

the whole continent, has from time to time poured down warlike tribes on to Europe. It was through Russia that many of these invaders had to pass; and Russia has been a battle-ground between Europe and Asia.

This was so in nature before it was so in history. Before the battles of peoples there was a battle of contrary winds. By the north-west of Russia the sea winds of Europe make a faint entry; the Baltic is but a brackish sea; it is only the almost uninhabited north of the Arctic coast that is just touched by the Gulf Stream. But these European winds, weak as they may be, are counted among the beneficent factors in the climate of Russia. On the opposite side, by the south-east, enter the arid and devastating winds of the deserts of central Asia. They tear up the soil or bury the surface with ruinous sand storms, which fill up lakes and ponds, block rivers, wreck harvests and ruin estates."

Here we begin with a primitive people with no organization, no leaders, no religion, no natural defenses such as mountains, caves, or rocks. No commerce, no friends, absolutely illiterate and beset all about by enemies. We find the beginnings of commerce down the Dnieper and later the Volga river. Almost from the beginning we find human slavery, not of other races, but of their own in which men employed to help move commerce down the streams might be sold at the end of the trip.

Attacked by others, they sought the protection of those using the river, and were aided by them because the river must be kept open for traffic and protected from marauders. Learning to depend on others, they were attracted to the Vikings, or Va-rang-ers, those brave Scandinavian free booters, who have left their mark on many nations.