THE SHADOW OF THE GLOOMY EAST

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BY

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"BEASTS, MEN AND GODS," "MAN AND MYSTERY IN ASIA," ETC.

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INTRODUCTION

AS a Pole I was an alien in Russia, where I lived for many years, and I looked upon that huge country with all the detachment of an unprejudiced foreigner.

I knew Russia from her Western confines right to the Pacific and the Pamir, and I think I understand the psychology of the peoples of that vast, mysterious land, where modern civilisation of the West and the ideology of Mongolian nomads, the asceticism of orthodox Christianity and heathenism exist together in weird confusion to this very day. The Russian intelligentsia, spiritualised and rising to the loftiest idealism, has long ago cut adrift from the people; it could not understand the great mass and contemptuously disdained to notice its qualities, hostile and dangerous to mankind, which nevertheless remained.

Tolstoy has cast upon the ant-heap of the country a new idea, which to his mind defined the pith of his people.

He called the common people "the carriers of God," and considered that all the qualities, the fine as well

as the terrible, were the means of searching after God and His truth.

This formula appealed to the minds of the educated classes and inspired a highly poetic view of the common crowd.

When warning voices were raised against this abstract and most unreal idealism, when writers like Rodionov, Kuprin, Gorky, Chehov pointed this out with set purpose or incidentally, their warnings evoked only the indignant ire of dim-sighted dreamers.

Sober reality wrote with a blood-stained hand its verdict on the visions of the intelligentsia.

I hope that the same severe judge will not pass the same sentence on the Christian civilisation, which has been sapped by materialism, and is passing at present through its twilight of death or new birth, unable to rouse itself with new strength and impulse to loftier ideals. In face of the danger threatening from Russia these should be our strength and stay, for in them lies the only salvation from the peril coming up from the East, with its passion for evil and showing its true face since the mask—which deceived mankind for so long—is torn off.

My sketches of the "Shadow of the Gloomy East" are an attempt to lay bare before the civilised world the true face of the Russian people, which must be enlightened, converted to Christianity, to European culture, strengthened in true morality, and then, only

then, admitted as an equal to the great comity of nations which aims at perfection, spiritual beauty and strength.

PROF. DR. FERDINAND A. OSSENDOWSKI.

WARSAW,
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CHAPTER I

The Masks

THE civilised world knew Russia by those of her representatives who were deservedly admired and respected in Western Europe.

The spiritual, refined culture of the highly educated Russian class and aristocracy, the genuine idealistic impulse of Russian arts, the piety and asceticism of the higher clerical hierarchy, the general very high level of education and intelligence of the middle classes, the profound learning of the most prominent scientists, the true heroism and high courage of military officers in the most aristocratic of Russian units, the æsthetic life and thought of the nobility—all these were eloquent witnesses soliciting the sympathies of the world for the Russian nation.

Why, the favourite subjects of the lofty and rapturous orations of the Russian intelligentsia which captured the ears of Europe were freedom and self-government for the oppressed peoples of Russia,

emancipation of women, the education of the masses of the common people, and called forth the enthusiasm of even the most critical political thinkers and philosophers acquainted with Western culture.

But these superficial declamations were but a passing fashion of good breeding, scenery, masks, underneath which lay a mean reality.

Unaware of the liberating forces which gathered strength within the masses, unconscious of the importance and power of the protesting classes, the aristocracy and the higher plutocracy, and alas! the higher middle classes were thronging the Imperial Court as of old, hunting for favours, honours, positions, basking in the sunshine of the Imperial presence.

This lustre, like the radiance of the sun, blinded the vision of those who should have been the strength and stay of Russian society to the seething movement, to the threatening murmur of the human ant-heap down there, in the dark hovels of the "common brute."

And at the time when the whole of Europe knew that a very decisive and dangerous moment in the history of Russia was approaching, the aristocrats and their set were forming the "black hundreds," dragging in the university youth, throwing them together with the scum of the large towns, filling them with reactionary political views, which led to every crime. The picked regiments of the Guards were murdering the helpless populations of Warsaw, Petersburg, and Moscow; and delicately manicured hands of aristocrats: the Golit-

sins, the Krapotkins, the Wyrubovas, the Ortov-Davidovs, the Shirinski-Shihmotovs, were counting out gold into the unwashen hands of a motley gang of ruffians—for the provocation of pogroms, for the commissions of the murders of a Yottos, a Herzenstein, a Goldstein, Stolypin, and others.

At the time when Europe was listening in rapture to the anthems on freedom, equality, and brotherhood, or to the enthralling mystical preachings of the Russians abroad, the very visitors and preachers had taken or were taking a hand in the greedy, tyrannous and iniquitous measures of their Government.

The war with Japan, the aggressive policy towards Finland, the harsh and overbearing attitude towards Poland, the policy in the Caucasus and the Ukraine, the persecution of Catholicism, the wrecking of popular education, opposition to all efforts of the more clear-sighted politicians, who counselled certain conciliatory offers to the Socialist groups as well as to the protests of educated men—such was the policy of what is now the ancient regime. At the same time the aristocracy, servile towards the Tsar, and cultivating truly byzantine forms of adulation, was debased and descending into ever lower depths and separated itself from the other classes of Russian society.

Descendants of the Ruriks kissed—for the Tsaritsa's gracious smile sake—the hands of the horse-thief, Grishka Rasputin, "the court saint" of the Palace of Tsarskoye Selo.

The crawling servility of the great nobles before the face of the Siberian peasant availed them little; they, the "salt of the Russian earth," were treated as so much chaff and trash!

A Prince Putiatin acted as the "court prospector" of candidates to canonisation, of miracles and sacred relics. Why, after the canonisation of Serafim Sadovski, he proposed to the Tsar and to the Tsaritsa six more newly discovered saints! It was only the great costs which drew from the Tsar the impatient exclamation: "It is our pleasure that there shall be no more saints after Serafim!"

The aristocrats were amusing themselves while serving at Court, unconscious of the tragic events that were about to be enacted and of the accounts to be settled. Outside the Court the representatives of the highest families lived their picturesque, sparkling, profligate life. True, there was no need to cringe before an evil-smelling peasant or other fortune-tellers, prophetesses and charmers, who were permanent guests at the Court of the Romanovs. They kept their "odd Thursdays," "secret Mondays," in dainty palaces, garçonières, or in the recesses of Villa Rodé, whose owner, M. Alfred Rodé, made the most exquisite preparations and watched over the proceedings of his guests with the mysterious smile of the Sphinx.

He is the man to write the secret history of the last year of the Romanov dynasty and of the fall of the

Russian aristocracy. He exercised a strange, silent influence on the set of the Court of Tsarskoye, for he knew how to make use of Rasputin, who was a standing client of the Villa, and Rodé himself was seated in the cabinet of his restaurant at the side of the Grand Duke Dimitri, Count F. Sumarokov-Elston and M. Purishkevich, when the assassination of the spiritual director of the Court was planned.

Now that is all gone! It would require the exuberant imagination of a French novelist to describe what the mirrored walls have seen at Cuba's, Medved's, Constant's, Donon's, Pivato's! To relate the scenes enacted in the luxurious apartments of the high-class dressmakers, milliners or corsetières, and count up the names of the titles and honours of the grandees. It would be instructive to learn how much the Imperial police was glad to restrain the Press and the Courts from interfering with those pastimes and frolics.

A whole series of marriages contracted by great nobles shows to what this society had come to, and into the oldest families descended from the Romanovs, the Ruriks, and Shuyskis, there entered gipsy-girls, variety stars, ballet dancers, and common prostitutes.

And all the while the "striving brute," who had been for years straining at his chains and waiting for the hour to strike, saw all and weighed the forces of his opponent and master against his own.

They that were above him heeded not the warning

voices; in the midst of their orgies they gave no thought to the morrow, to the necessity of pulling themselves together and taking measures of protection against the coming storm.

For the coroneted ladies and gentlemen with their friends of the plutocracy and higher bureaucracy were engaged in shadowy drawing-rooms and perfumed boudoirs, "searching" the secrets of spiritism, occultism, buddhism, or mysticism. A multitude of doubtful personalities flitted phantomlike through these cushioned recesses as media, occult practitioners, brahmins, yogas, epileptics, hysteromaniacs, hallucinating visionaries, prophets; some were on the list of the German secret service, or agents of the police, the "Okhrana," or had "letters of introduction" to Rasputin.

Thus Spake Zarathustra was their favourite book. Nietzsche's bombastic, cynically immoral and frenzied phrases were always on their lips, and it seemed as though this Slav renegade had written to the order of the Prussian King a book full of moral poison, which could have its full effect only on a Muscovite. This seemed a moral poison gas invented especially for the benefit of the Russians, considerably in advance of the material products discovered by Dr. Luther and other Teutonic chemists.

The "ivory-white bones" of Russian aristocracy, kept alive by the "blue blood," insensitive to the change in the political atmosphere, were dancing their last waltz upon the edge of the gaping grave.

And the dance was mad and gay, nor could piles of glossy carpets deaden the stamping of whirling feet. The lawsuit of Wonlarlarski, the "noblest Roman of them all," closely allied with the best blood of Russia, startled public opinion. The Seigneur, but yesterday intimately received at Tsarskoye Selo, was proved to have forged Prince Oginski's will. The owner of immense concessions in Kamtchatka seemed to have been occupied in defrauding the savage inhabitants and in stifling their complaints. "A scandal!" people whispered. But when the Press learned that the civilising activities of the great landowners in Kamtchatka had caused the deaths of hundreds of native families and wild hounds were devouring their corpses in the desolate "chumas," people exclaimed "It's a crime!" But their only fear was lest the scandal should not be hushed up.

The Commissioner of Police, von Waal, the Minister of Justice, Shcheglovitov, and the Governor of Kamtchatka were acquainted with the facts; indeed, the last-named official was suspended.

But a few cheques drawn, a few dull echoes in the press which died away, and silence reigned supreme—the lull before the storm.

The Japanese War, which ended in Russia's defeat, in the awakening of Asia and in the dishonour of the Imperial throne, was really but an episode in the "dancing high-life" of the Courtmaster of the chase, M. Bezobrazov, who, in connection with German

diplomatists and bankers, had been arranging for timber concessions in the valley of the Yalu, on the Korean-Chinese border.

Japan and China took offence, and the results were the fall of Port Arthur, the defeats of Wafangou, Mukden, Laoyan, and ultimately the sinister tragedy of Tsushima.

Bezobrazov's enterprise had enjoyed the gracious financial and moral support of the Romanov family!

Count Witte could say: "I have built a railway round Asia, I have conquered China by peaceful means and opposed Japan; whilst they have lost China and are defeated in the eyes of the Asiatics for ever, even before cutting down a single tree."

Such was the deep-rooted corruption and depravity of the higher Russian classes. And the bureaucracy followed in their footsteps.

It was as if a malignant and venomous parasite had chosen for its nest the huge body of the people of 140 millions, sinking ever lower its deadly roots.

Its influence made itself felt in the political thought of the nation. This power was not connected with the nation at large by any common link. Neither comprehending the purport and the gloomy soul of Russia, nor on the other hand being understood itself, it descended like an octopus to the darkest depths in order to form and fashion the lowest instincts. Upon such a background of political aspirations was it possible for such sinister figures to appear as the priest Gapon, the

provocator Azev, the Member of Parliament and police-spy Malinovsky, Rasputin, the Bishop Pimen, the monk Heliodor, and a whole gang of native and foreign adventurers and pirates of words and thoughts. It was with their help that bureaucracy, in a presentiment of the approaching Day of Judgment, tried to reach the core of national life, to gauge the dimensions of the threatening danger, to capture the foes and to compel the mind of the nation to enter the old kennel of dog-like servility towards the official, the priest, the lord, and the Tsar. None thought of the necessity of directing the awaking popular sense towards the firm ground of nationhood. And if even such men arose, like the authors of the October 17 1905 manifesto, Count Sergius Witte, or the Prime Minister, P. A. Stolypin, they had to meet conspiracies and engage in a life and death struggle for their very existence.

The war, then, had to be fought upon two fronts: against the awakening masses of the nation which were drifting ever nearer towards the revolutionary camp and against those of their own kind, who in their sagacious efforts at the progress of civilisation, desired the State to seize upon the thoughts and energies of the rising nation and to turn them to good account.

On both the fronts the self-same weapon was used, the most dastardly of all—*provocation*—the practice of conjuring up disturbances during which leaders and participants could be seized. Of those arrested the most depraved were seduced into the service of the

political police; they became the willing tools to spread demoralisation and disorder in the revolutionary ranks, and they served thus the purpose of the parasites.

The revolution of 1905, that uprising of the Russian intelligentsia, was choked in blood in the Court Square in Petrograd, and in the so-called "express courts" in the provinces, through the paid agents of the Minister Durnovo, Generals Kurlov and Trepov, who had been drawn from the ranks of the revolutionaries.

The priest Gapon, worshipped by the workmen, led to death in front of the Imperial Palace masses of his comrades, and then hid behind the walls of the political police till he received the money for a journey abroad.

The agent-provocator Ivanov first incited the Siberian social-democrats to armed risings of protest against General Rennenkampf, then denounced the more prominent leaders and took a leading part in hunting them down and dragging them to execution.

Through the revelations of the publicist Burtsev, and the ex-director of the III. Department of the Ministry of the Interior, Lopuchin, the responsible leaders of the social-democratic and revolutionary parties were one after the other proved to be paid agents of the Government and at the same time in touch with the most secret revolutionary councils.

These are but a few instances which illustrate the very peculiar methods of aristocratic and official Russia.

CHAPTER II

The Face Laid Bare

THAT great master, Leo Tolstoy, during the period of his life when he was perfectly frank and candid, described with ruthless sincerity the weird twilight which broods over the peasant soul, although at a later epoch he devoted himself to search and to find the rejuvenating and ennobling elements that lie in the depths of the mind.

Savage, brutish instincts, primitive passion and hatred, a hand ready to murder, the love-seeking dusk reminiscent of the murkiness of the low, smoke-filled cottages, silent, ill-boding hatred resembling the combat of two enraged stags in misty dawn upon a marsh dotted with tufts of brown-black, rank grass cut down by winds and frosts. When betimes the conscience, the almost listless conscience, of that savage stirs, and begins to give utterance to words that whip and scourge of an almost pagan mysticism, then, in his frenzy of self-mortification, that savage man is ready of his own free will to submit to every martyrdom that shall purge with the torment of the sinful body the mire and dirt deposited upon his soul.

Tolstoy was the first of Russian novelists to give

currency to the definition of the Russian nation as one "carrying God in its soul"—"the carrier of God" (Bogonosiets). Is this definition apposite? It would be useless to discuss this question. If we admit this truth, we have to acknowledge that the Deity which abides in the soul of the Russian people is neither Yahove nor the Christian God, but only the idol of some primitive deistic thought, made of clay, wood, and stone, some Perkunas or Moloch.

Still another great writer, Theodor Dostoyevski, the anatomist of the Russian soul, endeavoured to approach the true Divinity abiding in the Russian soul by every possible metaphysical quibble, but succeeded in putting before us the Karamasovs—father and sons—and Smierdyakov, and sundry "devils," including Raskolnikov, in whose souls a European psychologist can in no wise discern his God. He will behold there the sinister, contorted features of the gods of primeval pagans, nomadic Shaman-images, and only sometimes he feels himself in the presence of a sectarian God, in whose name men killed and burned others and themselves. This divinity has been worshipped for the last three hundred years secretly in the forests of the North and Kama within ancient "Skitas" (chapels) made of cedar or larch trees, by the priests of the "old Faith," which was suppressed by the "first Antichrist," Tsar Peter I, and later by the "General of the Knights of Malta," Tsar Paul I, who himself met with a violent death.

Thus, while in the country we behold primitive men and primeval passions, the instincts of the original "homo sapiens," turned nomad and pagan, according to whose views crimes are not sins, we are being shown quite a different picture, perhaps even more dangerous from a psychological point of view, by the poet of barefeeters and revolutionary workmen in the towns —Gorky.

When he saw that the types of heroes, represented for instance in the novel *Mother*, were not exactly attractive in their nudity, he tried to adorn them with the mantle of respect for old age, of filial love, of fidelity to ideals; but then his figures became wooden, astonishingly like marionettes of a pantomime, like vociferous provincial actors. Nobody could believe that these worthies ever lived.

But when those heroes dream of "the naked man upon the naked earth," when they want to throw one massive, collective bomb of revenge into the human ant-heap—their words burn with true force.

Let us consider the facts. There came the October revolution, that triumph of the illiterate, the day of the "approaching brute," of the Russian "Apocalyptic monster." What were Gorky's heroes doing? Why, they robbed and destroyed the workshops of their own labour and the property of the whole nation, condemning all to misery and to degrading independence on other nations. They have killed off or driven off the brains of industry—the technicians and capitalists, the

organisers; they took over the management of mine and factory, reducing them within three years to a state of utter bankruptcy; they were giving away millions of national money to a multitude of swindlers or jesters for the setting up of factories for the manufacture of bread from sawdust, sugar from straw, soap from turf, etc.; they were the men who, during the Soviet rule, took a bloody revenge, annihilated morality and faith, introduced inquisitorial tortures, and welcomed the unknown author of the imaginary decrees on the "nationalisation of women" and on the "Free-love Sunday" with a roar of applause.

If Gorky walks on stilts when describing characters equipped with general human psychological traits, his talent blazes up with magnificent fire when the heroes are types from *Malvina* or *The Barefeeters* . . . barefeeted . . . bare in the direct meaning of the word and transferred in their attitude to society and nationhood. The barefeeters are the outcasts of society not because they are criminals, terrorists, or anarchists. No! they are neither petty pickpockets nor slothful parasites produced as well by the town as by the village. What is there terrible in them? Such types fill at best the nightshelters, at worst prisons. We know them from the works of Chehov. Some of them are drunken dreamers, generally harmless, though sometimes given to smash windows or the faces of those with whom they disagree; others are suicidal dreamers, who brood over the unhealthy passages of their lives

with souls and brains corroded with a hereditary wild desire for disorder, who curse everything and everybody, see darkness in the rays of the sun and the abyss opening under their feet, as they stand upon the paved courtyard of their wretched, lonely, dull cottages. Such degraded souls differ from the whimpering souls of Chehov's heroes inasmuch as their masters are "barefooted."

What then is there terrible in these specific types of the Russian proletariat? Nothing at all; they are rather tragi-comic, pitiful, or at the utmost deserving of the attention of the policeman, of the social welfare worker or the doctor.

And, nevertheless . . . a perusal of the thoughts and imagination of the barefeeters fills the heart of a cultured reader with terror. There is an absolute self-erasement from the ranks of socially conscious human beings! There is a complete amorality, an utter lack of organs for the reception of intuitions and ideas, even of that primitive morality which arrived probably at the moment when two cavemen, resolving upon their troth, took their females with them, founded a family dwelling and began to live as neighbours, whilst searching step by step somewhere in the folds of their undeveloped brains manifold, yet simple, principles of ethics, which have outlived ages, centuries, and civilisations, and endured unto our own days.

There is a hatred and disdain of morality, law, and the principles consecrated by Christianity or the history

of nations, expressed in every word, in every deed of such individuals, as seem to be bred only among the Russian people.

And with all that, Russian critics, some of them very serious and exacting, have with timid servility bowed their heads before Gorky's "barefooters" and Skitalec's "stumps" (ogarki = degraded youths).

Deliverance of thought! Unbridled nature! A protest against the bourgeois! were the watchwords of the various admiring critics. Yes, the bold words of those microcephalians of thought, feeling, and morality were admired, as well as the actions of shamelessly naked men.

Until the "barefooter" seized power, lolled in the chair of the President of the Cheka and exclaimed with the jovial voice of a drunkard:

"Let's make the earth bare and bare the man upon it!"

And it was so. The earth became bare, and upon it were ghastly pools of blood and brains beaten out from the intelligent skulls of those who but a short time before had been enraptured by the comrades of the many-coloured *Malvina,* and the drunken idlers who in the years 1901–1906 had so greatly impressed the Russian youth. Gorky desired to point out the existence of those whom Russian ethnography has somehow not yet discovered, who formed "a state within the state," a number of egotistic and irresponsible groups of men in the loosely-cemented Russian society. But Gorky,

knowing so well the turbid side of his anarchic people, solicits unintentionally our sympathy for those who shed the blood of the unhappy, hated bourgeoisie.

His genius succeeded in convincing Russia of the amiability of these cavemen of Odessa and of the motley crowd which thronged the public-houses of the ports. According to him they were the "eagle's breed" whom the bourgeois reptile crawling on the ground tried to imitate with awkward clumsiness.

