

THE DEEDS OF DEVGENII

*About the Feats of Brave Men of Years Past,
About the Daring Bravery and Valour of the Splendid Devgenii*

Translated from the Old Russian and with a Note by Jack V. Haney

There lived a certain widow of royal blood and she gave herself over to the salvation of her soul and never, ever left the church. And she had three sons of unusual beauty who excelled in bravery in all their deeds according to the prayers of their mother. And this widow had a daughter who shone in charm and the beauty of her countenance. Then Amir, a tsar of the Arabian land, heard of the beauty of this maiden, and he gathered a great multitude of warriors and came to destroy the Greek land, all on account of the beauty of this maiden. And he came to the home of this widow and Tsar Amir abducted this beautiful maiden so cleverly that no one in the Greek land saw him with the exception of one old woman from that household. Her mother was at that time in God's church, and her sons were in a distant land hunting.

And that widow returned from God's church and could not find her beautiful daughter, and she questioned the servants in her home about her beautiful daughter, and all the servants of her household answered her: "We do not know, our lady, where your beautiful daughter is." Only this one old woman from the household had seen everything: "Amir, the tsar of the Arabian land, came and with cleverness abducted your daughter and our lady, and all traces of him in our land have gone cold."

When she heard this from her servant, the widow began tearing out her hair and scratching her face, and she began keening, intoning: "O woe unto me, a cursed widow, if my sons had been at home, they would have set out after Tsar Amir and caught up to him and taken back their sister!" Soon thereafter her sons did return home and seeing that their mother was weeping, they asked their mother: "Tell us, mother, who has insulted you? Was it not the tsar or ruler of our city? Let us not be alive if someone has dared to offend you."

Their mother replied: "O my dear children! No one from the citizens here has offended me but you had only one sister and she is now in the hands of Amir, the tsar of the Arabian land, and my heart is wrenched and this has punctured it as if

my a lance. And now I entreat you, my beloved children, and do not violate my trust: go at once and catch up to Amir Tsar and take back from him our beautiful sister. If you can't obtain your sister and lay down your heads for your sister, then I shall weep for you all, as I will then be childless." And her sons answered her: "O our dear mother! Do not be sorrowful about this; bless us and pray for us, and well shall set out on this journey at once."

And so they buckled on their weapons and mounted their horses, and they dashed off like golden-winged hawks, and it was as if their horses flew. And they reached the border of the Saracen land, and there they met some Saracen carrying out a watch, and the brothers questioned him: "Tell us brothers whether it is far to the camp of your tsar Amir." The Saracen bared his sword and brazenly galloped toward them, thinking them to be cowards, not knowing their bravery. The youngest brother rode out to meet him and grabbed the Saracen by the throat and brought him to his brothers, wishing to kill him. But the oldest brother said: "My dear brothers, why should you soil your sword on the Saracen? We shall use it on Amir tsar himself – he's the guilty one."

So they tied this Saracen to a tree on a hill, and they rode off down the same road and there they met a multitude of Tsar Amir's guards near a large river called the Bagrianitsa. (Ksanph –Ksandos [ruddy]). There were about three thousand of these guards. The brothers caught sight of this numerous force of Amir-tsar and the oldest brother said: "My dear brothers! This is the vast force of the Amir tsar. We will each ride in different directions."

The oldest brother rode from the right wing, the middle one at the forward detachment, and the youngest brother rode off from the left. And they galloped at Amir's guards and began slaughtering them just as good mowers cut grass: some they slaughtered, others they captured and led to a high hill, and they herded them forward like a good shepherd his sheep, and they drove them onto the hill, where they killed them. And they left only three men alive so that they might lead them to Amir tsar. And they questioned them: "Tell us, Saracens, does your tsar Amir dwell within the city or outside it?" And the Saracens answered them: "Our lords, you three brothers! Our tsar Amir is camped outside the city, seven versts from it, and there around the city are a host of tents, and in each tent are housed several thousand string and brave knights; any one of them will ride out against a hundred."

And the brothers said to them: "Brother Saracens! If we feared God, we would long ago have met our deaths; but we ask you: tell us which tent is that of Amir,

your tsar?" The Saracens replied: "The tent of our tsar Amir is crimson, and it has a green trim along the bottom, and then entire tent is sewn with gold and silver and pearls and decorated with precious stones, and his brother has a deep blue tent with a green trim, and this tent is also decorated with gold and silver, and many other tents stand there, and in each there are many knights, and they received annually a payment of one or two thousand, and they are strong and brave: one will ride out against a hundred." The brothers sent those three Saracens to Amir, their tsar. And they said to them: "Let Amir Tsar know about us so that this Amir tsar cannot later say that we came against him in secret." And the brothers said to the Saracens: "Go back where you came from." The Saracens were overjoyed at their liberation and told their tsar about all this.

When he had heard about this, Tsar Amir took fright and summoned his knights and said to them: "My brothers, mighty knights! I have seen a dream this night in which three hawks have beaten me with their wings and wounded my body almost all over; this means that those brothers are coming and will do battle with us." Just then the brothers rode up to the tent of Amir tsar and called Amir tsar out: ""Tsar! Come out of your tent and tell us, tsar, why you don't know how to raise barriers along your roads; we rode up to your tent without hindrance: and now tell us why you came and abducted our sister secretly? Had we been at home at that time, you would not have been able to gallop off with our sister; you would have died a bitter death, and all your land would have been subjected to us. And now answer us: where is our sister?"

Tsar Amir replied; "My dear brothers! Do you see that high and beautiful mountain? There many women and beautiful maidens have been cut down. And there your sister was cut down too, since she would not fulfill my desire." And they answered the tsar: "You are going to suffer from us for that." And they went up that mountain to search for their sister, for her dead body, and they saw on that mountain a host of women and beautiful maiden slaughtered. And they searched for the body of their sister and they saw one maiden of unrivalled beauty and they began pouring out tears over her, thinking that it was their sister.

But the youngest brother said to them: "Brothers! Our sister is not here, this is not she!" And the brothers mounted their horses and began singing the angels' song to the Lord: "Blessed is our Lord God, giving strength unto our arms for battle and for struggle." And they decided among themselves: "Let us recall, brothers, the word and order of our mother: we were born in daytime and we shall perish in the day according to the instruction of our mother, and we shall

lay down our heads for our sister." And they galloped up to the tent of Amir tsar and raised that tent on their lances.

