath his offerings bent.
All blindly follow what he teaches,
When suddenly—O wonder, shame!—
The Oracle betrays its fame,
Talks nonsense, which to downright rubbish reaches:
Whoever comes, whatever be the point,
Our Oracle finds speech but vague, disjoint,
And lies so, men ask wondering, whither
Hath flown the gift divine that once came hither!
This is the fact:
The Idol had a priest within, to act
His part in humbugging believers, so,
As long as one of sharp wits sat inside,
It did not matter much, e'en if he lied,

But when a fool got in, it was no go,
The Idol to a goose could not say "Bo!"

I've heard, is 't true, that we in days gone by
Had many Justices, who passed for sages,
Only while they could on a Clerk rely
To whisper to them wisdom for his wages.

[The Russian moral speaks of Judges and their Secretaries, but, as this would have no point in English, it has been replaced by the well-known butts of our novelists and dramatists.]

v.

The Eagle and the Fowls.

AMID the light and freshness of the sky,
One early morn,
An Eagle flew on high
To where the lightnings of the gods are born,
And sailing down, from out the clouds alighted
Upon a fence, which from on high he'd sighted,
And where some hens were sitting in their yard.
Why he had chosen it to say is hard,
A seat ill-suited to the kingly bird,
But kings have their caprices, as we've heard:
Perhaps no fitter seat was there,
No oak, nor rock with summit bare;
Perhaps an honour to the Hens designed:
Whate'er it was that moved his mind,
He sat not long, but thence
Flew to another fence.

A draggled Hen, who sat there hatching eggs,
Watching the Eagle, of her neighbour begs,
She'll tell her why eagles such honours get.
"It cannot be their flight, for even I
Could make a shift from fence to fence to fly,
Why should we be such fools to set
Eagles before ourselves? They've got
No more than we in legs and eyes, my dear!
And here, upon this very spot,
Thou'st seen the proof that they like Fowls fly low."
The Eagle, wearied rubbish like this to hear,
Says: "Dame, thou'rt right, but only partly though:
Lower than fowls an eagle sometimes flies,
But ne'er a fowl can mount unto the skies."

When thou, O Critic, dost of genius write,
Waste not thy pains its weaknesses to find,
But to its strength and grandeur turn thy mind,
And strive thyself to reach its giddy height.

VI.

The Fly and the Travellers.

One hottest afternoon of hot July,
Through clouds of dust, four horses try
A coach with luggage, in which sat
A Nobleman and Family in chat,
Uphill to drag.
The worn-out horses, whipped, slower and slower lag,

And end by standing still. The Coachman quits
His box quite riled;
He and the Footman lash the steeds to bits:
'Tis vain. From out the lumbering coach there flits
In turn, the Nobleman, his Wife, and Child,
The Tutor, and a Maid, by fear all goaded.
The coach, however, heavily was loaded,
So that the horses, on the traces straining,
On the steep hill but inch by inch were gaining.
A Fly came there by chance. How not distress to aid?
It sets to work, and—buzzes a master of its trade!
Against the trunks and bundles knocks;
Now the bay horse it worries on the nose,
Now o'er the brown one's forehead biting goes;
And in the Coachman's stead alights upon the box;
Or else, abandoning the horses,
Among the travellers hither and thither courses;
'Tis busy as a dealer at a fair,
And but of this complains;
That none, despite its pains,
To help doth care.
On foot and talking nonsense the Servants follow after;
The Tutor with the Lady keeps up a whispered laughter;
The Nobleman himself, not thinking he's required,
To seek for mushrooms with the Maid hath to the wood retired;
The Fly, in each ear buzzing, doth hum to each that she,
And she alone, has tried to set them free.

Meanwhile the horses step by step have dragged their load
A little higher up, unto a level road.
"We're off," exclaims the Fly, "may God be praised, at last!
And I may have some rest from labour passed:
My wings will hardly lift me from the ground."

How many are there not, that ever try
To poke their noses into each man's fry,
And when not asked nor wanted are always foremost found.

—o—

[This is taken from "Le Coche et la Mouche" of La Fontaine, which gives but a faint description of the travellers, and the close of which, as well as its moral, is much less pointed than the fable of Kriloff. The humorous turns of Kriloff, if they have not been quite lost in the translation, will be sought in vain in the French writer.]

VII.

The Elephant in Command.

A MAN of influence and rank,
Whose mind's a blank,
The softness of his heart will find but few to thank,
That only makes the matter worse.

An Elephant was once, in high command,
Placed o'er the forests of a woody land.
Description should be terse:

So let us say—though elephants are clever,
No family without its fool is ever:
Our new-made chief
From birth was fat,
And in his birth found comfort e'en for that;
While to a fly, if asked, he'd give relief.
He soon had given him a brief
Petition from the sheep, who prayed for aid:
"The wolves them daily without mercy flayed."
—"O rogues," doth cry the Elephant, "what crime!
Who gave you leave to rob in this free clime?"
Answered the wolves: "By thy paternal rule,
Hear *us* too! In the winter thou didst give
Leave to us wolves the sheep to school,
And take from them light tribute of their wool,
That we throughout the cold might warmer live.
'Tis but a silly sheep that calls that sin:
Why, we take nothing from them but their skin,
And even that they grudgingly give in."
—"Well, well," the Elephant decides, "look out!
In none will I injustice bear;
Their skins they well may do without;
But, beyond that don't touch of them a hair."

—o—

[The line, "Why, we take nothing from them but their skin," has become a proverb among the people. The wolves are the Tchinovnicks, and the sheep the peasants. The kind of good-natured fool described in the Elephant certainly was, and perhaps still is, too common among Russians in high command.]

VIII.

The Elephant and the Pug.

An Elephant was led along the streets
To join a wild-beast show,
And, as such sights with us one rarely meets,
Following a mob of gaping idlers go.
By chance a Pug-dog met them on the way.
Seeing the Elephant, he round it ran,
To bark and howl and jump at it began,
As if to fight in mortal fray.
"Upstart!" a poodle to him cried,
"Cease, cease, for shame! Art thou a match for him?
See, thou art hoarse already with thy whim,
While he doth step on free from care,
All unaware
That thou art barking by his side."
"Ah, ah!" self-satisfied replied the Pug,
"That is the thought I hug,
That's why I'm bold;
If once I knew that I must fight,
Dost think that I should scold?"
Let all the street dogs say:
"That pug is strong;
We can't be wrong,
He barked behind an elephant to-day!"

—o—

[The last lines are quoted in the collections of Russian proverbs, in a shorter form than is given here.]

IX.

The Sack.

WITHIN a hall, upon the floor,
Into a corner swept,
A Sack lay, long neglected;
The feet of all the servants left
Their wet marks on its back;
When, crack!
Its use was suddenly detected;
Promoted now to honours high,
'Twas filled with golden coin,
And made to join
The riches of a strongbox long laid by.
The master now himself doth care,
That on it neither dare
The wind to blow, nor any fly to sit;
And, what is more, the entire town
Has seen and talks of it.
No sooner has a guest sat down,
Than of his Sack the host will smiling speak;
And, if he once the strings untie,
Then each that peeps a tear has in his eye;
And e'en the one most shy
To touch or pat it tenderly will seek.
Seeing that none now thought him weak or low,
Our Sack to put on airs began
Of wisdom, like an ignorant man,
And from his mouth whole streams of nonsense flow,

Of all he judges and disposes :
This will not pass ;
That one's an ass ;
And everywhere some ill he noses.
His listeners stand around with mouths agape ;
Although his lips such rubbish shape,
That all their ears should burn :
One of man's vices is that he will hold
Sacred, and bow before what's backed by gold,
Though to absurdity it plainly turn.
But, *long* upon our Sack did fame and honours pour ?
Long did the petting last ?
The gold within it melted all too fast ;
And then, 'twas thrown aside nor heard of more.

None to offend we wish with this our fable :
But in the world of high finance,
Such Money-bags to meet we often chance,
That once served in a beer-house or a stable ;
Or else a gang of sharpers left,
To earn a shilling quite unable ;
Yet who, by thrift or theft,
The Lord knows which, have wondrous wealth collected,
—By dukes, ay, princes now respected—
Who play with each grandee,
Whose lackey once they dared not hope to be,
A friendly game at whist,—
A grand thing and thrice blessed, you see,
To hold a million in each dirty fist !

But still, my friends, 'twere best less pride to show—
Shall we speak truth behind your backs?
For once you're ruined,—God forbid it, though!
You're tossed aside with other emptied Sacks!

X.

The Fire in the Grove.

With care we must select our friends,
Under the mask of friendship selfish ends
Dig but a pit beneath our feet,
This truth a fable here to thee commends,
Look that its warning thou dost docile greet.

A Fire in winter smouldered in a Grove:
Some careless visitors had left it there.
From hour to hour still less and less it throve;
No wood to feed it, for the Grove was bare.
The dying Fire, seeing his end draw near,
Addressed the Grove: "Tell me, my dear,
How is it fate hath thee bereft
Of all, not one leaf on thy branches left,
In nakedness condemned to freeze?"
"Because o'er all doth lie the snow;
In winter neither leaves nor flowers I know."
Answered the Grove, the Fire continuing thus:
"A trifle, and for thee no need to fuss

Thyself about it, on thy friend rely;
In him the rival of the sun behold,
For in the depths of winter cold
He works no greater miracles than I!
Ask in the hothouses what fire can give:
While winter's storms and sleet are in the air,
The flowers blossom and fruits ripen there,
And 'tis through me alone they live!
I am not one of those that love self-praise;
The song of boasting I could never raise;
But to the sun in strength I yield no jot.
Brightly his rays have played upon this spot,
And yet the snow's unharmed at his decline,
But melts around me rapidly at mine.
If, then, thou wouldst in winter still be green,
As in the summer or the springtide scene,
Give up to me some quiet nook."
—"Agreed."—The Fire puts on another look,
And hastes to seize on branches green or dry;
The smoke in black clouds curls unto the sky;
And the whole Grove is soon in fiercest blaze,
Which ceases not until it raze
The Grove from off the ground,
And there, where once the traveller shelter found,
Are now but rows of blackened stumps around.
No wonder thus it ends;
For how can wood and fire be ever friends?

XI.

The Market Gardener and the Philosopher.

ONE spring a Market Gardener dug round
His beds, as well as if he sought a treasure;
Of vigorous look, so fresh and sound
One saw that work to him was pleasure;
And he with cucumbers had laid out half his ground.
Beside his plot lived one, who loved to measure
All details that to gardening belong,
With florid wordiness, in would-be learned scales;
He had enjoyed the titles long—
Of nature's helper when she ails,
Of a Philosopher that ne'er went wrong;
'Twas whispered, though,
That no diploma could he show,
And that, in talking of a garden and its use,
He made of what he read a sad abuse.
At length, to put in practice what he taught,
Of raising cucumbers he thought,
And while about it laughed thus at his neighbour:
"Goodman, 'tis vain for you to sweat;
To leave you long behind I'll bet,
With this my labour;
Your garden, with my own close by,
Like waste land soon will strike the eye.
Yes, to speak truth, I can't believe my sight,
To see this ground of yours kept somehow going.
How is't you are not ruined quite,
Having no science got to keep you right?"

"No time for learning," said the Gardener, showing
His roughened hands, "to these is owing,
To industry, and practice too,
The only science that I ever knew;
With these God lets me earn my bread."
—"You dunce, to dare 'gainst science raise your head!"
—"No, sir: don't twist my words awry;
If you can show good reason why,
I'm willing by you to at once be led,
Well, wait and see if summer comes in vain. * * *
But, is't not time to set to work again?
I've sown and planted something here and there;
But you your beds have not dug out."
—"True, I have not, because I'm still in doubt:
I've read, re-read,
Until went round my head,
To know if spade or plough the better were.
What then? There's time enough on hand."
—"May be for *you* there is, with *us* time does not stand
Quite still," the Gardener said, and—off he set,
Taking his spade.
Then our Philosopher walked home, to fret,
Read up, write out; inquiries made;
And, digging into bed and book,
No rest from morn to evening took.
One work unto another leads:
No sooner crops up something green,
Than in a newspaper he reads
Some novelty, and he is seen

To dig all up, and all transplant
For some newfangled plan and want.
And what then was the end?
The Gardener's cucumbers to ripeness grew,
And, as he well deserved, his pocket too;
But, our poor friend
Of philosophic mind
Had not one cucumber of any kind.

—o—

[This fable has been the subject of much dispute among Russian critics of Kriloff. There has always been a party inclined to accuse Kriloff of neglecting science, and of a tendency to sneer at the learned. The two best authorities, Kenévitch and Pletneff, have clearly shown the injustice and the absurdity of these attacks. Kriloff's point of view was always that of the critic and satirist, and therefore in dwelling on the evil effects of pedantry in learning, of presumption and excess in philosophy, and of ill-matured enthusiasm in science, not grounded on adequate knowledge, as he so often does, he is true to his mission, and by no means guilty, as he has been said to be, of setting himself blindly against all innovations. He welcomed with enthusiasm the idea of freeing the Serfs, and was always the firm defender of Poushkin, though, as he himself belonged to the old classical school of literature, Poushkin must have seemed to him an innovator. That the present fable does not attack science or true learning is evident from the text of it; the Philosopher makes that very complaint of the Gardener, and is answered, as Kriloff might have answered his critics,—

"Don't twist my words awry."

XII.

The Geese.

WIELDING a long sharp switch, a peasant
Once drove in haste some Geese to town for sale,
And, truly to recount my tale,
His cackling flock scarce found him pleasant;
The market only he'd in view,
And, where the pocket is in danger,
Not only geese fare worse, but friend or stranger.
The peasant I don't blame, do you?
But our poor Geese on that point otherwise commented,
And meeting with a traveller by the way,
To him their sad lot thus lamented:
"What geese unhappier are than we to-day?
That peasant is a scurvy master,
And drives us, just like simple geese, still faster, faster;
It enters not the head of that dull clown,
That he might somewhat knuckle under
Before descendants of the geese that once saved Rome's great town.
—Those noble geese were founders of our stock—from plunder;
To honour them e'en days were sacredly observed."
— But you, for what should your names be with theirs preserved?"
Did ask the traveller then.—"Our ancestors * *"—
"I know it,
I've read it all; but tell me, can you show it,
The good that you've been to the State?"
—"Our sires averted Rome's sad fate!"

—"Just so, but you, what have you done save boasting?"

—"We? naught ourselves!"—"Then is your worthlessness confessed;

Go, let your father's well-won honours rest,
For you, my friends, are only good for roasting."

This fable might have been more clearly still explained;
But then, how many geese it must have pained.

XIII.

The Ass and the Nightingale.

An Ass once saw a Nightingale,
And thus to her he spoke: "I've heard, friend, of thy singing,
So masterful that all the land with it is ringing!
Be sure, I could not fail
At once to see if they have told me truly;
Let me then hear, that I may judge thee duly!"
The Nightingale began her wondrous skill to show;
She piped now high, now low,
A volume of all sounds, and then a quivering note;
Gently the cadenced accents flow,
And, like a shepherd's reed, far o'er the distance float,
And then the grove is filled wi' th' music of her throat.
All gave a willing ear
To the loved one of the morning sky;
The choirs of the birds were hushed; the herds, no longer shy,

Ran thither, while the winds kept still to hear;
The shepherd, hardly breathing, listened quite beguiled,
And, as he looked upon his love, in fear
A trill were lost, he only smiled.
The singer ceased. The Ass, with head to ground,
Says: "That's not bad, I'll dare to say
Thy singing passes in a simple way;
A pity, though, thou'st never found
A time to hear what notes our cock can sound:
Thou wouldst have been so much the gainer,
To have learned from him an art, though high, yet plainer."
Our Nightingale, on hearing what thus the Ass decrees,
Spreads wing, and—takes her flight far o'er the distant trees.

And God deliver us from judges such as these!

—o—

[Kriloff read a translation from La Fontaine to one of the Seigneurs of the day, a Razounovsky or a Golitzine, and was asked why he did not write like Demetrieff. He answered at the moment, "Because I am unable to do so," and later with this fable.]

XIV.

The Leaves and the Roots.

One pleasant summer's day
The while a dale in shadow lay,
Unto the zephyr whispered the leaves upon a tree,
Their density and greenness boasting of with pride,
And thus their babble went: "You, surely, can't but see
That we alone adorn this laughing valley's side?

That thanks to us the tree so bushingly is growing,
To us its stately foliage owing?
What's left to it without us? Showing
Such claims, no sin in us ourselves to praise!
Is it not *we* the shade who raise
By which the shepherd and the wanderer are protected?
Not *we*, whose beauty to the dance
Hath hither oft the shepherdess directed?
When tints the sky the sun's first latest glance,
Then pipes for us the nightingale!
And zephyr, thou scarce quittest
The friends round whom thou gently flittest!"
—"And we too might have thanks within this dale,"
From 'neath the ground was answered no way loudly
—"Who ventures here to speak so proudly?
Who then are you, that wail
And impudently claim our peers to be?"
Ran the loud whisper through the trembling tree,
—"We are
Those in the dark that romage deep and far
To give you food. You, surely, can't but know
The Roots whose tree upon you deign to blow!
Then, flaunt you while you may!
Bethink you, though, at times this difference to weigh:
That each new spring doth see the tree's leaves fresh created;
But, let the Roots dry up, by rain unsated,—
You and the tree have lived your day."

—*o*—

[The roots are meant for the peasant serfs, the question of whose emancipation was first raised in the commencement of the reign of Alexander I. Kriloff, though sympathizing generally with the old Conservative party, raised his voice in favour of freedom.]

XV.

The Titmouse.

A TITMOUSE spread her wings above the sea,
And boasted: she
Would set the waves on fire.
Throughout the world all hear it, all admire.
Fear seized the dwellers in the watery regions;
The birds flocked there in legions;
And beasts rushed from the forests to the spot,
To see the ocean burn, and watch it getting hot.
'Tis even said that, when the winged report
Reached to the ears of certain city sinners,
They set off to the shore, at notice short,
With spoons all ready for their turtle dinners,
To taste a soup so rich no purse-proud buck
E'er gave it to the Lord he asked to share potluck.
The crowds assembled stand, with wide eyes gazing
In silence on the sea: it should be blazing;
It only murmurs still;
"There, it is boiling, soon the bright flames will
Burst forth."—Of burning not one sign,
"If it but bubbled!"—but no bubbles rise.
How ended, then, the plan benign?
Our Titmouse took her flight unto the skies,
Covered with shame;
The sea remained unburnt, but she earned fame.

A final word may be permitted,
Though for ourselves, of course, unfitted;

That, what we have not yet begun,
Had better not be boasted of till done.

—o—

[Probably this applied to a writer of the time, one Polevoi, whose history, long expected and much noised beforehand, turned out a failure.]

XVI.

The Quartett.

A ROGUISH Monkey,
A Goat, and Donkey,
With a great clumsy Bear,
Agreed in a Quartett to share.
They got their notes, two fiddles, flute, and bass,
And on a grass plot sat, under some limes,
Fain to enchant the world with skill and grace;
But how they struck up can't be told in rhymes.
"Stop, brothers, stop!" the Monkey cries, "Be quiet!
Your music ends in riot,
Because you all are seated wrong:
Thou Bruin, seat thee with thy bass
Before the flute there, face to face!
And thou, good second fiddler, take thy place
'Gainst this, which doth to me as first belong!
Our music now will go apace,
Rousing the woods and mountains into song!"
They change, and the Quartett begins;
But by it music nothing wins,

"Hold hard, the secret I have hit!"
Bawls out the Donkey. "We shall get on better,
If in a row we sit."
The donkey is obeyed unto the letter;
They all sit in a row:
Still the Quartett will not consent to go.
Now worse than ever quarrel they, disputing,
And refuting
The place of each.
It happened that a Nightingale their noise did reach;
She flew to them: they asked her to decide,
"Have patience here with us a space," they cried,
"Set our quartett in order, that we may
These notes and instruments correctly play;
Above all show us how to sit!"
"To be musicians first of all 'tis fit
Talent to have, and good ears too,"
Replied the judge that music knew;
"But ye, my friends, whatever seats ye take,
Musicians all your lives will never make."

—o—

[According to some, this alludes to a quadruple division into committees of the society called literally "Conversations of the Friends of Russian Literature," to which Kriloff belonged, and in which were first read a large number of his fables. This separation merely led to a useless multiplication of Secretaries and Presidents, and in no way advanced the work of the society. According to others, the fable alludes to a similar division of the labours of the Council of State, and the disputes of the leaders about their titles and precedence. Kenévitch considers either explanation equally applicable.]

XVII.

The Peasant in Distress.

INTO a Peasant's yard there crept
One autumn night a thief, while slept
All round.
He got into the poor man's store,
And all he found,
Whether on wall or ceiling, shelf or floor,
He without conscience stole:
For where is conscience in a robber's soul?
And thus, our Peasant, who went rich to bed,
So naked rose, that well he might
With wallet beg his way from morn to night;
May no one from his pillow more so sadly lift his head!
The Peasant moans and groans in his distress,
Calls round him all his friends,
For relatives and neighbours sends,
And asks them all to help him out of this fatal mess,
To this doth each himself address,
And gives him counsel wise.
Old Stephen lifts up hands and eyes,
Saying: "Why didst thou boast the village through,
That thou wast rich?"
Young Thomas speaks: "'Tis clear enough, the hitch
Is that thy storeroom was not well in view,
And from the house too far."
"Good fellows all," says Matthew to the lot,
"You all wrong are:
The fault is not

That distant was the store,
But that our friend here kept no more
A couple of surly dogs the house to guard.
Accept two pups, George, then from me,—
Judy has still got three:
My heart indeed were hard,
Did I not with a neighbour gladly share,
Rather than drown the useless pair."
In short to good advice there was no end
From each relation and each loving friend,—
They overwhelmed him quite;
But no one there did aught that helped to set him right.

And so it is in life: once that you fall to need,
Go, try your friends all round!
You'll get advice of all kinds, bad and sound;
But, only hint at help that tries their greed,
And unto this you'll surely come—
The best of friends is deaf and dumb!

XVIII.

The Wolf and his Cub.

A WOLF, his Cub to teach, by slow degrees,
Their old hereditary trade,
Sends him to roam along the wold and glade,
Enjoining him to take good notes, where'er he sees
A chance for them their luck to try,
Regardless of the sin,
If only they get in
To lunch or sup unseen by shepherd's eye.

The scholar soon comes back,
And says: "Come now, I've found a track!
Our dinner's ready: there's no risk, no bother:
Behind that hill
Are grazing sheep, one fatter than the other;
We only need to choose and kill,
Then eat our fill;
A flock like that is difficult to count."
"Stop," said the Wolf, "I know must, ere we mount,
What their good shepherd's like."
—"They say he is not bad,
A careful and a knowing lad;
But me most certainly his dogs did strike,
When I dodged round the fold, as poor,
Too fat and lazy to much work endure."
—"Thy tale, my son—I'm old—
Will hardly tempt me to attack the fold;
A shepherd that's a smart one will not keep
A pack of worthless dogs to guard his sheep,
We then may get into a mess!
Follow, I'll lead thee where our skins are less
In danger; I to thee a fold will show
Where, though the dogs are numerous, I know
The shepherd for a great fool passes;
For, when a shepherd is a fool, his dogs are asses."

—*o*—

[There are many Russian proverbs that express the leading idea of this fable. For instance, "As the priest is, so is the parish."]

XIX.

The Ape.

LABOUR as best you may;
Your work no praise shall pay,
No gratitude, no fame, no well-earned leisure,
Unless it profit bring to some, to others pleasure.

A peasant with the dawn his plough
Took out into a field to work;
Labour he was not one to shirk,
And soon the sweat in streams dropped off his brow.
As all his neighbours did allow
Him honest and good-natured too,
Of passers-by there were but few
Did not salute with thanks for service done.
An Ape, who heard it, was to envy wrought,
—For praise is sweet, by most of us is sought—
And swore his labours now should be begun.
He found a log: his aim was won—
To work he sets,
And frets,
Up to his ears in trouble:
The log in air he lifts,
Now shoves, now shifts,
Now rolls, now tries to bend it double:
The sweat pours down like rain;
He stands then gasping; yet, 'tis all in vain,
No praise doth softly at his ear-drum tap.
And 'tis no wonder, my laborious swain!
Such useless labours are not worth a rap!

XX.

The Mice in Council.

THE Mice once formed a plan to gain great reputation,
And, in despite of cats, or toms or pussies,
To turn the heads of cooks and household hussies,
Rousing a chorus of general admiration,
From cellar up to garret, of their nation;
And to this end a Council they did call,
In which a seat to those should only fall
Whose tails were long as they themselves were tall:
Having observed that Mice with tails than others longer
Were wiser, stronger,
And far more agile than the rest.
We won't stop now to ask if this were wise;
When we ourselves of wisdom judge, we've often eyes
But for a coat, or beard at best.
Suffice it may that, by unanimous consent,
All long-tailed brothers of the race were members named;
But none whose tails unhappily were maimed,
E'en though in heat of battle off them rent;
This was a sign that they'd behaved them sadly,
Or that their heads were furnished badly;
So that of such the Council had not one,
Nor to its dignity would injury be done.
Thus all put right, to meet are summoned all selected,
When the dark hours of night begin;
And then, on meal sacks piled within
A dealer's store, assemble the elected.

Each in his place appointed sat,
And lo, among them was, without his tail, a rat!
Observing this, a young Mouse nudged an old
And grey one squatted near,
And said: "By what chance here
Got in a tailless one? He's over bold,
Thus at the law we've made to scoff:
Let's give our votes, and send him packing off!
Thou knowest how the race that tails want love us not;
And is it likely he to us can be of use
Who could not his own tail from shame keep and abuse?
Through him shelves, holes, and larder, we're all one ruined lot!"
The old Mouse said: "Of such good reasons I've a dozen,
But then, you see, the rat is my first cousin."

—o—

[Although the meaning of this fable is self-evident, I cannot refrain from adding that it hits one of the worst and most general defects of the Russian administration. "Protection" still plays an important part in every branch of the service, and is far more prevalent and injurious than patronage ever was among ourselves. Efforts have undoubtedly been made of late to purify the administration from this and other abuses, and the palace influence is now unsparingly exerted against them, but it is difficult to root out abuses to which a nation has so long been accustomed, and it must be a work of time. The fearless way in which Kriloff, here and elsewhere, makes his meaning plain, is remarkable at a time when the censorship was so powerful and vigilant, and it should be remembered that the mass of Kriloff's fables were read by himself to the Imperial Family.]

XXI.

The Education of the Lion.

UNTO the monarch of the woods a son was born.
The nature of wild beasts, of course, you know;
With them 'tis not as 'tis with us: *their* yearlings scorn
Already to be swaddled,
While ours are coddled
Long after they a year can show;
And e'en our babes imperial are all
Not the less stupid, weak, and small.
Therefore, before the year was out, the lion-sire
In sober earnest thought, 'twas fit
That after him no fool should sit
Upon his throne, to drag into the mire
The honour of his kingly name,
And, that his people ne'er should blame
The father in the son, he'd best inquire
Whom he should force, or take on hire,
To teach and turn the prince into a king.
Give him unto the fox? The fox is wise,
But then, unhappily, he always lies,
And liars come to grief, a thing
That surely should not upon kingship wait.
A mole, the lion thought, might aid the state,
Moles are reputed to love order well!
They feel their way each step they take,
And every grain themselves they make
Clean for their tables, peeling off the shell;
In short the word goes round,
That moles are great where small affairs abound;

But one mistake: their eyes beneath their noses
Are more than keen,
But, in the distance, no one e'en supposes
That by them anything is seen;
Thus, as to order moles are never wrong,
Yet only in the things which unto moles belong;
However, it is clear,
A lion's realm has many a bigger hole
Than any into which but creeps a mole.
The panther, though, is here,
And he is known to be both strong and bold;
And besides that a great tactician he;
Yes, but the panther cannot hold
His own in politics, nor can he see
The meaning of a civil right:
How can he, then, good lessons give to use a sovereign's might?
Kings should be ministers, in peace or war
Judges or leaders fit;
But panthers still from this are far,
Given to throat-cutting to wit;
A talent that doth hardly hit
What in the tutor of a royal cub is most required.
In short: the beasts, and e'en the most admired,
Up to the elephant, whose mind
Throughout the forest world they find
Mighty as that of Plato once,
To the lion seemed to wisdom blind,
To want all learning of a better kind,
The best of them a dunce.