Thus it came that all of a sudden, like the hawk upon a flight of sparrows, the "barefooters" fell upon the Russian society—drew the knife concealed in their bosom and started the slaughter for . . . there was then no policeman and no prison bar.

"How many were there in all Russia?" asks the curious reader—"one thousand, one hundred thousand, or a million?"

There is an answer to this question. The main support of the Soviets are eight provinces situated round Moscow. Thirty million peasants, for a long time deprived of land, of every tie with their native village, enjoying the "famous" freedom of wandering from factory to factory, from mine to mine, from port to port, from prison to prison. . . .

They defeated the Soviets, created the Third International, formed the leading Russian Communist Party, and crushed Kornilov, Denikin, Kolchak—the last supporters of statehood in Russia.

They were the "barefooters" living from hand to

mouth like lords, feeding on the offal that fell from the table of the Russian society and State.

Far truer is the word of another Russian writer, Rodionov, who found their origin and fatherland in the village.

Rodionov wrote a number of articles and novels, of which the most instructive is *Our Crime*.

It is not even a novel, but rather a police record of village crimes: drunkenness, profligacy, unpunished murder, theft, ruin of family, disregard of authority, extinction of national consciousness—an inferno too loathsome to describe.

If we read Rodionov's revelations, we are reluctantly obliged to admit that the Russian village, to which Tolstoy looked for the rejuvenation and renascence of the nation, is not much better than a foul quagmire.

CHAPTER III

The Shadows of the Village

THE Russian village was celebrated in song by the greatest masters of the pen. But were Russia's writers ignorant of their country's village, or have they idealised it, perceiving in its shadows something they desired to see and which was not there, could not be there?

Let us cast a glance on the Russian village, no matter where it is situated, whether near a great city or in a virgin forest, somewhere north of Vologda or on the shores of the Kama. Obviously, the farther from civilisation, the clearer appear its most significant characteristics.

I know well the hamlets and the villages of the provinces of Petrograd, Olonetz, Novgorod, Pskov, as well as the Siberian villages and settlements.

The chief place in these hurriedly patched-up cottages of thatched roofs and rough log walls is occupied by the House of God—an Orthodox church or chapel; sometimes, near by, in a deserted cottage is the village school, indefinitely attended by the children of peasants. There is a priest, there is a school-teacher, of

whom the former seems chiefly occupied with getting contributions from the peasants, the latter with revolutionary propaganda; both add drinking to their daily work.

In close neighbourhood with these leaders of religion and education, near by in some similar room live the wizards, sorcerers, and hags . . . they are the survival of primordial paganism. Their traditional school has been preserved, and their prescriptions, having lived through centuries, are handed down from generation to generation.

The sorcerers are generally old people who possess the secret science of curing men and animals of diseases, of appeasing the house demon whenever he gets into too great a fury, of stanching blood, freeing insect-infested houses of vermin, cleaning the vapour baths—standing outside the village—of devils, who chose them as their abode, haunting people; of tracking horse thieves; of invoking the souls of the dead; of foretelling the future; of discovering treasures hidden underground and similar black arts. In reality the wizard or the witch has a good knowledge of botany, and through the dark pages of the history of the Russian village runs a sinister trait of the crimes of poisoning.

I will describe some of the wizard practices from my own experience.

In the province of Petrograd, near the station of Weymarn, there is a village called Manuilov. There some ten years ago lived a man called Sokolov, with

his numerous family. It was a typical peasant household in a suburban village. The daughter, Helena, served for some time as a maid in the town of Yamburg, but was caught stealing and was sent away. Then she drifted to Petrograd, and being without occupation became a prostitute. Sokolov's two sons were factory hands, but not relishing work, they fell into evil ways and ended by committing murder, whereupon one of them was sent to prison for four years, the other to Siberia. The latter, on his return from exile, became the leader of a band of robbers who for a long time terrorised the neighboring highways, sharing their spoils with the local police. The head of this worthy family enjoyed great fame as a wizard; his reputation was well established over a whole countryside embracing several districts. He was particularly popular on account of his medical practice.

I used to come often to Manuilov, invited to shooting parties by the owner of a local estate, Mr. Pavlovich.

I remember once a number of patients having been brought to Manuilov from the Gdov district, amongst whom were lepers, some sick of typhus and venereous diseases. Then began the cure. The leper was put into a cask, half full of hot water, and covered hermetically with many clouts. Into this the sorcerer threw herbs, muttering incantations in which the words "nostradamus" and "shugana" occurred most frequently. Then he proceeded to fumigate the cask

with the smoke of burnt grass and herbs, drawing upon it with pitch some complicated signs.

After an hour the diseased, who had become unconscious, was taken out of the cask; he was red like a boiled lobster; his eyes had a vacant stare. The wounds upon his lips, nose, and arms seemed to be even more horrible than they had been before. While the patient was recovering from his swoon, Sokolov made him drink a large glass of water taken from the cask in which he had spent an hour, and then took his head into both his hands, looked for a long time into his eyes, and said with a grave and commanding voice:

"Go! go away, shugana, chygana of disease! The Black One wants it! The Black One commands you! Go! Go away!"

I do not know if this cure benefited the leper, but I heard that the Government was obliged to establish a hospital owing to the rapid spread of leprosy in the districts of Yamburg and Gdov.

The same Sokolov treated the typhus patients in an equally original manner. The sick, raving with fever, shivering with alternate heat and cold, was first laid down upon the snow for a few minutes, then wrapped into new raw linen and tied up with a strong cord.

He was then fed forcibly with hot, soft, black bread mixed with the powder of dried and pulverised bugs, and on his belly one after another thirteen bricks, covered with secret signs and warmed to a considerable temperature, were laid amidst mysterious incantations.

It was said that this treatment usually effected a speedy cure; in the particular case I witnessed, however, one of the sick died of peritonitis, and a member of the Petrograd Academy of Medicine, Dr. Abramychev, who happened to be one of the shooting party, brought Sokolov before the Court.

But the protocol which was taken down on the spot was lost in the offices of the country police, who, as it transpired, frequently availed themselves of the "advice" of the wizard.

The venereous patients were put for three to five days into a heap of horse-dung freshly brought out from the stables. Into that heap he planted seven little sticks of various lengths with rags attached to each, bearing certain signs and unintelligible words, such as "prys," "tachny," "habdyk."

Cattle are usually cured by being fumigated with smoke of burning grass, mixed with ashes of burnt hair, dried frogs or bats; animal wounds are treated with the molten fat of the badger or rat. All this is enacted to the accompaniment of incomprehensible words or phrases, sometimes muttered or shouted aloud.

In the province of Pskov, in the district of Ostrov, I witnessed the treatment of a strange disease which had broken out among horses and women. The tails and manes of horses as well as the tresses of women became sometimes so entangled that it was impossible to comb them out in any way. Medical science knows

that this symptom follows the infection with a peculiar serous bacillus and that the disease occurs in marshy localities. The wizard, however, diagnosed it differently in his own way. He gave it out that the "house demon at nightfall plaits the women's tresses and the horses' manes, twisting and jumbling them because he was angry." To placate the demon a sacrifice must be offered.

A forsaken cottage is chosen and the stove is lit, behind which are put rags and old fur coats so as to make it a comfortable place for the demon, who likes to lie softly.

Then, with the blood of a black cock, a circle is drawn upon the floor, and inside the circle is put milk, honey, barley gruel and salt—a feast for the demon.

This done, before the clock strikes midnight, a young girl with her hair down and her hands tied up is introduced into the heated and sultry room. The demon must devote his time to the victim's hair in the meantime and leave all the others alone. According to the belief of the villager, the demon is appeased; but frequently the poor girl becomes hysterical or goes mad with fright and horror. By way of compensation she is highly esteemed throughout the neighbourhood as one who "has seen the demon" and feasted with him and has been treated by her uncanny host with brandy, a bottle of which was placed beside her.

The wizards practise even in large cities, in Petrograd, Moscow, Odessa, Kiev, and Charkov. It is true

that their clients belong as a rule to the poor and humble classes, but sometimes quite unexpectedly they appear even in the palaces of the rich.

I remember a case that happened in 1897, when I was coaching the children of a high official who lived in the beautiful palace of Prince Leuchtenberg, a relative of the Imperial family. One day my pupil came to me saying that the kitchen and the dining-room had become infested with bugs to such an extent that a "wizard" was called in to drive them out. We went to see the performance.

The wizard, a little, rugged old man, had just caught a bug; he examined it carefully, lifted it close to his lips and began to whisper something to the insect, repeating frequently the word "ygh."

He next drew a piece of chalk out of his pocket, wrote a sign upon its back, and let it go free.

The bug immediately disappeared in a chink of the dresser, the man received his rouble and went home. Next day, as my pupil told me, the cook protested on oath to having seen with her own eyes how the marked bug went round from one hole to the other, collected all his fellows into a big party, and marched them out of the palace.

"Did they take their luggage and forage with them?" I asked the boy.

He laughed and said:

"We shall ask the cook about it . . . yes, we must ask her—she's seen it."

Going through Siberia in 1920, I happened to stay a night in a village. I was fatigued with long riding and covered with dust from head to foot, and I accepted eagerly my host's proposal to have a vapour bath.

"I say," said the host to his wife, "don't let our guest go to the bath by himself. Send the boy for Maxim, that he may accompany him."

"But I shall be able to manage without assistance," I protested vigorously.

"No, sir, it can't be. Something evil may happen to you if you go without our wizard," gravely said mine host.

"But why?" I asked in stupefaction.

"Well, you see, sir, the devils have chosen our vapour bath as their dwelling-place and frighten people," explained the peasant in his slow way. "The other day they threw an old woman off the bench—she fell into the boiler and was scalded to death."

I was not allowed to go all alone, but had to wait till Maxim came, a giant with a veritable mane of tousled grey hair and the white beard of a patriarch.

When we approached the tiny bath-shed standing at the other end of the kitchen garden, Maxim halted and exclaimed:

"Fiend, satan, black devil, small or large, angry or merry, it's I, it's I!"

We entered.

The bath was hot, sultry, close with the exhalation

of charcoal. We lighted the fire under the pot, whereupon out of the darkness I saw projecting the dim shapes of various objects. The immense mass of a Russian stove, two rough benches, tubs with hot and cold water, a heap of stones, black and glowing, which served for creating vapour by having water poured over them.

The faint, flickering flame of the fire was playing restlessly upon the floor, the walls, the ceiling, lighting up sometimes the bubbling surface of the water in the tubs.

After a long while Maxim stripped off his clothes, picked up a little broom made of dry grass, dipped it in hot water, and seated himself in the darkest corner of the room. He commenced a conversation with someone invisible, intermingling his speech with interjections: "A kysh! A kysh!" and beating lightly with his little broom as if striking at somebody.

The corner was of course crowded with black and grey and sometimes transparent creatures. It was to them that the old wizard was talking; he was whipping them gently; he would not see or understand that they were nothing but the fleeting shadows of the flickering light which darted about, flashing and vanishing away.

"Now they won't come!" said the old man at last in a tone of thorough conviction.

Of course they did not come and I had an excellent bath.

The passion for horse-stealing is characteristic of

the Russian nation. It is undoubtedly an atavistic remnant inheritant from their forefathers, the Mongol nomads and Finnish pagans. Even the criminal law was of very doubtful application in the Russian Courts in cases of horse-stealing. This is an interesting racial peculiarity. All nomads, even the God-fearing, honest Mongols of Khalcki are accomplished horse-lifters. Galloping off with your neighbours' cattle is in their eyes a chivalrous adventure, a proof of courage and skill, for on such an expedition the galloper is thrown on his own resources, whilst he is laying himself open to serious penalties.

The Mongolian prairie law, transplanted into the plains of the Volga like that of Red Indians, lays down clearly enough that horse-theft is a great felony, but the law is honored in the breach rather than in the observance, and allows the wronged to get his horse back any way he can and to punish the thief at will.

The culprit, if caught, is cruelly lynched, and the State Court winks benevolently at the execution of the unwritten law.

The Russian peasant, if he was unable to track the thief, would consult a wizard, who had made this his special department. The latter, having listened to the tale of theft, advised the owner to come again during night-time and to bring the bridle of the horse, some dung from the stables, and a bushel of oats.

I witnessed such a performance in the district of Walday, in the province of Novgorod.

We called at about ten in the evening with the injured peasant on the sorcerer. We knocked at the door. He told the peasant to throw a handful of oats in each of the four corners of the cottage and to strike with the bridle at the single window in the easterly wall. This done, the window was lighted and we were allowed to enter.

The small, low room was hot and close. By the stove there was burning a piece of resinous wood which had been thrust into a cleft in the cracked stones and emitted a cloud of smoke. In the purple shine of the fire I beheld bridles hanging down from the ceiling, horsetails and skins, tufts of grass and herbs and little bags blackened with smoke.

In front of the stove sat a little grey-haired man with conspiciously squinting eyes, open-mouthed, showing two rows of black teeth, and wearing a look of inquisitive fear.

He took the bridle, examined it carefully, smelled it, tried its hardness with his teeth, and then all of a sudden he burst into a terrific yell:

"The horse was led away . . . driven far away . . . very far . . . it's a good horse . . . all foaming . . . neighing . . . breaking away for home. . . . Tum . . . here's good oats for you . . . ta . . . ta . . . ta . . . little horse . . . come . . . come here!"

During the invocation he cast upon the coals handfuls of oats, gazing intently into the leaping tongues of fire.

He jumped up, tore from the ceiling a bundle of grass and threw it on the coals. . . . The dry stalks and leaves twisted, stretched like snakes and burst into flame. Next the old man threw into the stove horse-dung, and as the smoke rose up, he bent over the coals and said in a whisper:

"The horse . . . the horse. . . . A broad road . . . a highway . . . three cottages . . . a burnt fir-tree . . . a meadow with a blackened haystack. . . . A tall lean man leads a horse . . . a shaven head, a scar upon his forehead, and he limps."

"I know him! I know him!" shouted the peasant. "It's Kuzma! The gipsy from Neshetilov. He won't escape me this time!"

With these words he rushed out of the room. I went home, and a few days afterwards I learned that the peasant, with the assistance of his two sons and his son-in-law, surprised the gipsy, bound him to his own horse and dragged him back into the village.

Here the crowd set on him, beat him, bruised his legs and arms, tore his hair, ordering him to say at once where the horse was hidden. The poor fellow swore by all the saints that he had not seen the horse, that he knew nothing about it, but the crowd would not believe him. Like mad, they beat him again, trampled upon him, until one of the frenzied lynchers finally finished him with a pitchfork.

The body was buried in a waste field, and a pale planted on the grave by way of memorial.

This is the emblem of the ancient law of the Golden Horde, which ordains that the captured horse-thief should be impaled. Such an execution, however, requiring too many preparations, it is easier for the crowd to beat the culprit to death, and afterwards to impale the dead body within its grave.

The demon-worship or shamanism is quite comprehensible in the vast desert of the North, where Nature unlooses a veritable inferno of multifarious and terrifying voices; where the hurricanes, blowing from the Arctic Ocean, claim death; where the quagmires breathe plague, emit pestilence; where savage men and beasts run wild, carrying death in their despondent, hunger-glowing eyes; where the earth and the air are overcloyed with the blood, the groans, and the curses of those whom the Tsars and their intelligent bureaucracy cast into the bottomless pit of solitary torture and death, solely because they strove for freedom, giving them the freedom of the boundless desert of snow in which, like stones in the depths of an unfathomable sea, were lost without trail hundreds and thousands of tombs of martyrs!

In those God-forsaken regions shamanism appears a natural phenomenon amongst the savage tribes of nomads.

Still, even in Russia proper, even near the capital, its existence is revealed.

I knew two instances.

I was a student at that time spending my holidays

with a doctor, a friend of mine, in the Kola peninsula. We were travelling in the province of Olonetz, and before reaching the town of Petrozavodsk we had to stay the night in a large village a few miles from the town. We went to the local inn, the usual den, not too clean, damp, and pervaded with the fumes of alcohol.

After the evening meal, we retired into our room to load cartridges for our sporting guns, as we had expended our ammunition on the way.

We were just beginning operations when there was a cautious knock on the door. A pale, emaciated little fellow came in; he was dressed in a long black coat, like a monastic servant. But the face of the man glowed with its huge, burning, and piercing eyes.

I remember well the fear that crept upon me involuntarily under their gaze.

"What do you want?" asked the doctor, throwing a measure of powder into the husk without raising his eyes.

"I came to invoke the spirits for you," replied the visitor gravely.

The measure fell from my friend's fingers as he lifted his amazed look upon the newcomer.

"Spirits?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders.

"Yes, spirits," said our guest gently.

"Who are you?" asked the doctor again.

"I am a 'koldun,' a shaman!" was the indifferent reply. "I brought this science from the Tundra of

Malaya Zyemla, where the nomading tribes possess the secret of intercourse with the dead and the spirits."

"How very interesting!" interjected the doctor. "But you cannot invoke the souls of the dead or the spirits here."

"Yes, I can. I can do it here right away," smiled the shaman. "It will cost you three roubles, gentlemen!"

His voice was imploring and betrayed the fear that we might refuse his offer.

"I shall pay three roubles," agreed the doctor. "Please begin at once!"

"Immediately!" said the shaman with joy, while greedily pocketing the money. "Please sit down at the other end of the room and put the light out."

I had time enough to notice that he took from his pocket a tiny, flat piece of wood which he put to his lips.

We were sitting in darkness and silence. From the neighboring cottage entered through the window the scanty light of a petrol lamp. Still we were able to see the shaman's black figure standing immovably near the door. All of a sudden a faint, scarcely audible sound was heard like the buzzing of a fly entangled in a spider's net.

The sound became gradually louder till it seemed to fill the whole space of the room. It split into tens, hundreds of tunes, which reverberated against the panes of the window, the papered ceiling, the walls; the

sounds, trembling, squeaking, roaring, raced in a mad whirl through the whole room, approached my very ears and vanished again in the distance, far away until they seemed almost smothered. I was seized with a strange restlessness; incomprehensible, morbid forebodings began to torment my soul.

The black figure of the shaman, hardly visible in the gloom, reeled, slowly at first, methodically, then with quicker passion, till his movements changed imperceptibly into swift jumps, twists, leaps. Standing on one leg, he started to turn round with ever increasing speed, till after a few minutes he fell to the ground exhausted and breathless, shouting with piercing accents: "They have come! . . . They have come! . . ."

Immense multitudes of echoing sounds seemed to chase each other through the dark room, changing into a whirlwind, storm, and chaos, which one could feel with almost a physical pain. Blasts of wind waves rushed through the room. It made my flesh creep to see it lifting the papers lying upon the table. I do not know how long it all lasted. I only know that my hands became icy cold and that my brow was covered with sweat. My eyes seemed to become extraordinarily sharp. I could see quite clearly the prostrate figure of the shaman. I could distinguish his pale, almost shining face and his wide-opened, glowing eyes. He had the same little piece of wood in his hand and with his lips called forth the various sounds.

Suddenly, in the darkness, at many spots, for the

twinkling of an eye, there blazed out greenish, phosphoric flames. Then again they came and vanished. The sounds abruptly died away. A sudden blast made tongues of flame flicker up near the ceiling, and then all was dark and silent as if a heavy black curtain was drawn. The shaman remained lifeless and did not answer the doctor's repeated questions if he might light the lamp.

He did so at last and approached the prostrate figure. The shaman was lying with closed eyes and compressed lips, a thin streak of blood issuing from his nostrils and deep furrows round his mouth.

We lifted him up and put him on a chair. He opened his eyes heavily and whispered: "Brandy!"

The doctor poured out a cup from his hunters' flagon. The shaman gulped it down, his teeth chattering upon the glass, stretched his limbs, and rose from the chair.

"It didn't come off to-day. . . . They came, but kept at a distance . . . and refused to approach."

After a while he left.

My friend the doctor patted my shoulder and said:

"It is better to shoot wild ducks and grouse than to invoke spirits. Set your mind at rest, my boy! This is no wizardry. Monotonous sounds and movements are all excellent devices of hypnotism. But we must hurry up with the cartridges. Open the bag with hail-shot No. 3."

This was my first encounter with a shaman-koldun.

The second took place years afterwards on the shores of the Pacific.

It was at the outset of my scientific career, when I was studying the origin of the coal deposits of the Far East. The scene was on the River Tudagou in the Ussuri country.

