

**RUSSIA AS  
I KNOW IT**

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Russia as I know it by Harry De Windt

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**HARRY DE WINDT**

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I KNOW IT**



# RUSSIA AS I KNOW IT

BY  
HARRY DE WINDT, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF  
"NIGERIA AS IT IS," "FINLAND AS IT IS," "THE NEW  
SIBERIA," "PARIS TO NEW YORK BY LAND," ETC.

*WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS*

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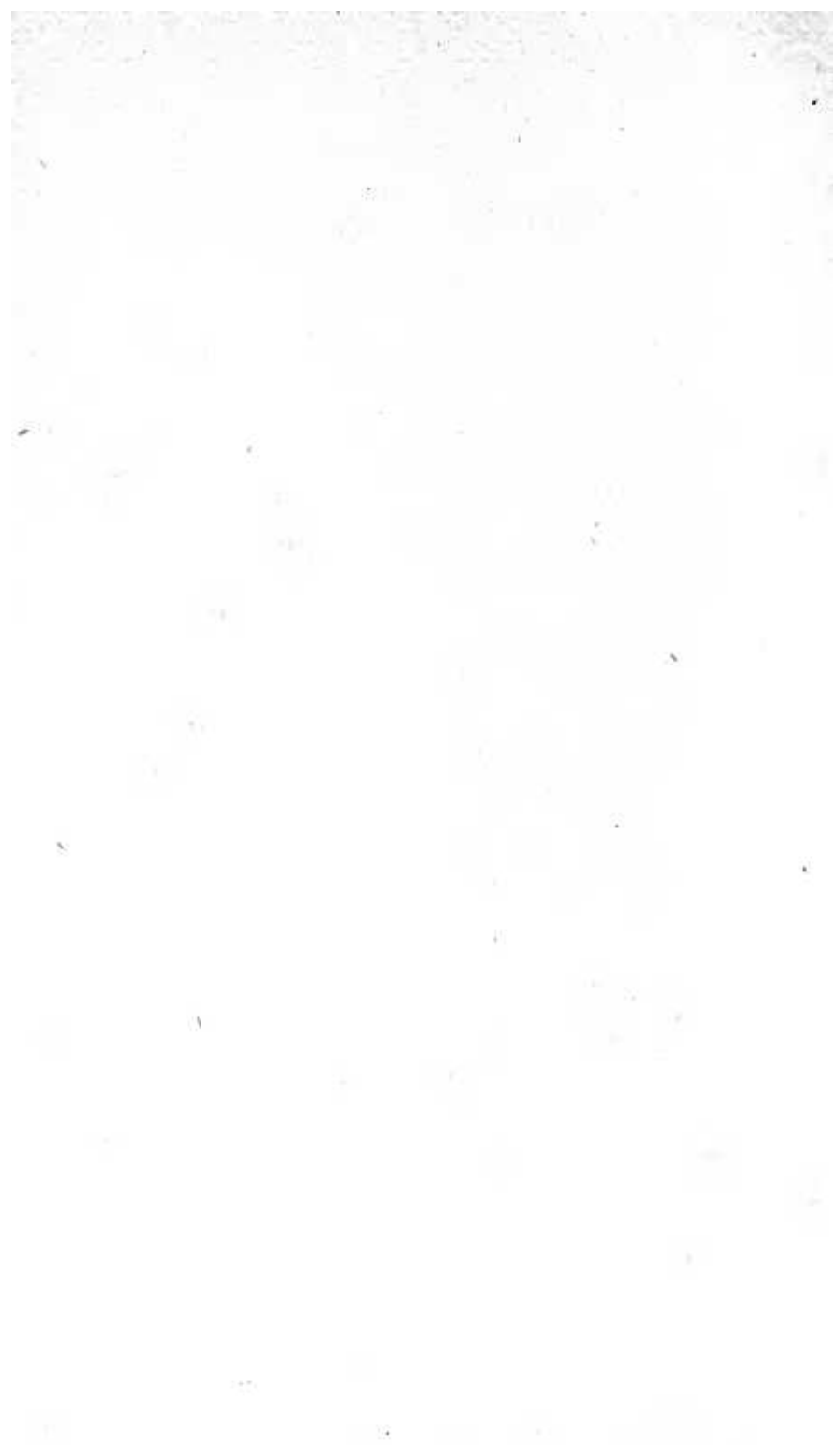
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TO  
MY FRIEND  
GERARD WARRINER

392186





## FOREWORD

THIS work is not to be regarded as an authority on political, military or social questions connected with that vast empire, which, to most Englishmen, is a sealed book, for it has been chiefly compiled from rough, and hitherto unpublished notes, casually jotted down during my travels throughout European and Asiatic Russia. These wanderings amount in the aggregate to over 50,000 miles, and I may therefore, perhaps, claim to speak with some authority on the conditions of life in a country where I have passed, with intervals, nearly four years of my life.

Thus, I have travelled, on various occasions, from Peking to Moscow (before the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway), from Petersburg to Bombay (via Little Russia, the Caucasus, Persia, and Baluchistan), and from Paris to New York "by land," which latter journey (hitherto unaccomplished) took me from Moscow to the Bering Straits. I have also (by special desire of the Imperial Government) twice visited Siberia in order to investigate its penal methods, these tours of inspection including the famous silver mines of Nertchinsk, and prisons on the island of Sakhalin. Previously to this, Mr. George Kennan, the American traveller, had horrified the civilized world with his account of the sufferings of Siberian exiles, and my journeys of inspection were undertaken with the sole object of verifying this gentleman's statements, which, however, I was unable to do, the result of my inquiries being as favourable as Mr. Kennan's were the reverse. I may add that my views on the Siberian Exile system have since been endorsed by English travellers of repute who have followed in my footsteps, although during my prolonged Press controversy with Mr. Kennan I was accused, by more than one English newspaper, of having received a large sum

of money from the Russian Government in order to "whitewash" its prisons! <sup>1</sup>

I shall now, however, deal chiefly with European Russia, without omitting those minor details of town and provincial life which, for obvious reasons, are not to be found in more serious works on the subject. Wherefore the average Englishman has, at present, the vaguest notions about everyday life in the Tsar's great empire, and this I frequently find when on returning therefrom, I am invariably asked: "What sort of a place is it?" and pestered with questions on subjects so trivial, that only one intimately acquainted with the country could furnish the desired information. My present object, therefore, is to present a bird's-eye view, so to speak, of the cities, towns, and villages of Russia, and to describe people of all classes, showing not only how they toil and take their pleasure, but also how the stranger may best conform to their occasionally curious manners and customs. For I anticipate that, when this war is over, thousands of my countrymen will visit Russia not only on business, but pleasure bent, and it is for their benefit that I shall now relate everyday experiences which, although they would be out of place in an ordinary book of travel, may prove useful to those in quest of a new playground. And if the information thus gleaned affords these tourists of the future any assistance in their wanderings through the most mysterious, and therefore most fascinating, country in Europe, *Russia as I know It* will not have been written in vain. It is necessary to state, however, that the earlier portions of this work were compiled before the recent political crisis.

In conclusion I must express my thanks to Sir George Newnes, Mr. John Murray, Messrs. Chapman & Hall, and Messrs. Nelson & Sons, for kindly permitting me to quote a few extracts from previous works of mine on Russia and Siberia which these firms have, from time to time, published.

HARRY DE WINDT.

*Garrick Club, London,  
April 1917.*

<sup>1</sup> See *Siberia as It is* and *The New Siberia*, by the author.

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