If luckily or otherwise we soon shall see,
Hearing what caused our monarch's grief,
Another king brought him relief,
He that ruled o'er the feathered tribe,
The eagle, he,
That for the lion love and amity
Had long professed (by these moved, not a bribe),
Came forward with a most obliging offer,
And to bring up the cub himself did proffer.
His burden off the lion's shoulders rolled,
As soon as he was told
A king the prince to tutor was at hand;
What could he wish for more?
The cub, equipped with ample store,
Was sent at once off to a rock-bound land,
By the eagle to be taught to rule.
A year goes by, another; and all the while but praise
Of the lion-cub is heard, and of his royal school;
The birds a song of triumph over his wonders raise.
At last the appointed term is out;
The lion for his son hath sent;
The son appears: at once each royal scout
Unto the people went,
To call them to the audience of their king,
Both great and small.
The king doth on his son's neck fall,
And, while embracing him before them all,
Thus graciously his words do ring:

"Son of my heart!
Thou, that my sole successor art!
I look already toward the grave, while thou
Beginnest but to live;
To thee my sceptre I rejoice to give.
Tell me, before my subjects now,
What have thy studies been, and how
To make thy people happy, thou dost hope."
"Papa," replied the son, "what I know, here
There is not one that can come near:
From eagles unto quails, I cope
With any bird, in knowing what
Birds want, and birds have not;
Where water they can find,
What food they take according to their kind,
And what the eggs they lay;
See here what all my teachers say:
And, if the birds' report may weigh
For aught, there's nothing in the world or sky
Too hard for me triumphant to defy:
When dost thou mean to me thy throne to cede?
Then will I teach the beasts the need
Of building each a nest."
Here groaned the lion-king, and with him every beast;
All hung their heads, at least
The Council did; and the old king confessed,
Though somewhat late, his cub had learned in vain,
And vainer still was his oration;
For he, that o'er the beasts hath got to reign,
Hath no great need to study the feathered nation:

And that the learning, that a king should own
Best to support his throne,
Was that his people well he understood,
And all that might be for his country's good.

—o—

[This was intended for the education of Alexander I. The emperor's tutor was one La Harpe from Geneva, who gave him liberal but unpractical ideas. Undoubtedly Alexander intended to lay down a constitution for which the country was unfitted, but Kriloff, belonging to the old Conservative party, is unjust in his exaggeration, as we shall see him afterwards unjust to the man who was the right hand of Alexander in these meditated reforms, cut short by the war with Napoleon, to Speransky. The party that held to the system of Catherine II. accused the Emperor of knowing the constitution and writers of England better than he did the state of his own country. Many of Alexander's plans have since been carried out; the codification of the law was accomplished by his successor Nicholas, and the late Emperor, Alexander II., emancipated the serfs.]

XXII.

The Swine.

OVER a squire's grounds by chance a Swine once strolled:
The dunghill and the dustbin saw him grubbing;
The stable-walls and kitchen got a scrubbing
To ease his itch;
Into each pool of filth, till sick of it, he rolled,
Up to his ears with every wallowing pitch;
Till home, bespotted,
A very swine of swine he trotted.

"Well what, old Grunter, was there to reward thee?"
A ploughboy asked our Pig:
"'Tis said in houses big
Our rich men all in beads and pearls outrig;
The sight, then, of such riches can't have bored thee?"
The Swine with grunt: "What rubbish men will say!
I saw no sign of all the wealth that awed thee,
Dunghills and filth alone stopped up the way;
And, if I'm right, unsparing of my snout,
I routed out
The whole backyard to-day."

God knows I don't compare; 'twould make some mad!
But, how not say a critic is a swine,
Who, whatsoe'er he judge, in every line
Has but the gift of seeing all that's bad.

—o—

[Kenévitch remarks of a contemporary critic, one Katchenovsky, who fiercely attacked what he called "a swinish story" as contrary to a supposed law of poetry, to deal only with the noble and elevated, that he probably felt himself indicated by the moral of the fable.]

XXIII.

The Ducat.

Does culture profit bring to all?
It does, we cannot doubt it;
But if so, why do we so often call
Vicious corruption culture, as we fall
In luxury's net, now seldom found without it?

We must be careful, then, if we would tear
From men's hearts all the roots of roughness there,
That we touch not the virtues we should spare;
For, manly worth, simplicity away,
The rest is tinsel flashing for a day,
Which never yet hath earned an honoured name,
Begins in weakness, and must end in shame.
A truth like this might fill
With gravest details books on books, and still
Be half untold:
But grave discourse doth suit not every mind,
So let me find
The same truth in a joking fable old.

A country boor, simple as such boors are,
Once found a Ducat on the ground,
With mud and dust all stained, the Ducat far
From looked its price:
A passer-by, who thought it sound,
Offered a shilling for it twice.
The boor, who thought the man would take him in,
Scratching his head, as if he ought to win
The double, said "Not if I know it,"
Meaning to his strong arm to owe it.
Away he went, got chalk and sand,
And scraped to dust a brick.
Sure that he'd found the trick,
He scoured and scrubbed the Ducat o'er and o'er,
Till he could rub no more;

For like a red-hot coal he meant
To make it shine and glow.
He worked out his intent,
Like to live embers did the Ducat show,
Only his labour he had cause to rue,—
The Ducat's weight had gone, its value too.

—o—

[Intended as a friendly warning to those, who in the earlier half of the reign of Alexander I. directed the efforts made to educate the people. The good these measures did cannot be doubted. Even in the midst of the terrible Moscow campaign, fifty-one new schools were opened. At the same time, however, the inspiration of the time came from the new French ideas, and Russia was overrun with a mass of foreign teachers, even for the sciences, who taught in most imperfect Russian, and the private boarding schools were in the hands mostly of foreigners, too frequently incompetent persons, who taught their pupils to look down upon the national language.

The above is the opinion of Kenévitch, but, with all deference to his authority, I cannot entirely accept it. There seems to me no special allusion to foreigners here, as there clearly is in "The Peasant and the Snake," to be afterwards noticed. The warning is, I believe, intended for that tendency to over-teaching, that crowding of too many subjects into each year's study, which has always been characteristic of education in Russia, and which does so much harm up to the present day. Such study must be superficial. This point of view seems to me to agree both with the opening moral and with the conclusion of the fable. The Ducat is a mind that has been rubbed too much. The allusion to "luxury" at the commencement may possibly have been intended to hint at a foreign influence corrupting the national manners, but, even if it be so, I must still consider the main idea of the fable to

be directed against over-teaching and superficial study. This inevitably destroys the "simplicity" for which Kriloff pleads, and, weakening the intellect and character, paves the way for the vice and corruption of which he accuses modern culture. It should be remembered that the educational reforms of Alexander were directed towards educating the people, and in schools for them foreigners clearly could not teach. Moreover, the opening of the subject with "culture" raises the question above elementary schools, and gives to it a more general character.]

XXIV.

The Eagle and the Spider.

BEYOND the clouds an Eagle flew,
And on a peak of Caucasus alighted,
Just where an aged cedar stately grew,
And with the wide expanse beneath his eyes delighted:
It seemed as if he saw the earth's far edge;
There streams amid the plains their shining waters wedge
There groves and meadows bloom,
In spring's first verdure decked;
And there the Caspian's angry waves find room,
Dark as a crow's wing on the horizon flecked.
"Praise, Jove, that thou, ordering the world aright,
Apportioned unto me such wondrous flight,
That spot unreachable I never knew!"
The Eagle unto Jupiter is speaking,
"That I from hence a world of beauty view,
Which all but me are vainly seeking."
"What boaster is't that here doth waste his wit?"

A Spider answered, from the branch now creaking
Beneath them both. "Do I, then, lower sit?"
The Eagle looks, and there he sees a Spider
Making his net around them fast and wider,
Weaving so busily about
As if the Eagle from the sun he would shut out.
"How camest thou so high?"
Did ask the Eagle. "Those, who fly
With boldest wing, but seldom dare
Make for this spot, and thou art there!
Thou without wings and weak! Surely, thou hast not crept?"
—"No, as to that, my pluck had failed."
—"Then, how from here canst thou have hailed?"
—"Well, over thee a thread I trailed,
And on thy tail have I been upward swept,
But here without thee to hold on I'm able,
And so shut up thy boasting words of fable,
And learn that I" . . . but here the wind's sharp blow
The Spider carried to his haunts below,
Never again on high to sail.

How is't with you? To me it seems we never fail
To meet with human spiders, who are thrown
—Wittols, without one effort of their own—
High up, by clinging to a great man's tail;
Then proudly swells the chest,
As if from God an eagle's strength were given:
Yet, let a puff of wind blow, off they're driven
With damaged web in some dark hole to rest.

[This fable has been generally supposed to allude to the career of Speransky. Kenévitch doubts the correctness of the application, because the fable was approved by the censorship three months before the fall of Speransky, but, in the biography of the latter by Baron Korf, it is evident that his fall had become inevitable long before it occurred, and Kriloff may well be credited with so much of the prophetical spirit, and moreover with the desire to hasten the predicted event. In Kriloff's fables and in his earlier works we find continually a dislike of foreign teaching and especially of French ways of thought, and Speransky was generally looked upon as the representative of French ideas in the administration. This to Kriloff, Karamzin and others represented an evil principle. I do not doubt that the Spider was intended for Speransky, but it is still more certain that the comparison was exaggerated and undeserved.

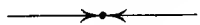
Speransky was the son of an uneducated provincial priest, and by his unaided talents rose to high rank in the service before he was thirty years of age. He became the principal confidant of Alexander I., and his power was greater than that of any of the ministers from the famous Conference of Erfurt, to which he accompanied the Emperor, till the beginning of 1812. He shared Alexander's admiration for Napoleon, and was the chief author of all the great changes in the administration which were put an end to by the Moscow campaign. He was unjustly accused of treason, and exiled in March 1812. It is almost certain that Alexander never believed the accusation, but he clearly thought himself compelled to give some satisfaction to the general voice, on the eve of a decisive struggle with Napoleon. The nobles, the commercial classes, and the peasants were all against Speransky, and he had many personal enemies among the higher Tchinovnicks: his fall was considered as the first victory over the French.

Speransky, like the Emperor himself, was more of a theoretical than a practical turn of mind, but again, like his master, he was a man of high personal character, of

chivalrous and generous impulses, of great energy, and of the truest patriotism. The work he accomplished was enormous. The charges, conveyed through his prototype the Spider, of hanging on to others, and owing his elevation to no efforts of his own, and of foolish pride, are especially unjust.

Within four years after his exile Speransky was made Governor of Perm, and three years later Governor-General of Siberia. After holding the latter post two years, he was recalled to St. Petersburg, and readmitted to high office and the personal confidence of the Emperor, but he never regained his former pre-eminent position. The Emperor Nicholas made him one of the instructors of his son and successor, Alexander II., and before his death, in 1839, he was created a Count.

The immediate application of this fable is manifestly unjust, but, like all Kriloff's fables based on particular incidents, it will bear a wider and more general application, the truth of which will always last.]



XXV.

The Brook.

A SHEPHERD, by a Brook, once plaintively bewailed
His ill luck in a loss irreparable to him:
His favourite lamb to save he'd failed,
Drowned in the neighbouring river grim.
On hearing him the Brook's soft purling wrath expressed:
"Insatiable stream! what, if that bed of thine
Were now, like mine,
Open and clear, by lucid waters pressed;

If passers-by could see, upon its depth now shaded,
The victims that thy greed hath swallowed, thou, upbraided
E'en by thyself with shame, through earth unaided
Hadst broken into some abyss, to hide
Thine ill-famed tide.
I think, if unto me by fate
Such wealth of waters had been given,
I should have been earth's ornament from heaven,
And not a hen had suffered from my hate;
How carefully had flowed my current then,
Nor injured either bush or hut of men!
Had I been only favoured in my banks,
Valleys and meads refreshed had given me thanks,
And not a leaf been found astray.
In one word, working good upon my way,
Nowhere the cause of grief or ill,
My waters to the sea had reached, and still
Flowed clearly, brightly on, like silver in a ray."
Thus spoke the Brook, and thus indeed it meant.
What followed? Ere a week o'erwent,
A bank of clouds upon the neighbouring hills
Burst, and came down in rain;
The Brook e'en higher than the river fills;
Was then, alas, the mild Brook's promise vain?
Above the banks the Brook's now turgid stream
Boils, rages, twists its soiled foam into balls,
As 'neath its fury falls
Full many an aged oak that safe did seem:
A crash is o'er the distance heard,
And lo—the shepherd, for whom late was stirred

The Brook's compassion, to the river pleading
Scarce artlessly but well,
Perished with all his flock, crushed, drowned, and bleeding,
And of his hut all trace bore off the torrent's swell.

How many a brook there is, that mildly flows,
And whose sweet gurgling to the heart straight goes,
Only through this—that not
A good supply of water it has got!

—o—

[Kriloff is said to have been particularly pleased with this fable, and his being so accords with all that we know of his character.]

XXVI.

The Liar.

But just returned from distant wanderings home,
A noble, maybe 'twas a duke, went out
With an old friend over the fields to roam,
And over where he'd been to boast and spout,
He lied egregiously, of what
Had really happened, and of what had not;
"No, no," he cried, "I *that* have seen
Which I shall ne'er see more.
A nice place this, for instance! You but score
Your days by bitter cold, or heat as keen;
Now the sun's rays are hid, now down in rays they pour:
But *there's* a paradise on earth!
The very thought of it to joy gives birth!

No furs nor candles there are ever needed ;
The shades of night not once e'en cloud the sky,
And the whole year glides by
One bright Mayday by a brighter one succeeded.
There no one thinks of planting or of sowing :
Would thou couldst see what there is growing !
For instance, once a cucumber so tall—
May God defend us all !
I've not got over yet the fright !
I saw in Rome that—pray believe my eyes
Measured its size !—
It really topped a mountain with its height ! "
" No wonder if it did," the friend replied :
" The world has wonders everywhere to show ;
Not everyone observes them, though ;
We're coming to a wonder now, beside
Which all that thou hast seen to nothing shrinks,
As I'll dare swear.
See yonder, where the valley sinks,
A bridge across the stream lies there
Right in our path,
And, though of simple workmanship, it hath
A property most rare ;
No liar dares e'en try to cross its planks ;
Before half way his shanks
Have reached, the bridge breaks down
And leaves him in the river's tide to drown ;
But, he who never lies,
Safe o'er the bridge, though in a carriage, flies."
—" And what about the river, say ? "
—" It is not shallow anyway.

And thus, my friend, thou see'st the world is wide,
And Rome's great cucumber but one thing in't,
Though huge beyond dispute; I think thy hint
Was that it topped a mountain by its side?"
—"A mountain, no, not quite; a house I meant."
—"Even that is odd!
But let it pass: the world cannot invent
A bridge like that o'er which we've now to cross,
Where liars dare not plod.
This very spring our town laments the loss
Of two smart editors, one tailor's lad,
Who in the torrent went to grief.
Thy cucumber, if we may give belief,
I think the measure of a town-house had?"
—"Well, after all that does not mean so much;
We must, before we judge, know how things are;
Don't think the houses everywhere are such
Mansions as ours, in the lands afar;
Houses not worthy of the name!
Two men can hardly in them creep,
No room for them to stand or sleep!"
—"So be't, but still I must allow
Thy cucumber deserves its fame,
If two men get in anyhow;
And of our bridge I'll say the same,
While not a liar on't takes paces five
That has not or to drown or dive!
No cucumber, however it may thrive . . ."
"Listen, good friend!" broke in our trembling Liar,
"Why cross the bridge at all, there is a ford up higher?"

[This fable seems to have been called forth by the observations of Kriloff at the English Club. One of the members was accustomed to boast of what he had seen on his travels, and once, when he declared the size of a stirlet in the Volga to equal the length of the room in which the company were assembled, Kriloff rose from his chair near the door, saying, "Allow me to make room for your stirlet."]

XXVII.

The Cat and the Cook.

A Cook, whose learning passed for great,
His kitchen left one evening late,
Intent (he was a man of godly life)
On pot-house ale in memory of his wife,
Who died that day a year before;
And, as he had of eatables a store,
To keep them safe from mouse or rat
He placed on guard a favourite Cat.
What's this he sees on his return? The floor
All strewn with pie-crust, Tommy on the stretch
Behind a cask, a chicken in his jaws,
And purring softly as a bone he gnaws.
"Ah, glutton! Ah, thou nasty wretch!"
The Cook's tongue for abuse was much respected:
"Is't not a shame in thee to desecrate these walls?
(Tommy the while a nice tit-bit inspected)
What thou, that everyone a nice Cat calls,
A model for all mildness past belief,—
O thou—fie, blush for thy disgrace!
The neighbours all shall cry out to thy face:
'Tomcat's a rogue! Tomcat's a thief!'

Nor yard nor kitchen now shall Tommy see;
From hungry wolves the sheep-fold should be free:
The scandal he, the pest, the eyesore of our streets!"
(Tom listens, yes; but—still he eats!)
Our orator, once set on morals preaching,
Could find no end unto his flow of teaching.
What then? while he his own words followed,
Tommy the last piece of the roast had swallowed.

And I would teach our Cook, the dunce,
By letters in the wall cut big:
To waste no time in talking like a prig,
But force employ at once.

XXVIII.

The Partners.

Two honest Dealers, who their office had
And house in common, like their trade,
Finding their business had not been bad,
Agreed to stop and share what they had made,
But when has sharing not to quarrels led?
This time a hot dispute was quickly bred:
Now o'er the goods, and o'er the money now
They wrangled, till were heard above the row
Loud cries of "Fire!"—"The house is burning, save
Your goods and it. Come faster, faster!"
But neither disputant attention gave.
At last said one, aware of the disaster,

"Let's go, accounts can afterwards be reckoned."
"But give me first the thousand that you owe,"
Insists the second,
"Without it I'll not leave the spot."
—"Two thousand mine, as all the books will show."
—"They're not;
Such scurvy tricks shall ne'er my pocket bleed."
—"But why?"—"Yes so!"—"In this way, then!"
And so shout on the maddened men,
Forgetting in their greed
The flames, nor feeling e'en the thickening smoke.
At length the latter doth their clamours choke,
And fire on them, their house, and goods doth feed.

In many more important matters we
Only too often see,
That loss and ruin all concerned befall,
Because, when union can alone make head
Against the common danger, each instead,
By his own private interest led,
For that will squabble and the rest outbawl.

—*o*—

[It appears to be the settled opinion of Russian critics, that this fable relates to certain administrative abuses during the invasion of Napoleon: the same kind of corruption which afterwards prevailed during the Crimean war. That such abuses existed is proved by the complaints of Rostoptchin, the same who set fire to Moscow, but I must confess that to me the fable contains very little that warrants the application, beyond the fact that it was written in 1812. Kenévitch relies on the moral and its allusion to interested motives, but that is a very general

form of reproach, and as the fable itself ends in ruin for the Dealers, I cannot see that the comparison holds good.]

XXIX.

The Wolf in the Kennel.

A Wolf, that thought into a fold to creep
By night, mistakenly did leap
Into a kennel, and could not get out.
At once arose a fearful rout,
Scenting the bully grey, the baying pack
Would break through all to fight;
The whippers in "A thief! up, up lads!" shout;
The doors are closed with ready knack;
And all the kennel is a hell of noise and fright.
With sticks some thither run;
Others snatch up a gun:
"A light! a light!" they cry. 'Twas brought, and there
Our wolf sat, huddled 'gainst the wall,
His tail into the corner pressed, bristling his hair,
Chattering his teeth, and in his eyes a glare,
As if with them he could devour them all.
But, seeing that no sheep now stopped his way,
And that the reckoning came at last
For those, on which he'd broken fast
So oft, our trickster 'gan to pray
For parley and for peace:
"My friends, what cause is there for all this riot?
'Tis I, your friend of old and comrade quiet,
Come in goodwill to let all quarrels cease;

Let bygones be forgot, and general concord reign,
And I engage, not only no flock to touch again,
But for it 'gainst all others myself my teeth to use,
And on my oath of Wolf I swear,
That I . . ."—"Good friend, forbear,"
Broke in the huntsman, "to abuse
Thyself! No greyer than my own thy hair,
And long thy wolfish nature have I seen;
Hence this my rule hath always been:
Not otherwise a peace to make
With any wolf, but when I take
His skin from off his back."
And on the Wolf at once let loose the eager pack.

—o—

[This represents Napoleon in Russia, and the huntsman is intended for Kutuzoff. The fable was read by Kutuzoff himself to his officers on the field of battle, after one of the victories of the retreat from Moscow. That Napoleon at this time vainly endeavoured to enter into negotiations is a well-known historical fact.]

XXX.

The Loaded Carts.

A LINE of carts, with earthen pots well loaded,
Had reached and must descend a steep hill's side,
The master, leaving his other beasts to bide
Their turn, led gently down the first ungoaded.
The well-trained horse upon his quarters wide

Bore up the cart so well, 'twas not once shaken;
When a young horse above for each step taken
Reviled the old one with abuse and sneers:
"A fine steed that, a very wonder!
A crab that crawls and sideway steers!
That stone had nearly sent him under!
He can't keep straight!
Stumbling again! Ah, what is it he fears?
No, to the left! Too late!
Oh, what an ass! Were it to mount the hill,
Or in the night;
But going down, and in the broad daylight!
It is enough to make one ill!
To pull a water-cart thou'st barely skill!
Look then at us, see how we do it smart,
An instant is not lost; when once we start
Our load we drag not, but glide on as sailing!"
This said, his burden he began to pull,
Holding his head up, and his breast out full,
But half way down the hill his skill's found failing;
The load bore heavily, the cart plunged wide,
Striking the horse's tail, and now his side.
The horse is off, his feet in air,
To win a race;
No stones, no ruts for him are there,
No bumps restrain his pace;
One turn too much, and with his load—he's in the river!
And all his master's pots to pieces shiver!

—o—

[This again alludes to Kutuzoff. The slow and prudent

movements of the Russian Fabius had roused the public feeling against him. The Emperor himself blamed him for not giving battle a second time under the walls of Moscow. Kriloff judged Kutuzoff more correctly.]

XXXI.

The Crow and the Hen.

THE hero-prince of Smolensk's plain,
Against the Vandals arming, once again
Their insolence to punish by his skill,
Left to them Moscow, as a snare,
For them to perish there;
Then, like a swarm of bees that will
Pour from the hive, came forth the crowd
Of young and old, of low and great,
Out of the ancient walls, beyond the gate.
A Hen, upon a loaded cart, aloud
Spoke to a Crow, that on a roof was sitting
Her beak at ease to clean,
The while she watched the tumult of the scene:
"And gossip thou, thou also wilt be flitting?
They say that just outside the city,
The foe is there in force."
To which the bird of omen hoarse:
"And, if 'tis so, what's that to me? Of course
For thee, and for thy sisters, 'tis a pity;
But I stay here without a care;
To boil or roast a Crow who dare?
I with our guests can get on well enough;
And profit too may well be mine,

A bone, a bit of cheese, or some such stuff.
Good-bye, and luck befall that tuft of thine!"
And thus the Crow did stay;
But, for all profit, got,
When Smolensk had his guests begun to slay
With hunger's pangs—it was his way—
Herself into the pot.

How blindly, stupidly men often reckon!
On tiptoes haste they to the luck that seems to beckon;
But, once with facts to deal they stoop,
They, like the Crow, get bundled into soup.

—o—

[We have here the justification of Kutuzoff, who had just received the title of Prince of Smolensk, for relying on starvation and cold. The Crow, with its arrogant assumption that no one dare touch it, is an admirable type of Napoleon. This fable is very probably based on some of the caricatures of the time, which frequently represented French Grenadiers shooting crows for their soup.]

XXXII.

Damian's Fishsoup.

"WELL, neighbour, now you are a brick!
Come, try some more."
—"Neighbour, I'm bursting quite."—"No humbug, quick—
One plateful let me pour:

Real fishsoup, see what soup, done to a t."
—"But that's my third."—"Hush! here we count nor plates nor glasses—
With a good appetite all passes:
Digestion's good for sleep you see.
'Tis tempting, 'tis a very jelly;
Look at the amber that its surface coats,
Indulge, old chum, unto thy heart's content!
See there, 'tis bream, here sterlet choice that floats!
That liver there for thee was meant.
Another spoonful!—Wife, thy reverence make!—
One small one more, and for my sake!"
Thus feasted Damian once his old friend Neddy;
No time to breathe or talk, kept to it steady.
Down Neddy's face had long been trickling rain,
But, yielding unto fate, his plate he hands again;
And, summoning his strength remaining,
He swallows all.—"Now, that a friend I call,"
Exulting Damian cries; "why on excuses fall
To spare my cheer? Then once more show your training."
Then hapless Neddy, who
Doted on fish, at this aggression new,
Seizing his coat,
Stick, and capote,
Ran straight and swiftly to his own street door,
And ne'er set foot in Damian's parlour more.

Good author, happy thou in gift beyond dispute;
But, if thou hast not learned yet to be mute,
Boring unwilling ears to suit

Nor time nor place, be sure—thy verse or prose
More sickening e'en than Damian's fishsoup grows.

—o—

[Kriloff read this fable at a meeting of the literary society alluded to in "The Quartett." He purposely came late, and read the fable at the close of a long and dry paper which had wearied every one.]

XXXIII.

The Fox and the Marmot.

"WHITHER so fast, good friend, so blindly running?"
Questioned a Marmot of a Fox one day.
"Alas, dear coz, behold in me the prey
Of calumny," replied the old rogue cunning.
"I suffer innocent, discharged for theft.
Thou know'st I was within a henroost left
To judge and rule: and soon, of health and quiet
Deprived by the eternal riot,
To munch a morsel I had not a minute,
And as to sleep, vain thought to win it:
Yet for my pains unto disgrace I'm brought!
Now, tell me, cousin, what shouldst thou have thought?
Is there a blameless one where slander's free?
What I to steal! Have I then lost my wits?
But say thyself, I can rely on thee,
Hast thou e'er seen me in such sinful fits?
Speak out the truth!"—"No, friend, enough:
Upon thy snout too oft I've seen the fluff."

Full many a man well placed, that goes on sighing
He's forced to spend the last groat by him lying,
And yet the whole town sees him buying
Now here, now there, first house, and then estate.
Not in his own name do they stand;
Not in his wife's—nor house nor land;
But still men ask,
How he can make expense on income wait?
To prove how legally a hopeless task:
Take thou though care, commit some other sin,
But do not say his snout hath fluff been in.

—o—

[This alludes to the many notorious cases in Russia of men, whose position could never bring them wealth, unless dishonestly acquired, becoming possessed of large fortunes, which they owed to "a warm place."]

XXXIV.

The Wolf and the Cuckoo.

"NEIGHBOUR, farewell!" a Wolf to a Cuckoo said:
"A wasted time have I too long here led,
In hopes of rest! Of man and dogs the spite
One worse than other here; and, though an angel thou,
With them thou'lt have to fight."
— "And is thy road a long one now?
Where lives the people honoured so by thee,
With whom thou hopest e'er in peace to dwell?"
— "I'm off unto the nearest dell
Of happy Arcady.