We pitched our tents in an oak and hazel forest, and in the innocence of our hearts we were making preparations for a prolonged stay, when unexpectedly arrived two mounted Orochons.[1] They announced that we could not remain where we were as it was an Orochon cemetery. When they saw my amazement, the natives led me to a small glade and pointed to the tree-tops. I noticed longish, black objects hanging down from the highest branches.

These were the bodies of the dead. The Orochons wrap them round with buck-skins, which are covered oak-tree bark, tied up strongly with leather straps and hanged up on the branches high above the earth.

Seeing me unwilling to leave my camp, the Orochons claimed a gift of brandy, in return for which they offered to bring a shaman, whose invocation would procure for us from the souls of the dead the permission to remain within the border of their realm.

The necromancer came towards evening. He was a young peasant, his face blackened and disfigured by smallpox. His coat was made of multi-coloured rags

[1] The Orochons are nomads, hunters of a Mongolian tribe which is almost extinct to-day.

with straps of red and yellow painted leather hanging down to the ground. He carried a gigantic drum and a long pole with little bells, from which a fife made of buckhorn was suspended.

He set to his task at once. First he began to beat the drum for all he was worth, then he blew the fife and made the little bells peal. Soon nothing was heard but the fife as he jumped and turned kicking his heels. The thin tunes of the fife were ever broken with the shrill yells and groans of the shaman. He whirled round madly, his face was swollen, his lips wide open, his eyes flushed with blood, and foam appeared on his lips.

He fell to the ground at last and quivered long as if in agony. Although he uttered no more sounds, the drum still roared in the air, the little bells still pealed, the fife shrieked and piercing groans were heard, repeated by the echo of the forest in the deep silence of the warm, dreamy and overwhelming July night.

When the shaman rose from the ground, we asked him if we might remain. He said yes, and taking a little salt and meat cast it to the four quarters of the world, offering sacrifice to the souls hospitable to us of the deceased Orochons.

The art of fortune-telling plays an important part in the life of Russian peasants. I can truly say that I have not in the home of divination, Thibet and Mongolia, met such a widespread and general practice.

In Russia fortune-telling is a "black" science, supposed to be the work of the evil spirits, while in Mongolia it has the character of a religious cult. Amongst the former it hides in solitary cottages, coming forth only in dark and stormy nights when all kinds of "evil forces" haunt the earth, and peep into the hovels of inhabitants whose souls are wrapped in even deeper gloom.

No other people attach so much importance to sorcery as the Russians. It is not only the uncouth, illiterate villager, but also the working classes, whom their leaders have taught false culture; the bourgeoisie and even the upper classes of Russian society have had recourse to fortune-tellers, often in the most serious emergencies of their lives.

The gipsy science of fortune-telling from cards, from seven or thirteen little stones, from horse beans or bones, was very much in vogue and had many highly skilled practitioners. In a village every old woman, every old man knew this science, nay, and practised with more or less success. The same held good for the towns, and it may be said without exaggeration that in cities like Moscow or Petersburg there was not a street without a fortune-teller of either sex, who had a numerous clientèle and a steady and considerable income. There were besides specialists who had a reputation of immense skill, in whose houses, furnished with rich oriental carpets and adorned as might be expected from the dens of wizards and alchemists with

stuffed owls and lizards, dried bats, frogs, and vipers, were met some common woman, a fat bourgeois butcher, a demi-mondaine, a Minister or a Grand Duchess.

It was a mania, a disease, which had its roots deep in the nature of the people.

Arabian wisdom read in coffee-grounds had also many disciples. Before the fall of the dynasty, this science was assiduously cultivated in the palace of Count Kleinmichel by a devoted crowd of those whose prosperity and magnificence depended on the grace of the throne, and who endeavoured to divine the fortunes of the "adored" Romanovs on the surface of black sediments. Once I witnessed this kind of soothsaying in the house of a high official, whose wife, a titled lady, was a devout believer in the secret arts and invited a sorceress of reputation, Irma Galesco.

In the darkened boudoir, scantily lit by a shaded lamp, the Roumanian gazed for a long time on the coffee-grounds which were served in three cups. She examined it from above, then against the light, rippling the surface with a puff of her breath or touching it with a swift and professional move of a long black feather. The main items of the proceedings were the constant murmurings of an incomprehensible incantation. After a prolonged inspection of the contents of the cups, the sorceress poured it all into a shallow white vase, added a pinch of herbs, and continued

stirring it with her breath and a touch of the feather.

At last she began to speak as if beholding something on the dark surface or reading some secret writing inscribed upon it. I looked attentively into the vase, but I could not see anything, and I was certain that in all these proceedings the cunning charlatan was adapting herself to the character of the house and flattering the wishes of her lady customer.

The commonest forms of soothsaying among Russian people are those which have descended from the age of heathenism. These are the auguries from blood and from water. I have seen all such forms of fortune-telling in the province of Pskov, the most backward of all the provinces of Russia. There they thrive among the marshy wastes, in the thick forests, or the sandy shores of the River Wyelika and the banks of the Pskov Sea, the embodiment of heathen superstitions.

I shall return frequently to that province, distant only a few hours' journey from the capital, as being the most typical of the whole Russian people.

It happened in the village of Zaluzhye, surrounded by a whole net of boggy lakes and rivulets. In the neighbourhood of this village cholera raged, taking a heavy toll of the inhabitants. It was necessary to find out who had carried the pest into that God-forsaken veldt. Only a wizard could do that. An old man, who looked a centenarian, was put into a room in a solitary cottage which stood close to the woods on

the banks of a small reed-covered lake. After sunset, a black ram and an old millstone were taken into the cottage.

Before dawn, when the first cocks began to crow, the soothsayer led the ram forth, its horns and neck crowned with grass and herbs. He cut the throat of the ram, poured his blood over the millstone, and lit a fire, alternately murmuring and shouting. When the fire burned brightly and the coal set down, he pulled it out with his fingers and threw it upon the stove. The curdling blood quickly formed black clots, steam and smoke rose from the stone, and the soothsayer, dishevelling his hair and flowing beard and opening wide his eyes, which seemed dead with age, began to shout with a piercing yet broken voice:

"I behold in the blood-red smoke and the scarlet vapours . . . open graves and terrible pale death. . . . Men proceed in front of her. . . . I don't know them, they are not from our country. . . . They go forward and cast into the water of the rivers and wells, into the stables and barns, seeds of disease which ruins and kills . . . by blood only can death be defeated. . . . I can see it. . . . I behold it in the scarlet, blood-soaked vapours and smoke."

The peasants stood in gloomy silence and profound thought. The soothsayer himself was silent; there was the hissing sound of flames in the hearth, the light crackling of the burnt curdling clots of blood, the quicker breathing of the throng, and the rustle of the

rushes in the lake. From afar came the chuckling of wild ducks settling down to sleep, the lowing of a stray cow, and the barking of a dog. The summer night was filled with mystery, which buries crime and every outburst of primitive passion, and it seemed to listen to the unspoken thoughts of this benighted crowd which stood flooded with the crimson glare of the open fire. My mind was involuntarily carried away, back into olden times, when perhaps on the self-same spot was raised the wooden image of the god Perkunas, while the priests, clad in white linen garments, their heads wreathed, shed the blood of consecrated beasts. The fire burning upon the altar then illuminated by its glare, just like now, the terrified crowd which, just like now, resembled a gathering of crimson-bathed phantoms.

Thus proceeded the soothsaying, and a few days afterwards the peasant mob seized the doctor and his assistants who were sent to fight the epidemics, clubbed them to death, and threw their bodies into the boggy river. Police inquiries were instituted, after which new crowds of sullen peasants, whose only crime was spiritual darkness, went to prison or Siberia.

Still another time, near Petersburg, in the town of Gdov, I witnessed fortune-telling by water.

The diviner poured water into a glass basin and asked the client for her wedding ring. She wanted to find out what had happened to her husband, who

had left home for a long journey and had failed to send any news of himself.

The woman handed over her ring, which the soothsayer dropped into the basin, uttering a conjuration and bending over the vessel. Muttering some words, the witch blew on the water, the surface of which quivered and was ruffled. For a long while we could not see anything, till at last I had the impression as if the inside of the ring were a tiny window in a little wall, behind which was a big room. I noticed all the details of the furnishing and the general plan of the room, when all of a sudden an elderly man with a quiet and smiling face entered. I saw clearly every feature of his face and his dress. Suddenly he turned pale, seized his breast, and fell to the ground. A dusk began to settle on his prostrate figure. The ring seemed now like an opening made in the bottom of the basin. The fortune-teller and her client looked pale and agitated. The witch shook her head with a wail of despair and whispered:

"Bad omen, very bad omen! . . . He will die . . . no! . . . He is dead. . . . There's no doubt! . . ."

By a strange coincidence the augury proved true. Next day my friend received a telegram saying that her husband had died suddenly of heart failure, after he had successfully settled his affairs and intended to leave for home the same day.

CHAPTER IV

The Treasure Hunters

EVERY neighbourhood in Russia has its own legend of treasures hidden under the ground. And there is nothing strange about this. Many a time in the history of the country whirlwinds of war swept the land and the people hid their treasures in the bosom of mother earth. It is comprehensible therefore that a great many of these riches have remained underground. There were, besides, other reasons, of which the legends have a great deal to say.

Many external signs indicate the spots where the treasures are hidden: the crossing of three roads, old trees planted by the way, heaps of moss-covered stones thrown up by human hands, the ruins of ancient fortified castles, palaces, and tombs, steep, broken rocks on the banks of rivers and lakes, solitary islets on the seas, or tufts of trees full of lapwings' or cranes' nests.

Any peasant who knows these sure spots could dig them out of the bottom of the earth, but the whole difficulty and danger of such an enterprise lies in the fact that each treasure is guarded by a monster, a penitent soul, or some evil "dark force." One must

have the means to drive this force away before getting possession of the treasure and bringing it home. And there is danger in every one of these stages. A wizard is able to spot the treasure, to indicate the means of digging it out, and to suggest measures of protection against the "dark force."

The wonderman receives first of all his fee for general advice, and some time afterwards he invites his client and reveals to him the exact spot where the biggest treasure lies, and the evil force he is about to encounter in his enterprise. Upon receiving a further instalment of his fee, he begins to prepare the bold adventurer for his encounter and combat with the devil. The treasure-hunter must not be afraid, and the soothsayer therefore washes his eyes and ears with the liquid brewed from various magic herbs; he must be proof against the poisonous bites of numerous insects and vipers, which, obedient to the command of the devil, gather to attack the hunter. The magician therefore prepares two ointments: one made of bear's grease mixed with the bark of sweet willow-tree, on which some time or other some man has hanged himself. Anointed with such an ointment, human skin does not shiver with either cold or fear. The other ointment is prepared from the grease of a badger mixed with the powder of dried frogs and spiders, and gives protection against the venomous bite of the viper.

The most important function of the expedition is the driving away of the "evil force" which guards the

treasure, and the assuring of a safe retreat after the conquest of the treasure. The first task is solved by the magician giving the client a bunch of magic flowers, which the latter has to burn at the decisive moment and to smoke the devil away. The second task is more difficult, because the daring adventurer, who is generally illiterate, has to learn by heart a long and complicated formula of incantation.

The peasant has to repeat the magic formula all over again and again every seven steps, and before shutting the door of his house he has to pronounce its last words.

The cautious soothsayer commands the treasure-hunter to recite a formula of considerable length before leaving him, and if the enterprise fails, the soothsayer simply states that obviously the first or the last formula was not delivered according to his instructions and express advice.

CHAPTER V

The Poisoners

THE drama of life has its own laws everywhere. In the palaces of princes and bankers and in the thatched cottages of the peasants. Hatred, treason, revenge, betrayed love, criminal instincts are not confined to the towns; they are to be found in the little villages, lost in the wilderness, the mountains or marshes. There still remain visible traces of dark paganism or Mongolian psychology, of a nomad, of the destroyer and annihilator who exterminates for the sake of extermination and destruction.

More often than not the drama ends with a stab of the knife or a hit with an axe or club. But this method of settling accounts causes police intervention, court inquiry and sentence, and the man breathing with vengeance employs other means: he invokes the assistance of the "viedunya," an old woman who boasts expert knowledge of all kinds of poisons.

These Russian village Locustas are excellent botanists, and the science—gradually falling into desuetude—of the various peculiarities of different grass leaves, herbs, flowers, and roots, is being carefully preserved among the "witches." These women roam the fields,

deserts, and forests the whole year round—except perhaps during the most severe winter months—gathering the healing or death-dealing plants and those required for various practices of witchcraft.

Such vegetable poisons as strychnine, conine, nicotine, atropine, or morphia, the poison of putrid meat (cadaverine, putrescine), the poison of special viper glands, spiders, frogs, the poisonous germs of tetanus and other bacteria, parasites of the sylvan plants or bogs—all these are known to the "viedunyas," the heirs of pagan lore.

The science of poisoning is kept a most profound secret, and handed over as a tradition from one witch to the other, usually her nursling and pupil. It often happens—sometimes it seems almost a necessity—that the witches are deaf and dumb, either from their birth or rendered so by the "viedunya," who either kidnaps a child somewhere, or obtains it from some poor illiterate peasant family for the horrible profession.

The poisoners employ besides for their practices human hair, powdered glass, or bovine or piscatory gall.

The poison is administered in food or drinks, or else a knife is poisoned, with which the victim is accidentally cut; or the victim is drugged in his sleep, the pillows having been sprinkled with venomous liquid, or the deadly plant is introduced into the pillows and acts through its vapours.

When, during the first Russian Revolution, I was

sentenced to imprisonment for two years, which I spent in Siberia, I saw a woman poisoner who had been condemned to fifteen years' hard labour for a series of crimes. She was an elderly, lean, black-haired, sinister-faced hag, with her eyes always cast down. Her movements were slow and lazy; there was something of a wild animal in the cautiousness of her gait and the manner in which she turned her head. It was only rarely that she lifted her eyes, but when she did so, I was struck with the heavy, immovable glare of those black pupils which pierced into the very soul. The woman's name was Irene Gulkina. How many agonies of human beings, tossed in pain and fear, slain by her terrible and sinister science, had been looked upon by those apparently calm eyes? What thoughts rested in that head, so gravely and deliberately moving upon the long thin neck?

She was a grand criminal. The courts discovered twenty victims killed by this "viedunya" in various districts, for the poisoners naturally cannot remain in one place, but after each crime move away somewhere else, appeasing the suspicious with money and gifts.

All of a sudden the news spread throughout the prison that a new crime committed by this woman had been detected. One of the courts in Southern Russia proved that the heirs of a certain rich proprietor entered upon their heritage with the benevolent assistance of Gulkina, the proprietor and several direct heirs having been put out of the way. Further develop-

ments followed quickly, till one day an order reached the prison authorities demanding that the woman be sent back from Siberia to the South of Russia.

Her manner seemed to become even more profound, grave, and slow. She ceased lifting her eyes altogether and to address anybody.

The other inmates of the prison cell understood that Gulkina knew that she would be condemned to death. Meanwhile she spent all the day in the prison yard, walking with her head downcast and gazing obstinately upon the ground.

"She is being tormented by a mortal terror," the prisoners explained to me. "It's always the case with those who know they are going to be hanged."

At last the day appointed for her removal to Russia approached. The night before the "viedunya" fell ill; bathed with sweat and writhing with pain, she quickly lost strength and fainted. She was brought round and fell asleep. At an early hour of the morning the guard noticed that she was lying in an unnatural position. The prisoner was dead.

The great criminal had inflicted upon herself the just penalty of her crimes with the aid of some poison grass she discovered while walking in the prison yard and scouring the ground. A few leaves of this were found in the little knot twisted together in her handkerchief.

CHAPTER VI

HEATHENISM

AMONG European peoples all actual traces of pagan worship vanished long ago, and it is found only in museums through archæological search.

Indeed, would it be possible to imagine and to believe that some hundred miles distant from Berlin people are sacrificing holocausts to the god Thor, or that in France people offer nocturnal prayers to the souls of the brave fallen on the Marne or at Verdun?

Of course not! But if this applies to the whole of Europe, Russia forms an exception. That land of "impossible possibilities" even now conceals among the lower orders a living pagan worship which has outlasted ages, thriving peacefully side by side with the Orthodox Church and twentieth-century civilisation.

I do not speak at all of such tribes, included in the population of Russia, as the Finn or Mongolian Wolyaks, Chuvashes, Mordvins, or the Kalmuks and Ostyaks, who, under the influence of certain ethnographical and historical-cultural reasons, have remained in a state very much akin to prehistoric paganism. I am speaking of the Russian people who were long ago in possession of the "window upon Europe"—Petersburg

—of Christianity, great scientists and scholars, inspired poets, and a . . . police defending till quite lately the rights of the throne, civilisation, and church.

I could give many instances of heathen psychology and pagan customs familiar to the Russian people, but I think it will be most instructive if I describe what I saw personally in the Pskov, and several years later in the Black Sea province.

Pskov was visited by extremely heavy rainfalls. Immense areas of fields and pastures were turned into vast lakes, which joined the numerous marshes and pools. Rivers flooded the roads, and the villages were cut off from the outer world. The crops were totally destroyed. The peasants were threatened with famine.

The Masses celebrated in the villages brought no help. The rain continued for days and days. The elder men in the village began to throw out hints that the "ancient gods were wroth with the people, which had forsaken them," and that the time had come when they should be implored to relent. Then the cottages hummed with mysterious murmurs. It was evident that the peasants were making ready.

It was at the end of July or the beginning of August.

One evening crowds of the older peasants with their womenfolk were seen moving along the bank of the marshy river in the direction of the forest which covered the surrounding hills. I joined them, having taken advantage of the invitation extended to me by my host, the old Justice of the village of Plochova.

The downpour continued. It seemed as if the clouds, which were crawling slow and heavy over the ground, were streaming down veritable rivulets of tepid water. At last we reached our goal, soaked to our very bones.

An aged peasant, clad in white linen trousers and shirt, was already waiting at the appointed place. The spot itself was very uncommon indeed. In the centre of a little glade surrounded by tall pine-trees stood the giant trunk of a mighty but long since decayed tree. Near by lay a blackened and moss-covered rock. My host explained to me that this was the trunk "of the god Perkunas' tree," and the rock served as an altar upon which of old sacrifices were offered to that terrible god of the Slavs.

The night was as black as despair. I heard nothing but the splash of the falling rain, the shuffling of legs over the softened, slippery ground, and the low whisper of a score of human beings assembled around the altar of Perkunas.

"Light the fires!" commanded the old man, and in several spots at once flashed through thick smoke the kindled bark of the birch. After a few moments two large fires were blazing, defying the rain. Then the greybeard unmade the bundle lying beside the rock, took out of it a black cock, placed it on the rock, and cutting its throat, smeared the stone with its blood, crying out:

"O ancient gods! Perun, Volos, god Dajdj! Help

your people, still the downpour, ordain the waters to retire into their bed. We offer you our prayers, we invoke your help!"

The men and women thronged closer to the old man, just in the same way as they did the day before, when they bowed their heads before the priest with the cross. The dotard dipped his fingers in the blood and sprinkled it over the heads of those twentieth-century heathens.

This happened in Pskov. The same ceremony was repeated later on in my presence in the Black Sea province.

On the Volga and Kama one can observe to this very day in the cottages of the peasants, mostly Mordvins and Chuvashes, little figures made of wood and clay, representing the old pagan gods standing by the side of holy ikons and crosses in the so-called "red corner," that opposite the entrance door.

True, the peasants who often turn to the "old gods" for help, offering them sacrifices, will sometimes, if the gods disappoint their expectations, pitilessly besmirch their faces with all manner of filth, or flog the little figures with whips.

Times have changed the psychology of worship.

Thus paganism and its spirit has outlasted the long era during which mankind advanced on the road of civilisation and perfection. This fact can be particularly observed in the mediæval belief in witches or hags betrothed to the devil.

CHAPTER VII

WITCHCRAFT

WITCHES form a distinct caste, very small in number, which is kept and guarded with great secrecy. A witch is trained from infancy to her profession. The young novice, who must not be baptised, is adopted by some adept in the black art and brought up in her lair, a dilapidated cottage or a cave in the forest; there she is kept from all contact with other people. Her mistress does not allow her to see anybody, nor to go to the neighbouring village. During her solitude the young girl learns a multitude of magic formulæ, incantations, soothsayings; she studies the properties of herbs and grasses; she is worked up into a state of almost continuous excitement, mystical terror, and nervousness, which in an immature child may cause acute neurasthenia or even epilepsy.