And Amir tsar said to them: "My dear brothers! Ride off a little way from my tent and cast lots among yourselves to see which one of you will fight me: if you overcome me, then take your sister; if I overcome you, then I shall have the pleasure of killing you all." The brothers rode off a little from the tent and began casting lots, and when they cast the first time, it fell to their youngest brother to go into combat. So they cast lots a second time so that their youngest brother should not have to fight with tsar Amir, as he was so powerful. But this second time it also fell to the youngest brother. They cast lots a third time and again the lot fell to the youngest brother to go into combat with tsar Amir. For this brother and sister had been born on one and the same day of their mother's womb.

So the brother began equipping their younger brother: and where the brothers stood, it was if the sun were shining, and where they were equipping Amir tsar there was no light, it was as dark as night. The brothers sang an angels' song to God: "O Ruler, do not hand over your creation to the disgracing of the pagans, let not the pagans rejoice, having debased a Christian maiden." And the brothers mounted their horses and rode out together to meet Amir tsar. When they met up, Amir began fighting with the youngest brother with sabers and they struck at each other with lances.

The Saracens and their knights saw the daring of the youngest brother and said to Amir, their tsar, "O great lord, tsar Amir! Hand over their sister and submit to them, for the youngest of the brothers has defeated your strength; if all three of them should gather together, all our land will turn out to be in servility." And the youngest brother, riding up from behind to Amir tsar, struck him between the shoulders, knocked him off his horse onto the ground, grabbed him by the hair and dragged him to his brothers. All the Saracens shouted to tsar Amir: "Give them their sister, tsar Amir, otherwise they will utterly destroy you." And Amir tsar said to the brothers: "Have mercy on me, my dear brothers, and I will now be baptized in holy baptism, in the name of my love for the maiden, and I will be your brother-in-law."

The brothers said: "Brother tsar Amir! It is in our power to kill you and in our power to let you go. But how could we give our sister to a slave? But tell us now, where is our sister?" And tsar Amir answered them tearfully: "My brothers! Do you see that splendid steppe, there where a host of tents stand? Your sister resides there, there your sisters walks about, there fine silks are spread out,

decorated with gold and her face is covered with a precious coverlet, and guards protect her, never approaching the tents.”

When they heard this, the brothers rejoiced and they hastened to her tent and galloped up to it, and the guard said nothing to them, thinking that they were foreigners and never guessing that they were her brothers. And the brothers neared the tent and they entered the tent to their sister and found her sitting on a golden chair, and her face was covered with a precious coverlet. And the brothers began questioning her tearfully: “Tell us, sister, of the brazenness of Amir tsar, if he disgraced you with even a single word, we will cut off his head and cart him off to the Greek land so that he will never again boast that he has defiled a Christian maiden.”

The maiden answered her brothers: “My brothers, nothing like that occurred; do not even think about me. When I was abducted by Tsar Amir, twelve protectors were placed about me and now I fear only being reviled by strangers and my own relatives who know I was a captive. It was I who told Amir tsar about your bravery and tsar Amir always came to me once a month and only admired me from afar, and he ordered that my face not be hidden from those near me, and no one ever entered my tent. Now, my dear brothers, I abjure you with the prayer of our mother to heed my request. If in fact tsar Amir has renounced his faith and will be baptized in holy baptism immediately, then you need find no other brother-in-law, as he is famed with fame and strong in strength and wise in wisdom and rich with riches.” The brothers replied to their sister: Let a mother’s prayer unite you with tsar Amir!”

Meanwhile, tsar Amir gathered three hundred camels and loaded them up with precious Arabian gold and sent them to the brothers as a gift, as a sign of his love for the maiden, and tsar Amir said to the brothers: “Have mercy on me, my brothers, I am renouncing my faith and will immediately be baptized in holy baptism in the name of love for this maiden and I shall be your brother-in-law. And the brothers answered tsar Amir: “If you wish to be our brother-in-law, then renounce your pagan faith on account of your love for our sister; quickly be baptized in holy baptism and come to us to the Greek land after your beloved maiden!”

And Amir tsar said to them: “My dear brothers! I do not wish to give myself over to disgrace, that the Greeks might say of me, that having taken a brother-in-law captive, they are leading him to their home. Let me be called your brother-in-law with great glory. I wish first of all to go and gather camels from throughout the

land and load rich gifts on them, I wish to gather mighty knights who would wish to come with me into the Christian faith; and I will come to you in the Greek land and call myself your brother-in-law, and I shall be famous and rich. And you ought not tire out your horses – wait for me along the road.” The brothers took their sister and set off on their journey.

And Amir tsar went to his mother and brother and he had a sly talk with them so that they would not hold him back. And he said to his mother: “My dear mother! I have gone to the Greek land and captured there a dear maiden, and her brothers came after her and began fighting with me. And one of them, the youngest, overcame my strength. If all three brothers had joined together, then all of our land would have been subservient to them.” And Amir tsar’s mother responded to her son in anger and she began pulling out her hair and she scratched her face and shouted: “Why do you call yourself tsar and keep strong knights about you and pay them by the thousand or two. Go now and gather an army and set off for the Greek land and defeat those brothers, and then bring this beloved maiden of yours to me.”

Amir, cunningly, replied to his mother, “Mother, I intend to do that, to gather as many soldiers as possible and go and destroy the Greek land.” And his brother said to Amir tsar: “Let’s go quickly, brother, gather an army and we will not permit those brothers with your beloved maiden to enter the city.” And Amir tsar said to his brother, “You sit on my throne and I will ride out alone and destroy the Greek land.” So then Amir tsar placed his brother upon his throne and he gathered an enormous army and he collected riches and camels from throughout the land and he loaded on them invaluable Arabian gold and precious stones. The Saracens saw that they were not setting off on a campaign like this but they said nothing.