Ah, that's a country, neighbour dear!
What war is none there ever hear;
Mild as their lambs, men love not slaughter,
And rivers run with milk not water;
In one word, there the age of gold doth reign!
Men all like brothers to each other act;
Dogs bite not, and they say 'tis fact,
They bark not. Oh! what gain,
Say, would it not, my sweet friend, be,
A land like that, though but in sleep, to see?
In such blest place to seek and find repose?
Recall no ill of him that to it goes:
I hope to live there, far from any foes,
In ease, in comfort, and in peace!
Not as 'tis here: where day but danger shows,
And e'en the night doth not from watchfulness release."
— "A happy journey to thee, and good cheer!
But what about those ways and teeth of thine,
Dost take them, or dost leave them here?"
— "Leave them, that would indeed be fine!"
— "Then mark my words, and choose:
Keep them, and thou thy skin wilt lose."

Those, whose vile tempers are the worst,
'Gainst others to cry out are always first:
No one is kind, they say, where'er they turn,
And ne'er by kindness try to kindness earn.

XXXV.

The Hare at the Hunt.

ASSEMBLED in one mighty band,
The beasts resolved to clear the land
Of bears, and slew them all in one long battle.
After the rout and rattle,
It came to choosing each his share,
And each got something. In their midst a Hare
Was striving by the ear to drag a bear.
"Halt there, thou squinting dunce!
Who sent thee here? Be off with thee at once!
What did thy help through all the chase avail?"
"What, brothers!" went the Hare's reply,
"Whom did the bush, then, hide? Who made the bear turn tail
And run into your arms, if 'twas not I?"
It seemed rare fun such boasting lies to hear,
And was rewarded with a bit of Bruin's ear.

We laugh at boasters, but to share in what
They've nothing done to gain is oft their lot.

—o—

[The last two lines are now quoted in the collections of Russian proverbs.]

XXXVI.

The Eagle and the Bee.

THOUGH happy he, who struggles upon a scene of glory,
Nerved by the thought, that each heroic deed
Shall have the world for witness, and its meed
Of praise allowed;
Not the less worthy of esteem the story
Of him, that in a lowly grade
By constant toil is bowed,
Content that all his pains be paid
With cold neglect, from him all honours far,
And but one thought to renovate his zeal,
To be through life his guiding star,
That he is working for the public weal.

Seeing a Bee around a flower hurry,
An Eagle said, in most contemptuous tone:
"How pitiful art thou, with all thy flurry!
How vain thy skill and industry to own!
Thousands within the hive in summer mould the wax,
Then who shall later tax
The work that thou hast wrought?
To me 'tis inconceivable, the thought
Of labouring a life out, but to die
One of an unknown herd, and with them lie!
Wilt thou the difference hear
Between us two? When me my sounding wings so oft
Carry unto the clouds aloft,
O'er all things I spread fear;

No bird to leave the safer ground then dares;
No shepherd near his flock to slumber cares;
Nor will the doe that skims the field,
If I be seen, appear."
The Bee thus answered:—"Thine be honours, praise!
May Jove upon thee pour each richest gift!
But I for the common good was born to pass my days,
Nor seek my labours from the rest to sift,
More than consoled, each time I see our home,
If but a drop of honey I've poured into the comb."

—o—

[Gogol quotes this fable as a proof of Kriloff's nobleness of mind. There is no reason to suppose that it was written from a conscious feeling, but it does not the less apply to the motives that guided his own quiet and unambitious career.]

XXXVII.

The Pike and the Cat.

THE pieman, that doth try to cobble shoes,
The cobbler, that doth take to pies and stews,
Will find that with them things go badly!
Have we not seen full oft, how sadly
Stupid and obstinate are those, that ever
Must take on them another's trade?
The best affairs with them can never
Be aught but downright ruin made;
They'd rather serve as food for laughter,
Than honest counsel list to or run after.

A sharp-toothed Pike once got it in his head,
That he was to the cat's vocation bred.
I know not if the evil one had tricked him,
Or if his fish fare to disgust had pricked him:
But he resolved a Cat to pray,
That she would take him to a warehouse near
To hunt for mice the livelong day.
"But you're scarce up to work like this, I fear,"
Unto the Pike did Tabby say!
"Look out, my friend, or you to shame may come:
The saying's never dumb,
That by his work the workman we must judge."
—"Come now, as if 'twere difficult with mice,
To make them budge!
When gudgeons we can snap up in a trice!"
—"Then, no time like the present, come!"—They started.
Once there, the Cat at ease did eat her fill,
Then went to know her new friend's will;
And there the Pike lay dying, gasping with open gill—
And with his tail, thanks to the rats, had parted.
Then, seeing that her mate to move all strength did lack,
To the pond, but half alive, did Tabby drag him back.
And serve him right! Let 't be
A lesson, Pike, to thee,
To wiser grow in future, if so nice,
And not go running after mice!

—o—

[This refers to the appointment of Admiral Tchitchagoff to a military command against the French, and his gross

incapacity in allowing Napoleon to escape over the Beresina. By an absurd retrograde movement Tchitchagoff "parted with his tail," losing a mass of baggage and provisions.]

XXXVIII.

The Divers.

A CERTAIN king of old fell once in strange confusion
Whether in science was more harm or profit found?
Whether the heart and hands were made less sound
By its illusion?
And whether a wise measure 'twas, if he
Out of his realm the learned packed beyond the sea?
But, as this king had ever wished, that his throne should be
Built on the love and happiness his people shared with him,
And, with that aim,
Had ever ruled the same
Impartially and not by whim,
He order gave, that all his lieges go
To a Council, in which each, from empty phrase abstaining,
In common sense might show his training,
And give his judgment: yes, or no;
That is, if learned men out of the realm should hurry,
Or if their voice as once should aid in every worry?
However, though the Council argued long,
Though many voted from conviction strong,
And others for the chief clerks' studied compilation,
Each only proved the others wrong,
And darkness reigned within the doubting head that ruled the nation.

Some said that ignorance was darkness made
More visible, that mind was aid
God had not given us for things celestial,
Unless 'twas his intent
That man should have for reasoning greater bent
Than any speechless being bestial,
And that, agreeing with the end,
Learning to man's life happiness doth lend.
Others there were to know,
That man from science only worse could grow;
That learning folly taught,
On morals but corruption brought;
And that, as civilisation wrought
Its work, it laid the greatest empires low.
In one word, though both sides shewed mettle,
Some less, some greater,
And filled with writing reams of paper,
The quarrel as to science' worth they could not settle.
The king did more: calling from every side
Experts unto him, he formed a Grand Committee,
And left to them the question to decide.
This also turned out bad when tried,
Through the allowances each member got who reached the city:
Thus, every point on which they disagreed
Was dainty food on which to feed;
And, if they had but had their will,
They would be there disputing still,
And still their salaries drawing;
But, as the state's finance the king would bear no flaw in,

And found it was at ebb, he soon dismissed them all:
Meanwhile from hour to hour in greater doubt he'd fall.
One day to walk he went, troubled, beyond the wall,
And saw before him stand
A hermit, whose grey beard the breezes fanned,
Holding a great book in his slender hand.
The hermit's stately look no scowl morose defaces;
A courteous and a kindly smile
Plays o'er his open lips the while,
And on his brow are seen of thought the furrowed traces.
The monarch to converse with the hermit then began,
And, seeing in him knowledge the kingdom might befriend,
To settle the vexed point did ask the holy man:
If science were of use or hurtful in the end?
"O king!" the old man said, "permit me now to tell
A simple tale to thee, which here suits well,
And which the long experience of years to me doth send,"
And, all his thoughts collecting, thus he spoke:
"Upon the shore, and near the sea,
In India lived some fisher folk,
Who passed long years in woe and poverty,
The father died, and left three sons behind.
The children, seeing
That they by netting fish barely to eat could find,
And from their father's trade with horror fleeing,
To seek rich treasures in the sea had mind,

Not fish at all—but pearls;
And, knowing how to swim and dive,
Thought that they well could thrive
By plunging till the head round whirls.
A different fate, however, each of the triad met:
One, idler than the other two,
Loitered all day the breeze to woo
Along the shore, and ne'er his legs would deign to wet,
Waiting for any pearls, though few,
The waves might throw up at his feet:
Such idleness, as was but meet,
He starving had good cause to rue.
The second, who well knew
That without trouble man gains naught,
In earnest worked, and sought
To find the depth for him was fit,
Diving where all the richest pearls do sit:
He lived and died by all a rich man thought.
The third for wealth felt such tormenting greed,
That reasoning with himself he thus decreed:
'Though pearls beside the shore no doubt are got,
No wealth to speak of comes from such a spot;
If I could only once succeed
In diving to the ocean's bed, away with need!
There mountains lie, perhaps, of wealth unmeasured,
There corals, pearls, and stones of brightest colours treasured,
Which only need the pains of raking
Into a heap, and taking.'

Egged on by thoughts like these, the madman got his boat
And o'er the open sea did float,
When choosing well his place, where blackest frowned the deep,
Down into the abyss he jumped; but, swallowed by the wave,
Long ere he could to the bottom sweep
For his audacity his life he gave."
"O king!" the sage his moral would apply,
"Although from learning much of benefit derives,
A mind audacious ever in it dives
To some abyss, in misery to die,
With but this difference known,
That others' ruin often he causes with his own."

—o—

[Kriloff has been accused, and especially in this fable, of underrating the influence for good of learning and science, but he intended here to hint at the evils that may follow on studies guided by false ideas; he attacks, not the depth, but the pride of learning. The keynote is struck in the line

—"and sought
To find the depth for him was fit."

XXXIX.

The Peasant and the Snake.

A SNAKE within a Peasant's house once asked to dwell,
Not to live idly without labour,
No, nurse the children would he of his neighbour;
Sweeter is bread when toiled for well!

"I know," said he, "the evil reputation,
Which men unfairly make
For every snake;
Wicked they call the hissing nation;
From earliest times the rumour runs,
That gratitude to it is all unknown;
That friendship, kinship's ties it ever shuns;
And as to children, why, parents eat up their own.
All this, perhaps, is true: but, I'm not therefore worse,
From birth not only have I no one stung,
But been from evil so averse,
That from my fangs my sting they might have wrung,
If, when once flung
Away, I could have lived without it;
In short, I am the kindest of all snakes,
Don't doubt it!
You'll see what for your children's sakes
A loving snake can do."
"If so," replied the Peasant, "and you lie not,
Still on my taking you rely not;
For, if such cases oft themselves renew,
For one kind snake, that here by chance may creep,
A hundred wicked ones may too,
And we our children lost for ever weep.
Yes, my good friend, it seems to me,
And that is why your breath you only waste,
The best of snakes should be
Off to the devil packed, and that post-haste."

Now parents, can ye guess with what I've here made free?

[This fable is directed against one of the evil consequences of the campaign of 1812. The French prisoners were not only treated with humanity, but became the lions of society to an extent that roused a justifiable patriotic indignation. Numbers of these foreigners, quite unqualified morally and intellectually for the task, were intrusted with the education of youth. French soldiers, cooks, housemaids, and grooms could hardly make useful instructors. This occurred while the national feeling was still deeply stirred by the struggles, the victories, and the sufferings of the war. One of the writers of the day exclaims: "A Jew cheats in all saleable articles, a Gipsy in horses, and a Frenchman in the education he gives." Kriloff belonged to the literary circle in which this feeling was uppermost, and even in the early days of his "Spirits' Post" it was one of the points to which his satire continually returned.]

XL.

The Frog and Jupiter.

After a long life spent within a bog,
Unto the hills above once moved a Frog,
For change of air;
A damp place in the corner of a gorge he chose,
And soon his home arose,
A paradise of grass in shade, just by a thicket, where,
For all the joys he thought his own, he only met with care:
With summer heat came every day;
Our Croaker's country seat was soon so dry,
That pains through all his limbs unwetted fly.
"Ye gods!" from out his hole the Frog did pray,

"Oh, deign my helpless self to save from ill,
Let water to the mountain's top the gorges fill:
So that, as far as reaches my domain,
The flood shall ne'er dry up again!"
The Frog keeps up a ceaseless wail,
And ends by Jupiter himself abusing,
That sense and mercy with him naught avail.
"Thou foolish one!" says Jupiter refusing
(To anger him the plaint, it seemed, would fail),
"To croak at nothing well befits a frog!
But why should I, to please thy whim,
Drown men that like thee cannot swim?
Hadst thou not better once again go back unto the bog?"

Oft in the world must we such folks admire,
Who to all interests save their own are cold,
Who, if themselves were safe, would willingly behold
The whole world blaze in one consuming fire.

—o—

[The idea of this fable is expressed by many Russian proverbs; for instance, "For me, let the whole world burn, if I may only live."]

XLI.

The Strangers and the Dogs.

Two Strangers once, engaged in earnest talk,
Were taking in a certain town their evening walk,

When suddenly a watchdog, lying
Inside a gate, barked at them sharp and loud.
The bark was echoed: instantly a crowd
Of dogs of all sorts, with each other vying,
Sprang up around them, barking in angry tones.
One of the Strangers had caught up some stones.
"Drop that, my friend!" the other to him cried,
"Of barking thou a dog canst hardly break,
But teasing may the pack more dangerous make:
I know dogs well, come on!" So side by side,
No notice taking of the dogs, they went:
Before the plan a dozen steps they'd tried,
The noise grew less, and soon was wholly spent.

The envious will, whate'er they look on meet
With spiteful yelp, like curs upon the street.
But thou, go thou thy way in peace!
They'll bark, and if not noticed cease.

XLII.

The Peasants and the River.

Some Peasants, out of patience getting
With all the evils them besetting,
From swollen brook and rivulet
Each time that high the waters rose,
Resolve the Stream for justice to beset
Into whose tide each raging feeder flows,

And cause enough their plea should count!
Here fields of torn-up corn;
There broken mill planks hurriedly are borne;
And cattle drowned, unknown the dread amount!
While gently runs the Stream, to grandest size enlarged.
His waves the walls of mighty cities wet,
But never yet
With such mad tricks hath he been charged:
So, surely he'll this ruin stay,
The Peasants argue, ready with their thanks.
But, when they came unto the River's banks,
They floating saw their goods and planks,
The half of all their wealth, upon him borne away.
Then, pains and profit knowing how to weigh,
The Peasants but of one good look had need;
Each in his neighbour's face had read,
And, shaking every one his head,
Off, home to bed
They went, and thus agreed:
"Let us not lose our time again!
Against inferiors to plead is always vain,
Where the superior thief gets half the gain."

—o—

[This is intended for the bribery, in which the higher officials themselves so largely shared. The evil has been lessened, especially through the legal reforms of the late Emperor, but that it still exists is notorious.]

XLIII.

The Fire and the Diamond.

A FIRE, arising from the merest spark,
Its bright flames casting through the dark,
Over a pile of buildings poured in the dead of night.
Amid the troubled scene,
A diamond its light
Gave from the dusty road with faintest sheen.
"How worthless thou!" the Fire did say;
"How in my presence dimmed thy vaunted play!
And what long habit's use must eyes demand
Thee to distinguish, e'en when close at hand
Or from a bit of glass, or water drop,
On which a ray of mine, or of the sun's, hath strayed!
I would not say, that misery alone with thee can stop,
That on thee never weighed—
Thou useless one!—some ribbon's rags;
How oft thy beams are lost in shade,
When o'er thee but a single hair-lock drags!
But not so easy to eclipse my glow,
When, I in all my rage,
Lay mighty buildings low,
See, how the efforts both of youth and age
Against me I despise;
How with a crash all that I meet asunder flies—
While the red glare, which through the clouds I spread,
O'er a vast space inspires dread!"

"Though, when compared with thine, my beams are naught,"
The Diamond answered, "Harm I never wrought:
In no one's misery have I had part;
My rays within an envious heart
Alone can cause the lightest smart;
But thou canst glitter only to destroy;
So that, their strength uniting all,
See, how men work that thou shouldst faster fall.
The higher thou dost flame in angry joy,
The nearer is perhaps thy end."
Now to the Fire, to put it out, a vast crowd dashes;
By morning on the spot is left but smoke and ashes;
The diamond, picked up, they send
To a king's crown its chiefest grace to lend.

—o—

[The strange predilection of Kriloff for fires has been mentioned in the account of his life; he everywhere describes the action of fire with an admirable truth and vividness.]

XLIV.

The Paper Kite.

A KITE, let up into the sky,
Observing, from its post on high,
A moth that in the vale did fly,
"Wouldst thou believe," cried, "I can hardly see
Thy form at all? Confess, thou enviest me,

That I rise thus without a risk to fall."
—"Envy? not I; no, not at all!
Vainly so much of self thou dreamest!
Thou art tied fast when high thou seemest,
And such a life, friend Kite,
To happiness must say good-night;
But I, however low my flight,
May roam where'er
I wish in air,
And, unlike thee, mere plaything fit for boys,
A foolish whirring noise
Makes not the only thing for which through life I care."

XLV.

The Shadow and the Man.

A PLAYFUL Rogue to catch his Shadow once did try;
His leg put out, It goes ahead; faster, and It doth fly
Before him still; he runs, and must at length go by:
But each time that he springs, swifter the Shadow runs,
Still unattained, like life's best treasure.
Our Rogue a step or two doth backward measure,
And lo, the Shadow following his step no longer shuns.

Ye Beauties bright! I've heard say many times:
What think ye now? No, truly, they touch not you my rhymes;
But what with Fortune haps, that with the subject chimes:

One time and trouble vainly wastes,
Striving with all his strength but once to hold her;
Another, as it seems, runs from her,—then, behold her,
How after him with opened arms she hastes!

XLVI.

The Pond and the River.

"How is it," to a River a Pond his speech began,
"That, look at thee whene'er we may,
Thy waters ever run?
Art thou, then, never tired by night or day?
Besides I see that thou dost bear
Not only many a raft, long, bound with care,
But ships that carry heavy freight;
The barks and boats on thee, a countless score,
I speak not of; when wilt thou change thy state?
I should have dried up in thy place, so sore
Had been my grief. Compared with thine, a lot
Humbler, perhaps, but pleasanter I've got:
I fill not up a page upon a map,
Harpists to jingle in my praise I've not—
All that's not worth a rap!
But then, within my soft and oozy banks,
Like dames in feather beds, I thanks
Give that I live in ease and rest;
Not only that I fear not, lest
A ship or raft on me should float,
I know not what it is to feel a cockle-boat

'Tis much, if e'er it chance
That o'er my surface e'en a leaf,
Wind-wafted, dance.
What can replace a life so free from care and grief?
Unruffled by the wind from any side,
I overlook the world's vain pride,
And meditate in philosophic dream."
— "And thy philosophy, as it would seem,
Forgets this law," the Stream replies:
"That water only can its freshness keep,
The while it stagnant never lies!
And if a mighty stream I leap
Myself unto the sea,
'Tis but that I, all rest and sleep
Thrown off, am free
That law to well obey:
Therefore it is, that every year I bring,
With my abundant waters, pure as spring,
Profit to all I meet upon my way;
Therefore it is, to me so many sing
A song of praise,
And it, may be, shall raise
Through ages yet to come,
For I shall flow and pour,
When of thee shall not live a memory more,
And that thou ever wert mankind be dumb."
His words came true: he flows on as of yore;
But the poor Pond from year to year did dry
Still faster up, choked by the sedges high,

Till one great waste of mire,
Beneath the sun its last drops did expire.

Thus talent, profitless to all, doth fade,
And each day weaker grow,
If laziness upon it once hath preyed,
And healthy work hath never made
The blessings of an active life to know.

XLVII.

The Tree.

SEEING a peasant pass with axe in hand,
"Good fellow," to him said a youthful Tree,
"Please, hew me down this wood, which here doth stand
So close that it prevents my growing free:
The sun to me his beams can't show;
For want of space my roots all stunted grow,
And all around me play no freshening breezes:
The wood above me weaves a vault that freezes!
By him unhindered, in a year the pride
Should I become of all the country wide,
And the whole vale be covered with my shade;
Now thin and lank, like to a sapless branch I fade."
The peasant seized his axe in haste;
His friend a service of him asked
Which left his strength untasked;
And soon the Tree had round him naught but a levelled waste.

But he his triumph lived not long to tell!
Now the sun's rays do through him burn,
Now hail, now rain beats out its turn,
And, broken by the wind, at length he fell.
"O witless one!" to him did say a snake,
"That must thyself thy ruin make!
Hadst thou but in the wood all hidden grown,
Nor heat nor winds had done thee ill,
Thou wouldst have safe been and protected still:
And when the old trees should have left thee lone,
Their time at last death's power to own,
Then, in thy turn thou wouldst have grown so high,
Thy trunk in vigour so enwrapped,
That this misfortune with thee had not happed,
And thou been able tempests to defy!"

XLVIII.

The Stone and the Worm.

"WHO makes this noise here? Some poor ignorant fool!"
A Stone said, in a valley, of the rain that made a pool:
'"And all are glad to see him,—it needs but look around!
And as a wished-for guest have him expected,
But why is he for this selected?
He wetted for some hours the ground.
Let something now of me be known!
Here I an age have been; still, modest ever,
Lying in quiet there where I am thrown:

Yet thanks to me from any heard I never.
The world's ways must be blamed, all own:
No trace of justice in it can I see."
A Worm said: "Shame to thee!
This rain, however short the time it fell,
The valley, dried up by the heat,
Hath dressed again in verdure sweet,
And made the farmer's heart with hope to swell;
But thou within the vale a useless weight dost dwell."

Thus many boast, their service has lasted forty years;
Though from it, like the Stone's, no earthly good appears.

—o—

[It is doubtful whether Kriloff here intended to show up the evils inherent in the system of State Service, in other words, whether he wrote against the Tchinovnicks as an institution, but at any rate he intended to show the many instances in the service of incapable men holding their office for life. Kriloff probably thought more of these particular instances, as he was by no means an innovator, but their frequency then and now proves that the system produces them. It requires an unusual "scandal" before those once possessed of a place, even in the case of worse defects than sheer incapacity, lose it through any disciplinary measures. It is a tendency of the system to make all concerned hold together and protect each other, and the chiefs are more afraid of "a scandal" hurting themselves, than of any harm done through individual laches.]

XLIX.

The Finch and the Pigeon.

A FINCH was in a trap of mischief snared:
The poor bird fluttered in't, and struggled long,
When a young Pigeon o'er her raised his mocking song.
"A shame that thou," he said, "in daylight unprepared,
Suffer such wrong!
With me but ill the trick had fared;
Answer for that I boldly might."
But lo, he's caught himself within the lime,
And serve him right!
Another's woe, good Pigeon, don't flout another time!

L.

The Eagle and the Mole.

MIND, and despise not any one's advice,
Before you've thought it over twice.

From some far distant spot arriving
Within the depths of an old dreamy wood,
An Eagle, with his royal mate, was striving
—They had resolved to stay in it for good—
To build their nest upon a branching oak,
That summer might within it offspring see.
Hearing of this, a Mole, too free,
Unto the Eagle boldly spoke:—

The tree he'd chosen was not of the best;
Its roots were rotting fast away,
And fall it well might any day;
And thus, the Eagle on its top should build no nest.
But, was it for an eagle fitting, that he take
Advice from out a hole,
And from a mole?
Are we not right
To praise an eagle's piercing sight?
And, is it for a mole the purpose dread to shake
Of air's great king?
So, on the Mole not wasting e'en a word,
Contemptuously to work set to the bird,
And soon, as passed the spring,
A new joy to him did his consort bring.
All ended well; and children now are there,
The firstborn of the royal pair.
What then? As once he homeward flies,
One early dawn, from ranging o'er the skies,
With an inviting breakfast for his brood,
The Eagle sees,—no oak where once it stood!
And, crushed beneath its fall, his queen there lies,
With all her young around!
With grief he's almost blinded:
"Unhappy one!" he cried,
"How cruelly hath fate avenged thy pride!
To listen to advice I was not minded.
But was there any ground
For thinking that a mole could give me counsel sound?"

"If thou hadst not despised my state,"
The Mole said, "thou hadst learned, and not too late,
That 'neath the soil I bore my hole,
And must know better if the tree be whole,
While under all its roots I grope and grate."

—o—

[The first two lines are found in the collections of Russian proverbs.]

LI.

The Mosquito and the Shepherd.

CONFIDING in his dogs, in shade a Shepherd slept.
Observing this, a snake up to him crept
From out a bush, and, with his sting in air,
The Shepherd unto death had soon done there:
But a Mosquito, touched with pity, to him flew,
And bit the sleeper through and through.
Awoke by this, the Shepherd killed the snake;
But first the poor Mosquito, in rising, off did shake
So roughly, that its life was ended on the spot.

And such examples noticed, who has not?
If once the weak unto the strong, though moved by motives best,
Attempt to teach a truth till then forgot,
We may be sure beforehand of their lot,—
With the Mosquito there to rest!

LII.

The Swan, the Pike, and the Crab.

When partners with each other don't agree,
Each project must a failure be,
And out of it no profit come, but sheer vexation.

A Swan, a Pike, and Crab once took their station
In harness, and would drag a loaded cart;
But, when the moment came for them to start,
They sweat, they strain, and yet the cart stands still; what's lacking?
The load must, as it seemed, have been but light;
The Swan, though, to the clouds takes flight,
The Pike into the water pulls, the Crab keeps backing.
Now which of them was right, which wrong, concerns us not:
The cart is still upon the selfsame spot.

—o—

[Kenévitch admits that this fable has been very generally attributed to misunderstandings among the members of the Council of State, but finding, as he says, no positive proof, with his customary caution, he refuses to adopt the explanation. To me it seems that the above application is the simplest and most probable.]

LIII.

The Slanderer and the Snake.

Of devils men unfairly talk,
As if in ways of truth they never walk,
Though justice of her due they seldom balk;
Of this a good example I can bring.
It chanced that once, within hell's burning ring,
A Snake and Slanderer together took their swing;
But neither to the other precedence would allow,
And so began a row,
As to the one that properly should march before his friend.
In hell precedence doth, 'tis known, on this depend—
Who can his neighbour's heart most surely rend?
In the dispute, with heat, in lengthy guise,
The Slanderer, to persuade the Snake,
The venom from his tongue doth shake;
And boasting of her sting the Snake replies:
She hisses out, none dare insult her to her face,
And strives to overcrawl her rival's pace.
The Slanderer behind her tail a step had stayed:
When Beelzebub, disgusted, moved his shanks;
Himself, for which to him be thanks,
The Slanderer came to aid;
And set the Snake again behind,
Saying: "Although thy services I mind,
In his unto precedence all a juster claim must find:

Thou evil art,—thy sting is death;
Thou dangerous art, when thou art near;
Thou bit'st offenceless ones (enough, no fear!),
But from a distance sendest thou such poisonous breath,
As doth this Slanderer here?
From him no flight o'er mountains high that saves,
No stretch of ocean's waves!
The harm he doth is never worked by thee;
Crawl thou, then, after him, and henceforth humbler be!"
This is why Slanderers in hell prized above Snakes we see.

—o—

[There is a Russian proverb to this effect: "Thou may'st escape a snake, but calumny its own will take."]

LIV.

The Steed and the Rider.