When the pupil reaches her fifteenth year the teacher arranges her "betrothal with the devil." The bride is dressed in a flowing white linen robe adorned with wreaths of water-lilies, on her front is placed a magic sign of Beelzebub, and she is left all alone, fettered, her dowry at her side, in a secluded spot, somewhere on a reedy bank of a lonely lake, in a jungle, or amidst

naked rocks. The dowry consists of a broken cross, a jug filled with the blood of a black ram or lamb, the skin torn off a black cat which had been hanged, and a bottle of brandy.

While awaiting in dire terror the sudden apparition of the bridegroom, she cries, shouts, wails, and sobs, till at last she becomes half insane or faints, and is often attacked with epilepsy. Upon the morning, at dawn, the old witch arrives, frees the unfortunate one from her fetters, wakes her up out of the swoon by pouring brandy down her throat, and salutes her with a magic formula, no doubt as old as the Slav world. From that day the girl has become a witch, and starts her own practice. The old woman fears no longer that her young disciple will escape, as the news of her having been betrothed to the devil has already reached the village, and if the latter dared to appear there, she would find certain death at the hands of the superstitious peasant women.

From the day of betrothal the witch begins to learn to . . . fly.

Forensic medicine, the history of religious worship, researches of the fathers of the Christian Church, and the great Leonardo da Vinci throw light upon this matter.

It happens that the witch prepares a special ointment, which is a mixture of grease and herbs, rubs her body with it before nightfall, falls quickly into a sleep, and in her dreams receives the familiar impression of fly-

ing. Enraptured and excited with the uncommon experiences and sensations, she knows how to tell her dreams vividly and impressively, establishing thus her reputation of a "flying witch," who rides on a broom or a squab.

Her fame now travels far and fast, although it is studiously concealed from the priest and the police. Her usual occupation is to cure women or to help them in their love affairs. She procures love-philtres, finds sweethearts, or gets rid of hated, drunken, brutal husbands. True, these magic arts often lead to the green table of a criminal court, where clients appear in the dock. For the hag tells fortunes, conjures the soul of a given man in his sleep, soothsays and manufactures all kinds of mascots, lucky things, and teaches how, by the intense exertion of will, it is possible to hasten another man's natural demise.

She is a past mistress of hypnotism. Living a simple life surrounded by wild nature, in constant fear of the authorities, the priests, and the people, she becomes observant and suspicious and an excellent psychologist. But she is careful to hide natural phenomena under the mask of magic conjurations, charmed formulæ, demonology, witchcraft, and other arts of black lore.

It is only rarely and under the pressure of sheer necessity that the weird hermit leaves her solitary shelter to get food or clothing in the village. Usually she steals at night into the house of a devoted client

and requests her to do the shopping. The witch herself is not allowed to appear in the street. If she were not seized at once by the police or priest, she would fall into the hands of peasant women. Every one of them turns to her in case of need, bringing rich presents or money, but every one of them knows that all misfortunes befalling the inhabitants of the village are the result of demoniac curses. And should the peasant women behold the poor, friendless old hag in the street, they might pursue her in a crowd, surround her and beat her, beat her womanlike with gradual, pitiless, tormenting torture. Pulled out hair, scratched out eyes, knocked out teeth, or broken bones, are nothing much to them. In their superstitious fear and rage women have torn the witch to pieces, burned the ragged remnants of her body to ashes, and blown them to the "dry woods, to the empty fields."

Sometimes they will drag her to the river and throw her down into the water with a stone around her neck.

Such are the witches, and such is the fate of "the devil's betrothed."

CHAPTER VIII

The Echo of the Dim Past

IN Russia everywhere and always meet: the West and the East, civilisation and primitive nomad, Church and "old gods," romanticism and crime.

For instance, in a village a branch of the "People's 'Varsity" is established, and the local authorities overreach themselves in eloquence in front of an almost empty classroom of the local school. In the meantime the peasants, for whom the gates of education are thus being thrown open, are all assembled on the ice of the frozen river engaged in the traditional "combat of the fists," an indigenous kind of boxing.

Two villages are competing with each other in vigour of fists, in endurance of skulls, jaws, and teeth. This is a kind of tradition, knightly tournament, mediæval romanticism.

I witnessed such a combat at Omsk, in Siberia.

The competitors are divided into two parties equal in number. The combat begins with the fight of little boys, who break each other's noses. When hosts of striplings advance to battle, the little boys scatter aside like sparrows. The striplings scatter similarly at the decisive moment of the combat, which is fought out by grown-ups.

The combat lasts long; it is contested with great stubbornness, and often ends with maiming and killing, as some peasant with a piece of lead or iron hidden in his gigantic fist dashes the skull of his opponent to pieces.

Such battles on the ice give some of the fighters the opportunity to reveal their natural abilities, uncommon strength of fists, courage, endurance, and even strategical talents, as victory must be won upon the entire front.

Let us remember the history of Russia. During the times of the independent existence of Free Cities like Novgorod or Pskov, before the reign of Ivan the Terrible, the inhabitants of towns resolved all political disputes by a combat of fists, fought out between the adherents of one or the other of the political parties.

On a lesser scale this habit has existed until our times.

Such combats, however, are not always the romantic echo of ages gone by. Sometimes they become a struggle for existence.

The Tartars and the Russians, the older inhabitants or the recent orthodox and sectarian colonists settled by the Government in Siberia, often settle their personal, tribal, or religious quarrels with the collective force of fists.

Another relic of olden times, to be exact of nomadic times, is the so-called "yamshchina." This is a huge organisation of peasants of Siberian descent, thirsting

for freedom, who during the winter form gigantic caravans of sledges drawn by a pair or three horses for the purpose of transporting goods on long, thousands of miles long, distances.

Twenty years ago such caravans travelled from Kyakhta, on the frontier of Mongolia, to Kazan or Moscow; nowadays they make shorter routes from the Mongolian border or from the Altay to various points on the Siberian railway.

The "Yamshchina" is gradually disappearing, but some few years ago it was still a vigorous organisation possessing its own unwritten law. Only the strongest, healthiest, and most persevering peasants engaged in this work, which was by no means easy. It was something of an effort to carry a heavy load of valuable goods, tea, furs, porcelain or silk from China to Moscow during the long Siberian winter, exposed to frost, hunger, blizzards, and to attacks of numerous bands of criminals who had escaped from Siberian prisons and lay in wait for the caravans. Many brave and rich traders started like those Siberian peasant drivers: for instance, the Kuchtierins or Korolevovs and others, who after the construction of the Siberian railway founded the largest transport companies, owning fleets of steamers, barges, and motor cars.

The Yamshchina produced strong and powerful men, but also taught the half-savage peasants to be indifferent to destruction of human life.

At Tomsk, in Siberia, there still lives one of the last

great "Yamshchiks" who remembers those old days of freedom, that heroic epos, that struggle for existence and money in the dusk of the icy and snowclad Siberian desert.

His name is Innocent Kuchtierin.

Once he told the following story in a narrow circle of friends:

"I had at that time three hundred of my own sledges, each drawn by a team of three horses. The 'Yamshchiks' were all wonderful fellows. I never engaged one who could not walk a mile with a sack weighing 400 pounds on his back. This was my test. I had Yamshchiks who could carry as much as 1,000 pounds. They are no more nowadays. We drove a load of tea from Kyakhta to Kazan. The winter was severe. A frost of 40° R. set in and kept up for a month. The horses, and the men wrapped in their furs turned inside out, marched like white ghosts. I had to deliver the goods at the appointed time. We marched day and night, and only rarely halted in a village for a longer rest.

"Near Kansk we had to pass the high-road cut through a virgin jungle. The trees, white with snow, sparkled in the light of the moon. The road was strewn with crystals burning with multi-coloured fires. Volumes of vapour soared over the caravan as the horses and men were fatigued. Suddenly, through this slowly descending mist, I noticed in the snow aside something suspicious. To be exact, I noticed nothing

—I felt it. All round it was silent, and only the horses were panting and neighing. The Yamshchiks marched beside the sledges, running from time to time to get warmer.

"Everything seemed to be in order and just as usual, and still I could not lift my eyes from the snow upon which I noticed a great many large spots. They were white, a little darker or a little brighter than the snow perhaps, but they captured and held my eyes.

"At last I called two of the nearest drivers and went to see. No sooner did we leave the road than the spots moved violently.

"I knew we were attacked by bandits.

"The bandits and deserters from prisons and Saghalien, a 'shpana,' as we called them in Siberia, lie hidden by the road, dressed in white cloaks over their fur coats. If we had been asleep on the sledges the bandits would have stolen near us unnoticed and cut the ropes holding the loads on the sledges. One by one the boxes of tea would have dropped noiselessly into the deep snow. We shouldn't have found it out till possibly the next halting-place, and of course much too late to get them back, as the 'shpana' would then have gathered our goods and decamped in safety.

"But seeing themselves discovered they attacked. We were fired at. Two of my men fell dead, five were wounded. All the others followed me against the attackers. Yamshchiks always carry their weapons with them. A long knife stuck into the leg of the

'fima,' a felt boot, or a heavy iron ball attached to a strong leather strap."

Kuchtierin took a deep breath and concluded his story.

"That frosty night we killed twenty-three of the 'shpana,' and the two leaders of the band, Wanka Chromy and Kurzina Bezrodny, we caught and hanged on the pine-trees by the road. On the trails of the fleeing 'shpana,' we reached the village Kudjeyarova. We had a real good time. The peasants of that thievish village paid dearly for the shelter they gave to the 'shpana,' who dared to attack the Yamshchiks. We spent three days there in mortal revelry in our fashion. Sure, the children's children of those peasants will remember us!"

Such a man was the old Yamshchik Kuchtierin. His spartan life developed in him a kind of a savage, overwhelming romanticism. He was in love with nature, and knew her as one knows a book read a hundred times. He knew the habits and voice of every beast and every bird. He knew how to imitate indistinguishably the strains of the nightingale and the bullfinch, the belling of the deer, the roar of the enraged bear, and the howl of a pack of wolves.

During one of his wanderings, being still an ordinary Yamshchik, only with a single pair of horses and a sledge, he met somewhere in the inn of a little town the innkeeper's wife, and fell madly in love with her. Saving little by little, and accumulating money with

simply incredible thrift, working like a slave, he collected enough to buy that woman from her husband. She was a truly Russian beauty. When Kuchtierin rose to the dignity, first of an Alderman and then Mayor of Tomsk, he dressed his wife in gowns imported from Paris, surrounded her with fabulous luxury and pomp, and loved her as only the savage nomads of old used to love.

When drunk, he would thrash her with mad and pitiless jealousy, and then roll at her feet imploring forgiveness, love, and happiness. . . .

The life story of famous Yamshchiks is as romantic as it is gloomy and savage. The Siberians love to tell such stories, often with rapture, sometimes with horror.

These men often robbed rich travellers whom they encountered on the road, attacked the mails, wiped out official convoys transporting money, plundered villages and towns, leaving behind them carrion and trails of blood. Many of them waxed exceedingly rich, earned honours and general esteem, silencing the courts with heaps of gold, with brilliant feasts and receptions. Nobody shuddered at the sight of these men, and no one shunned them. Had they not risked their own lives to earn riches and honours?

The heroes of the endless Siberian great road knew how to disarm the world.

CHAPTER IX

The Bold Industry

THERE is another "free profession" of the same kind pursued to this very day in the Far East of Russia. In former times—some twenty or twenty-five years ago—many men were actively engaged in it, who now, or whose sons, belong to the richest classes of the cities of the Far East.

In the early spring numerous bands of Koreans and Chinese travel from Korea and China to the countries of Ussuri and Amur. These are the poorest of the poor inhabitants of the "country of the sad dusks" (Korea) and the Sun State (China). Some of these newcomers obtain work in the local coal or gold mines, others as dockers in the ports of Vladivostok and Nikolayevsk on the Amur, some are engaged as labourers by the peasants and Cossacks of Ussuri and Amur. But a certain number of the most enterprising and the most energetic men who thus find themselves thrown upon their own resources in the virgin forests where the Amur tiger reigns supreme, search for gold and precious stones in the unknown beds of the mountain rivers and streams, or wander over the hills of the Sihota-Alin mountains searching for the priceless,

miraculous medical root, Jensheng, which is paid its weight in gold. Sometimes the enterprising roamers succeed in trapping a few beautiful, almost black sables, martens, or even beavers, which have still their settlements in the rocky folds of the mountains. In such hard work, in perpetual danger from the savage criminals who escape from hard labour in Saghalien, or the tiger, lord of the wilderness, passes the life of the Chinese or the Korean.

The summer and half of the autumn gone, the yellow guests begin the return home. Their paths are as well known as the course of the migratory swans and storks who flit before the winter comes. And all the roads trodden by the yellow travellers, who are burdened with their booty, are infested by Russians. The migrants are usually clothed in white, the Korean colour, which helps to conceal them in their surroundings of snow. The Russians go in for "the daring industry" or the "white swan hunt" armed with rifles. A bullet finds the traveller in his disguise. The robber escapes unpunished, leaving the dead body of his victim a prey to wild beasts. Nor does the thought disturb him that on the far-off Eastern coast there is a family awaiting the return of a husband or father, on whose courageous searches for gold or Jensheng in the mysterious and dangerous wilderness of the mainland depend their life and existence.

A great number of men in the Far East enriched themselves in this way. At present the "white swan

hunt" is being pursued by the peasants near the lake Chanka, which is the junction of many converging paths of the yellow prospectors, who usually go down the river from Sungach to the frontier of Mongolia. Besides the peasants, the Cossacks indulge in this unpunished crime as a matter of profession.

CHAPTER X

The Lords of the Sea

THE life of the Eastern borderland of Russia has brought forth other still more sinister, more wildly romantic characters: buccaneers. Five and thirty years ago piracy was carried on by foreigners and Russians, who subsequently became opulent traders and proprietors of immense urban areas within some of the larger cities.

Now they have vanished and their traces have gone. A few died, others left for strange lands. They were men familiar with the sea. Having built stout and swift sailing brigs, they manned them with criminals picked out of the refuse of the ports, and cleared off for action.

This action consisted in running down Japanese, American, and Chinese sailors in the Caribbean, the Chinese Sea, and in the open Pacific, in killing off the crew and finally scuttling the vessel.

The spoils of conquest were sold as merchandise in the shabby shops of the seacoast towns. The profits were enormous, and became the basis of future fortunes and honours. The practical adventures of these buccaneers in the Far East live still in memory and

legend. Theirs was an international league of genuine conquistadors, composed of Russians, a Finn, a Dutchman, a Swede, a few Germans, and a Jew.

All over the Pacific the brigantines of these terrible bandits were familiar, setting upon the foreign merchantmen on the high seas, raiding the colonies of Russian settlers which were then being established near the seacoast.

Commandor Islands, round which remained numerous herds of seals under the protection of the Petersburg Government, were often the scene of armed conflicts between the pirates and the handfuls of soldiers detached for guard. The pirates were usually victorious, and destroyed without pity hundreds of these animals, which became increasingly rare, their skins being sold to America or Germany.

On the seas of Okhotsk and Bering the bands surprised, pillaged, and killed the unprotected settlers from Japan and Alaska, who carried on barter trade with the natives of Kamtchatka, Anadir, and the Chukotsk peninsula.

The waters of the seas hid for ever the victims of the terrible tragedies, the principal actors of which were members of the bandit association. After cleaning the coast of foreigners, they usually penetrated deeper into the interior of the country and rifled the Mongolian nomads of gold, furs, precious stones, and everything else of value.

In the little gulf north of Vladivostok they had their

headquarters. Here the spoils were divided, packed, and transported to Vladivostok to be sold to foreign, mainly German, ships, which maintained regular business relations with them.

The Russian Administration and Vladivostok port authorities knew of the activities of the association, which had, however, a long purse, and could afford to pay the police a high percentage of the profits.

Everybody knew of it, and many reports went up to Petersburg, whereupon the higher officials were eventually removed from their posts; they did not, however, leave the city, where they had acquired land and houses and led a festive life.

Vladivostok was most conveniently situated for the mediæval practice of buccaneering.

It was a frontier city of military type exposed to Japan, and it was gradually fortified. Some thirty years ago the journey from Moscow to Vladivostok took three months, and the town then seemed a hopeless hole. The civil and military officers were frequently men with a past of an enterprising and occasionally criminal character. The life of the town was curious. Its most aristocratic body was the "Association of Lancepups." I am ignorant of the origin of the word, but I know well the aims and objects of the society.

To be quite exact, it was a society of hopeless drunkards, fortunately an "exclusive" club, numbering not more than fifty members. The usual drink was either

pure alcohol or the strongest arrack, which was served in large glasses like tea. The drinking proceeded automatically on signals given by an alarm clock wound up every five minutes by a Chink boy. Between the rounds of drink bits of dry bread were consumed.

Sometimes it was resolved to drink after every barking of a dog, after every rattle of a passing carriage, after every sound which penetrated from the street, and as the club was situated in the only street of the city, the Svetlanka, there were frequent and easy signals. Needless to say, the club ended in madness, delirium tremens, complete bestiality, suicide.

Such were the exciting pastimes of pirates, who, as time went on, became veritable "lords of the sea."

When at last the courts in the Far East were reformed and real judges and officials were appointed, the danger of energetic prosecution threatened for a time these vikings, who thought it wise to give up their profession, and they became very active citizens in various border towns.

The public prosecutor of the Vladivostok Court, Bushayev, opened an investigation of the case of the pirates. He collected all the evidence of their numerous crimes, he set about writing the case for the prosecution and preparing the summonses to be issued against the culprits, amongst whom anxious rumors circulated in Vladivostok as well as in other towns.

Then one day, Bushayev, who was a passionate

hunter, was invited by the local sporting society to take part in a deer hunt. It was held on the Island of Askold, situated thirty miles off Vladivostok, in the gulf of "Peter the Great."

The hunt proved a great success and thirty-two stags were killed. The bugle was blown to call the hunters back to the steamer. When the company assembled on deck, all were there except the public prosecutor. He was found with a bullet in his head. He paid with his life for his zeal.

CHAPTER XI

In the Dusk of the Palaces

RETURNING from the borderlands, from the semi-savage Russian villages and settlements, let us look into the magnificent palaces, often of historic character.

The palace of Tsarskoye Selo, the abode of the stricken Tsaritsa Alexandra of Hesse, the palaces of Princess Yuryevska, Count Sumarokov-Elston, Prince Orlov, Countess Ignatieva, Prince Putiatin, Countess Kleinmichel, Prince Golitzin, Prince Bielosielski-Bielozierski, even those of some of the Grand Dukes, concealed behind their thick walls and magnificent crystal windows interesting and somewhat uncommon happenings.

Crowds of unknown individuals, some with a doubtful past, had a free entrance within their gates. Vagrant monks and nuns from distant monasteries and convents, brought for show to the curious and for prayer to the pious, wonderful relics, similar to the "piece of the ladder" which Jacob saw in his sleep, according to an anecdote from the time of Paul I, or the "legs of the holy martyrs Boris and Gleb." They

kept telling of wonderful miracles on the graves of many, not yet canonised, saints, they celebrated masses according to an unknown rite, perhaps of some non-existent monasteries and churches. There were epileptics and hysterical women who, during the attacks of illness, foretold future events and tendered political advice. Just like the famous "klikusha" [1] Daryushka, an agent of Rasputin, Prince Putiatin, and the Commander of Imperial Headquarters, General Woyeykov, warned the Tsaritsa against the Minister of Education, Count Ignatiev, who was an opponent of German policy, and against the famous lady-in-waiting, Mrs. Wasilchikova, the author of the notorious letter to the Tsaritsa, reminding the Princess of Hesse that she was Empress of all Russia.

The well-fed, white-bearded, bald monk, "Ivanushka the Barefooted," with his red legs and his toes always carefully pedicured, amazed and piqued the educated public of Petersburg, when seen bare-footed, in a black cassock, with a distaff adorned with a gold ball set with precious stones, walking slowly and majestically along the Nevski Prospect, topping the crowd by a head and evoking general amazement by his athletic shoulders and bull's neck.

But when the news spread that Ivanushka was a frequent visitor of the Tsaritsa, and that he was very intimate with the house of Countess Kleinmichel, where mysterious nocturnal services were held, during

[1] Epileptic Woman.

which "Christ appeared," the indignation in the capital was so intense that the gluttonous monk was obliged to disappear from the hospitable banks of the Neva.

In the year 1910 there appeared in the capital an old wanton who, with skilful impudence, advertised herself as "the incarnate mother of God," claiming a husband, Joseph, and a son, Jesus. Crowds flocked to the Madonna, who healed the sick and comforted the distressed, sprinkling them with the water of the Neva or merely touching them with her hand. People kissed her feet and her robes, and contributed rich offerings, which the thrifty old woman saved up to buy land and houses in the provinces.