Tsar Amir went up to the border of the Greek land and he turned to his Arabs and said: “My dear brothers! You mighty and brave Arabs! Whoever wishes to go with me and show his ability will now come with me to lay waste the Greek land.” And one of them, an Arab, on whose lips were twelve locks, spoke out to tsar Amir: “Great lord and tsar Amir! Three youths came from the Greek land to our Saracen land and one of them overcame your strength, and if all three of them joined together, then all of our land would have been subservient to them. And now you wish to attack the Greek land: they will destroy us to the last one!” Tsar Amir sent the camels loaded with rich gifts to the Greek land and taking a few of his knights with him, he set off into the Greek land.

The brothers had gone fifty versts from the Greek city when they stopped in a field; and their sister implored them: "My dear brothers! Save me from great disgrace before people and my relatives, that I was abducted by Amir tsar; await the one you call brother-in-law tsar Amir." Very soon tsar Amir came with his riches and his camels loaded with gold and silver. And tsar Amir said to them: "Glory be to God that he has permitted me to see my brothers face to face." And the brothers said to Amir tsar: "O servant of Christ! Be our brother-in-law."

Two brothers, the eldest and the middle one, together with their sister, rode into the city at night so that people might not see them, and they came to their mother's house. When she saw her two sons and her daughter, the mother tearfully exclaimed: "You have rescued your sister but lost a brother!" And the sons said to her: "Rejoice, mother, and be off good cheer since our youngest brother is even now with our one called our brother-in-law tsar Amir, and now prepare, mother, a wedding feast for we have gained a brother-in-law famed with fame and strong in strength and rich with riches, and now we must conduct him to holy baptism."

And they took the patriarch of that city with all the clergy and they came to the river Euphrates, and there they prepared a font. And a great many people came out from the city. When the brothers saw that tsar Amir was discomforted by this multitude of people, they asked that tsar Amir be baptized quickly in the name of the Holy Spirit, and the patriarch himself baptized him and his sworn father was the tsar of that city. And they all set off for the house of their mother and began a festive wedding feast to their glory, and the festivities lasted for three months. And then tsar Amir built for himself separate chambers and into them with his beloved maiden.

After some time tsar Amir's mother heard that he had been baptized and had renounced his faith because of his love for this girl and she began tearing out her hair and she gathered a great army and set off for him: "Who has courage enough to go to the Greek land to his lord Amir tsar and bring him back from the Greek land together with this maiden?" And three Saracens responded: "We shall go to the Greek land and take your epistle to our lord tsar Amir." She gave them many gold cons and three horses, and one was called "Wind", the second "Thunder" and the third "Lightning." "When you get to the Greek land," she said, "and when you see your lord Amir tsar and bring him back from the Greek land, mount the horse named Wind and no one will see you. And when you enter the Saracen land with your lord Amir tar and his beloved maiden, then mount the horse Thunder, and then the Arabs in the Saracen land will all hear

you. But if you mount the horse Lightning, then you shall be invisible in the Greek land."

The Saracens took three horses and the epistle to Amir tsar and set off along their road and they came to the Greek city, stopped near the city in a hidden place, and mounted on their horse Lightning, and they were invisible in the Greek land.

And that very night the tsarina, the beautiful wife of Amir Tsar, saw a dream; and she was overcome with fear, and she told her brothers the following: "My dear brothers, I saw this dream: suddenly there flew into my rooms a golden-winged falcon and he took me by the hand and led me out of my rooms, and then three ravens came flying in and they attacked the falcon and the falcon let me go."

The brothers summoned all the wizards and bookmen and wise men and told them their sister's dream, and the wizards replied to the brothers: "Your newly-baptized brother-in-law wishes to abduct our lady, the beautiful maiden, on the orders of his mother and flee with her to the Saracen land,; and the three ravens are three Saracens who are stationed just outside the city in a secret place, sent there with a letter from his mother to tsar Amir."

The brothers went to tsar Amir and questioned him and reproached him. He swore to them in the name of the living God and then they took tsar Amir and rode with him out of the city with the bookmen and wise men, and they sought out the three Saracens near the city and seized them and interrogated them. They disclosed their entire secret plot and they took them into the city, baptized them with holy baptism, and they began dwelling with Amir tsar and Amir tsar gave their horses to his brother's, his brothers-in-law.

And then the wise men predicted the birth of Devgenii, and then Amir tsar's wife received the fruit in her womb, of masculine gender, and she bore a son, and they called him Akrit. And he was baptized in divine baptism and they called his name "Handsome Devgeni," and the patriarch himself baptized him, and his spiritual mother was the tsaritsa of that city. And there were in that city two tsars and four tsareviches. And they raised Devgenii tsarevich up to the age of ten.

THE LIFE OF DEVGENII

Handsome Devgenii began playing with a sword at the age of twelve, and at thirteen with a lance, and at fourteen he wished to take on all the beasts and from day to day he begged his father and uncles: "Let me go hunting with you!" And his father said to him: "You are young, my son, don't speak of hunting; I'm afraid of wearing you, a mere youth, out!" And Devgenii replied to his father: "You can't frighten me with that, father, as I put my hopes in God the Creator that hunting would be no labor but a great enjoyment."

The father heard these words of the youth and gathered many warriors and the entire city, and he was pleased to ride with him on a hunt. And many from that city gathered to hunt since they had heard of the audacity of Devgenii. And leaving the city for the hunt, Devgenii's father caught hares and foxes, and Devgenii's uncles hunted too, and he laughed at them and rode off into deserted places and jumped down from his horse like a young falcon, relying on God's strength.

And two bears with cubs were wandering about in the reeds. And one sow bear smelled the youth and leapt out to meet him and wanted to devour him. And the youth, who still hadn't been taught how to kill the beasts, quickly rushed at her, and he grabbed her and squeezed her with his arms such that all her gut came out and she died in his arms. And the other bear ran away into the reed thickets.

Then an uncle called out to Devgenii: "Watch out, my child, so that a bear doesn't attack you!" Devgenii was overjoyed and leaving his mace there where he had been standing, he ran like a swift falcon and attacked the bear. The bear turned to meet him, opened its maw wide and was about to devour him. But the youth leapt headlong at it, grabbed it by the head and tore it off. The bear died instantly in his hands. A roar from the bear and a shout from the youth resounded through the forest.