A PRACTISED Horseman once his Steed, by dint of schooling,
To do his will had taught; no time for fooling—
Before a motion of the rein was made,
The Horse his slightest will obeyed.
"Useless the spirit of such steeds to curb,"
His well-pleased Master one day said:
"I've hit upon a thought superb!"
And to the Steed unbridled gave in a field his head.
His mouth thus free, the Steed
Began by gently adding to his speed,

And, prancing yet,
With head up, tossing in the wind his mane,
He gambolled gaily o'er the plain,
His Master to amuse, not fret,
But, finding o'er him no strong guidance set,
His fiery instinct ruled again:
His blood got heated, and his eyes flashed light;
No longer to his Rider's beck he yields,
But carries him, in headlong flight,
Over the distant fields.
In vain our Horseman every effort makes,
With hand that shakes,
The bridle o'er his head to throw:
The Steed but shies, and hotter still doth grow;
Throwing his Rider off, into mad race he breaks,
And, like a whirlwind, hardly touching ground,
The way not seeing 'neath his feet,
Into a ravine doth he jump, to meet
Death at a bound.
The grieving Owner came to greet
For the last time his Steed: "'Tis I alone
Have caused thy woe!
If without bridle I'd not let thee go,
I had controlled thee, and the right path shown:
Me thou wouldst not have bruised, half stunned,
And thou such sorry death thyself hadst shunned!"

Howe'er attractive freedom's charms,
She often harms

A people's welfare, if, unfitted
For wisdom's guiding rein, it goes unbitted.

—o—

[The Rider is intended for Louis XVI., and the Steed for the French nation.]

LV.

The Good-natured Fox.

A TOMTIT in the spring a schoolboy shot,
And with her fate the evil might have ended,
But no, her death left orphaned, undefended,
Three of her fledgelings, who must share her lot.
Just from the egg, no sense nor strength had got
The infant brood to hunger bear,
Nor yet the sharpness of the air,
And lamentably for the mother whined in vain.
"How can one see the pain
Of infants such as these;
And not one's heart with pity feel to beat?"
A Fox said to the birds, his seat
A boulder making, opposite the nest, at ease:
"Dear friends, abandon not the infant in its need;
Though but a grain to the poor things ye bring,
Though with a single straw unto their nest ye wing:
To life with that they still may cling;
What's holier than a charitable deed?

Thou cuckoo, see, that idly now with life but toyest,
Were it not best to let thyself be plucked
A little, and that these in down were tucked?
Thou to no good at all thy plumes employest.
Thou lark, instead of circling high,
Mightst cease thy tumbling in the air,
And o'er the valleys and the meadows fly
Food with the orphans here to share.
Thou pigeon, for thy younglings, who are grown,
Need'st seek no fare, but let them find their own:
Quit, then, thy nest, where thou art not required,
And care for these, by mother's love inspired;
Thine own young leaving to the love
Of God above.
Thou swallow, shouldst catch moths by rights,
To feast for once the hapless mites,
And thou, my gentle nightingale,
—Thou knowest the delights thy voice gives best—
The while that zephyr gently rocks their nest,
Lull them to sleep with songs that never fail.
And by such tenderness, 'tis my belief,
Ye'll compensate for bitter grief.
Then listen, birds, to me: let's show the forest wild
Hath good hearts too, and that * * *" Here stopped the speaking mild;
The nurslings that above did sit,
Seized with the pangs of cruel hunger's fit,
Fell fluttering to the Fox's feet.
What did the Fox do? Gobbled up the three,
And let his fine discourse unfinished be.

Reader, such things we meet!
No waste of words with those that really are kind-hearted,
In silence they their good deeds do;
But he, whose empty talk of kindness buzzes through
All ears, by kindness is to action seldom started,
Unless another have the cost to pay,
And nothing of his own be lost in any way.
Once put to proof how few our Fox would shame,
For most men do the very same.

—o—

[After the French war thousands of Russian families had to struggle with poverty, and many were deprived of the "breadwinners." This distress led to a development of well-intended charity, but at the same time it was accompanied by a good deal of what may be seen elsewhere in such matters, vainglorious advertising and boasting, not to speak of funds diverted from their purpose.]

LVI.

The Man with Three Wives.

A CERTAIN vanquisher of women's hearts,
While still his first wife was alive and well,
Married a second, and a third.—They tell
The king the scandal of such shameless arts,
And, as his majesty abhorred all vice,
Given himself to self-denial,
He gave the order in a trice
To bring the bigamist to trial,

And such a punishment invent, that none
Should evermore dare do what he had done:
"And if the punishment to me should seem too small,
Around their table will I hang the judges all."
This to the judges seemed no joke:
The cold sweat ran along each spine,
Three days and nights they sit, but can't divine
What punishment will best such lawless licence choke.
Thousands of punishments there are, but then,
As all men of experience know,
They cannot keep from evil evil men.
This time kind Providence did help them, though,
And when the culprit came before the Court,
This was his sentence short:
To give him back his three wives all together.
The people wondered much at this decision,
And thought the judges' lives hung by a feather;
But three days had not passed before
The bigamist, behind his door,
Himself hung to a peg with great precision:
And then, the sentence wrought on all great fear,
And much the morals of the Kingdom steadied,
For, from that time its annalists are clear,
That no men in it more has three wives wedded.

—o—

[A scandalous divorce case, in which a well-known character of the time appeared as the unwilling husband of three wives, gave occasion to this fable.]

LVII.

The Sightseer.

"Good day, old friend, and where have you now
been?"
—"To the fair, and there the show three hours I've
seen;
I went o'er all, inspected all, and come—
Canst thou believe it?—home from wonder dumb:
Language can tell thee not
The miracles of that enchanted spot!
Nature's inventions all in one strange lot!
What birds fly there, and oh, what wild beasts roar!
What butterflies, what beetles rare,
What flies, what mites of insects there!
A coat of emerald some, others of coral wore!
What lady-birds minute and red!
Some, I declare, smaller than a pin's head!"
—"Didst see the elephant? Does not his look impress?
I take it, thou didst think him mountains tall."
—"What, is he there?"—"Of course."—"Old fellow, I
confess,
I noticed not the elephant at all."

—o—

[It has been asserted in Russian literature, that Kriloff was offended by a poetaster of the day leaving out his name in the enumeration of the great fabulists, the Christian name of each of whom was Ivan; La Fontaine, Xemnitzer, and Demetrieff were alone mentioned, though Kriloff's name was also Ivan. According to this account,

Kriloff avenged the slight by the above fable, but the well-known proofs of Kriloff's modest appreciation of his own merits make it impossible to believe that he could have represented himself as an elephant in comparison with La Fontaine. The fable is clearly directed against minute and pedantic study which overlooks more important things, one of the points on which Kriloff frequently dwells.]

LVIII.

The Cask.

A MAN called once upon a friend, to ask
That he would lend for several days a Cask,
A service which a friend could scarce deny.
Had it been money, now, he borrowed, why
His friend might easily have said him no,
Friendship and money together seldom go;
But lend a Cask, 'twas such a trifling thing!
Soon to its owner back the Cask they bring,
And he pours water into it as before.
Thus all had ended well,
Only the Cask had been, as told the smell,
For three days holding spirits in a store:
All that they put into 't a flavour catches;
The beer is spoiled, the wine bad whiskey matches;
And dry goods get a most unpleasant taste.
The owner's not in haste,
For many a day
The Cask he knocks about:
He steams it, airs it, but the smell won't out,
And so at last he throws the Cask away.

Think of this fable, ye who parents are,
And so bring up your children, that no bar
In life spring from their youth directed ill !
For that once stained, whate'er the lips proclaim,
In every act, beneath the seeming aim,
A mind perverted is apparent still.

—o—

[Several Russian commentators have supposed this fable to be directed against the mysticism which had then begun to penetrate into Russia; others, again, suppose it to allude to the secret societies which were then already at work. Kenévitch seems to lean to the interpretation of Pletneff, that it refers generally to the irreparable evils of a bad education, and so it will probably be most often understood.]

LIX.

The Doe and the Dervis.

A Doe, that had her new-born young ones lost,
Whose teats with milk were filled to overflowing,
Found in the wood two wolf-cubs, whining, tost
By chance, and to them mother's love was showing,
Feeding them from her udders well
In the lone wood, where they did dwell.
A Dervis, by her action much surprised,
Said, as he passed: "O senseless one, dost know
To whom thy milk, to whom thy love? Despised
Thou'lt be; canst think that race will show
Thee gratitude? Such natures work but ill,
And these thy blood will some day spill."

"So be it," the Doe replied.
"Of that to think I've never tried,
And would not now begin :
A mother's instinct has been all I felt ;
My udders pain to me had surely dealt,
If none from them my milk sucked in."

And thus a good deal for itself is done,
Without the slightest hope of gain :
A kind heart ever will abundance shun,
If it can't help with it a neighbour's pain.

—o—

[This fable may be considered as the reverse of the picture, "The Good-natured Fox," and most probably refers to the same circumstances.]

LX.

Tristram's Coat.

Poor Tristram's coat at elbows being worn,
He made not much ado. At once the sleeves were torn,
And out of each he cut a handsome slice,
To patch the elbows up. The Coat again looked nice,
Though through each sleeve peeped out a long bare arm ;
Which he accounted little harm,
Yet all his neighbours laughed poor Trist to scorn.
But ready Tristram saith : "A fool I was not born,

I'll soon put that in order;
And longer than before shall hang each sleeve's wide border."
For Tristram had a mother wit,
This time his sleeves were large enough;
He cut off tails and all that round the waist should sit,
And thanked his stars his coat did fit
Like a short jacket made of flannel stuff.

And thus I've chanced in life such wiseacres to see,
Of different degree,
Worst muddling where the most they think them handy;
Look, do not such men play in Tristram's Coat the dandy.

—o—

[This alludes to an absurdity common among the landed proprietors. They used to pledge and repledge their lands, without paying the interest due, and thus lived for a time in luxury and ease far beyond their means, with the necessary result of final and hopeless ruin.]

LXI.

The Cloud.

Over a region long by heat half roasted,
A large black Cloud pursued its flight;
No drop did from it on the land alight,
Its torrents on the sea spent all their might;
And then, unto a hill of generosity it boasted:

"What good hast thou e'er done,
Thou generous one?"
Unto it said the hill:
"To look at thee it makes one ill!
If thou the fields with rain had striven to fill,
A starving country thou hadst saved, instead of talking stuff;
Of water in the sea, my friend, without thee there's enough."

—o—

[This fable, taken in connection with "The Good-natured Snake" and "The Doe and the Dervis," seems to complete the view of what charity ought to be. No particular circumstances can now be found to which it might be referred.]

LXII.

The Ape and the Spectacles.

An Ape in old age suffered much from blindness,
But being told, through human kindness,
That such a weakness need not long endure,
A pair of spectacles the cure,
He went at once and bought a dozen pair.
The Ape the Spectacles turns o'er and o'er,
His forehead's hot with them, his tail quite sore;
He smells at them, and licks them round with care;
And still the Spectacles are useless quite.
"Confound them," quoth the Ape, "and every fool
That listens to the lies of human spite:
I'm cheated like a boy at school,
For spectacles set no eyes right."

Thus saying, on the nearest stone he dashed them,
And into sparkling splinters smashed them.

The same thing happens not to apes alone:
Where they should profit by the thing they own,
The ignorant to loss will always turn it;
And worse with fools who for their rank are known,
They will not only spoil the thing, but spurn it.

LXIII.

The Lion and the Panther.

ONCE in the days of old,
A lengthened war between a Lion and Panther bold
Raged for the woods, and dales, and caves which they disputed.
To yield to others' rights ne'er entered either's mind:
The powerful of earth are oft reputed
To be to all rights blind.
They follow out their law of might:
The one that conquers, he is in the right.
Our heroes, though, could not for ever fight—
They'd blunt their claws:
So they resolved to leave their quarrel to the laws;
To put an end to war and strife,
And then, as is the use, make peace for ever—
Till the first wrangle them did sever.
"Sooner to have a quiet life,

Let each of us an arbitrator name,"
The Panther said, "and as they two decide,
So be all without blame.
The cat I do appoint upon my side;
Not showy he, but with a conscience clear:
Thy cause unto the ass entrust; his rank is high,
And, if to speak out I'm permitted, I
Know not another beast of such engaging cheer!
Believe me as thy friend: thy Court and Council both
Thou'lt soon be nothing loth
To change against a hoof of his; nor fear
But what he with my cat decrees
Will be what best ourselves shall please."
The Lion what the Panther said confirmed,
Without an angry word;
Only the fox he, not the ass, affirmed
Should in his cause be heard,
Low muttering to himself (the world he seemed to know):
"Small profit found in those praised highly by a foe."

—o—

[Kenévitch supposes that Kriloff here alludes to a contemporary diplomatic appointment, but can find no ground for giving any name or particular circumstance.]

LXIV.

Dogs' Friendship.

UNDER the kitchen window lay
Rover and Dash, to warm them in the sun,
Though more becoming had it been, if they,
To guard the house, had gone to play

Before the gate, or in the yard to run;
But, as they'd eaten as much as they could stuff,
And were, besides, well bred enough
During the day to bark at none,
They had preferred to have a chat
Of things in general, of this and that,
And how a dog's hard service should be done:
At length of friendship they to talk began.
"What can be," Rover says, "more pleasant than
When two hearts only for each other beat,
In all with mutual service sure to meet?
Without thy friend to sleep not, nor to eat,
And know that, hero-like, to save thy skin,
Thy friend, when there's a risk, himself jumps in?
In short, to read within each other's eyes,
That every hour together spent but happier flies,
And think but how, by tricks, and jokes, and laughter
To make thy friend thy company run after?
Such friendship is the greatest bliss that life can show!
What, for example, if between us two
A friendship firm as this should grow?
I dare to say,
We should not see the moments as they fly."
"Well, done then! Let thy wish have way!"
Doth Dash reply:
"'Tis long I've felt that, Rover, thou and I,
Dogs of one yard, should never fight,
And well thou know'st, we do it day and night;

Without much cause for it! The master's kind:
Ne'er hungry we, and most things to our mind!
Besides, it truly is a shame:
Dogs once for friendship were examples quoted,
But now with dogs, as if 'mong men, 'tis noted
That friendship's but a name."
"Let us the age's bright example be,"
Cried Rover; "give thy paw!"—"Here 'tis for thee!"
The new friends then fell to to close embracing,
Each fondly after his fond comrade racing;
They know not in their joy what names to give:
"Orestes!"—"Pylades!"—To squabbling now an end,
No more in envy, malice now to live!
The cook here most unhappily did send
A bone to them the window through,
To it at once our new-pledged comrades flew;
Where now had got their concord wise?
At Pylades Orestes flies,
And clots and hairtufts fill the air:
A washtub in the end did part the tender pair.

The world is full of friendship quite as fair;
Of all the friends we see, 'tis hardly sin
To say, their friendship is the same:
Listen to them—it seems their souls are twin;
But throw a bone to them, and they our Dogs will shame!

—*o*—

[In this fable we have the Congress of Vienna, and the famous alliance between Austria, England, and France, against Russia and Prussia.]

LXV.

The Peasant and the Labourer.

When by misfortune's spite we're overtaken,
How glad we are, upon our knees,
To beg the aid that gives us ease;
But, when the evil's from our shoulders shaken,
The man that saves us is repaid but ill:
We seek some motive in his frank goodwill;
And 'tis a wonder,
If in the end we don't detect a blunder!

Once an old Peasant, after a day's haymaking,
Just as the evening shadows fell,
With a young Labourer his way was taking
Home to the village, through a wooded dell,
When face to face a shaggy bear they met.
The Peasant had not breathed a sound,
Before the bear had got him on the ground,
Hugging and bruising, rolling him over, yet
Waiting as if to find the fattest place to bite.
Disabled quite,
The old man, on the point of death,
Cried to the Labourer, with weakening breath,
From underneath the bear:
"Good Stephen, save me! Gentle Stephen, dare—"
The stalwart Labourer, collecting all his strength,
Gave with his axe one herculean stroke,
That half the bear's skull cut off, then a poke

Which deep into its guts his pitchfork sent,
And with a roar at length
The bear fell dying.
The Peasant rose, a new life to him lent,
Looked at the bear, in its last struggle lying,
And set to work poor Stephen to abuse.
The man was taken quite aback;
"What for?" he asked, and sighed "Alack!"
—"What for, oaf? Ah! art proud to use
A pitchfork, and to drive it in?
Look there, fool, thou hast spoiled the skin!"

LXVI.

The Wolf and the Fox.

We all give willingly away
The things we want not, every day;
And this a fable shall explain,
The truth, half told, gives no one pain.

A Fox once in a henroost ate his fill,
And, having put a stolen store aside,
Under a haystack lay at evening tide
In dreamy mood, when lo, a Wolf came by!
"Ah, gossip! Woe to me!" he said,
"Not a bare bone to gnaw, howe'er I try,
With cold and hunger almost dead;
The dogs are fierce, wakeful the shepherd's eye:
As well be hung at once, and sped!"
—"Indeed?"—"'Tis so"—"Poor fellow, sorry cheer!
Wilt try some hay? I have a fine wisp here:

To treat an old friend I am glad."
The friend no hay, but meat wished that he had—
The Fox said nothing of the store he'd hid.
Good-bye to him the gray rogue bid,
And, surfeited with all the kindness shed
Upon him, home went supperless to bed.

LXVII.

The Mechanician.

A VAIN young Spark a stately house did buy,
Old-fashioned, it is true, but on a scale quite splendid:
Both strength and comfort: everywhere the eye
Was pleased, in nought the owner's taste offended,
Except that it
Too far from off the water's edge did sit.
"Well, what of that! I of my goods am master;
And this my house, just as it stands,
Move to the river shall machines and hands.
(Our Spark, thus on mechanics mad, feared no disaster)
I sledges under it will lay,
Digging at first beneath it the foundation,
And then on rollers will I give it way,
So that a pulley, at a word I say,
Shall slide it, as on butter, to its station.
And what is more, a thing ne'er seen on earth,
When the house thither shall be borne along,
Then with a jovial set, a band, and song,
High feasting at a table long,
I'll keep in it a rare house-warming's mirth."

Enchanted with his stupid freak,
To work our Mechanician set, to seek
Out labourers, who under all the house went digging;
No money spared, nor trouble; all in vain:
The house moved not, though shoved and pushed again,
And all he gained, his workmen wigging,
Was that his house fell—crash—
In ruins, with a dreadful smash!

How often do we find
Freaks of a kind
More dangerous in a dull man's mind!

LXVIII.

The Flowers.

In a rich room, the windows open to the weather,
In porcelain pots, whose tracing was as gems,
Some handmade flowers, with living ones together,
Stood on their wiry stems,
Their bright heads nodding to the wind,
And showing all their beauties off, after their kind.
A shower of rain began to drop,
The taffeta flowers to Jove their prayer address:
"Canst not the rain's force stop?"
And loudly next the rain abused in their distress.
"Great Jove!" they cry, "to the shower put an end:
For whom can it befriend?

And what on earth than rain is worse?
It everywhere doth mud and puddles send,
And in the streets each passer-by doth curse."
Jove, though, the foolish prayer would not accept,
And down again o'er all the shower swept.
The heat off kept,
It freshened all the air, and nature lived again,
Clothed in a greener tint beneath the rain.
Within the window then the living flowers
Put forth new beauties with the welcome showers,
Giving out odours fresh and sweet,
With petals opened wide the rain to greet.
Meanwhile the handmade flowers, poor things, have lost
All beauty, and their luck
Is to be on the dust-heap tossed
With other muck.

True talent never is by critics vexed;
They cannot any of its beauties soil:
But artificial flowers are perplexed
By rain, for them the showers spoil.

LXIX.

The Village Assembly.

WHATE'ER the order that you introduce,
In hands dishonest it must play the deuce:

They always find some trick to play,
Through which they get, against all right, their crooked way.

The lion asked a wolf a shepherd's post to fill,
The fox's help giv'n to his comrade dear,
A word was whispered in the lioness's ear,
But, as of wolves there runs a rumour ill,
And as, of course, none must of the lion's favourites hear;
The order went out: unto all beasts greeting,
And summons to a general meeting,
Where each must say what of the wolf he knew,
And if he thought him false or true.
The order carried out, the beasts assembled all,
Each after his decree to give his vote they call;
But 'gainst the wolf no word was said,
And, by the judgment of the Assembly read,
To place him in the sheepfold 'twas decided.
To that what said the sheep,
Present, of course, at a meeting not onesided?
Alas, not so! The sheep forgotten weep,
With votes unasked,
Though theirs of all the voice that should have first been asked.

—o—

[Kriloff here alludes to the abuses of the Village Communal Institutions, and seems inclined to point out that some of them arose from the want of character in the Russian peasant. All who know Russia will agree that the picture is not overcharged.]

LXX.

The Starling.

EACH has a talent of his own :
But, by another's proved success too prone
To be led away, we oft alone
Attempt the very things for which unfitted.
If my advice were known,
Men for such failures would no more be twitted,
But cultivate the gifts which nature wisely lent.

A Starling, born with such a bent,
So like a bullfinch drilled his song,
Men swore it *was* a bullfinch charmed the throng.
With cheerful notes he filled the woods around,
Till every starling boasted of the sound.
Another might have been content in part;
Our Starling, hearing nightingales were praised,
—The Starling had, alas, an envious heart—
Thought: "Not so fast, friends, I myself have raised
The very notes
Which fill their throats,
As well as any nightingale."
Then off he set;
But in such wise his trills did trail,
That now he whined, and now did hoarsely fret;
At times just like a goat he bleated,
And then repeated

A cat's shrill squalling.
From all the woods he drove the birds — 'twas too appalling!
Say, Starling mine, what profit hast thou had?
Better to sing, a bullfinch at his best recalling,
Than as a nightingale to drive all mad.

LXXI.

The Hops.

Some hops grew in a garden wide,
Winding their lengthening stems around a dry stake's wood;
And in the field outside a young oak stood.
"What use in such a monster's pride,
Ay, even in that of all his race beside?"
Thus whispered of the oak the Hops unto the stake.
"How can he with thyself compare,
Were it but for thy straightness' sake?
His dress of leaves is passing fair,
But what sad colour, and what stiffness there!
For what can earth his roots thus feed?"
A week passed, and the master found he'd need
Of wood, so he the stake in pieces broke,
And in the garden planted the young oak.
His trouble with success is crowned;
The oak takes root, and from it young shoots spring;
But see, our Hops already wind around,
And in his honour loudest praises sing!

To this doth flattery its votaries bring :
They cast on thee the shade of things that have not been,
Of what themselves have dreamed, and, work thy best,
No good in thee at all can ever rest ;
But, once thou art with fortune's favours blest—
The first to fill thy anteroom they're seen.

LXXII.

The Mouse and the Rat.

A Mouse in haste once ran unto a Rat :
"Say, neighbour, has the good news reached thy ear,
Into the lion's claws hath fallen the cat ?
And now for us a time of rest is near ! "
"Gossip, no cause for gladness,"
Was answered by the Rat in sadness,
"Hope not for such an idle cause !
The lion's life won't last the longest,
If once it come to using claws :
The cat of all the beasts is strongest ! "

I've often seen, what no one that observes denies,
That every coward thinks the thing
Which unto him doth terror bring,
As dreadful in the whole world's eyes.

LXXIII.

The Mistress and her Two Maids.

An Old Maid, whom the years had made but fussy,
Stiff as a poker, for each trifle strict,
Had two young Maid-servants, whom she called hussy,
And who, from morn to midnight almost kicked,
Were forced to put their hands unto the spindle,
Until worn out they cried it was a shame and swindle.
A holiday or not, 'twas all the same;
Their Mistress would not let them be;
A minute's time to breathe from spinning never free:
When all else sleep at daybreak, the wheel has long its game
For them of rapid turning played.
It might have been that sometimes the Old Maid later rose,
Had not a cursed cock, who lived there, always strayed
Under their windows every morn:
Soon as she hears his sounding horn,
In jacket warm and high cap cornered, shows
Their Mistress, who upon the stove fire blows,
And grumbling hobbles into the spinners' room;
Her bony fingers shove them up upon their toes,
And for the obstinate,—well, there's a broom.
And thus their sweetest nap is daily broken.
What's to be done with her?
They frown, and yawn, and stretch, give every token
Of sleepiness, still from the bed must stir,
And, all unwilling, leave it warm as fur.

Again the next morn, at the cock's first crow,
The Mistress and her Maids the selfsame scene play o'er:
Once more the spinning-wheel to death doth bore.
"Then pest, be off, to the devil go!"
To the cock with teeth clenched say the spinners sputtering:
"But for thy song we'd slept much longer," runs their muttering;
"Upon thy head be all the sin!"
Seeking their opportunity, they wrung
The cock's neck so that never more it sung.
But they, alas, by that did nothing win;
Quite contrary to their intent
The business went:
'Tis true, no cock's cry with their dreams was blent—
Their persecutor dead:
But see, their Mistress, fearing that this to lost time led,
Let them not lie so long as it takes an eye to close,
And every day now rouses them so early from repose,
That no cock had, since cocks have crowed, so early tuned his lyre,
And then, too late each Handmaid knows,
That out of the frying-pan she'd fallen into the fire.

It happens that, when men have got in trouble,
The fate of these poor Maids they often share:
Rid of one bother, they draw on them double,
But to repent—when worse for good they fare!

—o—

[This is taken from "La-Vieille et les Deux Servantes"

of La Fontaine. Kriloff has only borrowed the leading fact, and out of a dry and humourless anecdote has made an animated and amusing fable.]

LXXIV.

The Bear in charge of the Bees.

ONCE on a time, the Bear to please,
The wild beasts chose him, in the spring, to guard the Bees,
Though they might well have made a better choice, than bring
A bear to honey, his one weakness knowing:
To which the sad result was owing:
But how can wild beasts judge of anything?
They got refusal flat,
All that the vacant place came after;
And lo, as if inviting laughter,
There Bruin meekly sat!
Some smelt a rat;
And they were right: the honey was soon in Bruin's den.
The news got out,
They raised a shout,
And then
The Bear brought to the judgment seat;
Where he his charge resigned,
And they an order signed,
That in his den the winter through should lie the hoary cheat.
Decided they, corrected, fast confirmed;
But yet no honey to the hive returned,

And Bruin's ears gave not the slightest heed:
By dawn of all his leave he'd taken,
And in his den, on bed down shaken,
The honey off his paws he licked with greed,
Waiting his time on other hives to feed.

—o—

[The abuses of the Civil Administration called forth many energetic measures from Alexander I. Repeated oukases reproved the system of bribe-taking and oppression which existed, as well as the choice of those for official duties whose reputation notoriously unfitted them for any such employment. The number of these oukases till the end of Alexander's reign proves that the evil had been but little repressed, and the fact, that not a few of them relate to the necessity of bringing justice to bear on the criminals, shows that many, like the Bear, escaped all punishment.

The closing line of this fable contains a Russian saying, which, if translated more literally, would run thus:

The honey off his paws he licked with greed,
Contented altogether,
And waiting, as on shore men do, for more propitious weather.]

LXXV.

The Mirror and the Monkey.

A Monkey, in a Mirror studying his form and face,
Nudged with his leg a bear, whom chance drew near the place:
"Look, gossip, there," he says, "look at that mug a space!

Didst ever see such features?
What twists and turns! Each limb doth seem to leap!
I really from mere shame should weep,
Were I myself as one of these poor creatures.
The cat out of the bag to let,
Such crooked ones among my friends I've met,
Though on my fingers I could now count up the set."
"Thy counting will but trouble earn,
'Twere better, gossip, on thyself thy looks to turn!"
Bruin to him replied.
But Bruin's sound advice was coldly turned aside.

The world sees many of such cases:
None in himself can find a Satyr's graces,
I saw it yesterday:
That John's hands are not clean knows every one;
In bribery John a name hath won,
But he, with shrugs and nods, winking looks Peter's way.