A campaign which the clergy and some organs of the press launched against her was suddenly stopped. The police, the censor, and the Holy Synod explained to the zealous popes and editors that an attack on the "Mother of God" is unseemly because . . . she was honoured with an audience of the Empress in a private house!

For several years afterwards the "Madonna" continued her activity unhindered, till one of her visitors, a person of some standing, was robbed. Police inquiries proved that "the hand lifted up to bless" had taken an active part in the theft, together with that of the husband, Joseph. The case was not brought before Court, but the religious adventuress was obliged to withdraw from the capital.

Another illuminating instance was furnished by the

Prior of the Orthodox cathedral of Kronstadt, Ivan Siergieyewich Kiyin, known as Ivan of Kronstadt. I met him several times.

He was a cunning, nervous, and clever priest, who knew how to enthral the masses with his prayers and preachings, to sway those who turned to him for advice with his word or a glance of his eyes. He was a master of hypnotism, of suggestion, and could submit to his will single individuals as well as whole multitudes.

He would have remained a goodly spiritual father and a zealous priest, but for a bigoted and crafty old woman, the wife of a wealthy merchant, Gulayeva, the friend of Pobedonoscev and of several officials of the Imperial Court.

She succeeded in rousing the interest of powerful members of the Court camarilla in the young priest, and soon she proposed to Ivan a deal. Gulayeva was to become the manager, Ivan—perhaps unconsciously—the actor; he was to employ his talents as a priest and preacher; she was to exploit the gullible public.

The enterprise was launched successfully. After a year had passed people were talking everywhere of the "Miraculous healings," revelations, prophecies, and "resurrections" of the dead wrought by Ivan of Kronstadt.

Money, honours, high connections and influence were the reward of these mighty deeds.

"The Holy Man—the Prophet of God," was proclaimed aloud.

The objections and jealousy of the clergy were overruled by Tsar Alexander III, who worshipped Ivan, and on his death-bed sent for him to receive the blessings and to kiss the hands of the wonder-worker in pious ecstasy.

When, after the Tsar's death, Gulayeva tried to enlarge her business by raising the rank of her client and spread abroad that Ivan was the "Messiah," who for the second time had descended upon the earth, the clergy rose against such blasphemy, and it was only the protection of the Dowager-Empress that saved him from any other punishment than being relegated to Kronstadt, and enjoined to mind the business of the cathedral, not to work miracles, and not to claim kinship with God.

Soon afterwards he died, and the untiring Gulayeva began to advertise the miracles wrought upon the grave of the saint. This new enterprise was carried on until October 1917, when the Bolsheviks put an end to her trade by destroying his grave and casting his remains into the sea.

Numbers of the nobility had considered it a great honour to receive the "holy father" in their palaces. For this privilege they paid Gulayeva a fee of five hundred roubles, and waited sometimes months for their turn to enjoy the blessing of his presence.

Such was the Russian fashion of "Christian mysticism," while at the same time close by was celebrated the "feast of the fiends."

It was an obsession of secret worship, a diseased enthusiasm for "black and white thaumaturgy," and neither an innocent diversion nor a scientific investigation.

The most realistic political game or the most vital intrigue on a grand scale was often played behind the scene. There was nothing of pagan rite in it.

I mentioned once before that I was coaching the son of an official of the house of Prince Leuchtenberg, a cousin of the Tsar.

I met there many high dignitaries of the Imperial Court, and one of them invited me to his home. A newly-arrived Paris celebrity was to be there—the famous king of occultists, "Professor" Papus.

The séance was not a success. Some vague glimmers of light, some murmurs and noises, some cold touches—that was all that this "Mahatma" could achieve. I saw many much more interesting phenomena in the occult and spiritist circles in Paris, and later on in Central Asia.

But after a few days I learned many sensational things.

In the palace of one of the most influential of the Grand Dukes, and in the presence of the Tsar and the Tsaritsa, Papus conjured up the apparition of the spirit of one of the dead Tsars, who called upon his successor to embark on a policy hostile to Berlin, to make war on Germany, and to be on his guard against the policy of Count Witte and the influence of an "unknown" but

powerful and beautiful woman, in whom all the people present saw . . . the Princess of Hesse, Empress of Russia.

After this bold, and even for Russia too obvious, intrigue, Papus was obliged to leave the country in great haste, never to return. After him came other Buddhist and masonic agents, and continued the policy of their master on a smaller scale, in a more cautious manner.

Equally mysterious, though less influential, was one Onore, for some time an obscure Siberian official, who had studied several years the shamanism of the Altay natives, and finally started his own practice, which consisted of nothing but personal and collective hypnotism.

Soon the fame of his miraculous cures of nervous diseases reached the larger Siberian towns, and numerous parties of patients came to consult Onore. The latter grasped quickly that Siberia was too small for him, and he went to Petersburg. Here at first he healed the poor from charity, as it seemed, and he made himself a great name. After a time he received wealthy people who paid him high fees. Then the Medical Council interfered, and prohibited his practice on the ground that the hypnotist had no medical education. However, this intervention had little effect, and he exercised his remunerative gifts among ever increasing circles without fear of the authorities, although several accidents dangerous to the health and

even the life of patients occurred in his consulting-rooms.

For the usual thing happened. Some personages of the Imperial Court, who were always quick to exploit the Tsaritsa's interest in mysticism and the secret sciences, engaged him just as they had Rasputin, Papus, Daryushka, "Klikushka," Ivan the Barefooted, and other "godly men."

Onore was introduced into the Rasputin group, the leader of which was Countess Ignatieva, and the guide into the apartments of the Tsarskoye Selo Palace was the untiring "specialist on saints and fiends," the Prince Putiatin.

From this moment Onore became the welcome guest of the most reactionary drawing-room sets in Tsarskoye Selo, where he hypnotised the Tsaritsa, and attended to her during her nervous attacks.

In Petersburg and Moscow several people were known as priests and priestesses of the "devil worship" (Diabolism). Amongst them were two Orthodox priests, several men of letters, three variety artistes, and a General Shuman. Strange tales were told of the abomination of the "black mass" and of the diabolic orgies of the Satanists, similar to those recounted about the "Club of Sixty-nine Ladies," the intimate rendezvous of ladies and gentlemen on Odd Thursdays or "innocent Mondays," about a whole series of psychological and psychic groups, clubs, societies, and gatherings.

Opium, hashish, cocaine, alcohol were all indulged in; religion was the worship of spiritual disease, as it is before the downfall of nations and empires.

The mad "feast during pest" was held secretly in magnificent palaces, and with each year it became ever more obvious that a tremendous catastrophe must ensue, with all its terrors. The crash came on October 17, 1917, when the people, the soldiers, and alien agents fell upon the nobles. The mad hatred of the mob then turned against the intelligentsia, which passed away without a trace, leaving the Russian people deprived of its moral leaders.

CHAPTER XII

Black Shadows

RUSSIA, the immense country, the ant-heap of one hundred and forty million human beings, the political chaos where a reactionary Government and a violently protesting revolutionism always marched together, where ignorance and mental haziness, divergent psychologies of different classes formed an excellent hunting-ground for the most obscure and ignorant elements, both in the reactionary and revolutionary camps.

The procedure in the two camps differed as to method, but had the same results.

The reactionaries employed the system of provocation, the revolutionaries that of destroying the foundations of the State by awaking the passions of the Russian mob. The results were the same: contempt of law and complete demoralisation of the nation.

On a background thus prepared were thrown such terribly dark shadows as Pobedonoscev, Kurlov; and appeared such living characters of the Middle Ages as Grishka Rasputin, the Bishop Pimen, the monk Heliodor. These were of the reactionary camp. The other

side could produce such figures as Azev, Maria Spiridonova, Borys Savinkov, Kerensky, Malinovsky, and others.

The famous revolutionary publicist, Burtsev, made secret investigations and inquiries into the internal conditions of the revolutionary parties, and published in the French and Russian press a series of articles proving that these parties were rotten to the core, infested by agents of the Government, who, under various pretences, acted as spies, as informers, and succeeded in disorganising and demoralising the ranks.

I mentioned already the ex-Oberprocurator of the Holy Synod, Constantin Pobedonoscev. He was the dark and evil genius of Russia, the man who led the bureaucratic thought of the Government on the path of the most extreme repression for the purpose of keeping the nation perpetually in intellectual darkness and humility under the triple yoke of the Tsar, the Church, and officialdom.

Pobedonoscev crushed many a budding flower of healthy, enlightened political thoughts and led many of the most distinguished men to ruin. It was he who issued the decree of the Synod expelling Tolstoy from the Orthodox Church, and compelled several of the greatest men of science to leave their mother country.

He fully deserved the name "Grand Inquisitor."

The Metropolitans, the Bishops and Priors trembled before the man, who succeeded in making the Orthodox Church an annex of the secret police, destroying

its influence, and rousing the wrath of the people against the clergy.

Beside this Inquisitor stands the appalling figure of General Kurlov.

As chief of the gendarmerie and vice-Minister of the Interior, General Kurlov was the head of the secret political police, the "Okhrana."

The corruption of members of revolutionary parties, and their recruiting into the ranks of the agents of the "Okhrana"; the staging of terroristic attempts on those high political personages of more liberal views, the torturing of political prisoners, numerous death sentences, the organising of pogroms of Poles, Letts, Finns, and Jews; the persecution of the national leaders of peoples living within the Russian Empire; spying, suppression of the freedom of the press and of education—these are among the deeds of the Chief of Police, General Kurlov.

He was "immortal," as all changes of Government and of political tendencies left him always unaffected. He always remained head of the police, the greatest power in Russia, able to destroy Ministers of State. The chancery of the "Okhrana" had a special department which exercised strict control over the utterances and actions of Ministers and dignitaries, even of the Grand Dukes. The disfavour which befell the family of the well-known poet and President of the Academy of Science, the liberal-minded Grand Duke Constantin, and the distinguished historian, Grand Duke Nicolai

Nicolayevich, were the doings of Kurlov and his secret police.

Kurlov conceived the plan of smashing the revolutionary groups and organisations with the help of distinguished members of the party, whom he bribed. He knew how to compel them to hand over to him compromising documents which made them his instrument. The traitor could never escape Kurlov's clutches, and added crime to crime, knowing that sooner or later he would fall into the hands of the Secret Revolutionary Tribunal.

The Director of the Police Department, Lopuchin, tried repeatedly to make Kurlov understand that such a policy was fatal, since it demoralised the whole administrative system, and exposed the police itself to the temptation of accepting bribes from the enemy. He pointed out to him that revelations of the activities of the secret police transpiring into the foreign press would make the worst possible impression on Russia's allies, and have a very prejudicial effect on Russian politics generally.

Lopuchin protested particularly against Kurlov's relations with Azev, who, acting as an agent of the "Okhrana," was at the same time a distinguished and influential member of the Russian and foreign revolutionary organisations. He feared international complications, as Azev's activity extended into the sphere of foreign political affairs. But Lopuchin was dismissed, and soon afterwards there appeared in the

French and Russian press sensational revelations, unmasking Azev. The scandal was astounding, but it came too late, for the revolutionary parties were utterly crushed by the arrests due to Azev's informations, still more by the mutual distrust and suspicion engendered by these denunciations.

Just at that time there appeared a new faction which changed the internal organisation, and several years later came to the surface of the international stage as Bolshevism first and Communism afterwards.

The famous leader of the workmen in the revolutionary period of 1905, the priest Gapon, was also a tool of the secret police; for it was he who led the enthusiastic masses to implore the Tsar to grant a Constitution, and to be massacred before the gates of the Winter Palace in Petrograd by General Trepov's troops.

The priest Gapon, preacher, socialist, and god of the working classes, was Kurlov's agent, and for Judas's silver delivered to death hundreds of defenceless workmen who put their trust in him. The "Okhrana" helped him to escape to Finland, but the Revolutionary Tribunal tracked him to his hiding-place, and the engineer Ruthenberg carried out the sentence and hanged him in a solitary hut in Teryoki.

Side by side with these ghouls of reaction there worked amongst the same people very different men—the revolutionary agents. There were many, but I shall mention only those who were not regarded as

such, and were received by those who plotted for the destruction of their own camp, the "powerful" Kurlov himself putting in an appearance from time to time.

There was the old philosopher, anarchist, sceptic and cynic, Solncev, who figured in several Russian novels as a most sympathetic character. He expressed without reserve his extreme radical views; but their exaggeration made him appear a crazy dreamer, and nobody paid attention to his vapourings.

I met Solncev several times at M. B. Glinski's, the editor of the *Historical Courier*. There he delivered himself of such anarchic opinions, and made such boasts of cynicisms in social and religious questions, that the nicknames "crazy fellow," "Diogenes," seemed to be fully justified.

Great was the astonishment when, in the Revolution of 1917, this "Diogenes" appeared at the head of a well-organised army of anarchists. Under his leadership were taken by storm the Leuchtenberg Palace, the Durnovo Palace, and the palace of the dancer, Krzesinska, and the police and military were helpless against his bands. Then in December 1918 Solncev proclaimed the Bolsheviks as reactionaries and declared war on them. In Moscow detachments of anarchists, equipped with artillery, held the city for two days, but at last were obliged to compromise and to come to terms with the Soviets.

Solncev's real name was Bejchman.

Another unknown apostle of Bolshevism was the

rich and highly educated publisher of sociological, historical, and psychological works, Mr. W. Bonch-Bruyevich. The brother of this revolutionary, who is now chief of the Chancery of the Soviet Cabinet, was a General of the General Military Staff, and for a time Commander-in-chief of the Russian army during the first revolutionary Government.

Bonch-Bruyevich was a welcome guest in the best Petersburg society, in circles of higher military officers, and of the best educated classes. He knew all and everybody, he seemed a true gentleman of old family, well educated, amiable. At the same time he was the secret leader of extreme socialist factions, bordering on anarchism.

It was he who during the 1905 revolution sheltered the present dictator of Russia, Trotsky, then Vice-President of the Workmen and Soldiers' Council, and who, remaining invisible, directed the work of Chrustalov Nosario, the President of the Council, pushing him in the direction of Maximalism, and all the time organising the Bolshevik party.

I was told that it often happened in Bonch-Bruyevich's house that the host, smartly dressed, entertained in his luxuriously furnished drawing-room the flower of Russian society; while in his study and library, the unwashed crowd of future dictators, breathing fire and smelling rank, discussed the means of destroying Tsarist, bourgeois, and socialist Russia.

CHAPTER XIII

Phantoms of the Apocalypse

DURING the fiery, obstinate struggles of the reactionary forces with those of the revolution, in which both reaction and revolution overlooked the arrival of a new common foe—Communism—there appeared on the political horizon of Russia phantoms which one would think could be born only in the imagination of the creator of the Apocalypse.

One of the first was the former horse-thief, drunkard and profligate, Grishka Rasputin. The very name of Rasputin, which means "profligate," seemed, however, to contradict the part which the mysterious adventurer played and with the by-names which he soon acquired, such as "the holy old man," "spiritual father," "wonder-worker," "giver of bliss," etc.

An illiterate peasant from the province of Tobolsk, a habitual-drunkard, Rasputin engaged with a band of gipsies in horse-stealing, and was many a time pursued by the peasants and police. At last one day, after an unsuccessful expedition, he was nearly captured, but escaping at the last moment, he hid in a secluded monastery, whose Prior was the severe ascetic, but psychically abnormal Pimen.

While in the monastery Brother Gregor learnt a

little curing and writing, but was not admitted to priesthood because of his lack of all education, and also because of his unrestrained habits.

Veritable legends were told of the romantic excursions Rasputin undertook into the neighbouring villages, of his success with women, and of his genius in addressing different people in a different and most impressive manner.

When the Prior Pimen felt the need of monetary succour he usually sent Rasputin to the rich and God-fearing Tobolsk and Tartar merchants. Rasputin always knew how to persuade them into munificence, and this made the profligate "little brother" highly esteemed with the claustral community, who employed him as their diplomatic envoy to the world without.

However, stories of Grishka's ebriety, gambling, and profligacy arrived from all quarters. People spoke of unheard-of orgies arranged by the "little brother" after every successful diplomatic enterprise for money for the monastery; people spoke of his share in the bold incursions of burglars beyond the Urals.

One day the news came that during one of his love excursions in a village a fight ensued, and that Grishka knifed one of the peasants. After this he did not return to the monastery, but in the disguise of a monk wandered a long time in Siberia, till he reached the Volga. Here he soon acquired fame as a "saint," "God's man," among the elderly women devotees of the rich merchant class.

Of course, it was impossible to deny that this man possessed some extraordinary powers, his wild, cat-like, glowing eyes seemed to pierce into the brains of men, to enter into their very souls.

He could size up every man at the first glance. He had an intuitive insight into human beings, their characters, psychology, and desires. Besides, he was a powerful hypnotiser, had an irresistible power of suggestion, and exercised his influence equally upon individual persons as upon great assemblies. He had the force of authority and conviction in his voice, a dull-sounding, threatening voice resembling the gloomy murmur of a virgin Siberian forest, in which he spent his romantic and stormy youth.

I remember boarding a tramcar in Petersburg. It was early in the morning, and there were only few people about. I was immersed in my newspaper, when all of a sudden I felt almost physically something like a strange blow on my head. I looked up quickly, and I met the eyes of a tall, lean man with an ascetic, immovable face. He was richly dressed in a magnificent sable fur coat and cap, but the fashion of his dress was strange, and looked like a cassock. I was at a loss as to his identity, seeing that he had top-boots, and under the fur coat I noticed, when he opened it to draw out a handkerchief, an ordinary Russian shirt of red silk. Again I felt compelled to look into the eyes of the strange man. Suddenly I noticed with a beating heart that those eyes vanished, and in their

stead crossed and shot forth radiant beams, concealing his eyes and a part of his face.

Suddenly his eyes appeared again, and round his lips played a disdainful, scoffing smile. I understood that he tested his hypnotic power on me. I decided not to look at him any more, and I succeeded in my resolve. Leaving the car, I had to pass the stranger. He touched my arm and said:

"I know you're a journalist. And you don't want to look at me? Why? I am Rasputin, Gregor Rasputin, the 'man of God.'"

Such was my first encounter. The second was semi-mystical. There was an exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts in Petersburg, where crowds were thronging and pressing in front of a sad, unfinished picture of the well-known Russian painter, Nicolai Rayevski. The picture represented the portrait of a tall, lean man in a black, semi-ecclesiastical habit, a thin, emaciated face, with long black hair falling down the forehead, and a dishevelled black beard. The picture was marked in the catalogue: "No. 144. The Portrait of an Unknown Man."

But the attention of the crowd was riveted, not by the habit, the face and the black hair, not even by the undefined mysteriousness of the portrait. One and all were looking into the black, piercing eyes, vivid and watchful, like the eyes of an animal preparing for a sudden and dangerous assault. When in turn I looked, approaching the portrait, the eyes vanished behind the

radiant veil which emerged from the mysterious black profundity of those piercing pupils.

"It's not a man, it's the devil," said someone among the spectators.

"It's Rasputin!" explained another. "What do you want?"

"The impure power," whispered a pious lady.

"The powerful, holy man of God!" protested immediately several voices.

The crowd dispersed. New visitors took their place.

My third encounter with Rasputin was amidst fatal circumstances.

A reporter of the paper which I edited telephoned through to me that Rasputin had been killed, and that the authorities were searching for his body. After a few hours I learned that the body was found. I went to the spot at once. Just before I arrived the corpse was lifted through a hole cut in the ice on the Little Neva River. He was dressed in a magnificent fur coat and a black silk shirt; on one leg I noticed a high jute snow-shoe upon a patent leather boot. His head was bare. His face was smashed, one eye injured, and his throat bore signs of strangling fingers. He was the victim of political, perhaps personal vengeance, sprung on him by the Grand Duke Dimitri, Count Sumarokov-Elston, and the Deputy to the Duma Vladimir Purishkevich.

The artist Rayevski, who painted Rasputin—at the request of the Empress Alexandra, his portrait was

removed from the exhibition on the first day—was very interested in the mysterious personality, and told me a great deal about the "man of God." It was clear from what he said that Rasputin must have exercised an irresistible charm on women. That ruthless man managed to penetrate into the boudoirs of the most distinguished titled ladies in Petersburg with the same facility with which he philandered in the modest apartments of the elderly widows of the merchant class, or with the variety stars in the *Villa Rodé*. He could be enrapturing, fiery, overwhelming. He used often to say:

"Woman is created for the pleasure and glory of man!"