And Amir tsar shouted at his son: "Devgenii, my son, watch out: an enormous elk is running toward you and you've no place to hide!" When he heard that, Devgenii rushed forward like a lion and caught up to the elk. He grabbed it by its hind legs and ripped it in two.

"Oh, most glorious miracle sent down by God. Who would not be amazed by this? What daring has the young lad shown, pursuing the elk quicker than a lion could! God has given him this strength over all things. And how he did defeat that bear without a weapon! Oh, most glorious miracle! We see a lad of fourteen

years but he is an extraordinary man, created by God." This is how they talked among themselves.

But then a fierce beast leapt out of a swamp, from those very reeds. And they watched the youth, following him to make sure the beast didn't attack him. Devgenii was carrying the elk head in his right arm and the two dead bears, and in his left the elk carcass he had torn apart. And his uncle shouted at him: "Come here, child, and leave those dead things behind. This is quite another beast, alive, and this isn't like tearing an elk in two: this is a fierce lion. Approach it with great care." The youth replied: "My lord and uncle! I place my hope in the Creator and on the might of God and in the prayers of the mother who gave birth to me." And replying to his uncle with such words, Devgenii quickly ran up, grabbed his sword, and went out to meet the beast. The beast saw the youth approaching him, roared and began switching his tail from side to side. He opened his maw and jumped at the youth. But Devgenii hit him on the head with his sword and sliced it into two parts.

His father said to his uncle: "Do you see the might of God: he has cut down the lion and before that the elk." And his father and uncle quickly ran up to Devgenii and kissed him on the lips and eyes, and they kissed his hands, and kept on saying to him: "Who will not be amazed, o Lord, seeing your stature and your beauty and courage!"

And the youth was like no other in stature, with curly hair and large eyes. It was a pleasure to look upon him: his face was like snow and with rosy cheeks the color of a poppy, and his brows were black, and his shoulders were wider than a sazhen. His father rejoiced looking at such a splendid youth and he said: "My dear child! Glorious Devgenii, the heat of the day is unbearable. Every beast is hiding in a thicket. Let us go, my child, to a cool stream, wash the perspiration from your face and change your clothes – take off those bloodied ones, soiled either from the beast or the bear's innards; the blood of the fierce beast has made your clothing crimson. And I shall myself wash your hands and feet."

And in that water all was shining and the water was lit up like a candle. And no one from the brave men dared approach that water as so much there was miraculous: in that water dwelt an enormous serpent. Having come up to the stream, everybody sat around Devgenii and washed his face and hands. He said: "Go ahead and wash my hands, but they are destined to be dirty again." And the youth had not finished speaking when the enormous serpent came flying up to the stream; it was like a three-headed man and it desired to devour people. When

he caught sight of it, Devgenii quickly grabbed his sword and went out to meet the serpent, and he chopped off three heads and began washing his hands. And all his companions were amazed at the daring the youth had shown in his battle with the fierce beast and they sang out his praises to God: "Oh, most glorious miracle! Oh, ruler and almighty one who created mankind and gave him great strength over all the strong and brave creatures, you have shown us the man who is stronger than them all."

And they kissed the youth for his contest with the other, and they removed his clothing from him. And his lower garments were worn for warmth, and the upper ones were purple and sewn with gold thread, and his sleeves were decorated with precious pearls and his leggings of fine silks, and his boots were golden and decorated with fine pearls and precious stones. His spurs were of twisted gold and decorated with emeralds.

The youth ordered them to hurry to the city right away so to tell his mother not to be anxious about him. And they all returned to their homes and began celebrating and were there in great joy. And most of Devgenii's mother rejoiced because she had born such a famous, melodious and handsome son.

And Devgenii's horse was as white as a dove and precious stones were woven into its mane, and among the stones were little golden bells. And from the multitude of little bells and the precious stones wondrous sounds rang out to the amazement of all. The croup of the horse was covered from the summer's dust with fine silk and the bridle was fashioned of good with emeralds and other colored stones. His horse was swift of foot and pranced beneath him, and the youth sat on it easily and with daring. And all were astonished at seeing this as the horse trotted beneath him and he sat tightly on it, displaying his weapons and he galloped about without fear.

Glory to our God now and forever, and unto the age of ages. Amen.

A TREATISE ABOUT DEVGENII'S BRAVERY,
HOW FILIPPAPA AND THE MAID MAKSIMIANA WROTE AN EPISTLE

When Filippapa and the maid Maksimiana heard of the bravery and strength of Devgenii, she began to think about how to ensnare him like a hare in a trap. Filippapa was brave and very powerful, and he had a large army but the maid Maksimiana had the bravery of a man and she sought the same

And so they went out against the glorious Devgenii and came up there and encamped, not having quite approached the Greek city on the River Euphrates. And Maksimiana sent letters of deceit to the glorious Devgenii: "O, Bright Light Sun, glorious Devgenii, you rule among all of us brave and mighty, like the month of May among all the months! In the month of May everything heavenly and earthly flowers and the trees put out their leaves and all heavenly beauty comes into being, just as do you in us, o glorious Devgenii. And we, o glorious Devgenii, beg you: do not tarry but make an effort to come to us with a small force to the Euphrates river that we might see your youth and bravery, and there is no other thought in this at all."

The glorious Devgenii read the letters and laughed, and he said to his father: "Father, I wish to go to see the glorious and brave Filippapa and the maid Maksimiana." His father said to him: "My dear child, glorious Devgenii, it is early for you to think of going to battle, you have not been in any victorious battles of yet; that Filippapa is strong and brave in battle, and the maid Maksimiana has a large army."

Devgenii wrote back a letter and sent his confidant with it to them and said: "Great is my shame to go out to battle against a woman, and you, Filippapa, are an elderly uncle, so for what reason have you come with a large force and brought a host of innocent people to me?"

The maid Maksimiana said: "O Bright Light and Glorious Devgenii, never having had it in my mind any ill will, we have come to see your youth." From day to day Devgenii thought about how to witness the bravery of Filippapa. And so he took a few of his confidants with him and he requested a prayer from his father and mother "Quickly bless me, father and mother. Have no thoughts of any sort because there will be no wounds on my body because I place my hope in the strength of God and in your fatherly kindness and that of mother."