—o—

[Pletneff and Kenévitch explain this as indicating the powerlessness of the most bitter and pointed satire against self-complacent vice: no one sees his own image in the glass. Undoubtedly this general lesson is taught, and probably Kriloff thought of nothing more particular, but we foreigners may be pardoned for observing, that the capping instance chosen by Kriloff as his example of this weakness, shows, even more than any allusion to a special case, the general prevalence of bribe-taking in the society of the day.]

LXXVI.

The Lion and the Wolf.

A Lion once upon a lamb was dining;
A puppy, when not whining,
Around the royal table frisked,
And from between the Lion's paws a tit-bit whisked;
The king of beasts this calmly bore, as if not vexed:
The pup was ignorant still, and very young.
The sight an old Wolf in his thoughts perplexed;
Concluding that the Lion was not strong
To suffer such a wrong,
His paw went out, as if by right lambs did to him belong.
But with the wolf it fared but ill;
The Lion's plate he helped himself to fill.
The Lion, piecing him, said: "Here's the rub:
Watching the puppy, stupidly thou thoughtest
That I to thee would leave the bit thou soughtest;
But he is ignorant still, and thou art not a cub."

LXXVII.

The Dog, the Man, the Cat, and the Hawk.

A Dog, a Man, a Cat, and Hawk once swore
To one another friendship fast, eternal,
Beyond all flattery sincere, true-hearted, nay supernal.
Apart should be nor house nor table more

They took an oath to share in joy and sorrow,
Each other lend a hand,
And by each other stand;
In case of need to die one for the other planned.
Together all, to hunt, starting upon the morrow,
These new pledged friends
A long way from their home go tramping,
Till stained, worn out, they think of camping
For rest, at the first brook that by them wends.
They all soon take a snooze, some lying, some upright,
When on a sudden near them draws
A bear, with widely opened jaws.
At such a dreadful sight
The Hawk is in the air, the Cat gets up a tree,
And the poor Man left there with life had parted,
But for the brave Dog, he
On the fierce beast, to wrestle with it, darted,
Clinging until the bear's neck smarted,
And though the bear hugged close to crush his foe,
Roaring aloud from anger and from pain,
The Dog bit deeper through and through again:
Fixed to the throat, his teeth not once let go,
Till loss of strength with life fast ebbing laid him low.
Well, but the Man? With men, a shame to us, 'tis rare
That they with dogs in faithfulness compare!
While with the fight was occupied the bear,
Our Man, his gun over his shoulder laid,
Took to his heels, the cur, afraid!

Caressing words and promises come easy to the tongue;
But he's the friend, who unto us through evil days hath clung.
How few can on such friends rely!
In proof of which, how often seen have I,
That just as in this fable the faithful Dog is left,
So he,
That is from troubles free
Through a kind friend, who is for him bereft
Of all, that friend abandons to his woes,
And e'er abuses him where'er he goes.

—o—

[The idea of this fable is found in many Russian proverbs answering to our own, "A friend in need is a friend indeed."]

LXXVIII.

The Wolf and the Shepherds.

A WOLF once prowled outside a fold, and thence
On peeping through the fence,
Saw that upon the best sheep of the flock
The Shepherds quietly were feeding,
And that the dogs lay round unheeding;
So off he muttering went, feeling a spiteful shock:
"Ye would have made, my friends, a nice ado,
Had I done this instead of you!"

—o—

[This has always been considered a borrowed fable, and its origin attributed to "Le Loup et les Bergers" of La Fontaine, but the treatment varies very much from that of

the French fabulist, and is much closer to a fable by Esop of the same name, from which La Fontaine only took the leading fact. Kriloff wrote this three years before the time that he began to study Greek, but he may easily have known Esop's fable through translation. My reason for translating it is this, that I believe it has a special application, and refers once more to the abuses of the administration, for which only a few scapegoats were ever punished, while those, whose duty it was to prevent them, were the first to commit them.]

LXXIX.

The Elephant in Luck.

A Lion to an Elephant once lent
A gracious ear. At once through all the forest went
The rumour of't, and, as oft haps, the guesses;
How into favour could he wriggle thus?
Not handsome he, nor have his tricks yet made a fuss;
What airs, and what a mien in his addresses!
Thus argued all the beasts with one another.
"If he a bushy tail had," said the fox,
Wagging his own, "but such a whip, it shocks."
"Or if it were his claws," the bear said to his brother,
"That made of him the Lion's ordinary;
No one would think it so extraordinary,
But he no claws hath got, as we all know."
"His luck unto his tusks he well may owe,"
Put in the wolf, clenching his grinders;
"Perhaps of horns they are reminders!"
"Ye all go wide," began the ass to show,

While flapped his ears; "what pleased in him is plain,
Through it alone he rank could gain—
Have ye not guessed it yet?
'Twas his long ears that did the Lion's favour get."

How often we, although we don't observe it,
Praise others but to show that we deserve it.

—o—

[The idea of this fable is variously expressed in a number of Russian proverbs; for instance, "Every fox praises his own tail."]

LXXX.

Fortune and the Beggar.

A QUAINT and worn-out wallet on his back,
From hour to hour a hapless beggar trudged,
Grumbling that he so much did lack;
Astonished, while he grudged,
To those inhabiting the mansions that he saw,
Their gold and all their comforts without flaw,
That they, with pockets like to burst,
For pelf could thirst!
And ev'n to such extent
That, of all reason shent,
And but on adding to their wealth intent,
They lose the all they had possessed before,
Wishing for more.

As an example yonder late householder we'll take,
Whose business was so long so firmly propped,
That capital he made; and then he might have stopped,
And peacefully with time into his grave have dropped,
But ah, to leave such trade for others' sake—
Once more a venture with his ships he'll try;
He heaps of gold expects: his ships are lost,
And all his treasures to the deep sea tost;
There on its bed they lie,
And his passed wealth a dream seems to his waking eye.
Another tried his hand at speculation,
And of a million he made sure;
Too little; double 'twill, if luck endure;
All right!—His ruin makes a short sensation!
Thousands, in short, of cases such as these;
And serve them right, whose greed can nothing please!
Here Fortune came up to the Beggar's side,
Saying to calm his fear:
"Listen, I long to help thy need have tried:
This gold within a hole I spied;
Hand up thy wallet here;
I'll fill it full, but take my terms thou must:
That shall be gold that into it doth fall,
But what upon the ground spills, that shall all
Be changed to dust.
Look out, I've warned thee thou must have a care:
The terms I'm ordered to make strictly such;
Thy wallet's old, put not in it too much,
So that the weight it still may bear."

The breathless Beggar feels his head go round,
His feet no longer touch the ground!
Setting his wallet right, with hand that knew its power,
He set to into it to pour a golden shower:
The weight already on the wallet told,
—"Enough?"—"Not yet."—"I see a hole."—"Be not afraid!"
—"See, thou a Crœsus art!"—"Give more, it more will hold:
A handful still and I am made."
—"Sufficient, man! Look there, thy wallet is all frayed."
—"A pinch more still * * *" But here the purse tore with the strain;
The treasure strewed the ground, to dust in falling turned:
Fortune had disappeared: the wallet left was spurned,
And on his way the beggar went begging alms again.

—o—

[The same idea, which Kriloff has here so happily and humorously rendered, forms the subject of another fable, "The Poor Rich Man." The latter has not been translated, because, while very long, the style is didactic and heavy.]

LXXXI.

The Fox an Architect.

A LION once there was that upon poultry doted;
Yet all he kept of them but turned out bad;
And this no wonder to be noted,
For access to them each and every had:

So, they were stolen every day,
Or else the fowls themselves had got away.
To put an end to all this loss and worry,
A yard for them, without the slightest hurry,
The lion ordered to be built, and planned
So that from it all thieves were banned,
And so that all the fowls should find
In it both space and pleasure to their mind.
Unto the lion they report
That, for a building of the sort,
A fox was known to be the thing—
And to a Fox they his appointment bring.
The work was well begun, and better ended:
The fox whom they befriended
Was wanting not in talent, nor in zeal.
Each that the building saw did admiration feel!
All, that was wanted, there was found:
Sweet provender the nose delighted round;
Perches were hoisted everywhere;
From heat and cold well-sheltered was the ground,
And pleasant nooks for brood hens here and there.
The work great honour did reflect
Upon the Architect,
And richly was he fee'd.
The Lion then at once decreed,
The fowls in their new home to place without delay.
What was the good, though, of the change?
None, any way:
The gate, it seemed, was strong enough;
The fence too high for fowls to range,

Of solid close-worked stuff;
And yet the fowls grew fewer day by day.
What caused the evil none could tell.
The Lion set a watch, and who was caught?
The Fox, the wretched droll!
He'd built it all, 'tis true, so well
That to break in a thief had vainly sought,
But for himself he'd left a hidden hole.

—o—

[It would appear, from a variation in the earlier manuscript of this fable, that the original idea was a designed loophole in a contract or a law; but, in its present form, the fable appears to apply more to the Directors of Public Institutions, who, while strict to prevent dishonesty in their subordinates, indulged in it with impunity themselves.]

LXXXII.

Too bad of Him.

How often, after that we've done some evil act,
Unto another's fault we lay the fact,
How often people say:
"The thought without him had not come into my head."
And, if no soul is by, instead
Old Nick himself comes into play,
Though he hath also neither helped nor led.
Examples not a few of this, and here is one.
A certain Brahmin in the East a name had won

For eloquence and doctrine sound,
But lived not up to all that he did preach
('Mong Brahmins also hypocrites are found);
But that apart, my story's point I reach.
Within his brotherhood the breach
Of holy rule was due to him alone,
The rest were men justly for saintship known,
And, what inspired most in him disgust,
His order's Head an iron hand did own:
"At thine own peril break our rules thou must."
Our Brahmin, though, was not so soon disheartened,
One day of fast his wits he smartened,
Could he not somehow to himself a nice treat stand?
He got an egg, and waited till 'twas night,
A candle from the tinder puffed to light,
And the egg roasted on't with sleight of hand;
He turns it lightly round unto the flame,
Takes not his eyes off, swallows it down in thought,
And grins to see his Chief thus set at naught:
"But thou'lt not catch me all the same,
Longbearded friend of mine!
The egg I'll eat in thy despite."
But here unhappily, and silent quite,
Into the cell his Chief came, and divine
His wrath at seeing such a sin!
An answer he doth threatening wait:
The proofs are flagrant, to deny too late!
"Forgive me, holy father," doth begin

The Brahmin through his tears,
"Forgive me this, my first offence!
I know not how it was, but no defence
Is there for him the cursed fiend that hears!"
A devil lifted here the stove's latch handle,
"Too bad of thee," he cried, "a slanderer to be!
It was but now that I a lesson learned of thee,
And truly I the first time see
How eggs are roasted at a candle."

—o—

[Several Russian proverbs express the idea of this fable, as "The devil gets the blame, but the monk ate the pig." The incident of the egg has, on the other hand, itself added to the number of national proverbs.]

LXXXIII.

Fortune on a Visit.

REPROACH we're all too apt to cast on Fortune's name:
One gets not wealth, another rank;
And we for all this Fortune thank,
Though, well considered, we're ourselves to blame.
Blind Chance, when wandering here with men on earth,
Not only visits kings and men of birth,
But ev'n unto thy cottage door,
A welcome guest, perhaps, will one day stray,
If thou waste not the precious store,
That time brings to thee every day;
A single minute, unto him that knows its price,
For years of patient toil pays thrice.

If thou, by Chance once helped, hast failed her grace to earn,
Then with thyself thou shouldst, not Fortune, angry grow,
And know,
That she, perhaps through life, may not to thee return.

An old house lonely stood upon a township's land;
Three brothers lived in it, who led a sorry life:
Nothing went well, for all their daily strife.
Whatever they might take in hand,
Not once the least success came after,
Everywhere loss, or else their neighbours' laughter;
Them to believe 'twas Fortune's fault alone.
Fortune, invisible, to call there left her throne,
And, feeling pity for them in her heart,
Decided that to help them was her part,
Whatever they might try for, wish for, own,
And be their guest the summer through.
All summer: had a joke come true?
Now the poor fellows found that things went better.
One was a trader, whom no rules could fetter,
So ignorant he; but now, he sells or buys,
And constant profit in each bargain lies:
What losing meant he had forgot,
And rich as Crœsus soon he got.
Another wholesale dealt; at other time he had
On a clerk's stool to sit been glad;
But now to him, from every side,
Flows luck's full tide:
They feast him, and they come with low salute—
Of rank or place he's sure with his repute;

See what estates he owns, town house and country seat!
And now you ask, how Chance the third did treat?
On him too, not less kind, will Fortune surely smile!
Of course she did: with him she hath no rest the while.
Well, the third brother, then, whose hands and eyes
Were quick, the summer spent in catching flies;
So luckily he caught 'em,
Men thought he'd bought 'em.
I know not if he formerly had practised this,
But now his pains were not unpaid:
Where'er his hand he dash, with Fortune's aid,
Not once he makes a miss.
Now of the brothers' house their guest had had enough,
And off she set on ways both smooth and rough.
Two brothers were well off; one quite a wealthy man,
The other had besides got rank: the third began
To swear at fate, that Fortune's malice left
A wallet to him, of all else bereft.

Reader, thou'lt own it was not theft:
Whose fault was it that after flies he ran?

LXXXIV.

Apelles and the Young Ass.

He, that of self-love more hath than his share,
Is pleased with self for that at which all others stare;
And oft it happens, that we hear him boast
Of what he ought to blush for most.

Apelles, meeting with an Ass
Still young, invited him to be his guest;
The Ass, too pleased to think of rest,
Boasting aloud through all the woods doth pass,
And tells the beasts: "Apelles is a bore;
Tormented I will be no more;
Each time we meet he presses me to call.
It seems to me, my friends, that all
He wants is, from me Pegasus to draw."
"No," said Apelles, chancing to be there,
The famous cause of Midas was my care;
In thee a model for his ears I saw:
And, if thou'lt call again, I glad shall be.
Though I have met with many long-eared asses,
Such length of ear as that on thee
All asses, young or old, by far surpasses."

—o—

[Kenévitch says, that the well-known grammarian and writer Gretch related to him, as the origin of this fable, that a young writer named Katénin once publicly declared in the Library, that Kriloff worried him with continual invitations. Kriloff had invited the ill-fated boaster twice.]

LXXXV.

The Funeral.

In Egypt, in the days of old, a custom reigned,
Whene'er they buried any one in state,
That hired howlers at the tomb their voices strained.
At one such funeral, the man was rich and great,
A mob of these same howling weepers went
To carry the deceased too, early sent

Off to the home where dwell the blest,
Unto his rest.
A passing pilgrim, thinking that the noises blent
Came from the man's relation plunged in woe,
Said: "Tell me, friends, would you not all be glad,
If him you've lost alive you had?
A Magian I; thus far my power can go;
And charms I have about me for the task—
The dead man now shall rise!"
"O father," shouted they, "then gladden our poor eyes!
And of thee we but one more favour ask,
That, when five days are by,
Again he die.
No earthly use in him alive was ever known,
Nor would there in the future be;
But, if he die again, then we
Again are certain to be paid to howl and groan."

There many rich men are, whose deaths alone
Them of the slightest use have shown.

LXXXVI.

The Cuckoo and the Pigeon.

A Cuckoo, on a drying branch, gave forth a wailing cry,
A Pigeon, on a green bough sitting,
With sympathy and softly asked her why.
"Is it that spring hath now gone by,
That love is flitting?
Or that the sun stands lower in the sky,
And winter's cold will soon the ground be splitting?"

"And how not grieve, when thus with me it fares!"
The Cuckoo answer made. "Thyself mayst judgment give:
Happy in love did I throughout the spring-time live,
And knew a mother's joys and cares;
But now, to cast me off each young one dares:
Was this the sweet reward that filled my mind?—
Is't not enough to rouse my envy, when
The mother's wing doth round the ducklings wind,
Or chickens, at a call, run nestling to the hen?
While I, as if I orphaned were, sit here alone,
And children's sweet affection through life not once have known."
—"Poor thing, for thee my bleeding heart doth groan:
My children me, not loving me, had killed,
Though of such cases there are many;
But tell me, of thine infant brood hast brought up any?
When hadst thou time thy nest to build?
I saw not how the work did go;
I saw thee flying to and fro."
—"What nonsense! If such glorious days I'd seen,
Only to lose them sitting in a nest:
That stupider than all had been!
My eggs in others' homes shall always rest."
"And yet thy wish," the Pigeon said, "is keen,
With children's fond caresses to be blest!"

Parents, to you this fable something teaches,
I have not told it children to excuse:
If parents they their love refuse,
To crime the vice unnatural reaches;

But, if they grow up scarce to know a parent's name,
Trusted in hired hands, from you apart,
Have you not got yourselves to blame,
That in your old age they no comfort bring your heart?

—o—

[This fable belongs to the same class as "The Ducat" and "The Cask," only it seems to include more than merely Tutors and Governesses; it points to the number of public institutions to which parents began more and more to send their children. These institutions in Kriloff's day were all "closed ones"; children entered them at a very early age, and were at once separated from the family. The spirit that reigned in most of these institutions was bad: boys were hardened, and turned out coarse, ignorant, and vicious, and girls became mannerised, formal, and superficial, and, if the hints of Russian novelists are founded on fact, not seldom something worse.

During the late Emperor's reign this system was materially changed, and the "closed schools" have been to a great extent transformed into "special classes" with admittance by examination. This remark, however, only applies to establishments for boys, though at the same time the number of Gymnasiums and Public Courses now opened for the other sex have done much to mitigate the evil in their case also, even in the still "closed female schools," which are now administered in a far better spirit than they were in the days of Kriloff.]

LXXXVII.

The Writer and the Robber.

WITHIN the gloomy realm, where dwell
The Shades, before the court of hell,
In the same hour, were brought a Thief
(He on the highways travellers would slay,
And to a gibbet found his way),
And a great Writer with him, whose fame had passed belief:
His works, with subtlest poison filled,
Debauchery gave root, rank unbelief instilled;
Sweet-tongued like Sirens, he could sing,
And like a Siren, ruin bring.
In hell a trial's short and rough;
No dragging out to useless length:
Ended, the sentence comes,—enough!
From two dread chains of iron strength,
Hung two forged caldrons black, vast, motionless on high:
A criminal in each was seated.
A monstrous pyre of logs the Robber's prison heated;
Megæra's self was there,
And stirred up such great jets of fiercest flame,
That almost down, split through, the rocks of hell's vault came.
The Writer's punishment, it seemed, was not severe;
The smouldering fire beneath could hardly sear
At first, but as time passed it hotter grew.
Ages went by, and still the fire increased anew.

Beneath the Robber now the flames had long worn out,
But with each hour fiercer the Writer swept about.
Seeing no respite near,
Our author, 'mid his torments, called on the gods to hear,
Shrieking aloud that justice among them ne'er was found:
His fame, he said, the world went round,
And if his writings had been somewhat free,
His punishment had outpassed all degree;
As to his sins, he thought the Robber's crimes were greater.
In all her awful grace, one minute later,
With hissing snakes among her hair's long bands,
With bloodstained whips in clutching hands,
Before him stood one Sister of hell's Three:
"Unhappy wretch!" saith she;
"Is't thou to rail at Providence that darest?
Thou, that the Robber with thyself comparest?
A saint he counts aside of thee.
By savagery and rancour spotted,
His was a life
Of harm and strife;
But thou * * * already have thy bones for long years rotted,
And still the sun's rise every morn
Fresh evils doth light up of thee but newly born.
The poison of thy works, not only doth not grow
Weaker, but wider, deeper from age to age doth flow.
Look there! (she opens wide the portals unto earth)
See all the evil deeds whose birth,

The miseries whose cause, hath been thy fault alone !
Those children, who upon their families bring shame,
Whom fathers, nay, whom mothers despairing hardly name ;
What poison hath their hearts and minds corroded, but thine own ?
Who laughed to scorn, as dreams of children now,
All wedlock, government, and rule ?
Who laid unto their charge all ills that men should school,
And all the ties that bind the world to loosen strove ?—
'twas thou !
Who was't but thou, that unbelief enlightenment did call ?
Who was't but thou, that pictured in deceitful colours bright
The vices' and the passions' might ?
Behold there, drunken with thy teaching, fall
The pearl of lands
Into the hands
Of murderers and robbers,
Revolters, wretched jobbers,
And to her utter ruin led by her faith in thee !
Of not one drop of blood, one tear she sheds, thou'rt free !
And, darest thou against the gods to raise thy cry ?
Ah, countless still the unborn ills that lie
Within thy books to vex the world !
Keep still ; for here thou hast but thy deserving ! "
Megæra said, from wrath unswerving—
And down the lid upon the caldron hurled.

[This fable was from the first supposed to be directed against Voltaire, but Kenévitch prefers the opinion of Gogol, that it was not directed against any particular writer, but against the evils of immoral and unprincipled writing in general. As Kriloff never admitted to his most intimate friends any personal application of any of his fables, the question must be decided by the internal evidence of the fable itself. To me it seems there can be no doubt, from what we have already seen of Kriloff's opinions, and from the text of the fable itself, in which the allusion to France is transparent, that it was specially directed against the French writers who prepared the way for the French Revolution, and surely Voltaire stands at the head of them. Such is the opinion of Poltoratsky, one of the best Russian critics. It has been suggested to me that the fable might at least equally apply to Rousseau, but the allusion to the Sirens shows that a poet was intended, and the evident allusions to a number of varied works apply only to Voltaire.]

LXXXVIII.

The Comb.

To dress a child's head once a mother bought
A Comb with teeth close set.
The child would take in hand naught else, and sought,
Whether he played, or learned his alphabet,
His mass of golden locks
—Wavy and curling, as it shocks
His forehead, soft as finest flax—
To draw out with the Comb, which, though he tax
His infant mind, he cannot praise enough:
Not only that it never scratches,
But in a tress it nowhere catches:
So even, and so far from rough,

The Comb no price has in the boy's fond eyes.
It happens once, though, that the Comb lost lies
Forgotten in a corner, where the boy
Has romping been, while playing with a toy;
The game had tangled in a knot his hair,
And when the nurse came with a brush, the air
Rang with his cry: "My comb! My comb!"
At last they find it in its dusty home,
But through the hair it will not go, it sticks:
And, as it tears, in tears the young rogue kicks.
"Thou nasty Comb, away!"
He angrily doth say.
And then the Comb speaks:—"I am still the same;
But now thy hair is tangled with the game."
The boy, however, out of spite,
His Comb into the river threw:
And now the Naiads with it part their tresses bright.

Experience tells me, it is true
That many thus with truth will act.
As long as we can feel our conscience clear,
Truth is a holy thing, to us most dear,
We listen to its teaching, call it fact:
But once a crooked conscience we have got,
We stop our ears, and truth for us is not.
Each, like the child, rather than comb his hair will wrangle,
When he has made it all one tangle.

LXXXIX.

The Two Casks.

Two Casks were started : full of wine was one,
And empty quite
The other.
The first all noiselessly did slowly run,
The second trundled light,
And o'er the pavement made a mighty pother,
Raising a cloud of dust ;
Those who are passing must
Leave the way free,
When heard the coming din,
But not the less, for all that fuss, within
The other cask, and not in this, we see
That which to us might useful be.

He who, whate'er he doth, is noisy ever,
In him men find their profit never ;
He, who is true in act, in speech is curt.
Their far-noised deeds alone great men assert ;
They work the thought out in an active mind,
And noise alone is left behind.

XC.

The Sportsman.

How often are not things put off with: Time to-morrow.
But 'tis a way of speaking, when,
By common sense unguided, men
From laziness their motives borrow.
And so, whate'er thou hast to do, at once get through it,
Or else complain of self, not chance, if thou shouldst rue it,
When taken afterwards quite unprepared.
See, how the hero of my fable fared!

A Sportsman took his gun, his cartridge box, and bag,
And, with a tried and well-trained dog,
Into the woods for game did jog;
But no one could persuade the wag
His gun before he left to load.
"What rubbish!" cries he, "well I know the road,
And not a sparrow crosses it I've not
Seen born; an hour's walk will reach the spot;
To load my gun the time a hundred times I've got."
Well, how was it? Scarcely the house he'd quitted,
When (as if Fortune him on purpose twitted)
Upon the lake
A flight of ducks was seen at large,
And that so near, he ought to take
A good half-dozen at the first discharge;
Which done,
He for a week delicious food had won:
It wanted only, what he'd not, a loaded gun.

He loads at once; but at that sight
Ducks soon take fright:
While he his gun rams down in haste,
They cry, they wildly flap about,
And rise in one long line above the trees drawn out;
They're gone; and he his shot in air may waste.
Long after this in vain our Sportsman drags
His weary way, not e'en a sparrow bags;
One trouble leads unto another:
And so 'twas with our sporting brother,
For home he came
Wet to the skin,
And not a rap his game bag in;
But still it was his luck, not he, that was to blame.

—o—

[There is a Russian proverb with which this fable agrees, "Don't put off to to-morrow, what may be done to-day."]

XCI.

The Peasant and the Snake.

A SNAKE unto a Peasant crept,
And said: "Good neighbour, let us now be friends!
To fear me still would serve but ill thy ends:
Thou see'st that o'er me quite a change hath swept,
The spring hath brought to me another skin."
The Snake, however, no consent could win.
The Peasant took his shoe,
And, saying: "Thou that in a new skin art,
Canst hardly yet have changed thy heart,"
His neighbour's head he split in two.

When once thou'st given for distrust a reason,
Then, change thy mask with every season,
And still thou wilt be seen through clearly:
With thee what happened to the Snake may well occur, or nearly.

XCII.

The Ant.

A CERTAIN Ant was with unequalled strength endowed,
Such as was heard not of in ancient days;
He even (as his chronicler avowed)
Could from the ground two grains of barley raise!
And more, his courage for a wonder reckoned:
Where'er a worm he saw,
On it he was that second,
And near a spider's web alone he'd draw.
By this his fame became so great
Within the ant-hill which he called his own,
That all the talk in't was of him alone:
Praise in excess I worse than poison hate;
Our Ant of praise,[1] though, not a rap would bate,
He loved it well;
It acted on his boasting like a spell,
Prone to believe what flatterers tell;
And with it was his head so turned, sad to relate,
That go unto the town he must,
And to his strength there for all honours trust.

[1] There are several Russian proverbs against flattery, as "Praise is the first taint."

Upon the largest hay cart he could meet
He crawled up, to the driver's feet,
And rode unto the town in state ;
But ah, his pride there got a heavy blow !
He thought a crowd would run to see the show,
Breathless, as to a fire they go ;
But there they let him sit and wait :
Throw time away on him they can't.
Our Insect drags the broadest leaf, in vain
He falls from it, and gets on it again,
Not one that stops to watch an Ant.
Tired at last of hauling, he sets himself to rights,
And vexed, unto the dog upon the road,
There lying to protect the master's load,
Says : " What a town for sights !
There must be—is't not true ?
With eyes and sense to use them here but few !
Is't possible that no one sees what I have grown,
What weights for hours I can pull ?
With me alone at home is full
The ant-hill where I've long been known."
And home he went his shame to hide.

Thus, thinks with pride
A trickster, only droll,
That all beneath the sun his skill admire,
Although his fame but fire
Some ant-hill where he has his hole.

XCIII.

The Sheep and the Dogs.

UNTO a fold, to guard the sheep,
That wolves might dare no longer them to worry,
It was resolved a pack of Dogs to hurry.
Well, what? There soon was such a lot to keep
The wolves off, that the Sheep feared no attacks,
But Dogs themselves must also eat:
Stripped of their wool the poor Sheep bleat,
And then, by lot adjudged, the skin's torn off their backs;
And, when but two or three were left on which to sup,
The Dogs them also gobbled up.