Pious people asserted that Rasputin had an unmatched talent for prayers. He said his prayers in simple, uncultured words, but with burning passion, poetry, and inspiration. It seemed as if he would behold the very face of God, to Whom he was speaking in human, simple, and comprehensible words. The nervous shivering of his shoulders, the spasmodic voice, the facial mimicry full of pain and penetrating imploration, the fire, and the tears of his eyes made a terrifying impression on the pious, mystically moved spectators. The dull, threatening voice of the old thief rose to such a power of tune, resounded with such passionate force that it seemed as if by the lips of this man somebody else, pure and full of bliss, was uttering life-saving words of Eternal Grace.

He turned from time to time towards the Holy Picture, outstretched his hands, and spoke in tones imploring and commanding:

"Turn Thine eyes upon us and give a sign that Thou hearest me!"

And the man praying seemed to perceive the eyes of the Holy Image moving and gazing upon the crowd.

Rayevski told me that one afternoon when Rasputin was sitting for his portrait, a well-known nobleman drove up in his car to the painter's studio, and rushing in, fell on his knees in front of Rasputin with the words:

"Father! My brother is dying! Help!"

Rasputin got up at once, and forgetting his fur coat, ran down the staircase murmuring:

"Lord! Oh Lord! Creator of all life, grant me to arrive in time!"

Arrived at the palace, Rasputin found an elderly man in a terrible state of asthma, which was still further endangered by a heart attack. The sick man had already lost consciousness. Rasputin looked a long time into his face, and then exclaimed, or rather howled like a terrified dog in a winter's night:

"Why dost thou not call for help to our Lord? Why dost thou not ask Him: 'Deliver me from my disease, and give me, O Creator, the strength to praise Thy name in glory?' Awake, and repeat these words of my prayer! Awake!"

"Can you imagine," said Rayevski, "the Count

actually moved, opened his amazed eyes, pressed his hand to his heart, and repeated the short and not quite common prayer word for word. I was really astonished!"

Another of my Russian friends, the well-known poet and critic, A. A. Izmailov, told me his own experience once.

"I succeeded with great difficulty in getting at Rasputin; I wanted to interview him, but I was careful to tell him through the servant that I wanted to speak to him about our mutual friends from the Volga. When I entered his room he was seated in a comfortable chair. He measured me with an inquiring eye and with a forbearing smile, said:

" 'A journalist! Why do you try to deceive me?'

"He stopped short. I kept silent, knowing his hatred of journalists, who had annoyed him much in the past. Besides, his words had embarrassed me strongly and I could not say anything.

" 'I shall not talk about any of my affairs to you,' said Rasputin after a long while, 'but I want to speak of you. Death passed over your head when you were eleven years old. I can see it plainly. Tell me how it happened.'

"Of course," related Izmailov, "when I was eleven I went with my brother to try to shoot a hare. My brother was to do the shooting and I was to do the beating. I had scarcely entered the garden-bed when I tumbled over a root and fell to the ground. This

saved my life, for at the very moment the hare jumped up; my brother fired, and the shot went over my head, which was protected by the high bed.

"When I finished my story, Rasputin said:

" 'Beware of a narrow street in which stands a house of red brick and two turrets. Remember it and go now.' "

I don't know if Izmailov heeded the warning or not. I lost sight of him when he remained in Soviet Russia, and it is quite possible that he perished in its bloody whirl.

Alfred Rodé, the owner of the notorious villa, and some officers of the late Imperial Guard told me of the orgies arranged by Rasputin, of their lasciviousness, cynicism, and vulgarity. He often let himself go, offending his guests, laughing at their opinions and their manners. Once, whilst boasting of his intimate relations with the Imperial Court, he showed his richly embroidered silk shirt, and chuckling with laughter, said swaggering:

"It's Shashka's work." Shashka being the Empress's pet name.

There followed a great scandal. One of the officers jumped at the "man of God," and in the free fight which ensued wounded him with a bottle.

Rasputin was reputed to be aware of the attempts contrived against him; he escaped several of them, and he knew that a sudden end awaited him, and he lived in mortal fright. Once, in an attack of that terrible

longing which befell him in the expectancy of death, while sitting at the bedside of the Empress, who, surrounded by her daughters, was writhing in pain, he called out in ecstasy:

"Not a hair of yours shall fall to the ground as long as my pictures and dress shall be with you!"

It must have been true, because about the middle of 1916, after an attempt on Rasputin, the photographer Ocup received the order to call on him and to make seven large portraits of the "Old Man"—the Tsar's family consisted of seven members—to perform all the operations in the presence of Rasputin's secretary to whom the plates were also to be handed over.

At the same time news spread from the Tsarskoye Selo Palace which amazed everybody. One learnt that after a long conversation with the Empress and her daughters, Rasputin left the apartments of Alexandra in tears, and went into his room, where he changed his dress, to return afterwards carrying his black silk shirt torn into seven pieces.

His power rested upon mysticism, the exploitation of momentary moods, forebodings of an impending debacle, and the skilful handling of situations as they arose.

In Siberia, where Grishka was hated, to-day already, during the Bolshevist regime, people whisper:

"Rasputin was a dog, but a strong, supernatural man. He foretold the Emperor Nicholas's black days that should follow his own death, and so it happened.

He foretold that the Romanovs would live as long as they should have with them his pictures and bits of his shirt—and they lived until the Commissar Yurovsky took all this away from them, when they were murdered. Strong, uncanny was Grishka! Antichrist! The servant of the devil!"

Several attempts were made on Rasputin's life, but without success. Two of them were most dangerous. One in Siberia, when the monk, Heliodor, sent a half-demented peasant woman, who inflicted several wounds on him with her knife. The wounds were rather serious, but Rasputin lived.

Another time, when he travelled in sledges from Petersburg to Tsarskoye Selo together with Madame Wyrubova, the Empress's lady-in-waiting, the sledges were upset by an unknown motor-car, which succeeded in effecting its escape. Madame Wyrubova was seriously hurt, but Rasputin only slightly bruised.

At the head of the organisation which combated Rasputin were the Moscow Metropolitan Makar, the Bishop of Samara Pimen, and the monk Heliodor, supported by a band of influential and rich men belonging to the Nationalist circles.

After the last and successful attempt on the life of the spiritual director, the despondency of the Empress and her daughters was limitless. They even went into mourning for him. The body was buried in a magnificent chapel erected for the purpose in the Park of Tsarskoye Selo. Daily pilgrimages of the Tsar's fam-

ily to the "Old Man's" grave proved the genuine and profound sorrow for the "holy father," whose life was so mysteriously bound up with the fate of the dynasty.

Speaking of the mysterious ties which existed between the Romanov dynasty and Gregor Rasputin, I remember a legend which was very popular in old Moscow and particularly alive during the war of 1812, after Napoleon's conquest of the Kremlin.

When the Romanov dynasty, in the person of the youthful Tsar Nicolai Teodorovich, was elected to the Russian throne, the solemnity was held in the Ipatiev Monastery, built by the Ipatiev, a rich family of traders in Kostroma. During the procession one of the epileptics of the name Grishka became mad and started to shout prognostications:

"The house of Romanovs will reign long centuries over us. It will attain glory and power. It will perish under the Ipatiev roof after 'Grishka'!"

The history of the dynasty corresponds with this augury, which was at first incomprehensible to its contemporaries.

The dynasty reigned for more than three hundred years, achieved glory and power, and perished after Grishka (Rasputin) under the roof of the Ipatiev's in Yekaterinburg, where the descendants of the founders of the Ipatiev Monastery were removed from Kostroma.

In 1812 there appeared in Moscow a "prophet"

Grishka, who foretold the fall of Russia and the Imperial dynasty. It was then that people remembered the legend, all the more as Russian troops retreated in the presence of the Tsar in part towards Kostroma. The Police Commissioner of Moscow, hearing of Grishka's prophecies, had him captured and flogged to death.

Grishka's prophecy of a "God's man" and "epileptic," pronounced two centuries earlier, were revived for more than a hundred years, only to become true in a more terrible and sinister manner after Grishka, a "God's man" according to the beliefs of the Court and some Russian aristocrats of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER XIV

ASCETICS *versus* ANTICHRIST

THE ascetic Prior of the Tobolsk monastery, the monk Pimen, did not forget "little brother" Gregor. When the latter came to the surface of political life in Russia, and when his star shone forth upon the horizon of the Imperial Court, Pimen went to the Moscow Metropolitan Makar and the Kiev Metropolitan Vladimir and informed them who exactly Rasputin was.

Pimen's revelations, who at that time was already Bishop of Samara, made an overwhelming impression. The Metropolitans began to act in various ways, but soon received peremptory instructions to abstain from this agitation if they desired to retain their mitres.

They desisted and started to plot secretly against Rasputin.

Bishop Pimen, who expected to find in the Metropolitans energetic and determined allies, wrote them very sharp letters, and engaged in the struggle single-handed. The threats of the provincial Governor and gendarmerie and the instructions and reprimands of the Holy Synod made no impression on him. He acted with vigour and skill.

He prepared his "spiritual flock" for the impending coming of Antichrist in the shape of man. "It will be possible," he said, "to fight against this Antichrist because it will be the first, still weak incarnation of evil. On the successful issue of this fight shall depend the postponement of the terrible era of the coming of other, stronger, Antichrists and their reign on earth, which is groaning under the weight of sin and of carnal and spiritual crimes."

The austere, ascetic Bishop had an assistant, a young monk, a student, an inspired orator and preacher, Heliodor Trufanov, who went a step further and called the revealed Antichrist by name. It was Gregor Rasputin, the notorious Grīshka, deserter-monk, horse-thief, profligate, and murderer.

"Women and children, remember that cursed name!" exclaimed Heliodor, invoking the devout congregation. "If you meet him, spit into his face, throw mud at him, and the Church and the Lord will forgive those who stab him with the knife or strike him with the axe, for the knife will kill the body of a satanic serpent, and the axe will have struck down a barren and poisonous tree!"

Various men gathered round Heliodor and Pimen, some drawn by religious enthusiasm, others by political reasons.

At last Heliodor went to Petersburg to carry the struggle into the enemy's camp. Here, however, he met with the resistance of ecclesiastic authorities, who

were terrorised by Tsarskoye Selo; he was arrested and imprisoned, but escaped, crossed the frontier, and published abroad his pamphlet on Grishka, full of invectives against the Tsaritsa, of personalities, expressing his own private views, but containing little real evidence.

During his stay on the Volga Heliodor had time to organise the Siberian attempt on his enemy, and another attempt in Petersburg, in which he was helped by the Metropolitan Makar and some of the God-fearing Moscow merchants of the "old belief."

Notwithstanding all attempts at suppression, the activity of Pimen and Heliodor created a sensation, a general curiosity regarding the "dark secret of Tsarskoye Selo," provoked several speeches in the Duma, a lively press campaign, and the formation of many groups for the purpose of struggling against Antichrist. The last embraced the Bishop of Novgorod Yevdokim, and the Bishop of Omsk Sylvester, who, later on, in 1919, initiated the all-Russian idea of Antichrist.

CHAPTER XV

Factories of Immorality

SPIRITUAL illiteracy and the home policy of the Government were the causes of endemic famine in Russia. During periods of greatest prosperity one-fifth of the village population was in the clutches of hunger, dying of starvation, of hunger-typhus. Primitive methods of agriculture in districts in which there were no estates belonging to the more cultured gentry, the obstinacy and fear of the peasants of any modern improvements of farming, diminished the crops from year to year and exhausted the soil. No wonder that whole families of peasants were leaving the land and moved into industrial towns to earn their living in factories.

Here, very soon these families were dissolved and scattered over the whole of Russia, losing all contact with each other, never to meet again. Bereft of all moral support, with only a faint stock of religious principles, these people developed into pronounced demoralised representatives of the lowest type of the ragged proletariat, heroes in the Maxim Gorky style. The women particularly sunk to the lowest depths, perished in tap-houses or hospitals from loathsome

diseases, or vanished without trace behind the walls of houses, the doors of which were illuminated by the sinister "red lantern."

The villages even coined a special name for those who went into factories or mines. They called them "posadski," which may mean a thief, a criminal, an adventurer, and a ragamuffin of the suburb.

Sometimes a peasant family struggled hard to stick to the land. Then it sent its members, men and women, as temporary wage-earners into the towns. Rarely, however, did such envoys return home directly. Usually they sent the money and stayed themselves for a long time in the towns. And if they cropped up in the village they brought with them customs and habits alien and hostile to the village, licentiousness of word and gesture, contempt for family traditions, and indifference to religion. With the newcomers and their "European" clothes, hats, silks, and transparent stockings, crept into the life of the villages terrible diseases, which decimated the population and reduced it soon to a state of degeneration. This was a phenomenon which could be observed particularly in the Central Provinces of European Russia.

But really, justice demands that these poisoners of the village should not be condemned too harshly, for it is not they who were so very and exceptionally guilty.

The guilt lay with the Government and society.

I shall draw a few scenes from the life of those

peasant men and women, mostly young and completely inexperienced.

A group of peasants arrived in a big town intending to earn their living; they walked from one factory office to the other, with servile bows begging for work. But this was no easy matter for naïve, half-savage paupers, who were ready to fall at the feet of every factory-watchman, and said their prayers before every holy picture, in fact every framed picture they noticed, who wept aloud or howled in despair. Thus passed days and weeks. In the meantime the entire store of food brought from the village was consumed, the small fund spent after a few days, and so one evening the peasant boys and girls had to pass the night in the streets, hungry, and with despair in their hearts.

But the streets are cold and wet, chilly and fearful, and drive the homeless man where the lights glitter from the windows of the happy "rich." There the bands of paupers throng like moths to the light, to meet the police who are watching that "paupers shall not loiter in clean streets." The next scene takes place in the police station. After a severe passport control, the homeless vagrants are sent, by way of protection, to a night asylum.

When in 1908 I visited these asylums in Petrograd, I thought I had a nightmare, so horrible was all I saw. Already at that time I felt instinctively that out of this dark and foul underworld would come forth some unknown, monstrous avengers. They have come

indeed, to drown Russia in blood and themselves to perish in blood.

But when I described the metropolitan night asylums in one of the popular dailies and in several monthlies, the official press protested violently, and the papers which published my articles were fined.

On the confines of the gigantic city of palaces and luxury, somewhere behind the cemeteries set apart for beggars and suicides, rise in several districts black, massive, prison-like structures of many storeys, void of any adornment, dilapidated, their windows broken and closed up with soiled garments, pierced by projecting, crooked vent-pipes from the iron stoves.

The windows are dark, although it is only nine o'clock in the evening. Over the doors only flickers the yellow flame of a lantern showing beneath the board with the inscription "Night Asylum."

A crowd of dark figures throng in front of the gates, shivering with cold, sobbing, sighing, or weeping silently.

At last the gates open narrowly, and sturdy men admit the wretched few for whom there is still room in the asylum; however, a small coin pressed into the hand of the door-keeper will let in twice the number.

The village paupers have been admitted to the asylum. They are marched with others through dark, mud-covered courtyards, ascend iron stairs, and enter the "office," where their passports are inspected, and where they receive the number of their rooms. At

last they are in a huge, low hall, almost dark. The narrow passage in the centre is evil-smelling, littered with boots, rags, and other footgear of those who a little earlier succeeded in gaining admission.

On both sides of the passage there rise in five tiers, bunklike, wooden benches, which are dirty and bare. The air is close, foul, saturated with smoke and soot from the little iron stove, the smell of petrol from the diminutive, smoking lamp close to the ceiling, with the exhalation of dirty, worn-out, and diseased human bodies.

On the benches, like so many cast-off bundles of rags or broken furniture, were lying human beings, young and old, men and women, the vicious and the virtuous, the profligate and the innocent. . . . Close to a boyish youth, still clinging to life, still able to dream dreams, without complaint and appeals for help, was dying an old tramp, who had stumbled through the last lap of a life which was as dark as this night asylum; into the ears of a young peasant girl, no more than a child, a powerful, drunken, red-faced, and red-haired brute was whispering vile suggestions; at the side of a woman, weeping silently with a sick baby in her arms, was sitting and chanting merry songs a curious character: a monk, to judge by his habit, a regular prison inmate according to his words and actions. . . . And at night . . . at night . . . abominable things took place, which rotted bodies and souls, filled brains with despair, and hearts with hatred.

Regularly every morning the place is raided by the police, which searches and examines documents; some of those caught there are flogged, others dragged to prison, and all terrified and tired out to death.

And thus passes night after night for weeks and months, till the unemployed peasants, with the perfect education of the night asylum, give themselves up to the employer of "black labour." Now they have become familiar with the city; they know how to retort boldly and quickly, have forgotten to bow low, looking insolently straight into people's eyes; they do not uncover their heads before holy images any more; they have a look of hatred and of resignation.

Now they start the true factory life, leading either to prison or back to the village, carrying with it new customs and diseases.

One of the favourite occupations of the peasants who went into the towns to earn their living was the loading of barks and ships and "burlatstvo."

Here it was always possible to make a bare living, and all who wasted long days and weeks in search of work, wandering in hunger and cold through the pitiless streets of the town or through night asylums, were allowed into it. This kind of work had the additional attraction that it was not subjected to law and authority. Man or woman was here a simple beast, like the horse or the mule, to be paid for bodily work, nothing else having any value or mattering anything.

Man, woman, young children formed one straining

and active throng which did work with a quick and powerful movement, almost in a frenzy, in conditions of heat, cold, physical and moral filth, for no legislation has been thought of to protect this mob of occasional workmen, who here to-day, will probably disappear to-morrow.

One beholds here an appalling kaleidoscope of types, a motley chaos of thought and feeling.

A young girl beside a murderer, escaped from prison; a deserter from the monastery, half monk, half vagrant, shoulder to shoulder with an ex-Government official, whom drink has led to the unloading of barks. A Tartar beside a Finn, a buddhist Calmuc beside a regular Orthodox believer, a typical, demobilised, depraved street walker from a great city hand in hand with an illiterate young peasant, who still dreams of lakes and woods of his far-away, sad village.

They load coal, firewood, logs, boards, fruit, barrels of fish or butter. Everything is permitted here except theft, which is severely guarded against. The entire working throng must be working all the time. There is one break only—an hour at noon—during which the workers can feed and rest. Here characters are shaped in their own fashion; here primitive morality is transformed into dissoluteness among human wrecks, one time human beings; here is the recruiting ground of future gaol birds and involuntary settlers in Siberia.

The loading of barks and ships is carried on during the summer, and those hundreds and thousands of

men, women, and children lay out for themselves a camp close to the sea or a river in wood or bush. All are crowded into one mass, where disappear all modesty and bashfulness, all respect of woman, and there remains only a sinister contempt of man for man. Against this background dramas and tragedies of life are enacted; martyred life passes hopelessly from day to day without a morrow, without a future.

Maxim Gorky, Skitaletz, and a number of writers of the realistic school took their subjects from the life of this proletariat, which later on so magnificently supported the Government of Lenin and Trotsky. Thus it happened that a Frantsuzov, an ex-workman from the barks, performed the functions of Minister of Commerce and Industry in Petrograd.

A still more glaring picture of human savagery was presented in the "burlaks," who boast a tradition many centuries old.

"Burlak" is the homeless, outlawed workman, who, possessing no documents or identity because of his past, dares not, for fear of prison, come to town. Thus he is obliged to look for work in some out-of-the-way place, where there will be nobody to ask him for documents or to oblige him to observe the existing laws.

Such places are the great Russian rivers, where the work consists of pulling the cables of the heavy river craft. Hundreds of barks go up the Volga, Oka, Kama, Dnieper, and other rivers,

They are pulled on long cables by teams of burlaks moving slowly along the bank. It is terribly hard work. From early spring till late autumn the burlaks march, drawing the cable of the heavy bark, which cuts into their arms, chests, and shoulders; they will march sometimes singing with hoarse voices weird lays of olden times, of the famous robbers Pugachov, Rasin, Yermak, and Kolets.

Here, within the crowds of the burlaks, was born and gathered strength that unquenchable hatred of all organised society, of Law, and Church, and State.

Once upon a time the brotherhood of burlaks brought forth famous leaders who became the terror of the main Russian trade route: the Volga, whom their followers, anarchists by nature, crowned with the halo of the "avengers of the people." During the Red Revolution this revenge found its executioners among those whose shoulders and chests still bore traces of the "lamka," that cable-loop which for hundreds of years was dragged by the burlaks.