And he mounted his horse and rode out on his way. He came to the River Euphrates and stopped on its banks and he sent his confidants to Filippapa and the maid Maksimiana. When Filippapa saw Devgenii's troops, so few of them, he attacked them with all his army.

When Devgenii saw the attack on those surrounding him, he grabbed his lance and forded the river and set out on foot like a falcon from the arm of a hunter, and he shouted out in a loud voice: "Give me a horse, a steed," and he mounted his horse and began the attack like a good mower cuts grass: in the first swath he defeated a thousand, in the second a second thousand, and in the third he caught up to Filippapa and struck him between the shoulders with the butt of his lance and knocked him down off his horse. When the maid Maksimiana saw Devgenii defeating Filippapa, she let go her lance, hoping to strike the glorious Devgenii from the rear.

But Devgenii saw it and grabbed her lance and struck her with its butt end and knocked her from her horse. And so he took Filippapa and the maid Maksimiana, and he killed others, and others he seized, and he drove them before him, and like a good shepherd his sheep, he drove them over the river.

And at that time old uncle Filippapa turned to Devgenii and said: "Golden-winged hawk, glorious Devgenii, you are glorious among all of us, strong and brave. And the glorious Stratig is braver and stronger than you on this earth, having four sons and many warriors, and the earth cannot hold him. And he has a daughter, the glorious and beautiful Stratigovna, who has the daring of a man and bravery and in beauty there is no one on earth like her. Many brave and strong tsars and kings have come but none can take her, and there is no one comparable in beauty and strength. And now have mercy on my old age, and release me soon."

And the glorious Devgenii said: "I wish to know whether you are speaking the truth. I will then release you, having placed a mark on your face at this time." Then the maid Maksimiana pleaded with him: "O Light, Bright Sun, glorious Devgenii, Many brave and strong tsars and kings have come to me in great strength and not one has defiled me with a single word, all have been defeated at my hand. And now we are subjected to you by God. If you will join with me, there will be no one stronger than we are and no one will be able to stand against us."

And the glorious Devgenii said: "Brother Maksimiana, I shall have no help from any other man except the mercy of God and my mother's prayers, that is what will aid me. For it is written for Devgenii: if you unite with Maksimiana, there will be sixteen years of life; if with Stratigovna, then thirty six years of life."

And Devgenii shouted out loudly to his confidant, saying, "Go to my father and to my mother and tell them this: Rejoice, Father and Mother, that I have defeated Filippapa. And take him to my father and this Maksimiana take to my mother. And if you cross her with even a single word, you will not be alive this very day." The confidant came to the house of his father and mother and brought them Filippapa and the maid Maksimiana and he told them everything as ordered. His father and his mother were very glad always for him.

Then the glorious Devgenii began always thinking about Stratigovna, how he might see Stratig and his children and all his army, and the beautiful Stratigovna. He father and mother tried to dissuade him: "Child, be dissuaded from this thought. Many have thought of this Stratig and Stratigovna, how they might see her, but nothing has come of it."

OF THE MARRIAGE OF DEVGENII AND THE ABDUCTION OF STRATIGOVNA

The magnificent Devgenii, having received the blessing of his father and his mother, gathered a small force and, taking fine clothing and fine-sounding gusli with him, mounted his swift horse and set off to Stratig.

And he reached the boundary of Stratig's possessions. And riding up to about five versts from the city, he halted his force and ordered a strong guard placed about him, and then he himself rode in the city of Stratig. And he came to the city and rode through the city gates, and he met a youth, a servant of Stratig met the youth and the youth began questioning him about Stratig and about his sons and about his daughter, Stratigovna.

The youth replied to him: "Our lord and tsar Stratig is not at home, he is off hunting in a distant land with his four sons. And you ask about Stratigovna – why, there is not a more beautiful maiden in the whole world. Many have come here but no one has seen her because Stratig is brave and powerful, and his sons and all his warriors: one goes out against a hundred and Stratigovna herself is as courageous as a man, no one except you can compare with her."

Devgenii was most pleased to hear this because it had been predicted and it was written: if you marry Stratigovna, you will live thirty-six years. And Devgenii rode through the city of Stratig and came to the courtyard of Stratig, and he began looking at his court.

When she caught sight of him, Stratigovna peered out the window but she did not show herself. Devgenii went back again, looking into the court. The maiden looked at him and was astonished.

But day turned into night, and Devgenii returned to his tents, taking with him that youth who was so enamored of him, and he dressed him in fine things and feasted throughout the night with his favorite confidants. And toward morning he arose early and ordered his retinue to put out sentries, and he said: "Go along separate roads but do not lose sight of each other. If Stratig attacks you and begins harassing you from all sides, I still won't be ready for battle, so fight with him at half-strength until I can hurry back."

And when he had said this, he dressed in his best clothes and ordered the golden-stringed gusli taken with him and the youth, his new servant, and he and

four others set off for the court of Stratigovna and there he took up the gusli and began playing and singing, for God's aid had been given him – it was always with him. He always managed everything, and the beautiful maiden Stratigovna was destined to be abducted by Devgenii, the son of Amir tsar.

And when she heard his voice and the splendid sounds, the maiden became frightened, she became anxious, and she pressed herself to the little window and saw Devgenii and the other four riding by her courtyard.

And love settled in her heart. And she called her guardian and said to her: "How that youth who rode past my court has muddled my mind! And I ask you with all my heart: go and delay him with your conversation." And when the youth was riding by the court another time, her guardian saw him and addressed him: "Where did you get such brazenness and what do you need in this house? Not even a bird dares fly about our court. Many heads have been laid down because of my lady." And Devgenii asked her: "Who sent you to talk with me?" She replied: "My lady, the beautiful Stratigovna, sent me, having taken pity on you on account of your youth so that no one did harm you." He said to her, "Say to your lady that Devgenii has said the following: 'look quickly out the window and show your beautiful face, and then you will find out why...'" And if you do not do this, then neither you nor any of your family will live."