—o—

[I can find no explanation of this fable in Kenévitch or elsewhere; perhaps it was thought inconvenient to give any. The meaning is, however, obvious: it refers to the oppression of the lower classes by the Tchinovnicks, and, I expect, contains a special allusion to the Police, which, in spite of many late changes, still leaves much to be desired. There is also, unless I am greatly mistaken, an allusion to one of the causes of these evils, the absurd under-payment of the lower functionaries, a thing still existing, so that a man must steal to live. I allude to the line,

"But Dogs themselves must also eat."]

XCIV.

The Ass and the Peasant.

A PEASANT for the summer hired
An Ass, and put it on his ground.

To keep off crows and sparrows 'twas required,
A mischief-making lot. The Ass was bound
By strictest morals, and its body sound.
'Twas never savage, and it knew not theft:
A leaf upon the ground it untouched left,
And birds had sinned in saying it let them steal.
The Peasant's gain, though, from the ground was small:
The Ass's active heels the birds drive all
Away, but on the beds they also fall;
Up, down, to right and left they wheel,
The soil down-trodden where in heaps not tossed.
The Peasant, seeing that his pains were lost,
Upon the Ass's back did rub
The score out with a good stout club.
"Give it him well!" the neighbours cry. "Serves the brute right!
With wits as dull as night,
Upon him such a charge to take!"
And I say, not excuses for the Ass to make:
For he was wrong (and well hath paid his debt),
But, counting faults, there was another's yet,
His who to keep his ground an Ass could get.

—o—

[There are two Russian proverbs on which this fable may have been grounded: "He let the goat into the garden," and, in allusion to the practice in the Greek church, of bowing the head to the ground, "Set a fool to his prayers, and he will break his head."]

XCV.

The Ear of Corn.

WITHIN a dale an Ear of Corn, swaying unto the wind,
A flower in a hothouse seeing
Petted with warmth, behind
The panes in comfort, he himself still being
Exposed to moths and storms, and heat and cold,
His wrath unto the master told:
"Say, why is it that man is always so unjust,
That those, who only please his taste, perhaps his eyes,
To them their slightest wish he ne'er denies;
But, those that are of use, bear his neglect they must?
The dale for profit thou dost trust:
But see in what uncared-for state it lies!
Since that in earth thou castest here the seed,
Hast thou once thought of raising, for our need,
A roof of glass, once weeded, heated us,
Or come our drought with water sweet to feed?
No, we are left to chance,—not worth the fuss;
But all the while thy flowers live
—Though they to thee no food nor riches give—
Not thrown, like us, aside upon a field,
But sheltered, under glass, perfume at ease to yield.
Ah, if we had but felt thy care, and not thy scorn,
Thou wouldst have next year told
Of profits hundredfold,
And to the city sent a caravan of corn.
Bethink thee well, let *us* to the hothouse now be borne."

"My friend," the master answer made,
"No heed unto my pains canst thou have paid,
My chiefest care hath ever been for you,
The labour that it cost, if thou but knew,
To clear the wood, manure for you the soil:
There was no end to all my varied toil.
But hours to waste in chattering I have few,
And where's the good?
Address thy prayers for rain and wind to heaven;
For, following thy advice, I surely should
Without a flower be left, without a loaf to leaven."

How often farmers—discontented men!—
A simple soldier, or a citizen,
That raked together have a fortune small,
Grumbling upon their own profession fall,
For they, though blessed by fate, themselves neglected call.

XCVI.

The Boy and the Worm.

In treachery don't flatter thyself that luck thou'lt find!
A traitor, e'en in those that use him, has good reason
To know men think him base, though, wanting him, they're kind;
And traitors are the first that always pay for treason.

A Peasant by a Worm was asked, that he should give
Permission in his garden the summer through to live.

The self-invited guest could honestly affirm,
That he would touch no fruit, with leaves content
Which faded to the ground the breezes sent.
The Peasant reasoned thus: "Why should not help be lent?
My garden's not so small but place there's for a worm:
Let him of it be free.
No loss to speak of well can follow
Should he a leaf or two there swallow."
Permission given thus, the Worm crawls up a tree;
There from all weathers safe beneath a bough he'll be;
His few wants satisfied, he lives unstirred,
And nothing more of him is heard.
Meantime to gild the fruits the Sun-God sends his beams.
In the same garden, where already ripened all,
Glossy and amberlike, transparent seems
An apple on a branch, loaded to let it fall.
A Boy there was that for that apple sighed,
And long had it alone 'mong hundreds eyed;
But, how to reach it if he tried?
Upon the apple tree to climb he dare not,
And make it shake he can't, though strength he spare not,
And, in a word, the apple, do what he will, stands firm.
To steal it who the Boy will help now? Why, the Worm.
"Listen," he says the Urchin to, "I know for sure,
The master down his apples soon will shake;
Then for us hard the apple to secure;
However, I to get it undertake;

But I must share. I suffer shall no wrong,
If thou get ten times more of it than I;
A smaller part would well supply
Me with my food a whole age long."
The terms were clearly put: the Urchin gave consent:
The Worm got up the tree, and there to work he went;
The apple, with its stalk bit through, soon fell.
The Worm's reward I've still to tell.
The apple once upon the ground,
The Boy pounced on it, ate it pips and core;
And, when the Worm his share came creeping for,
The Boy's heel smashed him, flattened in his gore:
And neither Worm nor apple e'er was found.

XCVII.

The Bee and the Flies.

Two Flies had once arranged for foreign lands to start,
And did their best to get a Bee with them to come:
A parrot to them did impart
Of wonders there enough to strike them dumb.
Besides, it seemed to them themselves a shame,
That in their native country they
Were guests whom all men drove away;
And ev'n (disgrace to man to name,
But then men were such oddities, you see!)
That they the richest dainties of the table
To feast upon should be unable,
Glass covers were invented, each dish from flies to free;
While they in hovels must from fiercest spiders flee.

"A lucky journey, then!" to them the Bee replied:
"I find
My birthplace to my mind.
My honey love to me doth bring on every side
From all, the lowly and the great;
But you, where'er
You wish, go there!
And, everywhere
You'll have the selfsame happy fate:
Nowhere will you, my friends, of use to none,
Be loved, nor after you will any run;
Spiders alone will share your joy,
And with you toy."

He, that by work his country's good advances,
To part with her to him it seldom chances;
But he, that useful qualities doth want,
After a foreign clime will ever pant:
For there, no citizen, he less contempt excites,
And no one angrily will count his wasted days and nights.

—o—

[Absenteeism was one of the natural accompaniments of the institution of serfdom, and from the time of Catherine II. a very large number of Russian nobles were better acquainted with the Continent, especially with Paris, than with their own country. In the reign of Nicholas an attempt was made to stop this by making the acquisition of a passport difficult. Kriloff was thoroughly patriotic, and especially set himself against every manifestation of this mania for everything foreign. Up to the present moment many instances are met with in society of Russians who know foreign languages better than their own. The

general feeling has, however, now set against this, and even in the case of a great writer like Tourgénieff, it is a general complaint against him, that he has lived abroad till he has lost his Russian instinct.]

XCVIII.

The Industrious Bear.

SEEING a Peasant work at bowshaped wooden halters,
And knowing that they profit brought
(Though they, like bows, bend not when patience falters),
A Bear to gain his living by them thought.
For miles the woods, in which he wrought,
Resounded with the noise of cracking,
Nut trees, and elms, and birches thwacking,
Bruin around him desolation made,
But with it still went ill his trade.
He to the Peasant goes, to ask him for advice,
And says: "Good neighbour, tell me where's the vice?
Though to break trees I've strength, I know,
I can't bend one into a bow,
Teach me what's wanted my affairs to mend."
The Bear this answer got!
"A thing of which there's not in thee one jot:
Patience, my friend!"

—o—

[Pletneff imagines this to allude to Kriloff's own life as a tutor in Prince Golitzine's family, but Kenévitch very justly objects that, through Kriloff's correspondence with his brother, we know that he was contented with his position,

and looked upon it as a home. It must be admitted that it was one for which his character unfitted him, but not in a way to which this fable applies. It was his laziness and want of experience as a teacher that were against him, and neither his impatience and roughness, nor, as Pletneff implies, the contrary defects of subservience and over-pliability. Indeed, the latter idea is utterly opposed to what we know of Kriloff's character, above all an independent one. I believe the fable has a purely general meaning.]

XCIX.

The Lamb.

How often people have I heard to reason thus:
"Of me let others say whate'er they will,
Provided that my conscience clear be still!"
No; something more is wanting unto us.
If we would keep ourselves in men's esteem,
Not merely honest folks to be, but honest seem.
Above all else, Fair Women, should ye know,
That your good fame's your chiefest ornament,
That by it to you charms are lent
Sweeter than all the flowers in spring that grow.
How often, heart and conscience free from guile,
A look too much, a word, a single heedless act,
Gives poisonous tongues the chance to fasten on a fact,
And your good name is slurred the while.
Are we not once to look? To smile are we forbidden?
I say not that, but only that every step you take
Should be so well thought o'er, for honour's sake,
That calumny itself can find no pretext hidden.

Annie, my little friend!
For thy companions and thyself, attend
To what I shall relate. While still a child thou art,
This fable learn of mine; it well may profit thee,
If not just now, when thou shalt older be.
So, take the story of the Lamb to heart;
Thy doll put in the corner by,
My tale is not so long to make thee sigh.
A Lamb, that foolish was and young,
Once o'er her back a wolf's skin hung,
And went, dressed out, among the flock to walk.
The Lamb thought all of her were sure to talk:
The dogs, who saw her garment gray,
Thinking a wolf was from the woods astray,
Jumped up, rushed to her, got her on the ground,
And, long before her wits came round,
Had almost torn her into pieces.
By luck the Shepherd hears, and her releases,
But take from dogs a bone no joke is at the best:
The poor thing from the scuffle so doth stagger,
That hardly to the fold her legs will drag her;
And there she droops from day to day, pains in her chest,
With one continual plaint to all within her hearing.
But, if the Lamb had wiser been,
A danger in the thought she'd seen
Of ever like a wolf appearing.

—o—

[This fable was written for Anna Alekséevna, the youngest sister of Kriloff's intimate friend Olénin.]

C.

The Peasant and the Sheep.

A PEASANT once brought up, before the Court
For cases criminal, a Sheep—denial—
The fox is judge—roundly goes on the trial.
Directions to defendant, plaintiff short;
To speak well to the point, and leave all shouting,
Give facts, and proofs beyond all doubting.
The Peasant speaks: "One morning, such a date,
Two fowls were missing from the poultry yard,
Their bones and feathers only left to guard;
And near them this same Sheep alone did wait."
The Sheep speaks next: she'd slept throughout the night,
And all the neighbours called, to witness she was right,
And that not one had ever known her bleat
For what she stole,
No trickery in her soul;
Adding to this, she ne'er ate poulterer's meat.
The fox's sentence thus went, clear and neat:
All pleading from a sheep to set aside;
To save delay, at once decide—
All sheep were well known rogues and clever;
On the said night, the evidence made clear,
The Sheep unto the fowls throughout was near,
And fowls taste well as ever—
The hour and place both suited:
"Therefore I say, upon my conscience well reputed,

It cannot be the Sheep was such an owl,
As not to eat the fowl:
All this considered well, the Sheep's death I decree,
The flesh the Court to have, the skin the plaintiff's be."

—o—

[This is a bitter satire on the administration of justice to the Peasants; all through Kriloff's fables the latter are continually represented by sheep.]

CI.

The Bluebell.

A BLUEBELL, on a lonely spot,
Lost all its bloom, and hung as if quite faded,
With head bent o'er its stem; its lot
Of coming death it met unaided,
And to the Zephyr whispered in tones of sorrow sad:
"Ah! If the dawn broke sooner, then we had
Some chance the sun the fields might brighten,
And my pain too his warm rays lighten."
"A very simpleton art thou,"
Said an old beetle, buzzing round a bough.
"Thinks't thou the sun hath naught to tax his leisure
But care for thee, and for thy growth?
Bloom'st thou or fadest, I'll take oath
'Twill give him neither grief nor pleasure,
No time to waste on thee.
Couldst fly as I do, thou wouldst see
The meadows, and the fields, and valleys,
Which he alone to joy e'er rallies:

There doth his ray
Reach to the spreading oaks, and stately cedars;
There robes the flowers in rich colours gay,
With perfumes filling them; such flowers are not pleaders,
They have no need like thee;
Of priceless beauty, fresh and free;
Time's scythe doth mow them, while his heart is sighing;
But thou no beauty hast, nor scent:
The sun no longer with thy wail torment.
His faintest ray will reach thee not though dying—
Then, let to silence sink thy worthless cry,
Wither and die!"
The sun arose, on nature brightly shining,
Till the whole realm of flowers drank life from every ray,
And e'en the Bluebell, through the long night pining,
Lifted its head to heaven with the day.

O ye, to whom are given, by fate's decree,
High rank and dignity,
Take home to you the sun's example, see
Ye act as he!
Where'er his ray can reach, it aideth all,
Whether a blade of grass, or cedar tall,
Leaving but joy and happiness behind;
For which his image lives in every heart,
And, like a ray through crystal, there doth dart
A blessing through the depths of every mind.

—o—

[The family of Olénin, under whom Kriloff served in

the Imperial Library, was his second home during the whole of the latter half of his life, and through them he was introduced to the Imperial Family. Both the Emperors, Alexander I. and Nicholas, specially favoured him, and the Empresses Maria Feodorovna and Alexandra Feodorovna treated him on a footing of friendly intimacy. Kriloff was once seriously ill, suffering from a flow of blood to the head, and it was in Olénin's house that he was treated and cured. On this occasion the Empress Maria Feodorovna, when Kriloff began to be convalescent, insisted on Olénin bringing him to Pavlovsk, one of the imperial seats near the capital to the present day, and herself watched over him. When Kriloff departed, he left his "Bluebell" in an album, on the table of one of the pavilions of the park.]

CII.

The Cat and the Nightingale.

A CAT a Nightingale once caught,
Into the poor thing stuck her claws,
And gently squeezing her, she sought
To soothe with soft applause:
"My dearest Nightingale!
I hear that everywhere thy songs are praised,
And thou above earth's singers raised.
My friend, the fox there, in the dale,
Says, that so marvellously sweet thy throat
When from it trills the quivering note,
The shepherds and the shepherdesses fail
To know themselves for joy.
Couldst thou not now employ

A talent which I die to hear?
Be not too stubborn, friend; tremble not thus with fear,
Thou hast no cause; I will not eat thee, dear.
Sing me but something, and I make thee free.
It is from love of music that I keep
Thee, for I often purr myself to sleep."
Meanwhile the hapless Bird,
Scarce breathing in her claws, not once had stirred.
"Well, well, begin!" encourages the Cat:
"A song, my friend, or else—have done with that!"
Our Songstress, though, won't sing, she can but whine.
"So, this is what the forests call divine!"
Spitting out scorn, the Cat doth ask:
"Where are the tones so clear thou once couldst task,
Their wondrous strength, affirmed by all?
I could not stand it did my kittens squall
Thus, and I see in singing thou'rt a dunce,
So, let us try how well thou'lt taste for once!"
And she the singer ate,
To the last bone.

Shall I in whispers now my meaning here out set,
Reader, for thee alone?
A nightingale's best songs fall flat,
Caught in the sharp claws of a cat.

—*o*—

[All the contemporaries of Kriloff agreed in understanding this fable to mean the censorship, then in all the rigour of a strong reaction, and the closing allusion to the necessity for "whispering" makes the allusion more evident and cutting.]

CIII.

The Two Dogs.

A FAITHFUL house dog, from the yard,
—His name was Bard,
And he his service well did, though 'twas hard—
Saw an old friend of his, by name Joujou,
A curly pug, an open window through,
Sitting upon a cushion soft.
As if 'twere to caress, which he did oft,
Tears in his eyes, and full of tender feeling,
Up to the window he
Comes howling, her to see,
His tail off wheeling.
"Well, what with thee, Joujou, of late,
Since thou hast had a mansion under guard?
The days thou dost remember when we hungered in the yard!
In what consists thy service, mate?"
"A sin at luck to grumble," Joujou said,
"My master is with me quite off his head:
I live in comfort and in ease,
Drink out of, eat on silver, when I please;
Frisk round my master's chair, and never tire,
Rolling on carpets, sofas soft, unto my heart's desire,
How is't with thee?"—"With me?" did Bard reply,
His tail and head both hanging, with a sigh,
'I live as ever: have to bear with cold;
'Gainst hunger bold,

And all that might the master's house attack ;
I sleep beneath the hedge, when rain falls wet my back ;
And, if I bark when not required,
The stick upon me ne'er gets tired.
But how didst thou, Joujou, thus come by luck,
Weak, small, and wanting, dear, in pluck,
Whilst I, my sides to crack, have toiled in vain?
What is thy service?"—"What my service!" says again
Joujou with scornful laughter :
"That master on my hind paws I walk after."

How many lucky are, who've only got
The gift upon their hind paws well to trot!

CIV.

The Fishes' Dance.

A LION, in his kingdom's bounds,
Not only forests had, but waters too :
His herald one day to a meeting sounds ;
The beasts must choose a Chief Commander new
Over the fish ; the Fox 'twas got the place,
And sat in it with all a warrior's grace :
He soon, however, visibly grew fat.
A Peasant was with him, his gossip, comrade, friend ;
And they together to the river wend!
While on the bank, in judgment ordering, sat
The Fox, his gossip fished,
Giving unto his comrade dear all that the latter wished.

But roguery not always meets with the same success.
The Lion at complaints his ears began to dress,
And think that in his Courts the scales of justice were
Uneven held; so he, when free, resolved to travel,
And through his kingdom all the truth himself unravel,
To know if all was just and fair.
He comes unto the bank: the ready Peasant's fire,
Prepared to cook the fish, burns as one could desire;
The rogues are waiting to begin the feast;
The fish are leaping sideways up—the water, it was hot,
And death was near—but out not one had got.
The angry Lion, understanding least,
Asks of the Peasant, opening wide his jaws:
"Who art thou? Is it thus ye keep my laws?"
"Great Sovereign!" then the wily Fox replies
(For never yet were Foxes wanting in tricks and lies),
"Great Ruler of the wood!
This man so well a Clerk's work understood,
I made him mine; and the whole nation knows,
That not one thought of self he ever shows;
These, sire, are carp, and in the water live:
And we have all come here to give
Due honour to our loving King, who deigns to visit us."
—"Well, how goes justice on? Your province is content?"
—"Great King, a people's paradise; unheard of—plaint or fuss;
If only of thy life may be prolonged the glad extent."
(The fish within the pan meanwhile struggled to find a vent.)

—"But, how is it," the Lion says, "and tell me now, I pray,
That there so many heads and tails are prancing?"
"O Lion wise!" the Fox replies, "and they
From joy to see thee here are dancing."
But this time such gross lies the Lion could not swallow,
And so, to give his people music their dance to cheer,
The Chief Commander and his Clerk so dear,
Squeezed in his heavy claws, he made to sing and hollow.

—o—

[This fable in its original form was forbidden by the censorship. There was no Fox, and only a Peasant, whose excuses were accepted, and the Lion, after embracing him, went on his way deceived and satisfied. Kriloff felt so much annoyed at the prohibition of this fable, that he was only prevented by the entreaties of his friends from destroying it. He ultimately recast it in its present form. The suspicions of the censors, that it alluded to one of the visits of Alexander I. to the provinces, were undoubtedly well founded. On one occasion Alexander came to a provincial capital, and stopped in the Governor's house. The next morning he perceived on the square before the windows a large crowd apparently approaching the house, and asked the Governor what they wanted. The latter replied that it was a deputation from the town to thank the Emperor for the prosperous condition of the province. The Emperor, on the point of leaving, avoided the reception of the supposed deputation, and, rewarding the Governor for the happy results of his administration, went away well satisfied. The truth was, that the people had assembled to present a complaint against the Governor for his abuses and extortion.]

CV.

The Fly and the Bee.

ONE spring, within a garden, on the slight
Stem of a flower bright
By the wind shaken,
A Fly its rolling seat had taken,
And, seeing on the bud a Bee alight,
Conceitedly did say: "Does it not tire thee
Toiling from morn to night to be?
A day of it enough to make me pine to death.
But mine, ah, there's a life
Like to the joys of heaven! No strife,
No toil, but only, while I've breath,
Where guests are, or where balls to fly;
And, not to boast, throughout the town I'm known
In every house a rich man calls his own,
If thou couldst only see how feasted I!
At wedding or at birthday tables dining,
I'm sure to be the first,
I eat off porcelain dishes, and my thirst,
Sweet wines slack well from crystal brightly shining,
And, before every guest,
I take what pleases me of delicacies best;
Then, to the gentler sex I go,
Wind round the youthful fair ones there,
And, if to take my rest I care,
Upon some rosy cheek I sit, or neck that's white as snow."

"Of all that," said the Bee, "thou need'st not now remind,
But unto me the sad report's come down,
That thou to no one e'er art kind,
And that at feasts at flies they only frown;
That often e'en it haps, where'er thyself thou showest,
Out, driven off with shame, thou goest."
"What if I do?" the Fly says; "a trifle not worth bother:
Out of one window driven, I fly in at another!"

—o—

[This fable is taken from "La Mouche et la Fourmi," by La Fontaine. The play on the word "mouche," in the sense of "patches" on ladies' faces, is of course omitted, and, I cannot help thinking, much to the advantage of the fable. La Fontaine's version is wanting in the directness and clear point of view, which strike at once in Kriloff. The moral in La Fontaine is vague, and seems to apply much to the same idea as that in "La Cigale et la Fourmi," translated by Kriloff, and found in Esop under the title of "The Grasshopper and the Ant," that is, to industry and idle waste of time. In Kriloff the idea of the importunate parasite is dominant throughout, and is most humorously clenched by the concluding line. The details in French, of tasting the sacrifices offered to the gods, of sitting on the heads of kings, etc., are replaced in Russian by a description of feasts more suited to the subject; and the lines, "je baise un beau sein quand je veux; je me joue entre les cheveux," are amplified in a way far more appropriate in consequence of this very description. The versification of the Russian has a lightness and playful elegance, which has made it one of the fables oftenest given to be learned by heart in every Russian school. This fable seems to me an instance of Kriloff's superiority over La Fontaine, even when he has to a great extent followed him, and I have ventured on translating

it, in the hope that some of the qualities which distinguish Kriloff's work will still be apparent, to those who choose to make the comparison, in spite of all that Kriloff must lose through the necessary change into English.]

CVI.

The Rich Man and the Poet.

A Poet, with a Man famous for wealth once went
To law, and unto Jupiter for help he prayed.
Before the Court of heaven the cause was laid,
Both came: the one was lean, and thin, and bent,
Half dressed, and almost shoes without;
The other all in gold, and with conceit swelled out.
"Take pity on me, thou, Olympus' ruler great!
Compeller of the clouds, on whom the thunders wait!"
Cries out the Poet, "How am I in fault before thee,
That from my youth from Fortune have suffered every ill?
Without a corner for my head, or bread my mouth to fill;
My only *having* in my mind,
What there I can imagined find;
Meanwhile my rival, who should well adore thee,
Void of all sense and merit, an equal is of gods;
His palace in a crowd, whene'er he nods,
Of worshippers his wish prevent; with luxury and ease
The fat upon him hangs, and falls almost unto his knees."
—"And is it, then, a thing so vain,
If unto latest ages reach thy lyre's lightest strain?"

Thus answered Jupiter: "His name
His grandchild won't remember, his great-grandchild will forget.
Was't not thyself that chose for earthly portion fame?
This Man for life I've given all earthly good, and yet
Know thou, that, if he had things rightly understood,
And if his narrow mind at truth could even guess,
Before thee he'd have felt his utter worthlessness—
And at his fate have railed, e'en more than thou he would."

CVII.

The Parishioner.

MANY there are, be only once their friend,
And thou the first of writers art, a genius without end;
But let another come,
However sweetly he may sing, they're dumb;
Not only can he not the slightest praise expect,
They fear to feel the beauties they detect,
And, though I may annoy them by the act,
I here shall tell no fable, but a fact.

Within a certain church a preacher
(Plato in eloquence had been his teacher)
Taught his parishioners all charitable ways.
His gentle speech sounds sweetly as it flows,
And, with the simplest truths alone, which no pretence betrays,
Straight up the steps of faith it goes,
Till in the light of heaven each thought and feeling glows,

Lifted from earth to where earth's vanities are not.
The Pastor's teaching to an end had got:
But each heart felt his touch, and every mind,
Surprised at self, itself did elevated find,
While tears unconsciously did fall—day ne'er forgot.
As from the house of prayer the congregation went,
"Who would not such a gift admire?"
—One of the hearers to another lent—
"What sweetness, and what fire!
How forcibly all hearts to good he doth incline!
But thou, my friend, must have a nature more than tough:
In all eyes tears, but not in thine!
Didst thou not understand?"—"How not? All, well enough!
But then, what cause for me to cry?
I am not of this parish, I!"

—o—

[The idea of this fable may have been taken from an old French epigram, in which a similar answer is given about the preaching of "un Père Capucin,"

"Pourquoi pleurerois-je dit il,
Je ne suis pas de la Paroisse,"

but there is no reason for supposing that Kriloff was acquainted with it. A more probable source is an old and forgotten collection of anecdotes published in Moscow, which Kriloff, a great hunter after odd books, may easily have met with. Some have supposed that this fable related to the neglect shown to Kriloff by the literary world of Moscow, and the preference given to Demetrieff. It is even averred that a particular passage, in a preface to the poems of Demetrieff, by Prince Viazemsky, roused Kriloff to write "The Parishioner." This last idea was shared by Kriloff's great friend Olénin, so that, in all probability, this was the occasion, and the old anecdote book the source of the point of the fable.]

CVIII.

The Miller.

THE water through a mill-dam once on a time did ooze :
And no great harm done, if they choose
In time a helping hand to lend ;
But to such boring trifles the Miller can't attend,
And day by day the leak doth wider grow,
As from a tub the water pours.
"Miller, look out !"—he yawns, or snores—
"'Tis time thy readiness to show !"
Our Miller thinks : "No harm at all to fear,
I want no seas of water here :
More than enough for all my time to last."
He sleeps, and all the while doth run,
As from a cask unplugged, so fast
The stream, that all the harm is done :
The grindstones of the mill stand still.
The Miller roused himself, the air to fill
With grief, and angry cries :
To think of means to stop the flood he tries.
Behold him on the dam, searching to find the leak :
His thirsty fowls he saw come to the river's brink.
"Ye cackling fools !" he cried, "ye draggled brutes, that seek,
Though without you so little water's left,
Your greedy fill to drink !"
And on them with a log he fell, to punish theft.
What good by that he did remains a question still :
Water and fowls both gone, he—went back to his mill !

It sometimes chanced to me
People of this same kind to see
(And 'tis for them that I this fable handle),
Who for their follies will their thousands spend,
Yet think their home affairs to mend,
By saving now and then the end
Of some poor candle,
Glad, for its sake, their servants to row like any clown.
And is it odd, that ruin should ever quickly crown
The care that thus a house turns upside down?

—o—

[Pletneff, with the evident approbation of Kenévitch, supposes this fable to have been meant for Kriloff himself, whose character was careless and uncalculating. It is related of him that he would, having to go a long distance, walk half the way rather than pay a reasonable price to a Tzvorstchick (a Russian cabman), and then, when tired, be forced to take the first equipage he could find, and pay almost as much as he was asked at first. This he used to call economy. He was, however, at times aware of his own weakness, and pleasantly laughs at it in this fable.]

CIX.

The Crow.

If thou wouldst not deserve men's laughter,
Keep to the class which by thy birth is thine;
If low-born, nobles don't run after
Till, once allied, thou say'st, their rank is mine:
Created dwarf, don't try to gain
A giant's stature, 'twill be vain.