The terror of it all! While all these burlaks, lords of the sea, witches, wizards, sorcerers, and pagans, who shed the blood of the black ram or cock, spread among the ignorant Russian people licence, hatred, and lawlessness, in the capitals, the Imperial Court, nobility, bankers, and higher clergy led a gay and glittering life, of which Europe knew nothing. The scientists wrote epoch-making books, Russian diplomatists at foreign courts enhanced the charm of the Russian name, learn-

ing, art, and production, while Tolstoy, the impotent semi-philosopher and semi-romanticist, with his own peculiar Slavic psychology, proclaimed the philosophy of "not opposing evil."

Such contrasts were Russia, but none was willing or able to see them, just as at the present moment none of the civilised countries is willing to behold behind the lofty slogans of Communistic Socialism the million graves of innocent victims who were sacrificed in bloody hecatombs for the greater glory of the new faith.

CHAPTER XVI

Woman and the Child

TURGENIEV, Nekrasov, Pushkin, Gucharov, and Pezmantov enriched literature with wonderful types of Russian womanhood. But in the west of Europe people did not pay any attention to the fact that the women thus presented were of ancient noble families, of houses living the civilised life of the West, where French culture was supreme and even exclusive.

But now, other giants of Russian literature, Feodor Dostoyevski, and the painter of the petty bourgeosie, Antony Chehov, or the apologist of peasant morality, Leo Tolstoy, draw an entirely different picture.

The woman of the Russian middle class was a "typeless" individual. She had no place left in Russian humanity. From the point of view of civilised man she was dispossessed of wider human rights, while her spiritual needs were symbolised in the "drab fence" of Chehov's tale as a colourless, soulless life: a drunken, or mentally demented husband, a petty provincial official, proud of his rank and uniform, her narrow-minded and old-fashioned folks, little-town gossip, lazy, bourgeois flirtations, which ended in nothing but shame and disgust, without the shadow of a drama.

In such an atmosphere of discontent and bitterness, in vain search of adventure, which was to render that grey, soul-killing life endurable, the Russian woman had to bring up her children. What was to be their lot? We find the answer in the works of the Russian authors.

The boys will grow to become "heads of families" or revolutionaries.

The girls will become beings of the same "typeless" type, waiting and complaining of life—capable only of bearing beings after their own image, without will, at best women capable only of a passive protest, or martyrs whose martyrdom remains unknown to anybody, and therefore passes without leaving a trace.

When Dostoyevski painted this apocalyptic picture of Russia, finding in the Russian society so many "fiends" and "antichrists," he allotted to woman one rôle only, that of victim to man's passion, or victim to his perverted, unbalanced, and confused endeavours and strivings. Thus the mad whirl of life carried to fathomless moral depths or to death those impotent beings dispossessed of will, who were the mothers and wives of the Russian middle class.

Tolstoy, again, presents the peasant woman either as a semi-heathen enchanted with the mystery of nature's secrets which are unknown to her, or as a benighted criminal, or as one of a million of females of a still bestial species.

It may be that just this position of the Russian

woman drove her so often into the bloodstained, fiery embrace of revolution, into Bolshevik madness and its abominably cruel revenge, or into those extreme associations or groups which are entirely outside even Soviet law.

It may be this position made the woman generally an easy prey to man, a being not desirous of tenderness of feeling, but only of excitement, and the easiest way of self-forgetfulness.

The heroism, high courage, and magnanimity of the Russian woman are the instinctive protest against such enslavement, against such degradation to the position of a mere factor, an outlaw in the social and national life.

At present, under Soviet rule, having obtained the rights of a "human being and citizen," woman was torn from the family frame, compelled to hard work equal to that of man, carried away by the whirl which tossed her on the men, who more and more lose the sense of respect for the woman that becomes gradually "socialised."

"The decree on the Nationalisation of Women," never passed by the Soviet Government, was enforced by the life created by the Soviets. For, deprived of the moral support of a father, a husband, or a brother, compelled to send her children to the Communistic asylum—because having no time and no means to keep them, she hands them over to the "children's asylum of the Third International"—disillusioned in her old-

fashioned ideals of morality, having lost the sense of womanly dignity, she subjects herself to the regulations of the non-issued decree, the news of which perturbed and revolted the whole world. And the world is still unaware that, although never passed, the decree is enforced in Russian life.

In the villages the life of the peasant woman is one long round of cruel treatment at the hands of a drunken or savage husband, who uses infamous and disgraceful language, and thrashes her almost to death.

The children lose their respect for their mother, they deny her all moral authority, and when they grow up they begin to insult and beat her, forgetting that all her life she was thrashed like a dog by the father, the head of the family, the lord and master.

It is sure that nowhere else is the gulf separating parents and children so impassable as in Russia. If in the educated classes this may be explained by the progress of learning and intellectual advancement, in the villages its cause is patent to every observer; it is the decay of morality amongst the younger generations.

Having lived in Tsarist and later on in Soviet Russia, I have had the opportunity of observing such a decline of morality among the workmen and peasant youth, that I could not, without offending the ethical sense of my readers, describe adequately the terribly filthy, abominably criminal life of the Russian youth, which will replace the present generation in the social

and national life, and which constitutes a terrible menace, not only to the Russian nation, but to the whole world.

The Russian Government never cared to penetrate the depths of the national masses. Indeed, almost like fairy tales are the articles of the well-known Russian publicist, Kondurishkin, who in 1917 brought to light sensational revelations of the villages and settlements in European Russia and in Siberia which have never seen any representative of the Russian Government or Church.

Thus from such villages and settlements spring aboriginal prejudices, superstitions, and witchcraft, which, in the mass of people naturally inclined to dark and gloomy mysticism, quickly spread and became fixed, casting a shadow of mediæval, elemental romanticism, which took crude, primitive, unchristian, and anti-civilised forms.

How else can we explain happenings like those which I remember well from the experience of my younger years?

In the little town of Borovicha, in the province of Novgorod, lived the notorious Pieta, an elderly man imbecile from childhood, but obsessed by a peculiar religious mania, who used to go about summer and winter barefooted and bareheaded, in a thin and dirty linen garment. He used to go about praying hours on end in front of every church or holy ikon, chanting merry tunes and playing with a few splinters which

he kept thrusting into his long, dishevelled hair and beard.

Crowds of boys and girls would chase him, pulling his beard or shirt, throwing stones and sneering at him. Then Pieta would run away, making his pursuers laugh by his strange leaps, exciting them to new, often malicious, and cruel jokes.

During one of these retreats he led his youthful tormentors out of the town, and, hidden in a big haystack, he began to bark like a dog. The children, unable to get him to come out, crawled one after the other into the passage which Pieta had made in the haystack. The madman had only waited for this, for then in a moment the stack blazed forth in a huge flame, in which the children perished together with Pieta.

The Government, instead of taking care of such dangerous lunatics, allowed them to go about free. They were considered to be "God's people," respected by the pious peasants and townsmen, jeered at and persecuted by the young.

People suffering from epilepsy and hysteria are also greatly respected amongst the half-educated classes. Hysterical woman, or the so-called "klikushas," are regarded as particularly godly beings. During their attacks, when the unfortunate women were raving in convulsions, shouting, laughing, cursing, and weeping alternatively, the "initiated" were making auguries and forebodings on the incoherent words uttered by the irresponsible wretches. The "klikushas" sometimes

played a political part even during the ancient regime. Several of these sick women, brought from various parts of the Empire, played such a part even at Tsarskoye Selo in the apartments of the mystically minded Empress Alexandra. Under the Soviets everything remained as it was. The epileptics, hysterics, and "klikushas" received the right of revenge, not only against children, but also against the bourgeoisie, and often they were put in charge of the "workshops of revenge" run by the Chekas.

Those epileptics and hysterio-maniacs were the children of women who had been daily thrashed by their drunken husbands, or who complained all their lives of their "forlorn fate," bewailing their sad lot. Incapable of, and unwilling to work, they could not find any escape out of the impossible conditions of a life which they hated with all the might of their pitiful souls.

The well-known Russian pathologists and psychologists, Bechtierev, Miezeyevski, Karpinski, and Wedenski, maintained that the terrifying number of abnormal people in Russia was the result of the abnormal life of the wives and mothers of Russia.

And in Soviet Russia, under the influence of the horror of terrorism and the impossible, inhuman conditions of life in that "freest of all countries," the number of pathological cases reached 4.8 millions in 1919, exactly as much as the total population of some of the smaller European States.

CHAPTER XVII

Death of the Romanovs and the Mystical Movement

MONARCHIST circles strenuously uphold the rumour that the Tsar and his heir have been saved from a bolshevik prison. But this is a purely political speculation and an apocryphal legend. The evidence collected during Kolchak's rule by Sir George Elliot and a special Commission of Inquiry, my conversations in Omsk with the imprisoned soldiers who were present at the execution of the Imperial family, and my meeting with the brother of the actual executioner, Yurkovski, at Tientsin, have dispelled all doubts I ever had as to the execution of the whole family of the Tsar.

I may venture on a slight digression from my immediate subject in order to quote Yurkovski's story, which completely corroborated all that the soldiers confessed who had guarded the Tsar's prison, and were arrested by Kolchak in Yekaterinburg.

"Moscow sent the order to liquidate the Romanovs," related Yurkovski to me, "but this had to be managed in such a way as to throw the whole responsibility on the local Yekaterinburg Soviet, which was to keep up

the appearance of acting independently, and passing the sentence upon the Tsar's family on their own account. The arrangement of the whole affair was left to my brother. He visited the volunteer detachment of the Third International and announced that the local Cheka passed sentence of death on the Tsar and his family, and that on this very day the volunteers could take vengeance on the Tsar for the sufferings of the people. But the volunteers remained silent, and not one amongst them was willing to do the deed. In short, the same scene was repeated as that which took place when the Moscow Soviet desired to have the Tsar executed in Tobolsk. Thereupon my brother, taking with him a number of Letts and Hungarians, went to the Ipatiev house, turned into a prison for the Tsar's family, and informed the Tsar that, together with his wife and children, he was to be transferred without delay to the cellars of the building. The Tsar received the news with indifference, but his family were terrified; they burst into tears, cries, and prayers. My brother succeeded in calming them by saying that the garrison of Yekaterinburg had mutinied, and demanded the death of the Romanovs; that the Soviet had refused the demand, and to save the lives of the prisoners, had decided to lodge them in the cellar. The Empress and her daughters quickly composed themselves and thanked my brother, pressing his hand in gratitude. When the Imperial prisoners were in the cellar, they were informed of their doom, and my

brother immediately gave the command to fire. But not one of the soldiers dared to obey. Thereupon my brother pulled out his pistol and shot the Tsar. There followed a disordered fusilade, after which only the Empress remained alive. Mortally wounded, she lifted herself from the floor, caught hold of a pillow from the bed, and, hiding behind it, burst into a terrible scream. The only Russian soldier among the Letts and Magyars finished her off by driving his bayonet through the pillow into her bosom. At daybreak the bodies were cut to pieces, transported into the woods, drenched with petrol and burnt."

This was the story related to me by the brother of Yurkovski, a member of the Yekaterinburg College of the "Cheka," and the murderer of the Imperial family.

It is amazing that in spite of such conclusive evidence of the death of the Romanovs, there still thrives in Monarchist circles the mystical belief that the last of the Tsars has been saved, that he still troubles his heart over the fate of his country, firmly believing in the conversion of his "beloved people," which meantime has concentrated all its energies upon the annihilation of civilisation and all moral values, of Holy Russia itself. The land of the Tsars has since a few years become a geographical expression, a no-man's land, peopled by a mob of anarchists who are destroying even the poor remnants of their intelligence, their culture, their title to the very name of Man.

No wonder that while the Socialist-emigrés, mu-

tually opposing each other, still dream of the Socialist paradise . . . only without the Lenins, the Trotskys, and the Cheka . . . the Russian intelligentsia are devouring the pages of the Apocalypse, looking there for the future destinies of Russia. It is an appalling symptom of impotence, utter weakness, and dangerous obsession.

This apocalyptic movement originated under the influence of Rasputin. Not that that mysterious adventurer had propagated it. On the contrary! Some eminent dignitaries of the Orthodox Church began to consider Rasputin as the Antichrist. When the first revolution broke out, and the intensified anti-dynastic and anti-social movement pointed to the catastrophe in Russia, the study of the "revelations of Saint John" turned almost into a mania, which later on became a vogue and a proof of "spiritual aristocracy." Four men were the leaders of the anti-State ideology: Prince John, the son of the Grand Duke Constantin; the Archbishop of Omsk, Sylvester; the Bishop of Novgorod, Yewdokim; and the Bishop of Tobolsk, Pimen.

Grand Duke John was a very interesting figure. A Christian mysticist, engrossed in the study of canonical books of the ancient eastern rite, a man with distinct tendencies towards asceticism, he was a severe critic of the depraved life at Tsarskoye Selo. He was a welcome and honoured guest among the circles cultivating Christian mysticism, and he was reverenced by

the clergy, dreaming himself of a monk's habit, but the constant object of mockery in Court circles. The Minister of the Interior, Nicholas Maklakov, had chosen him for the special butt of his wit. And Maklakov's anecdotes, jokes, and funny stories were really responsible for their author's career, and for his appointment as Minister of the Interior during the dangerous period of general unrest.

Prince John was inscribed in the "black list" of the Court, kept diligently by the all-powerful Commander of the Tsarskoye Selo, and the alter ego of Count Frederics General Woyeykov. He was always absent from Court receptions, but frequented with pleasure the drawing-rooms of the liberally or mystically minded members of the educated classes. It is an interesting fact that when the Orthodox Church contemplated the establishment of a Patriarchate for the defence and strengthening of the Eastern Greek ritual, and for combating Catholicism, the young Prince John was first mentioned as the candidate for the patriarchal see. The revolution frustrated all these plans, and Prince John was murdered by the Bolsheviks at Alapayevsk.

The Bishop Yevdokim was an equally interesting and a much more prominent personality. Of peasant origin, he was a man of great education and tremendous will-power, an ascetic resembling the sacerdotal giants of the first centuries of Christendom, but with narrow, sectarian ideas. Yevdokim enjoyed an

enormous influence in his diocesan district, and his fame travelled far and wide. Being one of the leaders in the struggles against Antichrist, he secured such a great following that he remained at his post even after the advent of the Bolsheviks, who feared him more than the Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia Tikhon. In 1921 Yevdokim all of a sudden started a campaign for the purpose of applying treasures belonging to the churches and monasteries to the relief of the hunger-stricken population of Russia. His agitation met with complete success. The Soviet Government at once entered into close relations with the author of a scheme so helpful to the Communist bankrupts. Yevdokim undertook to collaborate with the Soviets. But it was not a change of views or any humanitarian designs which prompted him to assist the Soviets, crumbling under the weight of economic confusion. Yevdokim simply took recourse to the approved Russian method of provocation. The Bishop understood that the Bolsheviks feared only one power still remaining in Russia, which was the influence of the Church. After the outbreak of the October revolution, they scrupulously avoided to tread on this dangerous ground. It was necessary to provoke the persecution of the Church.

Assured of the help of Bishop Yevdokim, the Bolsheviks requisitioned the treasures and estates of the Church; gradually they grew bolder and proceeded to simple robberies. The popes and the parishioners resisted. The outcome was a struggle, severe sentences,

and bloody battles, which was imitated in numerous other districts. Thus the idea of fighting in defence of the Church against the "servants of Antichrist" spread. The Soviets remained the victors. Bishop Yevdokim first, and then the Patriarch Tikhon himself, submitted to the Soviets and became their faithful partisans, offending the people, the Church, and the Russian emigrés. The idea of struggling for the Church was extinguished like all the other lofty watchwords of Russia.

CHAPTER XVIII

Black Ravens

SUCH was the name given to the Orthodox clergy by the Russian playwright, Protopopov, in one of his plays.

Black habits and black souls! . . .

It was the least intelligent class of the people which supplied the recruits for the future spiritual shepherds of the nation. The candidates for priestly positions acquired their knowledge in seminaries established by the Holy Synod, the most idiotic and demoralising institutions, which educated rather for police work than ecclesiastical service. They regarded their profession simply as the means of securing an easy and comfortable life, which allowed them to save a little money, to indulge openly in drink, and secretly in prostitution. The parsons were always at the service of the Government, the police, the Holy Synod. They were indifferent or hostile to their parishioners, exploiting them without acknowledging the bonds that united them with the people, from whom they had sprung, and to whom they themselves belonged by origin and culture. Thus had the Synod alienated the souls of the

peasant-pastors from those of the peasant-tillers of the soil.

Among the popes and monks there were men of profound knowledge, but even they were enmeshed in the toils of the Government, which knew how to use them skilfully. Such ecclesiastics worked among the educated radicals, among the aristocratic opposition and liberal bureaucracy. They, too, were the agents of the Government. And if one of them dared to propagate not the official, but the genuine mysticism of the Christian Church, then he soon felt the heavy and ruthless hand of the Holy Synod and the provincial Governor; he had either to leave his post for ever or to submit. The official Russian Church, directed by the Synod or the Ministry of the Orthodox Church employed the popes and monks to fight socialism, anarchism, liberalism, the progress of true learning; to combat Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Mahommedanism, Buddhism, and Sectarianism; the hand of the Church was in the struggle against Tolstoy and other writers, opposing parliamentary institutions; often the clergy were employed for various political purposes, as the mouthpiece of popular expressions of devotion and loyalty to the dynasty, or as instrument for the organisation of pogroms of the Jews, Poles, and Tartars, and for political provocation.

The figures of the popes, Vostorgov, Gapon, Bishop Makar, and others, will for ever cast their terrible shadow upon the realities of Russian life.

Vostorgov, an inspired speaker and demagogue, travelled from one end of the country to the other agitating for the extermination of all who showed the slightest sympathy with revolution. Here and there he succeeded in creating disturbances during which much blood was shed, and in which perished the progressive youth of the universities, professors, and publicists.

Under the influence of Vostorgov families were destroyed whose son or brother was a student. That was in 1905. But even to this day lives the terrible phrase which was used in Moscow by the outlawed fiends stirred up by Vostorgov: "Beat him—his brother is a student."

Vostorgov incited the Petersburg and Moscow butchers who wrought pogroms of students in 1899 and 1905.

Makar, the Bishop of Tomsk, who subsequently became Metropolitan of Moscow, met the mob which, led by gendarmes, marched towards the theatre where a political meeting was being held. Makar delivered speeches attacking the educated classes and "blessing the deeds about to be done." They were accomplished in less than an hour afterwards, when the mangled bodies of a score of eminent politicians—amongst them the well-known engineer Klonowski—lay under the burning ruins of the Tomsk theatre.

The pope Fomin in the province of Perm, a drunken profligate who devoted his life to the exploitation of

the peasants, persuaded his parishioners, during an epidemic of cholera, that "the disease was cast into the river" by the local doctor (who was a Socialist), teacher, and veterinary surgeon, in order to destroy the village population. He did this because these men protested against the demoralising conduct of the pope, who usually celebrated Mass in a state of complete intoxication, and preached impossible sermons. A crowd of raving peasants dragged them out from their homes and literally tore them to pieces.

Not much better were the Metropolitans of Petersburg and Kiev, and the higher Court clergy, if for their personal comfort and earthly honours they felt happy in the presence of the "sacred" scoundrel, Rasputin, or agreed humbly with the opinions of the sinister Pobedonoscev, and the charlatan Prince Putiatin, when these two worthies invented new saints, arranged miracles on their graves, and intended even to consecrate as a saint during her lifetime the widow of the Grand Duke Sergius—the Empress's sister Elisabeth—who became the prioress of a Moscow convent.

After the Bolshevik revolution, Elisabeth, together with other nuns, was murdered, and her corpse disappeared. Some years afterwards, in 1921, when I was in Japan, I learned that a monk had concealed the coffin containing her body, transported it secretly across Russia and Siberia to Japan, from here to Jerusalem, where, it is alleged, the coffin was to be buried.

The most honourable and remunerative work of the

clergy was by common assent that of the missions among the Mongolian natives of the Russian borderlands, and among the Sectarians.

Bishop Makar, whom I mentioned before, especially distinguished himself as the head of the Altay missions in the Siberian province of Tomsk. In this immense mountainous country the Orthodox faith was spread among Tartars, who were partly Mahommedans, partly Shamanists, and it was done so successfully that the Governor of the province, the German Tobizen, was obliged to draw the attention of the Petersburg Government to the "inadmissible methods" of religious propaganda, which consisted in alcoholic intoxication of the natives, who were being baptised in a state of complete ebriety. The Governor pointed out in his reports that the autochthonous population was being pauperised and decimated under the influence of this "Christian spirit."