When she heard this, the maiden Stratigovna peered out the window and spoke to Devgenii: "My bright light and beautiful sun! I pity you, my lord, that you wish to perish on account of your love for me, for many have laid down their heads on my account, even without seeing me and never having spoken a word with me. And who are you who has determined on such a brazen deed? My father is, you know, exceptionally brave and my brothers are powerful, and my father has many warriors, each of whom can take on a hundred. And you have so few men with you." Devgenii answered the maiden: "If I did not fear God, then I would commit you to death. But answer me quickly what is in your thoughts: do you wish to become the wife of Devgenii Akrit or do you wish to be a captive – a servant?"

When she heard this, the girl answered him tearfully: "If you love me so strongly, then quickly abduct me while neither my father and nor my mighty brothers are at home. But why must you abduct me? I wish to go off with you myself, only dress me in men's clothing. For I have the daring of a man! If they catch up to me along the way, I will not disgrace myself. Many have been unable to overcome me."

When he heard these words, Devgenii rejoiced and said to the maiden: "I have no heart to do what you propose for I would cover you with shame before your father and your brothers. They would say: Devgenii, like a thief, has stolen away this maiden. But this is what I say to you: Do as I command you. When your father returns and your brothers, tell them that you have been abducted." And he summoned her: "Come out of the gates."

And she bowed to Devgenii, and he took her by one hand, sat her down on his horse's withers, and began kissing her gently. Then he took her down from his horse. The maiden did not want to leave him but Devgenii said: "Go back and do as I have said; when your father returns, then wait for me and be ready: be just outside the porch of your home."

And when he had said this, he kissed her and galloped away. And he sent the youth into the city, the one he had met at the gates, and he ordered him to report to him when Stratig returned. And having said this, he set off for his own tent and began feasting happily with his retinue.

About then Stratig returned from the hunt, and the youth hurried to Devgenii with the news, and he said: "Stratig has come." And Devgenii ordered them to saddle his swiftest horse and he dressed in his finest clothing and rode off on an ambler, and the swift horse he ordered led before him. And he rode up to the city, got on his horse, and left his favorite servants at the city walls, and he took his lance and rode to the court of Stratig.

The maiden told her father what Devgenii had ordered her to say. And Stratig replied: "Many bogatyrs have thought about this but it hasn't happened." And Stratig had just spoken these words when the glorious Devgenii arrived. And when she heard the pounding of the horses and the tinkling of the little golden bells, the maid jumped up quickly and stood near the porch, as Devgenii had ordered her to do.

Devgenii struck the gates with his lance, and the gates disintegrated, and he rode into the courtyard and demanded in a loud voice that Stratig and his mighty sons come out to him and they would witness the abduction of their sister. His servants began calling Stratig and they told him what Devgenii had so daringly said: he stood in the courtyard without fear and called out Stratig.

And Stratig heard the voice of Devgenii but he did not believe it, saying: "No bird dares to fly into my courtyard here, let alone some man." And he left his

house. Devgenii stood there for three hours waiting for him, and then he could await an answer no longer, and the servants dared not say anything.

And Devgenii asked the maiden to come up to him, and like an eagle he seized the beautiful Stratigovna, placed her on the withers of his swift horse, and shouted to Stratig: "Come out and take away y our daughter, the beautiful one, who is with Devgenii, so that you might not say that I stole her like a thief." And with these words he rode out of the courtyard, singing a cheerful song and praising God. He finished the song and rode out of the city to his favorite servitors, and placing the maiden on the ambler, he rode back to his tents.

And riding up onto a hill, he turned back to look to see whether there was any pursuit. And he said to the maiden: "I shall cover myself with great shame if there is no pursuit of me: I wish to return and deliver a great dishonor to them." And Devgenii equipped his trusted servants and ordered his warriors to mount a guard around the maiden, and he himself returned to the city and to the courtyard of Stratig. He rode into the court of Stratig and struck the porch of his home with his lance, and the porch disintegrated, and all were overcome with fear: who was in the yard?

And Devgenii shouted out in a loud voice, summoning Stratig out, and he said: "O Stratig most glorious, where his your courage and that of your sons if I have abducted your daughter? Why did neither you nor your sons pursue me? And I have returned and delivered a great dishonor to you so that you would not be able to say later that I had come and abducted your daughter like a thief.. If there is any masculine courage in you and in your warriors, take your daughter away from me!" And having said this, he rode out of the courtyard and then he returned again and shouted out again in a loud voice: "I will leave the city and await you in the field so that you cannot say later that I came, deceived you, and ran away from you."

When he heard these words, Stratig shook in anger and summoned his sons: "Where are my distinguished warriors who will capture a thousand each and others even two thousand, or five and even ten thousand! Quickly gathered them and other mighty warriors."

But Devgenii came back to the maiden and dismounted his horse, and then he said to her: "Sit down and search my head (for lice – perhaps part of the wedding ceremony – JVH) until your father and brothers come with their army. If I fall asleep, do not awaken me in fright but be careful." And the maiden sat down

and began searching his head, and Devgenii fell asleep, and the maiden watched over his sleep.

Stratig gathered a host of warriors and bogatyrs, and voevodas, and he set off to take his daughter away from Devgenii. And he rode out of the city with his countless warriors and the maiden saw him and became terrified, and she began to awaken Devgenii carefully, and tearfully she said to him: "Wake up! The sun is shining and the moon is bright. Stratig has come against you with an innumerable force, and you have still not gathered your warriors! Why do you give him so much hope?"

Arising, Devgenii said, "I seek no aid from anyone but rely on God's force." And he leapt up and mounted his swift horse and buckled on his sword and took his mace and he asked the maiden: "Do you want me to leave your father and brothers alive or shall I kill them all at once?" The maiden began pleading with him: "O my lord, who has received his strength from God, do not deliver my father who has committed no sin to death; do not cover yourself with disgrace in the eyes of people; let no one say that you have killed your father-in-law." And Devgenii began questioning her: "Tell me, what are your father and brothers like?" And the maiden explained to him: "My father wears armor of gold and his helmet is gold with precious stones and pearls embedded in it, and his horse has a green silk garment; and my brothers are in silver armor, only their helmets are gold, and their horses have red silk trappings."