Decking with peacocks' feathers out her tail,
A Crow among the peahens went to walk,
Thinking she could not fail
To make her former friends all talk
Of her, as the new wonder;
That she to peahens would a sister be,
And that the world would see
That Juno's Court itself, if she
Were once away, must soon fall quite asunder.
What gained her arrogance and folly thus together?
That, pecked by all the peahens, till she must
Fly from them rumpled, tumbled in the dust,
Not counting stolen plumes untrussed,
She'd hardly of her own still left a single feather.
She went back to her relatives, but they
Knew not the pecked bedraggled Crow,
And plucked at her, until she flew away.
And thus her mad trick ended so!
A crow no longer now was she,
And yet a peahen could not be.

This fable shall a fact explain to thee.
Martha, the daughter of a tradesman, took
A fancy, that she would be nobly married,
And, as she had some thousands on her hook,
The bait was swallowed, and her point she carried:
A Baron chose her for his bride.
But was she happy by his noble side?
Her new relations at each third word drop
Some sting about a shop;

Her old ones nettle her with clumsy joke,
That she her nose will 'mongst her betters poke:
Poor Martha gained but woe—
Neither a peahen, nor a crow!

—o—

[This old fable, in La Fontaine "Le Geai paré des plumes de Paon," and in James's Esop "The Vain Jackdaw," has been translated here because it is a striking instance of a new application of an old thought. La Fontaine applies his moral to those "que l'on nomme plagiaires," and Esop to contentment with what nature has given us. The latter idea has been developed by Kriloff, and applied with such inimitable humour to unequal marriages, that, though the Russian language previously possessed more than one proverb expressing the idea of the two concluding lines, they have become the one saying used by Russians to express the thought. I am better aware, than most of my readers can probably be, of what the fable has lost in translation, but I think a comparison, with either La Fontaine or Esop, will still show the immeasurable superiority of Kriloff.]

CX.

The Flint and the Diamond.

A Diamond, lost, was lying on the ground,
And him by chance a passing merchant found.
The latter to the king
The precious stone did bring;
'Twas bought, and, duly set in gold,
Upon the royal crown its rightful place to hold.
To hear of this a Flintstone did disquiet,
His fancy o'er the Diamond's fate ran riot,

And thus he spoke, to a peasant who came by :
" Oh, cast on me a pitying eye,
Take me with thee the capital to see !
Why in the mud and rain should I here lie,
And our good friend the Diamond in honour be ?
For me I cannot think to what he owes his state,
So many years that he with me in dirt did wait :
Just such a stone as I, born brother unto me !
Pick me, then, up ! who knows ? When I too there am shown,
That I am also fit for something men may own."
The Peasant put the Flint upon his heavy load,
And with him to the town he rode.
Rejoiced our Flintstone was, and thought that he beside
The Diamond soon would sit in equal pride ;
But, as it turned out, he a different chance did meet :
True, he was made of use, but 'twas to pave the street.

CXI.

The Roach.

ALTHOUGH no prophet I,
When moths I see around a candle wind,
My prophecy come true I often find :
That they to burn their wings will fly.
Thou, my good friend, the lesson may apply :
It grown-up men will suit, children as well.
Is this thy fable, then ? thou askest, wait a bit,
No fable here as yet I tell,
Though into one it fit,

Which I thus introduce with moral teaching.
I read thine eyes in, thou dislikest preaching;
At first 'twas brevity that scared thee, now I see
Thou fearest tediousness from me.
What's to be done, my friend? Without that look beseeching,
Myself the same I fear.
How can it other be? Old age draws near:
Autumn brings always rainy weather,
And age and talking go together;
But, not to leave the business out of sight,
Listen: I've heard a hundred times, or might,
That counting smaller errors not for much,
Men for them seek excuse, and say:
"'Tis but my way;
A foolish trick; pray, count it such."
Such ways the first steps are that lead us to our fall:
They take the form of habit, to passion rising next,
Until by vice's power gigantic we're perplexed,
So that our better selves we can't recall.
That I to thee may clearly show,
How over-confidence in self works ill,
Permit that I to please myself on go;
The pen now of itself the page would fill,
And through it thou, perhaps, a truth mayst know.

I know not where, nor e'en the name
The river bore, but near the same
Those foes of the great kingdom came

That's called the realm of water;
Some fishermen there built a hut.
The bank so steep, the clear tide brought her,
I mean a Roach, to live there, but
She was so active, bold, and cunning,
That, though too fond of rashly running,
They never caught her.
Around the rods she wheels, like to a buzzing fly,
And through her fault the fishermen their trade at swear.
When one at last a prize off hopes to bear,
With line thrown out, upon his float resting his anxious eye,
"There, that's a bite!" he cries; his heart beats fast with joy;
He strikes, and pulls his line in, and—the worm is off his hook;
It looks as if, on purpose the anglers to annoy,
The little rogue, by hook or crook,
Whips off the bait, and makes of it a toy.
"Listen!" to her another roach did say:
"'Twill end ill with thee, sister, some fine day!
Is there no room here free to go,
That thou must always round the lines be flitting?
I fear thou'lt soon be out of water sitting.
The nearer to a rod thou art, the nearer unto woe.
To-day 'tis well, to-morrow—who can guarantee?"
But on the foolish, like the deaf, wise words we only waste.
"See there," replies the Roach in haste,
"Shortsighted I am not, and free!

Though sly the fishermen, thy fears thou mayst lay by:
Who sees through all their tricks as I?
Look at that line! And there's another thrown!
A third, a fourth! Come now, dear sister, own
That I can their devices guess!"
And to the line she like an arrow darts:
Pulls at the one, the other drags, and for the third she starts,
But there she's caught, and in a fatal mess!
The poor thing then, too late, confessed
That danger to avoid at first is best.

CXII.

The Spider and the Bee.

For me those talents are as naught,
Which to the world no profit bring,
Though with their praise the world itself may ring.

A merchant to a fair some linens brought;
And linen is a thing which most of us require.
A sin in him, if he were not content
Wi' th' crowds of pushing purchasers that went
His goods to buy up, and their worth admire.
A Spider, who had watched the briskness of the trade,
Was envious made
To see such profits going;
So he resolved for sale to weave,
And far behind the merchant leave,

Opening his shop the window in, and there his own goods showing.
His points first fixed with care, his lines all night he drew out,
Set up his wares for admiration,
And, as he there, awaiting a sensation,
His shop not quitting sat, his cheeks he blew out,
And thought, if it were only day,
Buyers would come in crowds his way.
The day *has* come, and what with it? The dirty rogue a broom
Out of the shop hath swept, for webs no room.
Our Spider cries, with angry spite,
"See there the just reward that does me right!
Witness the world for me: *is* it as fine,
The merchant's cloth as mine?"
"Of course 'tis not: that every fool may guess,"
A Bee in answer says; "but what has that to do
With this, that none from it e'er profit drew?
No one it warms, and in it none can dress!"

CXIII.

The Peasant and the Snake.

If those, that care much for respect, would gain their ends—
With care must they select acquaintances and friends!

A Peasant took for friend a Snake.
We all know that the Snake is wise:
This one so charmed his heart and eyes,
That he by it alone would swear, or oath would take.

Of all his former friends, his relatives, meanwhile,
Not one would put a leg within his door.
"What's come to you," he said—it made him sore—
"To leave me all in this unfriendly style?
Was't that my wife e'er failed her guests to treat?
Or that our food ye could not eat?"
"Old fellow, no," Jack told him in reply;
"With thee we're always glad pot-luck to try;
Never didst thou (to say so I defy)
Offend or grieve us once in anything:
But what's the pleasure, put thee in our place,
To sit with thee the fire beside, and have there face to face
That crawling friend of thine, who may or may not sting?"

CXIV.

The Swine under the Oak.

BENEATH an Oak a century old,
A Swine ate acorns once, until his skin was cracking;
And, when he could no longer hold
His food, he thought that sleep was lacking:
He slept, he rose, his small eyes stared about,
And under all the roots next poked his grubbing snout.
"Methinks, that can't but harm the Oak,"
—It was a Crow that to him spoke
From off the tree—"'twill rot, if thou the roots lay'st bare."
"Let it, then, rot!" the Swine replied:
"What's that to me? I do not care;
No use can I see in its leafy pride;

And, when it dies for good, I'll grieve not in the least,
If I have only acorns to fatten me and feast."
"Ungrateful that thou art!" the Oak then gently said:
"If thou that snout of thine couldst higher raise,
Then wouldst thou know and praise
The tree on which alone are acorns bred."

Thus ill-bred dunces, blindly spurning
The light of science, rail on learning
And all its labours, ignorant that they
Themselves enjoy its fruits from day to day.

—o—

[This fable will, I think, amply justify the remarks, already more than once made, with reference to Kriloff's supposed indifference to science and learning.]

CXV.

The Snake and the Lamb.

A SNAKE within a furrow lay,
Venting upon the world his rage;
Snakes unto anger all give way,
The feeling in them placed by nature sage.
A Lamb too near him frisked and played;
Of snakes she was not yet afraid:
But lo, the Snake crawled up, planting in her his sting.
Round, in the poor thing's eyes, both field and sky now swing;
In all her veins the poison burns.
—"What had I done to thee?"—The Snake returns:

"Who knows? Perhaps, for all thy looks, false-hearted,
Thou here hast come with purpose to slay me,
So, for precaution's sake I've punished thee."
"Ah, no!" the Lamb sighs out, and with her life hath parted.

The man, whose heart's created so,
That he can feel nor love nor friendship's glow,
But hate alone for all of human kind,
Will for himself in others his own bad feelings find.

CXVI.

The Wild Goats.

A SHEPHERD found in winter some Wild Goats in a cave,
And to the gods with tears of joy his thanks he gave;
"A splendid chance!" he says. "I want no better treasure,
A double flock redoubles now my pleasure;
With less to eat, less time to sleep,
My gentle Goats well fed and warm I'll keep,
And for a man of means be widely known."
Flocks to a shepherd are the lands the gentry own:
From them he gets his yearly rent;
Butter and cheese he sells besides;
And e'en the skins to market oft are sent;
If only food he carefully provides:
And for the winter's need shepherds have all a store.
Behold our shepherd now, as from his flock he takes
Half of their food, and more;
It is his guests he makes
His fondlings, as with words of love he strokes them o'er:

A hundred times a day to them he goes;
Their comfort is the only care he knows.
His sheep may go without a meal,
For them no time hath he to feel;
Easy with those depend on us to deal:
Their hay he throws them bit by bit,
And each that comes to beg his staff doth hit,
By way of teaching them their place.
But still there's something wrong: when comes the spring,
The Wild Goats to the hills set off to race;
Their life seemed sad without a rock o'er which to fling:
The flock meanwhile grew thinner,
Dying without a dinner;
And off our shepherd sets, his gains unpursed,
Sure, at the worst,
Of threefold profits with the winter's snow.
Shepherd, a word! 'Twould wiser be, and fairer,
Thy love away on strangers not to throw,
But for those nearer to thee be a carer.

—o—

[A reference to the "Chronological List" and "The Sources of the Borrowed Fables," will show that Kriloff began to translate directly from Esop in 1818. This fable is one of those thus taken; it is found in James's Esop under the title of "The Goatherd and the Goats." A comparison will show that Kriloff has only borrowed the general idea, and modified both the circumstances and the moral. It has been chosen for translation because Kriloff does not appear to have succeeded as well as usual in the other fables of the same class. The very common practice in Russia of keeping goats with sheep probably led Kriloff to choose the subject.]

CXVII.

The Broom.

A DIRTY Broom to honours once did leap :
The kitchen floor no longer he's to sweep ;
His master's clothes are given him in a trunk
(The servants, as it seemed, were drunk),
And on them he sets eagerly to work :
Upon the coats he beats with ceaseless blows,
And, like a flail on corn, o'er trousers goes.
Truly his task he does not shirk.
The one thing wrong was, he was dirty, soiled :
What was the good of all his trouble ?
The more he brushed, the more the clothes he spoiled.

The selfsame harm there is, if not the double,
When, rough as stubble,
An ignorant man, in others' business meddling,
Corrects a learned labour with his peddling.

—o—

[This fable, like "The Swine under the Oak," is another proof, if any were needed, that Kriloff attacked ignorance and presumption, and not true learning.]

CXVIII.

The Nightingales.

A MAN, by birdcatching that throve,
A lot of Nightingales one spring caught in a grove.
In cages sit the songsters, and there sing,
Although they wish their songs through woods could ring ;

Prisons most songs from every memory wipe.
But, nothing to be done, they pipe,
From sorrow some, from weariness the others.
Among them was one hapless Nightingale,
Who suffered more than all his brothers:
He for his mate did ceaseless wail,
And for his liberty with her enjoyed.
With tears the fields he sees, where once he toyed;
Grieves day and night;
But still he thinks: "Grief won't set evils right:
Foolish are they, who only weep for woe;
Wiser to seek for means, that go
To help us in our sorrow;
And I myself may help, if not to-day to-morrow:
We were not caught, methinks, to fill a dish;
The master clearly songs to hear doth wish;
So that, perhaps, if with my voice I please,
I earn may from him in reward my ease,
Nay, even liberty again."
Thus thought he, and began his notes to trill:
At twilight they the room with music fill,
At sunrise every morn he's singing still.
But what's the good of all his pain?
He only heavier made his cruel fate.
Those that sang ill, for them the door
O' th' cage had opened long before.
And they had got their liberty, though late;
But our poor Bird,
Who in his tender song had erred,
Found his cage fast, and from it never stirred.

[This fable has been sometimes explained as referring to the censorship, and I have known some who specially connected it with the poet Poushkin, but I can find no ground for either application. It evidently applies to a tendency, common enough everywhere, to work a willing horse to death.]

CXIX.

The Miser.

A SPIRIT, that a house did guard, once watched a treasure,
Buried below it deep ; when suddenly a measure,
Adopted by the demon peers,
Sent him to fly o'er unknown lands for lengthened years :
Such was the service : gave it grief or pleasure,
An order must be carried out.
Our Spirit was by this much put about :
Who in his absence should fulfil his task ?
To guard the treasure whom to ask ?
Watchers to hire, a warehouse to erect,
With that one must expense expect ;
Leave it unwatched, the treasure might go lost ;
To answer for a day one could not ;
They'd dig it up, whatever pains it cost ;
Money to steal, what man that would not ?
His wits he worries, and at last 'tis hit :
His landlord, a mean miser, is the man the place to fit.
The Spirit with his treasure unto the Miser goes,
Saying : " Good landlord, pity thou my woes !
In distant lands I now afar must roam ;
I've always felt a liking for thy home ;

So, as a parting gift, for friendship's sake,
Thou won't refuse my treasure here to take!
Drink, eat, and merry be,
To spend it all thou'rt free!
And, when at last thou hast to die,
The heir of all thou leavest I:
Upon these terms with thee it stays,
And for the rest, may fate prolong thy days!"
Agreed, and off he is. Ten years, twice ten have passed,
The Spirit's service done, at last
He flies home fast,
To his loved home again.
What sees he there? O triumph! The Miser, key in hand,
Lies starved to death upon the coffer, and—
The ducats all remain!
The Spirit takes his treasure back,
Glad that he need not rack
His brains to find a watchman's pay,
And that the safety of his gold cost nothing anyway.

When, 'midst his gold, a miser will neither eat nor drink—
To keep for the House Spirit all his ducats does he think?

—o—

[There are two Russian proverbs applicable to this fable: "Who gets into a miser's hands never gets out," and "He looks into the grave, and trembles a groat to save."]

CXX.

The Wolf and the Mouse.

A GRAY Wolf from the flock a sheep once took,
And dragged it to a solitary nook,
Of course not treating it as quite a guest:
The glutton there the Sheep to pieces tore,
And, at each morsel choice, the more
His teeth the bones crunched, cracking them with zest.
But, greedy as he was, the whole he could not swallow;
So putting by for supper, he laid him in a hollow,
To lazily digest what he had gorged for dinner.
Meanwhile another sinner,
A little Mouse, attracted by the rich banquet's smell,
Its way made through the moss, o'er hillocks silent trailing,
To seize the smallest piece, its want of strength bewailing,
And off with it it hurried, fast to its hidden cell
Upon a tree, within a hole.
Seeing what thus it stole,
Our Wolf throughout the wood
Raised all the rout he could;
"Help, help!" he cried, as angrily he sobbed.
"Stop thief! I'm ruined! I am robbed!
They've taken all that I possessed!"

Such things in towns will happen, 'tis confessed:
A rogue from John, our Judge, his watch snatched—past belief!
And odder still—John roared: "Help, help there! Stop the thief!"

[In the days of Kriloff there were no "Justices of the Peace," and both the Police and the Courts in general, especially in the provincial towns, swarmed with examples of those who only objected to robbing when practised on themselves.]

CXXI.

The Two Peasants.

"THE morning to thee, Matthew!"—"Ah, gossip George, good-day!"
—"How wags the world with thee, my friend?"
—"Ah, gossip, in a mess to which no end!
Guests came, we had a snack: my house I set on fire,
And I've since got to beg, or else go out on hire."
—"How that? No joke 'twould be!"
—"Just so! At Christmas we'd a feast you see:
I with a candle went to give the horses hay:
Frankly my head went round a little;
I somehow dropped the light, and somehow got away
Myself, but house and goods burned, every tittle.
Bah! how'st with thee?"—"I, Matthew, I am worse:
Upon me for my sins a curse;
Not ev'n a leg,
On which to beg;
How I am still alive's a wonder!
I too at Christmas, to the cellar under
The stairs, for beer went, and—shall I confess?—
Had got my head warmed, as thou well mayst guess;

Bottles 'mong friends get empty fast:
Fearing a fire, should I down the candle cast,
I took and blew it out:
But on the stairs the devil himself gave such a clout,
That I got up but half a man,
And since on crutches limp as best I can."
"The blame on you, my friends, is even."
Said, overhearing, neighbour Stephen:
"To say the truth, if I don't blunder,
'Tis no great wonder,
That thou thy house hast burned, and thou hast got
Crutches for life: when drunk, a light's a snare,
We go with it to pot;
But, drunk in darkness, may we not
Have greater ills to bear."

CXXII.

The Kitten and the Starling.

ONCE in a certain house there lived a Starling,
A singer bad, and yet a darling!
Great in philosophy his name;
By friendship to a Kitten bound.
The Kitten soon would be a cat of fame,
Peaceful, and quiet, and polite all round;
But, from the table chased, some trick the ground,

Which she in hunger's pangs must rue,
She meditative wanders, wearied of her long fast;
Mildly her tail wags; and, at last,
She utters one long mew.
Our pert philosopher would show he knew
The remedy, and said: "My friend, thou simple art
At fasting thus to play a willing part;
Above thy nose a cage hangs with a finch:
Thou art too squeamish, take it at a pinch!"
"But conscience, then?"—"How little dost thou know
The world! Believe me, that's an idle show,
A prejudice that but weak minds obey,
To greater minds—a joke for children's play!
Whoever in the world is strong,
Is free to act or right or wrong.
Here good examples will I give in proof."
Then, dwelling on them, in his friend's behoof
The depths of all philosophy he sought.
This pleased the fasting Kitten, and it brought
Her weakness out: the finch she seized and ate.
The dainty morsel only more did whet
Her appetite, for hunger plagued her yet.
Another lecture, 'twas the second,
Met with success that was not reckoned:
The Kitten to the Starling said:
"Thanks, my kind friend, the lesson thou hast read
Has taught me what I've got to do."
She broke into his cage, and ate her teacher too.

CXXIII.

The Razors.

With an acquaintance once—we met upon the road—
It chanced that to an inn I went to pass the night.
And, when I rub my eyes with morning's light,
What do I see?—my friend some angry devil goad!
Joking, and free from care, we both went late to bed;
But now I see and hear—my friend has lost his head.
He shouts, exclaims, of sighs heaves up a load.
"What's come to thee, old fellow? May I hope,
Not ill?"—"Oh, no! I'm shaving off the soap."
—"What! nothing more?" I rise, look round, and—there he is,
Crying before the glass, twisting up such a phiz,
As if to flay his skin off tormentors had begun.
On seeing then the cause of woe that looked like fun,
"No wonder in't," said I, "if thou thyself dost tickle.
Look there, I pray!
To torture, not to shave, thou'st found a way,
Thou hast not got a razor, but a sickle."
—"Well, friend, to you I'll own
My razors all are blunt!
How not know that? I'm not so stupid as to hunt
For sharp ones, that I may for cuts have but to groan."
And I say—may I not thine anger earn—
That a blunt razor's sure thy chin to cut,
While with a sharp one thou'lt shave safer, but—
To use it thou must learn.

My story to explain I'm ready here:
Are there not many such, ashamed though they may be
To own it, who a man that's clever—fear,
And fools alone around them care to see?

CXXIV.

The Guns and the Sails.

Upon a ship, the Guns once with the Sails
Came to an open dreadful war;
And lo, a row of noses, long as tails,
Out of the portholes poke, as wails
One of the Guns unto the gods afar!
"O dwellers in the skies, have ye
E'er seen that such base lowly creatures
Dare unto you to raise their canvas features,
Proclaiming they, like us, of use can be?
What *do* they all our long and troubled way?
Let but the wind upon them play,
And, puffed out with conceit, they sway
As 'neath the burden of their honours bending,
And o'er the seas the good ship proudly sending—
They boast 'tis all their work; but we, we thunder in the fight!
Is't not through us our ship rules wide as ocean's might?
Is't not ourselves that o'er him do carry death and fright?
No, we can live no more with Sails together;
We on ourselves take all, despite of wind and weather.
Fly to us, Boreas, thou, thy help, thy power show,
And torn to pieces they, at once when thou dost blow!"

The prayer was heard—the god but sighed, as there he flew;
At once the sea's face frowned, and dark it grew;
Great lowering clouds swept o'er the sky;
And massive waves arose, piled, breaking, mountains high;
The deafening thunders roar; the blinding flashes fly;
And raging Boreas rives the sails to rags.
They're gone, and suddenly the tempest flags;
What then? The ship, her sails without,
By winds and waves is tossed a toy about,
Or floats a log which every current drags;
And the first time she meets the foe,
Who rakes her from her stem to stern with one broadside,
She stands immoveable—a sieve through which the tide
Pours—and she drops with all her Guns, key-like, to depths below.

A kingdom, small or great, is strong
With all her parts by wisdom ordered well:
Her Arms—are ready to avenge a wrong,
Her Sails—the civil rights of all that in her dwell.

—o—

[This fable is a protest against the predominance of the military element in the reign of the Emperor Nicholas.]

CXXV.

The Peasant and the Horse.

A PEASANT oats sowed in a field one spring ;
Which when a young Horse saw,
He, grumbling thus, did his conclusions draw :
" Of mighty use the oats he here doth bring !
They say, that men are wiser far than we ;
What stupider, more laughable to see,
Than digging up a field with trouble,
Only to spread o'er it a double
Layer of oats, to serve no earthly end !
Had they to me been given, to my bay friend ;
Did but his hungry fowls them partly get,
One might think that they'd turn out useful yet :
Had he but kept them ; stingy I should have thought him ;
But throw them all away ! To that stupidity hath brought him."
Meanwhile, the oats in autumn were reaped and in the stable,
And our pert Horse to feed on them proved well that he was able.

Reader ! no doubt, it cannot have been long
Before you saw the Horse had judged quite wrong ;
But, from the earliest times unto our days,
Is it not thus that bold Man weighs
The will of Providence,
As if unto his blindness did belong,
Not knowing Him, nor any of His ways,
To judge His wisdom and His competence ?

CXXVI.

The Squirrel.

A SQUIRREL on a lion waited,
How, when, or where he served, my story does not say,
The point is that his service pleased more every day;
And those that lions serve are ever highly rated,
It is no trifle that. So, to reward him well,
They promised nuts, a cartload—promised while were flying
The years, and oft the Squirrel, of hunger nearly dying,
Had still to grin and jape, and gulp the tears that fell,
He wistfully regards the wood, and there they cluster
Brightly everywhere, his friends on high;
He can but note them from the corner of his eye,
Though in his ear they seem to crackle where they muster.
Our Squirrel towards the nuts but looks, but moves a leg,
And he is stopped—in vain to beg—
The lion asks for him; they call, and push, and bluster.
At last our Squirrel's grown a worn-out aged thing;
'Tis time that he resign, he wearies now the king.
To leave he is permitted,
And then a load of nuts are at once to him remitted.
The nuts are glorious, none such on earth i' sooth;
All chosen ones: nuts upon nuts—a wonder!
There is but one small blunder—
The Squirrel has not got a tooth.

CXXVII.

The Pike.

A PLEA was lodged against a Pike,
That in his pond no fish their life could bear;
Proofs were heaped up a haystack like,
And they the culprit brought, as was but fair,
Unto the Court-house swimming in a tub.
The judges did not come from far:
They on a neighbouring field did rub
Their noses; and their name in archives are:
Of asses were a couple,
Then two old jaded mares, and lastly three goats supple.
That all things might go on in order due,
The fox accuser was, and the indictment drew.
A rumour went about the country side,
That fish for the fox's table the Pike supplied;
No personalities of course the judges occupied,
And we may add, it was not thought convenient
With Pike's tricks this time to be over-lenient,
So, nothing to be done: writ out was the decree,
That gave the guilty one to shameful death;
And, that his fate to others a warning dread might be,
He to a dry branch hung must draw his parting breath.
"My honoured judges!"—here the fox did interpose:
"Hanging's too little: I'm for a death that shows
Through all the ages that have been unheard of woes;

That henceforth rogues should for their own fate shiver—
In a deep stream let's drown him."—"Splendid!"
The judges shout, "Agreed!" And so, the trial ended,
They threw the Pike—into the river.

—o—

[This fable again alludes to the favour shown in official circles to the most notorious corruption, and to the abuses of the legal administration.]

CXXVIII.

The Cuckoo and the Eagle.

THE Eagle to a Cuckoo gave the rank
Which nightingales enjoy.
The Cuckoo, thus made great,
Sitting upon an ash in state,
In music, majesty to thank,
Her talent did employ;
She sings—and all fly off,
Some roundly her abuse, and at her others scoff.
Our Cuckoo was much grieved,
And 'gainst the birds with plaint unto the Eagle came.
"Can it, Great Sire, be believed
That, when from thee I have received
The right, to bear throughout the woods the name
And rank of nightingale, within the same

They dare to mock my song!"
"Good friend!" replies the Eagle, "I king am, and not God,
To free thee from thy woes to me doth not belong;
A Cuckoo as a nightingale to honour and obey
I can oblige, but, if the power hath my nod
A nightingale to make out of a Cuckoo, say!"

CXXIX.

The Lion, the Goat, and the Fox.

In a wild forest once a Lion chased a Goat;
Her soon he overtook,
And over her his greedy look
Went, on his fat and certain feast to gloat.
To save herself, it seemed, no hope was left;
A ravine there her of all chance bereft:
But the light Goat, her strength redoubled by the shock,
Like to an arrow from a bow,
Shot o'er the precipice below,
And, on the farther side, alighted on a rock.
The Lion stopped his speed.
It happened that a friend was there to help his need:
And that was our old friend—the Fox.
"How!" says he. "Thou, that art so bold and strong,
Be beaten by a Goat! To thee doth it belong
What miracles thou wilt to work! A faint heart shocks:

The ravine's wide, but if thou triest,
The leap thou easily defiest,
I speak with conscience clear, from friendship true:
Thy life no risk should run, unless I knew
The force and the agility that's thine."
The Lion's blood was up, and hotter grew;
He took his spring, and through the air he flew,
But never reached the ravine's steep decline:
Head over heels he fell, killed on the spot.
And what felt then the friend that caused his lot?
Stealthily down the ravine's side he slipped,
And, seeing that no flattery could be lipped,
No service done the Lion more,
He used him for his larder's store,
Carousing well to keep his memory green,
And ere a week had gnawed his friend's bones white and clean.

