

**THE FALL OF
TSARDOM,
PP. 10-255**

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BY

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"RUSSIA AS IT REALLY IS"

"THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TSAR"



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EVELEIGH NASH

1905

heart of the nation, and the ghastly spectacle of a hundred and fifty millions of people who are forced to pay with their substance and with their blood for the follies of Tsardom.

Russia has never known the blessings of peace nor the triumphs of war since the days when Ivan III. broke up the republics and founded the bloody autocracy which has continued to the present day. Novgorod, Vyatka, Pskoff fell before him; then Lithuania and every state which enjoyed constitutional government were trampled under foot by Ivan or by his son Vasili. Ivan IV., known as "the Terrible," carried on ruthlessly the work of his ancestors. He was the first to assume the title of Tsar; and he handed down to posterity a worthy example which his descendants have often emulated but never excelled. From Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great, and from Peter the Great to Nicholas II., the work of internecine strife and the subjugation of neighbouring tribes has been carried on unceasingly. And as the Russian territory expanded under the influence of fire and sword, so did the untold miseries of the people increase. Territory conquered and annexed, a governor appointed by the Tsar, coercion, oppression, religious intolerance—so the good work has gone on from Ivan III. to Nicholas II.—from Novgorod to Blagovestchensk. The only change that marks the epoch is in the names of the all-powerful Tsars who have added new conquests for the glory of autocracy, new fetters for the thralldom of the people.

I hold that war is iniquity when it is waged for the gain of territory or for personal aggrandisement. If there be a cause which justifies war and the slaughter of nation by nation, it can be found only in the name of Liberty or Justice. That wars should be waged for the acquisition of the property of others is, to my mind, a black spot on the face of this fourth-rate planet. Let a nation be prepared and armed in defence of her liberties and justice, and when she strikes let her see to it that Liberty and Justice flourish wheresoever she plants her flag. And let it be her boast that though she stands prepared for war she is at peace within her own gates—that though she is ready to defend her sons, she will only draw the sword when Liberty and Justice demand it.

But what advantage have the people of Russia reaped from the wars which Tsardom has waged? Did the suppression of the Polish insurrection benefit either Russians or Poles? The lot of the people in Turkestan was by no means improved by Russian invasion. The war with Turkey brought no relief to the Christians in the dominions of the Sultan. The Armenians, Bulgarians, Roumanians and Serbians are in a worse plight than before the war. The Russian "civilising mission" in the Far East can hardly be held to have benefited the inhabitants of the country or the wretched immigrants scoured out from the poverty-stricken villages of Southern Russia and transported to the new territories.

The wars which the Tsars of Russia have waged

have brought neither Liberty nor Justice in their train, nor have they enriched the struggling masses of the people. But, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, they have been of the greatest benefit to members of the Imperial Russian family and to innumerable members of the bureaucracy—and that, of course, should be satisfaction enough for the poor moujiks who have to fight and to starve for the glory of Tsardom. In the days of Ivan, of Peter, of Nicholas I., it was enough for them. They were content to suffer, attributing all their misfortunes to a benign Providence, who punished them for their good. And so, for centuries and centuries, they endured with exceeding great patience and with simple faith in the "Little Father" all the ills which wars of conquest and wars of oppression brought upon them.

But to-day a change has come over the people of Russia. They have found out all at once that the man whom they called "The Little Father" is no divinity. The understanding which had hitherto existed, that all the joys of life emanated from the "God on Earth" and that their many afflictions were visited upon them by Providence for the good of their souls, has been rudely dispelled. To-day the true Russian says, *Moya nadejda—Bogh*, "My hope is in God," and there is no word about the "Little Father." His eyes have been opened and he is beginning to look at things in their true light and to think for himself. The ikon is shelved for the present, and he no longer crawls

on his knees begging from the myrmidons of his "Little Father" the right to live. That right has been denied him, and he knows now that it is the "God on Earth" who has forbidden him to fill his belly with the fruits of the earth or to endeavour to elevate his mind above the beasts of the field. He has convincing proof of it, and, in consequence, he has dethroned in his heart the earthly god, and has pronounced him *nesposcovnie*—"unfit." And the sentence having gone forth, no power on earth can reinstate the Tsar in the position which he once held in the minds of his people. He is unfit—and not all the prayers of Father John of Kronstadt nor of the Metropolitans of holy Russia can make him fit again.

There is no need to seek for the causes which have made such a change possible. For centuries the Tsars of Russia have been waging wars simply for the lust of territory and for the glory of Autocracy. The rulers of Russia have sown the wind, and they are now beginning to reap the whirlwind. Instead of setting in order the affairs of her own house Russia has been waging wars on all her frontiers—wars which have left her own people the worst sufferers. She has gained untold territory; but the gain was not for her people—only for Tsardom and Bureaucracy. Go out into the vast expanse of Asiatic Russia, and look upon the great forests of stately trees and the rich tracts of grain-bearing land. Ask the inhabitants to whom do the forests and the land belong, and in nearly every case the

answer will be—"To the Tsar." His sign is up, and all know that it is crown property, and that it is as well to keep off the grass. There is no benefit to the people in the conquest and annexation of these huge tracts of land; yet they must put on the Tsar's greatcoat, made of the commonest shoddy, and shoulder his rifle when they are told to, and march.

It has gone on until it can go on no longer. The useless war with Japan has opened the eyes of the people to the folly and iniquity of wars waged for such ends, and the result of their enlightenment is to be found in the present state of Russia, concerning which we glean scraps of information from our own press. But the newspapers have given us but a faint idea of what has lately taken place, and what is daily taking place in Russia. The British public knows that there are strikes on a gigantic scale throughout all the great industrial centres of the country. It knows that the peasants in the country districts are banding themselves together to pillage and destroy the property of the landed proprietors. It knows that Poland and the Caucasus are running with blood, and that murder and arson, famine and desolation, brood over all the land. But I doubt whether the British public realises that the instigators of these crimes are the officials of the Tsar himself. Hints to this effect have now and again appeared in the newspapers of this country, and, no doubt, the peaceful British man of affairs who reads them over his cup of coffee at the breakfast-table,

dismisses them from his mind with incredulity—unable to understand that such things can be in a country which poses as civilised and Christian. But, as a matter of fact, only a very small proportion of the crimes which are being engineered by the officials of the Tsar finds its way into the English newspapers. And even if the Russian correspondents of the British press were to send in full reports of the present state of affairs in the towns and villages of the empire of the Tsar, it is exceedingly improbable that the responsible editors would insert them in the columns of their papers. They know the public taste too well. The British reader is squeamish outside his own law-courts. So he is given his news from Russia in small quantities, diluted to suit his palate.

Autocracy in Russia thoroughly deserves the fate which is overtaking it, if for no other reason, because it has waged war upon its own people. Against a foreign foe Russia could not have fallen had she had peace in her own borders. She could have sent millions of men to the front, and if her army had suffered reverses, there would have been the united strength of the nation behind it to ward off disaster. But behind the beaten armies of the Tsar is open rebellion and red revolution. There is no spontaneous determination on the part of an united nation to rise and protect Tsardom—the tendency is all in the other direction. For the people of Russia have discovered that their "God on Earth" has feet of clay, and they have shattered the