When he had heard this, Devgenii kissed her and rode out against them, and he met them far out in the field. He struck like a strong falcon at the center of the army, like a good mower he cut them down like grass: he galloped through them once and killed seven thousand; he returned and killed twenty thousand. A third time he galloped and he caught up to Stratig. He hit him lightly with his club on the top of his helmet and knocked him from his horse. And Stratig began imploring Devgenii: "Be content with the abducted maiden, my beautiful daughter. Let me live!" And Devgenii let him go but he caught up to his sons, bound them, and led them off with him. He did not tie up Stratig. And binding the army, he drove them before him like a shepherd a flock of sheep to where the maiden was standing. And she saw her father and said: "That is what I told you, father, but you would not believe me." And Devgenii ordered his servants to drive the bound warriors of Stratig and he led Stratig himself and his sons along with him.

And so then Stratig grew sad and together with his sons began to plead with Devgenii, saying to him that "You did not condemn us to death but granted us life, so do not cart us off with you but return us our liberty." And the maiden heard the pleading of her father and brothers and she began asking Devgenii: "I was given into your hands by God. You are the ruler not only of me but also of my family. You have defeated many warriors already but give my father and brothers back their liberty, do not grieve my mother who nursed your wife." And as the maiden spoke this way, Devgenii heeded her and said to Stratig: "I shall have mercy on your age and grant you and your sons freedom, but I shall place my brand upon you." And Stratig pleaded: "What kind of freedom are you granting us if you are going to besmirch us with a brand?" The maiden dissuaded Devgenii from the brand. Stratig wore a gold cross of his great-grandfather, invaluable, and his sons had valuable clasps with pearls and precious stones, and Devgenii took all this instead of the brand...

So then Devgenii invited them to the wedding. And Stratig said to him: "It would not be proper for us, your captives, to go to your wedding. But my children and I beg you, do not cover me and my children with disgrace: you wish to carry off an only daughter from her mother like a captive. Return to my home and we shall put on a joyous feast and have a glorious wedding, and you can then return with gifts you shall receive and with great honor." And Devgenii listened to the words of Stratig and went back to Stratig's house with his bride, and the wedding lasted three months and all was joyful. And Devgenii received innumerable gifts and the entire dowry of the bride, and her guardian, and her servants, and then went back to his own place with great honor.

When he had returned to his own country, he sent his trusted servants with great ceremony to his father and mother with the news and requested of them that they prepare a glorious wedding. And he said to his father: "You, father, were formerly famed for your strength and glory, and now I, with the help of God and your blessing and the prayers of my mother, what I conceived of has all come true. I have no opponent. Stratig alone was stronger than all knights, but with God's help he could not stand against me, for I abducted his daughter. And now, father, with great honors come out to greet me and Stratigovna" And his runners came to him and told the father all that Devgenii had told them to say.

And upon hearing this, his father and mother rejoiced and began preparing for the wedding, and they summoned the entire city and they went out to meet Devgenii and Stratigovna, and they met them eight versts from the city with great honors.

And all knelt down before Devgenii, exclaiming: "O great is the miracle accomplished by you, a young lad, o noble is your daring! You have defeated Stratig and abducted his daughter!" And Devgenii replied: "It was not I who defeated the force of Stratig; he was defeated by the force of God!" And Amir immediately summoned his brothers-in-law and sent them to Stratig, inviting him to the wedding, and he said to him: "Do not be idle, o matchmaker, hasten to come and we shall greet each other and rejoice together, and our children will rejoice, for God has united them without our command."

When he heard this, Stratig rejoiced, and at that very hour gathered all his family and took his wealth to give it to his dear son-in-law; he took with him his wife and children and he set off to the matchmaker Amir. Tsar Amir, having learned of the approach of Stratig, rode out with Devgenii to meet him with great honor and when they had gathered at one place, they began exchanging gifts with each other and they celebrated the wedding for three months.

And Stratig presented his son-in-law with thirty horses, and they were covered with precious silks and their saddles and bridles were emblazed with gold; and he gave him twenty grooms, and leopards, and thirty falcons with their keepers, and twenty leather coats sewn with pure gold, and a hundred bolts of silk, and an enormous tent all sewn in gold, and many thousands of warriors could be housed in this tent, and the tent guidelines were also silk, and the grommets of silver. And he gave him an icon of St. Fedor in a golden frame, and four Arab lances, and the sword of the great-grandfather. And his mother-in-law gave him thirty expensive green silks, and twenty leather coats sewn with pure gold with precious stones and pearls, and many other gifts. The senior brother-in-law gave him eighty belts of hammered gold and the other brothers-in-law brought him a multitude of gifts and there was no numbering of them.

Three months they celebrated the wedding and they gave great honors to Stratig and his wife, and his sons, and to tsar Amir. Then Devgenii set off to accompany Stratig, and when he looked at him, Stratig was most happy, and his sons praised God that God had sent them such a brother-in-law.

So Devgenii returned home, having seen Stratig off, and he freed all the captives. And he branded his uncle Filipap on the face and then sent him off to where he had come from, and Maksim's liberation he announced through his servants. And then he began living and prospering and going hunting, for he loved these bogatyr's pursuits.

Oh, what a great miracle, brothers! Who would not be astonished at it? He was an unusual man and he became such not from Amir but he was sent down by God. All brave Christians learned of his glory, and he was made famous throughout all the world with the aid of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and forevermore and in eternity, and to the ages of ages. Amen

THE LEGEND OF HOW DEVGENII DEFEATED TSAR VASILII

There was a certain tsar named Vasili. And he became extremely angry, hearing of the daring and bravery of Devgenii, and he burned with the desire to capture him for tsar Vasili controlled all the land of Cappadocia.

And so he equipped his envoys and sent off an epistle to Devgenii and with feigned cordiality he wrote thus: "Famed Devgenii! I very much want to see you. Do not hesitate now to visit my tsardom; your daring and courage have resounded over all the earth. And I have come to love you with all my soul, and I wish to gaze upon your youth." They delivered the royal epistle to Devgenii, and Devgenii read it and understood that the epistle to him was false.

And Devgenii answered the tsar: "I am a simple man. Your royal highness has no need of anything from me, but if you wish to see me, then take a small number of warriors with you and come to the River Euphrates." And then he ordered the envoys to say to their tsar: "If you wish to see me, an unworthy one, then take a few warriors with you, so as not to anger me, for youth brings many irrational acts with it. And if I should become angry and destroy your army, then you will not return alive!"