—o—

[One of the fables omitted in this translation, "The Lion and the Man," has been supposed by Professor Grote to be the origin of the present one. "The Lion and the Man" was omitted by Kriloff in all the later editions of his fables, and is undoubtedly one of his weaker productions. It was written in 1809, the third year of his career as a fabulist, being his twelfth original fable, whereas he had already taken seventeen from La Fontaine. The opening lines contain its moral:

"Well to be strong, but better far be wise.
He, that this truth doth not believe,
May here the clearest proof receive,
That but small good in strength wanting in reason lies."

The boasting Lion, enticed into the net to show his force, falls a victim to the Man. Grote believes that "The

Lion, the Goat, and the Fox" is only a reproduction twenty years later of the same idea. I do not share this opinion, and doubt if Kenévitch did, for he gives it without the slightest comment. I imagine the present fable, like "The Fire in the Grove," to be intended for interested and treacherous assurances of friendship. In the earlier fable the Man is a hunter, and only follows his calling in ensnaring the Lion, but in this case the craft of the Fox is too cruel to be a fit representative of mind as opposed to force, but it is in its place when applied to a treacherous friend.]

CXXX.

The Falcon and the Worm.

UPON a tree's high top, unto a light bough clinging,
A Worm swung to and fro,
A Falcon up above, through air his wide wings swinging,
Seemed to the sky in easy play to go:
—"What pains, poor thing, thyself up here to haul!
What good to thee that thou thus high dost crawl?
Thou gett'st not more of will or liberty!
As the wind lists, so bends thy bough with thee."
—"To joke thus it may please
Thee, whose high flight is taken at thine ease,
Thanks to thy wings' rare force and length;
But fate to me such dignity gave not:
I keep on this high spot,
Only because for sticking I have strength."

CXXXI.

The Sword-blade.

THE steel Blade of a sharp-edged sword
Was thrown into an ironmonger's hoard,
And sent, with other odd things, to be sold;
A peasant for it next to nothing paid.
He was not one that much ado e'er made,
So, thinking that it well might serve his trade,
He made for it a handle fit to hold,
And used it bark to cut for making shoes,
Or else, at home no time to lose,
A pine-torch for a light he'd shave,
Or boughs for trellised fencework, or he gave
Himself to trimming trees of branches dry,
Or sharpening stakes to form his garden's hedge.
So thus, a year had not gone by
Before the Blade got rusty, and like a saw its edge,
And all the children rode on him
As came the whim.
A hedgehog, lying in the shed
Where the Blade happened to be thrown, once said:
"Tell me, for what a life like thine
Is meant, and why
Men ever lie,
Saying that Sword-blades brilliantly do shine?
Were't so, thou'dst be ashamed a torch to cut,
Or sharpen to a point a stake,
Or worse, a children's toy to make!"
The Sword-blade answered: "But,

I once, held in a hero's hand, inspirèd dread
In hosts of foes, though here my gifts are vain ;
At work that but degrades me I must toil with pain :
But am I by my own will led?
No, not to me the shame, on those then let it sit,
Who could not understand for what alone I'm fit."

—o—

[This fable clearly refers to the undeserved neglect of some man of distinguished military talent, and the insult of bestowing on him uncongenial employment, but to whom it refers it is now impossible to say.]

CXXXII.

The Tradesman.

"Come hither, Andrew, brat!
Where hast thou got to? Quicker, drat
The lazy boy!
Learn of thine uncle how good profit to enjoy,"
A Tradesman once behind his counter said.
"That piece of home-made cloth that hung like lead
—Thou mindest how it long by me hath lain,
For it was old, spoiled by the damp, and rotten—
That very cloth for English off my hands I've gotten!
And, for the pain,
I pocketed, look there, a hundred rouble note :
God's bounty we may thank."
"Yes, uncle, all that's well," replied the nephew lank :
"But as to bounty, why, I doubt who's gained a groat :
Look at the note, you'll find 'tis false, at any bank."

Deceiving, be deceived! In that there's wonder none;
And find it in the world may any one,
That to look higher than a shop can claim;
He'll see that there things go the same:
Of one and all in everything the aim
Is solely how to do each other,
That each more cunningly may cheat his brother.

—o—

[Notwithstanding the general application of this fable in its moral, the choice of the example shows the kind of morality which prevailed among the commercial classes of the day. A good deal of it continues to exist among them to the present time. In the smaller Russian shops, they care more about making an immediate profit, than securing future custom by strictly honest dealing; purchasers must still bargain, and often get articles for a third of what is asked at first. Within the last thirty years things have greatly improved in this respect, and now in all the better establishments they fix a price and keep to it.]

CXXXIII.

Melibœus.

A RICH man in the town there was named Melibœus,
A name not chosen from the stress of rhyme to free us;
No, it is well the names of such men to recall.
His neighbours on our rich man fall,
And not, perhaps, without good reason:
They say there is a million in his coffers,
And yet that he a poor man never offers
A coin, however bad the season.

Who does not wish to bear an honoured name?
To gain himself among the people fame.
Our Melibœus started the report,
That beggars he on Saturdays would feed;
And truly each, that came into his court
That day, his gates found wide indeed.
"Alas!" they think, "the poor man's ruined quite!"
Be not afraid, the stingy cur's all right!
On Saturdays his dogs are out, and full of spite;
The beggar, though with naught to eat or drink,
Is lucky who out of his yard can slink.
Almost a saint now Melibœus counts,
All cry: "Who Melibœus can enough admire?
A pity, though, his dogs have so much fire,
And no one easily his staircase mounts:
But, while a crust remains, of giving he'll not tire."

I've often seen, and not forgot,
How hard the mansions of the great to enter;
But then the fault in dogs doth centre—
For Melibœus's of course 'tis not.

CXXXIV.

The Ass.

A PEASANT had an Ass,
And, as it seemed, for quiet he did pass,
At any rate from day to day
His master on him praise did lay;

But on his neck at last the peasant hung a bell,
To find him in the wood, where he oft liked to dwell.
This puffed our Ass up; he began to shew his pride
(Of "orders"[1] he of course had heard),
And think himself a person aye to rank allied;
But dignity turned out, unlucky Ass, instead—
(A lesson not for Asses alone, be it inferred)
A thing thou'lt hear, read on of course implied.
Our Ass's honour was not much
To boast of, but, before he got his bell
His happiness was such,
That he in field of corn or oats, or garden feasted well,
And then, when full stole off all unobserved.
Where'er our stately Personage now deigns to poke his nose,
Ring! ring! upon his neck the sign of new rank goes.
They hear, they look: the master takes his club,
Drives him from out the corn, the beds; and down his sides doth rub
The neighbour's stick, who hears the bell about
His oats, from which he turns him out.
Well, thus 'twas with our poor Grandee:
Until the autumn fretted he,
And then of him remained but this—an Ass's bones and skin.

And many, that to rank slip in
Though rogues, the same fate meet: while still his rank

[1] "Orders" here means those "crosses" which most Russians so eagerly run after, and which are so profusely distributed. Rich merchants have often given enormous sums, by way of public contribution, to become possessed of one.

Is low, a rogue obscurity may thank
For all that he can shameless win;
But high rank on a rogue is like a bell:
The ring of it is loud, and far it sounds of him to tell.

CXXXV.

The Owl and the Ass.

A BLIND Ass in a wood once lost his way
(He had been travelling far, they say),
And, when night came, stuck in a thicket;
Whither he moved right, left, or back
To find a track,
Our Noodle could not nick it:
Indeed, the best eyes there might well have been at fault.
As luck would have it, an Owl had made a halt
There, and to guide the Ass his promise plighted.
All know that Owls by night grow more sharp-sighted:
The ditches, steep descents, and every hill
Our Owl distinguishes, as if 'twere day,
And by the morn has reached an easy way.
How lose a guide that thus has shown his skill?
The Ass the Owl entreats to stay and help him still,
Meaning with her to wend the wide world o'er.
The Owl agrees on him to ride,
And, as his mistress, sits on him with pride:
The road they take again, is't lucky as before?
Not quite: the sun no sooner o'er the skies
Sheds his first beams, than in the Owl's dazed eyes

Darker it grows than in the night.
The Owl though, obstinate, still thinks she's right,
Trusts to her sight,
And leads the Ass across, aslant, and round—
"Take care," she cries, "t' th' right are bogs!"
No bog was there—the left hand worse was found,
"Another step to left, and we've safe ground!"—
But, plump into a ravine the Owl-led Jackass jogs.

CXXXVI.

The Dog and the Horse.

A Dog and Horse had long a peasant served
Together, when one day dispute arose—
Which of the two had most of him deserved.
"Cease, upstart," says the Dog, "to twist that nose,
And toss that mane of thine!
Were the power mine,
I'd have thee driven from the yard with blows.
A wondrous thing, forsooth, to drag and plough!
Yet, hast thou nothing else to boast of, thou!
How canst thou, then, with me in aught compare?
Nor day nor night to take repose I dare:
All day I guard upon the mead the sheep;
All night the house in safety keep."
"Thou dost, 'tis true," the Horse replied,
"And yet it cannot be denied
That, if I had not dragged the plough,
Thou wouldst have nothing left to watch o'er now."

CXXXVII.

The Snake.

A SNAKE from Jupiter did ask
The sweet voice of a nightingale.
"For life to me is now," she said, "a weary task.
Where'er I show me in the dale,
Those that are weaker fly,
And those, that stronger are than I,
God give me to escape from them the chance.
No, life like this I cannot longer bear:
But if like nightingales I filled the woods and air,
Then, wonder my poor merits would enhance,
And I should love obtain, and to respect have right,
Of every joyous circle then the soul."
The Snake's prayer found acceptance in Jove's sight:
No trace of hissing in one trill or roll.
Climbing a tree, from it our Snake did hang,
And like the best of nightingales she sang:
To her a flight of birds from all sides flew,
But soon as they the songstress knew,
They showered from the tree like rain;
Of such a greeting few that would be vain!
"Is't really that my voice disgusts you all?"
Asked the vexed Snake.
"No, no!" replied a Starling. "It doth fall
Full sonorous and marvellous on the ear;
When thou such melody dost make,
It seems to us a nightingale is here;

But fear our hearts, I must confess, doth wring,
When we but look upon thy sting:
To be so close to thee a fearful thing;
And so I'll say to thee, but not in spite:
Thy songs would fill us with delight,
If only thou wouldst from us farther sing."

—o—

[It is clear, from the manuscript variations of this fable at the close given by Kenévitch, that Kriloff intended it to point to a particular individual. There is a separate moral, addressed in the second person to some one who is warned that, though he (or she) may astonish by talent, to gain respect and love talent is not enough. Kenévitch, however, could find no proof to fix it on any one, and where he has failed it would be useless for a foreigner to try.]

CXXXVIII.

The Wolf and the Cat.

A WOLF unto a village scampered,
Not on a visit, but his skin to save;
The huntsmen, after him, each movement hampered,
And to the air the pack their yelling gave.
How glad he'd be a friendly gate to spy,
He'd vanish in the twinkling of an eye;
Only, as if they mocked
His sore distress, the gates were locked.
Then saw our Wolf a Cat close by
Sitting upon a paling,
And, him in hurry hailing,

The Wolf said: "Tell me, friend, I pray,
Which peasant here's the kindest, that he may
Conceal me from my savage foes.
Hear'st thou that hubbub of the dogs and horns?
'Tis all for me."—"Ask Stephen, coz, he knows
A trick, and is a good man," said the Cat.
—"No doubt, but then he mourns
A sheep I tore of his."—"Then, try with Mat."
—"He may be vexed with me, I fear:
I carried off his goat last year."
—"Well then, run there, there Isaac lives."
—"Isaac! Not I! His name a fever gives:
Since spring he threatens for a lamb I took."
—"A bad look-out! Old Will perhaps may hide."
—"Ah, Tom! A calf of his I bled at Easter-tide."
—"I see, my friend, there's not a single nook
Throughout the village, where thou hast not left
A dirty trail:
Help thou expectest in reward for theft?
No, thou wilt fail;
Our peasants not so dull are not to see
What they would gain by saving thee.
Truly thou mayst thyself accuse, and own
That thou but reapest what thyself hast sown."

CXXXIX.

The Three Peasants.

THREE Peasants in a village once did stop to sleep.
To "Peter"[1] here they often loads did bring;
After a day's work they would take their swing,
And then for home the shortest path would keep.
But, as a peasant likes not to his bed
Fasting to go, our guests for supper asked.
In villages a host is not severely tasked:
A bowl of cabbage soup with bread,
Some warmed-up porridge added, was their fare.
Not as in "Peter"—but, that's off our track;
Better than hunger through the night to bear.
Our Peasants cross themselves with pious care,
And the soup bowl attack.
One of them, who was giv'n to calculation,
Doubting for three the size of this their ration,
Thought of a way his share to double
(When force can't help, a trick oft saves us trouble).
"You know, my boys," says he, "our good friend Will,
As a recruit I fear he'll serve but ill."
—"How a recruit?"—"Just so: there'll soon be war with China;
Tribute we claim from her, in tea we fine her;
And Will is of the age, although a minor."
The other two began to argue and dispute
(For they, to their misfortune, both were 'cute,

[1] "Peter."—This expression is often used for St. Petersburg by many Russian authors.

Could read and write, and oft perused a paper,
All its advertisements to talk of later).
How the war'd go, and who'd get high command.
Our 'cute lads got into a warm debate,
No end to guessing, settling all off-hand;
Just what our trickster wanted. Well to sup,—
While thus they reasoned and arranged,
Their troop's positions changed, rechanged,
Without a word, he ate the soup and porridge up.

There's many a one, no matter what the theme,
Will talk of anything that comes to hand;
He'll hold you forth on India, all doth seem
There clear to him, as any other land:
Though all the while, under his eyes around,
His village fast is burning to the ground.

CXL.

The Shepherd.

In Shepherd Stephen's flock (he kept his master's sheep)
The animals once took to dying.
Our smart boy, sighing,
Laments, nay, almost he will weep;
He goes about, relating unto all
That on his flock too oft did fall
A dreadful wolf, it dragged the sheep from fold,
And pitilessly tore them.
"And no great wonder," say both young and old,
"When was't that wolves no hatred bore them?"

The wolf they try to catch and slay.
But, how is it that Stephen puts away
Now mutton broth, now ribs of sheep with rice?
(He'd been a town cook once, and, for his sins,
Now in a village bread he wins:
But in his eating still was nice.)
The wolf they hunt; if they could only find him!
But in the wood the wolf no trace hath left behind him.
Time waste not, friends! The wolf you blame, and yet
'Twas Stephen that the sheep up ate.

—o—

[There is a Russian proverb, almost in the very words of the concluding lines.]

CXLI.

The Squirrel.

UNDER the windows of a mansion, where
The manor's lord lived, once did stare
(It was a holiday—of age the heir)
A crowd of village folk, to see
A Squirrel flee
Over a wheel, that filled his little cage.
A thrush, that on a tree was perched, admired him too:
He ran so that his paws but twinkled through
The bars, his bushy tail held up.—"Of thy wise age
Permit me now to ask," the thrush did say,
"What thou art doing here?"
—"Ah, gentle friend! I work the livelong day;
I go on messages; and, never fear,

No time have I to drink or eat,
Hardly to draw a breath."
And o'er the wheel again the Squirrel's feet
Run fast. The thrush, off flying, to him saith:
"Yes, it is clear, thou runnest and not ill;
But—the same window thou dost hang in still."

Look at that busy body there!
He worries, fusses in a whirl, until
He makes admiring neighbours look and stare;
He works to burst his skin; he sweats with care:
Only he forward not a step advances;
Upon a squirrel's wheel he dances.

CXLII.

The Fox.

ONE frosty winter morning, near
A village, early to an icehole came
A Fox to drink. Meanwhile, though 'tis not clear
If fate or carelessness had caused the same,
The Fox's tail got wetted at the tip,
And frozen to the ice.
No great harm done, not difficult to slip
With one good tug safe off, and in a trice;
A tuft of hair or two, 'tis true, would out,
But then,
He'd get back to the wood ere men
Were yet about,
But could he spoil his tail? A tail of bushy fold,
Outspread, and all bedecked with gold!

No, better wait: see, all the village sleeps;
A thaw may come, and then the ice, that keeps
His tail fast, melts, and he is free.
He waits and hopes—his tail is only faster frozen.
Day breaks, a bright day he'd have chosen:
He hears men's voices, can their movements see.
The poor beast writhes, and twists, and strains,
But can't wrench off for all his pains;
He must sit there beside his hole.
But ah! what luck! A wolf runs by.
"Thou best of friends! Thou kindly soul!
Help, save me!" cries the Fox, "I die
Without thee here!"
His friend has stopped,
And on the ice-block, to assist him, dropped.
His plan was simple, could not fail:
Just at the root to gnaw right off the tail.
Without a tail ran home our Noodle, glad
That still upon his back a skin he had.
Methinks, this fable's easily explained:
Had not a few hairs, swept
From off his tail, our grudging Fox so pained—
He might the whole of it have kept.

—o—

[The old story, in the "Roman de Renard," of the Fox teaching the Wolf to catch fish with his tail in an icehole, was doubtless known to Kriloff, and very similar ones are to be found in the Russian folk-lore. As usual, whether so far borrowed or not, Kriloff has put his own interpretation upon the incident.]

CXLIII.

The Wolves and the Sheep.

THE Wolves once harassed so the Sheep,
That life to them unbearable became.
The rulers of the beasts at last, to keep
The Sheep from tyranny, announce their gracious aim;
And to that end a High Commission name.
'Tis true, the members Wolves were for the most;
But then, not every Wolf hath evil fame.
There have been Wolves, and many too, they boast
—Examples of it are not yet forgot—
That by a sheepfold mildly passed, when they
Hungry were not.
Then, why should Wolves not to Committees find their way?
Although, of course, Sheep must be well protected,
For that Wolves need not be oppressed, neglected,
A meeting was appointed in the wood;
They reasoned, argued all they could,
And in the end bethought them of a law,
And here it is without a flaw:
"Whene'er a Wolf doth riot in a fold,
And dares affront a Sheep,
The Sheep shall seize him by the throat, and bold,
Be he of high rank, young or old,
Bring him unto the wood or wold
Where we our Court for instant justice keep."

The law was just, nothing to change or add :
Only I've seen that sheep—'tis sad !
Although the cry is, "Wolves are now kept quiet—"
Be they defendants, plaintiffs in a riot,
Are still dragged off in gore
By Wolves unto the wood, as 'twas of yore.

—o—

[This is one of the numerous fables in which Kriloff exposes the official tyranny over the peasants, and the failure of the means adopted to protect them. Russian "Commissions" and "Committees" have only too often led to the same lame results as our own, a formal shelving of the question, and Kriloff never alludes to them without a biting satire on their uselessness.]

CXLIV.

The Peasant and the Dog.

A PEASANT, who should housekeeping have known,
A man who did a house of plenty own,
Once hired a Dog to bake his bread, and guard
At the same time his yard,
And e'en to weed and water what grew upon his plot.
What a strange notion he had got,
The reader says—no sense in it at all,
And profit small !
To watch a yard may well fall to their lot,
But has't been seen that dogs e'er take to baking,
Or are they found 'mong vegetables raking?
Reader, I should be wrong no doubt,

If I said yes—but, that apart,
The point is this, from which we start,
The Dog agreed to carry these things out,
And got for his employment triple pay:
For him 'twas well, what else had he to weigh?
The Master meanwhile set off to a fair,
Amused himself, came back, and there
Found little comfort him to meet.
He rages with vexation just, to find
The house without a loaf, or any kind
Of vegetables green or sweet,
And, what was worse, a thief had broken in,
And cleared out all, e'en to the cellar's bin.
Upon the Dog poured down a tempest of abuse;
But he quite coolly answered in excuse:
The plot of vegetables hindered baking;
And they themselves had only not succeeded,
Because his presence in the yard was needed;
And, if a thief the house-goods had been taking,
The cause was this—
A chance of baking he would never miss.

CXLV.

The Robber and the Carter.

UNDER a bush, beside a highway lay
A Robber once, awaiting there his prey:
'Twas evening: like a bear from out his den,
He sullen peeped at all within his ken.
Presently came a rolling cart that way.

"Ho, ho!" our Robber mutters, "that's a lot
Bound for the fair; cloth, sure, and worked with gold:
Enough to fig one out.—Alive, Jack! Bold!
This time at least you've something got
For all your pains."
Meanwhile the cart drew nearer. "Stand!"
The Robber cried, and with his club in hand
He fell upon the Carter.
But, if our thief was smart, the other p'r'aps was smarter.
It was no child that gave him blow for blow,
But a brave man, who fought ere he'd let go
His wares.
Long and severe the struggle, in which fares
Our hero badly; half his teeth knocked out,
A wrist sprained, and an eye less from a clout:
Yet, in the end his murderous will
Prevails—he doth the carter kill.
Kills him—and now, the prize of skill
To seize, he hurries to the cart.
What's there?—A load of bladders piled with art!

How much of crime and wickedness on earth
Committed is for things of trifling worth!

CXLVI.

The Grandee.

In days of old a powerful Grandee
From all his wealth was forced to flee
Unto the land where Pluto holds his Court,
He died, in short;

And must before the judges of all the Shades appear.
There he was asked: what he had been? where born?
"A Satrap I did Persia's rule adorn,
But, as ill health did ever make me fear
Exertion, on my Secretary I
Did for affairs of government rely."
—"But what didst do, then?"—"Drank, ate, dozed,
And signed whatever was to me proposed."
—"At once to heaven with him."—"But, is that just?"
Cried Mercury, forgetting that he must
Be first of all polite.
"Ah," answered Æacus, "you might,
Good friend, have sense to see I'm right,
And not try me to school.
Canst thou not guess, the dead man was a fool?
What if, with all the power he possessed,
Himself to rule unhappily he'd tried?
He'd soon have ruined all the country wide,
And tears wrung from a nation thus oppressed!
To heaven his ghost we justly call,
Because on earth he did no work at all."

I yesterday a judge saw, sitting in his court:
The way to heaven for him seems sure and short.

—o—

[Kriloff presented this fable, a year before it was published, to the Minister of Public Education, Ouvaroff, who promised to obtain the authorization of the Emperor,

but allowed it to lie by him forgotten. In the meantime copies of it got into society, and it was publicly declaimed by the pupils of the Page Corps. This disquieted Kriloff, and he determined to profit by a masquerade at the palace, and read it in the Emperor's presence. He did so, and Nicholas was so much pleased with it that he gave permission on the spot for it to be printed.]

CXLVII.

The Two Boys.

"Come, Tommy, now that we've not got to go,
Like driven sheep, into the class,
Come to the garden, there to thee I'll show
Chestnuts, which we will eat upon the grass."
—"No, Fred, those chestnuts do not grow for us.
Thou knowest well to climb that tree what fuss:
Nor thou nor I can reach so high,
As there where chestnuts catch thine eye!"
—"Where strength is useless, best to try a trick.
I've thought of all, come see!
Hoist me, and on the lower branch I'll be,
And once up there, 'tis hard if we don't find
A way to feast on chestnuts to our mind."
Off the two friends set running to the tree.
Then Tommy helped his comrade to a hold,
And gasping lifted him till sweat down rolled,
And he had scrambled on the branch below.
Thence Freddy worked himself up, till at ease,
Like mouse in meal box, was his joy to seize,
Upon the tree-top, where the chestnuts grow,

More fruit than he could eat or count:
Enough to feed him well, and spare
Good portion for his comrade's share.
Tommy, though, got but little for the mount:
Below his lips he licked at sight
Of Freddy up there feasting with delight,
While from the top to him was thrown
A heap of empty shells alone.

In life I've many a Freddy seen,
Whose generous friends have ever been
Ready to hoist him to a place up high;
But once the scramble o'er, and he
Seated among the nuts, they're free
In vain to him for empty shells to cry.

CXLVIII.

The Cuckoo and the Cock.

"How loud, dear Cock, and proudly thou dost sing!"
—"And thou, sweet Cuckoo, what clear notes
Of melody drawn out from thee do ring!
The singers of our woods have not such throats."
—"I'm ready, gossip, thee an age to hear."
—"And thou, my beauteous one, I swear,
No sooner have thy strains died off in air,
Than I stand watching till again they fill my ear.

Whence comes such voice as thine?
So pure, so tender, and so high!
Thou, sure, wast born with it: and I,
Small though thou art, defy
A nightingale to match thy trills divine!"
—"Thanks, gossip, on my conscience I declare,
In paradise itself no bird can shine
Above its fellows with a song so rare,
As flows from thee,
And all that hear it must with this agree."
A sparrow passing cried: "My friends, I'm glad
To hear you praise each other till you're hoarse,
But, all the same, your music's bad!"

Well, was it not a thing of course?
Justly the Cock was by the Cuckoo lauded,
Because the Cuckoo he himself applauded.

—o—

[In this fable Kriloff laughed at the mutual compliments of Gretch and Bulgarin, two well-known writers of the day, who, having become joint editors of "The Northern Bee," lost no opportunity of belabouring each other with fulsome praise.]

CXLIX.

The Steed.

A RIDER, 'twas a daring partisan,
Had once a Steed, whose like
No drove could show that o'er the steppes e'er ran.
A shape the eye to strike!

A growth, a beauty and a strength !
For bounteous nature gave him all her gifts * * *
How grandly through the battle he his rider lifts !
How boldly rushes the abyss, and climbs the mountain's length !
But, with the leader's death, the fiery Steed belongs
Unto another chief, a bad one, who but wrongs
The past. He sends the Steed into a stall,
That he may eat and drink, fast tethered to the wall ;
And, to reward his zeal and service bold,
They're bid to hang on him for aye a bridle all of gold * * *
For long, long years, no work to do, our Steed there stays ;
The owner often comes to delight in him and praise ;
But fears on him to take his seat,
Lest with a fall he meet.
The Steed's years lengthened grow,
The fire that once was in his eyes burns low,
His limbs look thin,
And slight.
And how should idle hours not work this in
The nursling of the roar of battle's might ?
All to see this, e'en to the grooms, felt sad ;
Ay, and the chiefs together met,
To this would their conclusion set :
" That none such Steed to see, would not be glad,
In other and more skilful hands."
The master too himself this understands ;
He tries to make him serve his need,
But is unable ;

To drag a load the Steed
Not once will leave the stable.

Yes, there are Steeds, that have from nature got
Such blood, that though
You kill them, they will not
In harness go.

—o—

[This fable is not to be found in any Russian edition of Kriloff, not even in the best, that by Egoroff, because Pletneff,—who, if he did not edit it, was at least consulted in its arrangement, and wrote a short biography for it,—like the rest of the Russian public then, doubted its authenticity. Kenévitch also does not speak of it, evidently for the same reason. Though published in a periodical in 1859, after having circulated for a long time in manuscript copies, and though the publication led to many disputes among the critical judges, the question was only settled in August 1881, by an article in "The Russky Stariná," in which the author, who was evidently personally connected with General Ermoloff, asserts that Kriloff sent the fable in his own handwriting as his own composition, accompanied by a letter of dedication to the General on the occasion of the General's namesday, and that he himself not only read, but copied it. Ermoloff had been one of the heroes of the Caucasus, but on the accession of Nicholas he was deprived of his command there, and relegated to a nominal dignity. Later the Emperor wished to employ him more actively in the service, but he always refused, and passed his life in retirement. That this fable breathes the spirit of Kriloff in every line, no one can doubt who has ever read his fables in Russian.]

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