

**THE CONFESSIONS  
OF A LITTLE MAN  
DURING GREAT DAYS**

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The confessions of a little man during great days by Leonid Andreyev & R. S. Townsend

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**LEONID ANDREYEV & R. S. TOWNSEND**

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TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN OF

*LEONID ANDREIEV*

BY R. S. TOWNSEND



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# CONFESSIONS OF A LITTLE MAN DURING GREAT DAYS

## PART I

ST PETERSBURGH,

*28th August 1914.*

To speak with a clear conscience as one does at confession, even now I can't make out why I was in such a panic on that day. War is war, we all know; no one greets its coming with delight; still, it is a simple matter, when all is said and done; we have been through it before. The Japanese War is still fresh in our memories. At present, for example, when bloody battles are being fought, I have no sense of fear, and live as I always do. I go about my work, see my friends, indulge in a theatre or a picture-show, and were it not for my



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wife's brother, Pavel, being at the war, I could almost forget, on occasions, the terrible events that are happening.

Of course, I don't deny that there's a restlessness and anxiety at bottom. I can't exactly describe the sensation; it's a kind of gnawing despair that comes over one mostly in the morning at breakfast. You no sooner open your paper (I take in two besides *Kopeika*) than you are brought back to the horrors that are happening over there to those poor Belgians, to their houses and children, and you feel as though some one had poured cold water over you, and turned you out naked on a frosty winter's day. Still, this sensation has no relation to fear; it's merely a feeling of human pity for those in distress.

As I was saying, on that first day I was ridiculously frightened. It makes me blush to think of it. I need only mention

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that on the 2nd August I paid no less than *thirty roubles* for a miserable conveyance to take us from Shuvalov, where we had been staying, back to town, and in less than five days I was taking the whole of my family back again by train, and that we actually remained in the country until the 25th August in the most peaceful manner possible. What a state we were in, to be sure ! My wife, unkempt, unwashed, dazed and distraught, jolted along with the children in the cart, while I, the head of the family, marched in the road by their side, feeling as though doomsday were behind us and we must run, run without looking back, without stopping to take breath, not merely to St Petersburg, but to the very ends of the earth.

All the shops along the road were selling bread in abundance, and I had thrust some stupid crusts into my pocket in case

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of need. Prudence and foresight—under any circumstances!

The weather was glorious at the time, but we had no faith even in the weather. It seemed to us that it was bound to pour with rain, or that a sudden snow-storm would descend upon us although it was August, and we should perish on the way! How horribly we worried our driver!

Another disgraceful circumstance comes to my mind. I picked some blue little bell flower on the wayside and gave it to Lidotchka, my little girl, chaffing her a bit as I did so. It was a natural act, being fond of my children as I am, especially of Lidotchka, but it pains me to recall the thought that occurred to me at the time. I congratulated myself on not having lost my head like other people, since there I was picking flowers, joking and trying to