So they rode back and the envoy transmitted all that Devgenii had said. When he heard this, the tsar became extremely angry and sent the envoy back to Devgenii with the words: "My child! I do not wish to bring many warriors with me but only to admire your youth. I have nothing else in my heart."

The royal envoy came to Devgenii and related all that had been said by the tsar and Devgenii answered him: "Tell your tsar this: I do not fear you, tsar, nor your innumerable army, for I place my hopes on God. I do not fear your evil plot but I say to you: Come to the River Euphrates and you and I shall see each other. If you come with a large force, then you will not rejoice in the fact that you rule,

and your entire force will be destroyed." And the envoy came to tsar Vasiliï and related the words of Devgenii to him.

When he had heard this, the tsar immediately ordered his warriors summoned and having gathered them together, he moved off with that force to the place indicated by Devgenii. And having come to the River Euphrates, he set up his tents at some distance from the river. And the royal pavilion was enormous, bright red in color, and the top of it was sewn in pure gold; and inside the tent were quartered several thousand warriors. And the entire force of the tsar was covered: some in tents and other in sheltered places. And the tsar stayed for six days on the river and he said to his voevodas: "Devgenii has found out something and contrived something against us for he himself intends to come with a large force." And having said this, tsar Vasiliï shook from fear.

And Devgenii sent a servant to the tsar with these words: "I am amazed that you have put forth so much labor on my account as I am nothing. But I already told you of my custom: if you wish to meet me, then come with a small detachment. But you have gathered an enormous army thinking to defeat me, and that is disgraceful, for my fame has gone throughout all the earth and to all lands. And so now do as you have intended to do."

Tsar Vasiliï answered: "How dare you that you do not wish to submit to me, a tsar!" And fitting out his envoy, he sent him across the river and received Devgenii's envoy. And the royal envoy came to transmit the royal words to Devgenii. And Devgenii replied; "Tell your tsar: if he is relying on his great force, then I hope on God the Creator. And your force cannot compare with the might of God. This day is nearly over but prepare for battle as of tomorrow morning, and come forth with your innumerable force and you will see the courage of an insignificant man who will appear before you; otherwise, I will be shamed for that which is not undertaken." And the envoy of tsar Vasiliï came back from Devgenii and told his words to the tsar.

The tsar quickly called his boyars and began taking counsel with them, and the magnates said to him: "What is your rule worth, tsar, if you are afraid of a single warrior – no forces are seen with him." And Devgenii's envoy hurried across the river and told Devgenii all that had occurred with the tsar.

The next day at daybreak tsar Vasiliï placed his forces and got ready to cross over the river to catch Devgenii like a hare in a trap. Devgenii saw that tsar Vasiliï had prepared an innumerable force, and he guessed that when he had crossed the

river, he would surround him. Furious, Devgenii said to his servants: "Join me in a little while, first I shall myself undertake some little labor and serve that tsar."

And having said these words, he propped himself up with his lance and leapt across the river like a strong falcon, and he shouted at the top of his lungs: "Where is this tsar Vasilii who wanted to see something of me?" He shouted and immediately the warriors rushed at him, and he stuck his lance in the ground and rushed at the warriors with his bare sword. And he galloped up and like a good mower cutting grass, the first time he galloped through, he defeated a thousand, then he came back and galloped through them again, and another thousand he defeated.

Tsar Vasilii saw the courage of Devgenii and with but a handful of his men fled. Devgenii killed the remaining warriors and then bound up the remainder and shouted to his servants across the river: "Bring that swift horse of mine, the one called 'Wind'." They drove the horse over to him, he leapt onto it and Devgenii tore off and soon caught up to tsar Vasilii at the walls of his city, and he killed all the warriors who were with him, and took the tsar and three of his companions captive.

And he sent one of them into the city with the news. And he said to the citizens: "Come out to meet Devgenii; from this day on God has granted it that he will rule in your country." When they heard this, they gathered together and came out to fight with him before the city, thinking that they would be fighting with an ordinary man. And he sent a message to them, saying: "Put down your weapons and do not anger me." They replied: "A single man cannot stand against our entire city." When he heard their reply, Devgenii grew angry and rushed at them: some he killed, others he bound and handed over to his servants, and then he entered the city and began ruling there. And he soon freed the captives, as it says in scripture: "The servant cannot be greater than his master, nor the son greater than his father."

"But I still have twelve years to live and now I wish to rest, I have seen many wars and victories in my youth," so spoke Devgenii to his father and he sat him on the royal throne and he summoned all his captives and gave them their freedom. And he placed brands on the faces of Kanam and Ioakim and sent them to their native country. And he summoned all his relatives and shared in their great joy, and thus it continued for many days.

Glory to our God now and forever and to the ages of ages! Amen

A NOTE ON THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION OF THE OLD RUSSIAN
VERSION OF THE EPIC OF DIGENES AKRITAS

The Old Russian version of the epic of Digenes Akritas (known in Russian as the Devgenevo deianie) was translated from the Greek no later than the twelfth century. It thus antedates the surviving western manuscripts by at least two centuries (Grotto-Ferrara MS); it is apparently from a different tradition as well. At the present time three differing manuscripts are known but the oldest attested copy of the original translation, probably from the thirteenth century, perished in the Great Fire of Moscow of 1812. The three extant manuscripts are all of much later provenance, the oldest dated to the seventeenth century. They differ considerably, the one from the others.

According to a description of the manuscript that was burned in 1812 and a careful textological study of the extant manuscripts, that manuscript from the Kievan era consisted of five parts: the tale of the abduction of the Greek princess by Amir (the emir) of Arabia; the Life of Devgenii; His defeat of Filippapa and the Maid Maksimiana; his abduction of and marriage to the daughter of Stratig (Stratigos); and the story of his defeat of Tsar Vasilii (Basil). None of the surviving manuscripts contains all five parts. The translation given above was thus made from several of them. All this is cogently argued by V. D. Kuz'mina in her 1962 study *Devgenevo deianie: (Deianie prezhnikh vremen khrabrykh chelovek)*, Moscow and also by A. IA. Syrkin, *Poema o Digenise Akrite*, Moscow, 1960. The texts, in Old Russian, are published in Kuz'mina.