The missionaries used to convert with money, clothes, boots, or rifles the Tartars on the Volga, the Cheremis and Votyaks on the Kama, and the Kalmucks in the Caspian steppes, boasting of the great numbers of converts, without being in the least concerned when these "new Christians" put the crosses alongside the old gods, made of wood or clay, and said their prayers simultaneously to both the God of the Christians and the pagan idols with equal and ignorant zeal.

In the north-east of Siberia the Orthodox missionaries also used spirits for their propaganda, and when

they had driven all the natives into the pale they left. But propaganda by alcohol continued to spread, and a few years after large encampments of nomads could be met with, whose sites were marked by the remains, half devoured by wolves and dingos, of Orthodox believers, who, having drunk themselves into oblivion, were frozen to death in the boreal darkness of the polar night.

Another branch of the missionaries was active among the Sectarians, particularly among the adepts of the old, unreformed Orthodoxy, or the so-called "old believers." The bishops and the theologians of the "old faith" are well-read men, capable of holding their own in a philosophical discussion, and only the ablest and most eloquent missionaries were entrusted with propaganda amongst them. The rhetorical combats, carried on usually with great passion, were of long duration, and the official monks and pastors had usually the worst of them. The learned of the "old faith" invariably gained a moral victory. But the missionaries had their remedies ready. They selected some corrupt members of the "old believers'" community, with whose help they organised illegal meetings, conferences, speeches, when the most dangerous and irreconcilable opponents could be arrested and deported, either to the north of European Russia or to Siberia.

CHAPTER XIX

Old Gods in Christian Worship

WHILE hunting in the provinces of Novgorod in the forests round the railway station of Luban, I was staying for a time in the little village of Marjino. Not very far away from the village was the estate of the Princes Golitzin, descendants of the Ruriks, one of the oldest aristocratic families in Russia.

One evening my host, a peasant of the name of Basil Batonin, whispered mysteriously into my ear:

"Do you want to come and see the 'radenye' (serice) of the Chlysts?"

I knew that the Chlysts are Sectarians, and that their "radenya," or religious mysteries, are distinguished by particular savagery, so I agreed to accompany my host out of sheer curiosity.

It was already nine o'clock in the evening, and the dark autumnal night had come on.

Leaving home, we went in the direction of the ducal estate. My host led me into a large, rough-looking hut at the back of the courtyard.

The huge hall was sunk in dusk, as it was lighted only with seven wax candles placed along the walls. The atmosphere was suffocating with close on a hundred

people; men and women, grown-ups and mere youths, many little girls amongst them, were crowded into the room. At its far end was placed a table covered with a white sheet, upon which I noticed in the light of a solitary candle a holy picture blackened with age, a large holy water-pot, and a thick volume bound in a wooden cover.

Near the table, which represented an altar, stood a powerfully built peasant, whose long, black hair was girdled over the forehead with a narrow leather strap, and whose patriarchal beard was neatly trimmed.

As soon as the crowd formed in even ranks, and the noise of trampling feet and whispers were silenced, the sturdy peasant read out from the book some ancient Slav text, making signs of the cross over his brow and bosom, kneeling down and bowing to the ground after each sign. I noticed that his movements became every time quicker and more violent, and that the eyes of the congregation were fastened with intent on the "priest." Suddenly the latter leaped to his feet, and exclaiming, "Pray ye, and offer sacrifice," he snatched from a heap of sticks in the corner of the room a rod (in Russian: chlyst), with which he began to beat his head and shoulders. When the rod cut the air with a whizz I was reminded of the bloody mysteries of the dervishes which I had witnessed in Turkey and the Crimea. Meanwhile the "priest" threw off his coat and shirt, uncovering himself to the waist. The beating with the rod increased in speed and strength. His back was

entirely covered with wheals, till blood gushed out and poured down his back in red streaks. At this sight the whole crowd, including my host, snatched the rods from the heap. A mass beating began. The sharp whizzing of the tough and pliant rod mingled with the heavy pantings and groans of the crowd, who began to tear off their clothes in order to reach the height of torture.

The "priest," lashing himself unceasingly, began to turn round on one leg. Others at once started to imitate him, and in a few moments the whole crowd was whirling round, hitting one another, stuttering and shouting with groans that had a weird and yearning sound.

After a short time some sank down exhausted, and at last the "priest" himself fell to the ground, but others leaped and leaped and turned round, trampling upon the bodies scattered on the floor.

The air was thick with vapour, the exhalations of perspiring bodies tired to death, the smell of boots and dirty clothing. Someone blew out the candles, leaving only the one burning on the altar-table. I could barely see the half-naked male and female bodies in a heap, exhausted, imbrued with blood, almost dead.

Such was the "radenye."

I do not know on which texts of the Scriptures a sect of such unwholesome mind and morals could build its tenets. I think its origins could be traced to the Apocryphal books, which for a long time were accumu-

lated in great numbers in the Christian Byzantine Empire, to which Russia was always linked by close moral and religious ties.

The sect of the "floggers" spread particularly during the reign of Tsar Paul I, when it penetrated not only into the houses of the rich merchants, but also of the aristocracy and into the Court. The Commander of Paul's palace, where the Tsar was afterwards strangled by his courtiers, was with all his family a confessor of this sect. The story of his conversion still exists.

He had a very beautiful daughter, who had strong religious inclinations. The "floggers" resolved to take advantage of this side of her character to gain her adherence to their sect. Through her they expected to win for themselves as many influential people at the Imperial Court as possible, as the rumour had spread of measures about to be taken which pointed to approaching persecutions.

The son of a rich merchant, a member of the sect, was sent to the young girl. The young man was good-looking, and having been introduced, he made himself much liked, and became a standing visitor in the Commander's house. One evening, speaking of the floggers, he allured her imagination, and invited her to come and see the Sectarian mysteries. The young merchant was himself the "priest." His religious ecstasy, his inspired voice, and handsome appearance evidently impressed the young lady all the stronger, as the circumstances were extraordinary and mysterious.

She was carried away in rapturous excitement when the young "priest" began the ritual dance. He turned round with such speed that it was impossible to discern his face, and increased the rapidity of his movements to such a degree that the current of air he made extinguished all the candles.

Notwithstanding the young lady's accession to the sect, and her bringing in with her her family and many members of the aristocracy, Paul I instituted a cruel and pitiless persecution of the "floggers"; they were beaten to death in public squares to the accompaniment of military drums, exiled to Siberia, tortured in prisons. Since then the sect has almost disappeared from the capital cities, although I remember that in 1911 there were discovered in Petersburg mysteries of the "floggers" who were members of the merchant class and the aristocracy.

They are most numerous in the provinces of Yaroslav, Saratov, and Ujim, where the most prominent priests of this sect live and hide in the houses of rich merchants.

There exists in Russia another, perhaps still more immoral sect.

When one visited in Moscow or Petersburg those quarters of the town where the small Russian money-changing counters were, one was struck by the yellow, faded, sleepy, and hairless faces of the stout, womanly-shaped men.

They were the owners of the exchange offices, small bankers, who formed almost a separate caste.

They are all "skoptsy," confessors of a special sect, which taught that mankind should exist as long as human society contained men who would, of their own free will, deprive themselves of the capability of perpetuating their race. And so long Antichrist would not be able to descend upon the earth.

They call themselves the "white doves," which means the innocent. Some become "skoptsy" in their infancy, others at a mature age. In families which have belonged to this sect for centuries, there always must be a "white dove." And if no member of the family consents to become one, then with complete disregard of expense, the "skoptsy" persuades some outsider to enter the sect and to receive the "seal of the white dove."

The police and the courts in Russia have paid very keen attention to these activities which were severely punished, although the perpetuation of "geldings" within traditionally sectarian families was tolerated.

The provinces of Yaroslav and Kostroma, from which all these rich bankers with yellow and faded faces came, were for centuries the seat of this sect.

The religious origins of the sect are unknown to me, but I am bound to say that in the most ascetic Orthodox monasteries there exists a sinister, mediæval custom of receiving "the great seal," when the friar sub-

mits to the operation which deprives him of his manhood.

Thus it would appear to be some primeval remnant of ancient worship, perhaps of Brahminism or Dervishism, perhaps of even older cults of Egypt and Babylon. In the worships of Astarte and Izis can be discovered traces of similar rituals, which have permeated Christianity and are so glaringly expressed in the "skoptsy."

This sect suffered many severe persecutions at the hands of the Government, but always succeeded in saving itself from most trying circumstances, and owed its salvation to the large funds accumulated in families belonging to the creed.

They are slow, quiet, wise men, with great cunning and commercial cleverness. But they are also vindictive, malignant, and despise those who do not belong to them.

The first "skoptsy" existed as early as the first century of our era, and the "seal of the white dove" has never disappeared from Christendom, but it is only in the Eastern Church that it has lasted until the twentieth century. During the reign of Paul I these Sectarians were energetically suppressed, and many families were exiled to Siberia, as far as the Yakut country, the coldest part of Siberia, where the soil thaws only six inches deep during the short summer.

I have been to those scowling places of exile and torment, for it was here that Russian Governments

dumped for long years the most dangerous revolutionary agitators. It is a country of virgin forests, immense rivers, and unexplored marshes. But there also exist oases of culture. They were founded by the "skoptsy," exiled there during the time of Paul I. They adapted themselves to the climatic conditions, and learned to raise crops of potatoes and grain, having by careful selection cultivated special species of these cereals. In the Yakut country they developed cattle breeding most successfully. And they refuse to return to Russia, although they were amnested long ago, because they find it easier in Siberia to maintain the traditions of the sect, which have there their Mecca, their spiritual centre.

CHAPTER XX

The Simplest of All Gods

SOME years ago all Russia was aroused by the news which spread of a sinister sect of "self-incendiaries." At their head were the brothers Rakitsky, who had come to Russia from the Balkans. They worked in the southern provinces of Russia, particularly in the province of Yekaterinoslav, and succeeded in gathering round them a considerable number, over five hundred followers.

Their tenets were simple: Antichrist has descended upon earth and is sowing seeds of sin, which bring forth every year larger and ever more terrible crops. The people are sinking in the morass of evil. Nothing can save them but men's own, voluntarily given, blood of sacrifice. Or, in other words, it was a sect of suicides, demanding of its professors the termination of their own lives for the good of others.

This unhealthy propaganda lasted for a good many years. The authorities had no knowledge of it till a score of men, with one of the brothers Rakitsky at their head, amid chanting pious songs, set fire to the farmhouse in which they were congregated and perished in the flames.

The police made inquiries, which led to startling discoveries of the progress made by "self-incendiaries." The other brother was arrested, condemned to hard labour and deported to Saghalien; but, while still in prison, he poured over him the contents of a petroleum lamp, set fire to himself, and expired in the prison hospital.

There was another sect of a similar kind and founded on similar religious grounds by Stephen Kolesnikov. I had the chance of becoming personally acquainted with this group.

Kolesnikov established himself in the province of Perm. His faithful followers cut their throats amid prayers. After several suicides had been discovered, Kolesnikov was imprisoned, sentenced, and deported to Saghalien. But he succeeded in escaping from there, and hiding from the authorities, lived for years in the province of Tomsk, migrating from one locality to the other.

All these sects have in any case a certain historical or canonical foundation. But in the north of Russia there exists a sect whose origin cannot be explained on such grounds.

I came across it in the northern part of the Perm province.

I saw a great gathering of peasants, of benighted, half-savage, illiterate men, exhausted by their struggle with hard, inexorable nature; there they stood, lazily and apathetically gazing at a wall of uncouth logs

stopped with moss. I am sure their minds were blank, unless they were thinking of bread and brandy. But after a while, one of the peasants came up to the wall and began to bore a hole in it. He drilled the log through, and slowly, cautiously, and unctuously unscrewed the drill backward.

This done, together with the others he fell on his knees and yelled with a heart-rending voice:

"O, hole of ours, O, sacred hole! Help us!"

And for hours they kept imploring the hole in the log.

Who was it that invented this simplest of all gods—a hole? Who was the founder, the prophet of this savage, idiotic sect, terrible in its madness and darkness?

No one has ever inquired into this question, but now, after many years have passed away, it seems to me that perhaps I am on the track of the solution of this riddle.

For in the northern territories of Russia the wintry night lasts for months. The sun disappears, everything becomes cold, hopeless, sick with an unknown yearning in the dark cottages with windows filled in with thick bladder instead of glass, covered with a sheet of ice, and snowed over as high as the thatched roof. Through a hole drilled in the wall a streak of moonlight enters; not even a beam of light, but perhaps only the faintly perceptible glimmer of its shine

with which all nature, ice, snow, clouds, and stones are enveloped and enwrapped.

Is it possible that this hole in the wall and this scarcely noticeable gleam reminds those prisoners of the night of the moment of the appearance of the sun?

The birth of the sun! The myth of Helios! A myth in the primitive, arctic night-like, gloomy form. A different form for different men. For it is the country of forlorn tribes whom God and men have forsaken!

CHAPTER XXI

The Devil's Feast

ALWAYS and ever during the Christian era Russia, having accepted the cross as her emblem, has maintained in the customs of her sects the ancient pagan ritual, and has desired instinctively, even subconsciously, from motives hidden in the depth of the souls of those tribes which live amid forests, fields, and mountains, and preserve in their blood so many elements inherited from the primitive nomads—to preserve some link with the "old gods," who, it seemed, perished long ago, annihilated either by the hand of man or the grinding of time.

So it was even in the final period of the Russian Empire of the Tsars, when the Court of St. Petersburg impressed the whole world, when civilised Europe was charmed by the refined Russian aristocracy and intelligentsia, by Russian literature, art, the Russian village described in such poetic words by Tolstoy, when the soul of the Russian people was the subject of animated discussions and studied in the best types of the educated classes, of the learned world, of the novelists, and of soldiers of the Imperial Guard.

None of the foreign visitors penetrated into the

gloom of the Russian countryside, where side by side with the pagan nomads swarmed great and varied multitudes of "fiends."

At last the new age has come of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of communism, and sovietism, of the all-powerful, blood-soaked Soviets, at the head of which appeared individuals stripped of religion, prejudice, traditions, old pagan and more recent pagan customs. There has come the rule of materialistic thought, the authority of speculative philosophy, the efforts for the well-being of the body! There is no soul, there is only a "vapour"! Thus spoke the old, scarcely literate, obscure Russian nihilists who left their workshops, mines, or prisons. Thus spoke also, although in another rhetorical form, the "People's Commissars" and dictators while liberating from the bodies of millions of Russians this "vapour."

There has thus arrived the era of profound and true rationalism and radicalism. One would think, therefore, that all religious sects, worships, and prejudices had disappeared from the horizon, that all those wizards, sorcerers, witches, and priests of the old gods had been compelled to put a violent end to their obscure lives.

But reality presents an entirely different picture.

Never before flourished in such fame and such glory the powerful mystic charms of the Church. Never before have the once secret Sectarian temples attained to such power, have the mysteries of the "floggers"

been frequented by such multitudes, has the "seal of the white dove" been preserved with such precision, the simple, fatigued, and hungry folk thronged so passionately to the wizards, and last, but not least, never before has sorcery had such amazing success and importance in the life of the whole Russian nation.

The Orthodox churches are overflowing with pious multitudes praying and invoking the help of the Almighty, not for themselves, but for the country. Persecution and blasphemous mockery frighten them no more. It often happened that the Bolsheviks rushed a church, shouting wildly, and trying to terrify and disperse those that were praying. But in vain. There was no panic, and the crowds did not even turn their heads at the reports of the fusillades. At such moments one was able to understand that Russia has been seized by a mystical readiness to submit to the death of martyrdom for the redemption of future generations.

During the Easter service in 1918 the Bolsheviks in Moscow burst into the church where the All-Russian Patriarch himself celebrated Mass. Not a single member of the congregation moved; one of the Communists shot at the Patriarch and wounded his arm. The Patriarch did not heed the pain; he continued praying till the time came when he turned, the congregated flock intoning the joyful song, "Christ has risen from the dead." It is impossible to describe the enthusiasm and the ecstasy with which the crowds were seized.

The Bolsheviks understood the position and left the church without delay.

A similar mood of religious excitement prevails among all sects.

The professors of the old faith have become even more cautious in their relations with people of other beliefs; in the villages of the old believers there reigns an even stricter discipline and severer morality; the most famous bishops and priests of this sect were invited from abroad for the defence of the flock against the moral poison of the Soviets; the old believers have withdrawn their youth from the Red Army, willingly paying high taxes instead. The churches and chapels have been filled with the pious in expectation of Satan, whose servants have already sown the deadly seeds of sin and perdition.

The "floggers" count in hundreds of thousands the members of their sect, which gives them the means of forgetting, of lifting themselves above the unbearable conditions of life, created by the Soviets, of taking some active, physical part in the driving away of Satan, the echo of whose heavy step is heard everywhere.

But the "floggers" no longer smite themselves with birch or aspen sticks; they flog themselves with twisted wires or iron, red-hot rods.

"More torment, more self-affliction of the body, more blood!"—thus the priests of the sect incite them, "and the combat with Satan will be more fruitful and perhaps lead to victory, after which peace and happi-

ness will rule over the earth soaked in blood and infected with sin."

Bolshevik papers at the beginning of 1920 were jeering at a priest-flogger, who addressed the following letter to the Soviet Government:

"Do you not behold Satan? Lo! he strides in the fire of conflagration which reddens with blood his hands, his face, he strives in his mantle purple with gore. His head reaches the black, high-soaring clouds pregnant with thunder and lightning; his heavy iron feet press human blood out of the earth, destroy cities, crush millions of innocent men, and threaten mankind with destruction. Do you not see, do you not hear the echo of his heavy foot resounding everywhere? Save the people, save the country, save yourselves before it is too late."

The Sectarians as well as the non-Sectarians behold Satan upon the soil of Russia. Perhaps they have reasons for their visions? Who knows. . . .

In Russian towns—from Petersburg and Moscow to the most obscure little provincial townships—everywhere one can find—now, during Soviet dictatorship—the newly founded worship of the Devil. Unofficially, this worship was fostered by Soviet authorities and certain private groups. Its aims are comprehensible: the crushing of Christianity, the destruction of the Church, of the old worships based on ethical foundations, so utterly hostile to the rationalistic ideology of Communism. The worship of the Devil was started

among the young. They read the story of Julian the Apostate, a work on the devilists of various epochs, they acquainted themselves with the worship of Baal, they took up the history of the mysterious Cagliostro, they scoured the pages of the books on black magic, kabal, translated portions from the records of the Holy Inquisition, from the epoch when the Inquisition was suppressing the devil-worshippers in Spain and the Netherlands. All these studies were fertilising the soil for the launching of a bacchanalian orgy of religious morals. Black Masses were said, at which Communion was administered in the form of human blood and other elements of the body, in an atmosphere of ghastly moral depravation.

There appeared priestesses of the Devil, recruited mostly from variety stars and prostitutes. From the depths of society came forward obscure figures of connoisseurs of devil-worship, popes deprived of their priesthood for profligacy and crime, drunken, outcast monks, some "scientists" who had studied all their lives the history of the different kinds of worship.

In Petersburg an ex-actress from Odessa, known by the name of Irene Heinzel, achieved fame as the priestess of devil-worship; her real name is unknown to me, but she was the head of the Bolshevik prison in Ufa, where she distinguished herself by appalling cruelty. Her licentiousness and her terrible, blood-stained past have given to this priestess of Satan a peculiar charm and fame. She is frequently invited

on solemn occasions to the dark mysteries and celebrations in other towns, where her perversions, her hystero-mania, and pathos make a deep impression.

Equally popular is the pope Elias, a well read and eloquent profligate and epileptic, who knew how to excite the masses. In his younger days he was as a friar condemned to hard labour in Siberia for the murder of a monastery servant. After the Bolshevik revolution he was able to return and to occupy a prominent position among the Diabolists.

At the present time diabolism in Russia numbers a great many professors, and disposes of large and ever increasing funds. A very energetic propaganda of this idea is being carried on in a number of special publications; and all of it, together with the magnificence of the ritual, is attracting ever greater numbers of men, who, amidst the hateful servility of Russian life, are searching for sensations, for some guiding light, for nervous excitement. Because nowadays, prison, death, penalty, persecution, hunger, and misery do not move, do not excite the nerves any more.

People have become indifferent to almost everything, and they must needs live up to something. And they are attracted by sects, by profligacy, or morphia, or diabolism.

The internal politics of the Soviets favour the spread of vice, which is sapping family ties, which undermines society and civilisation. Thus Communism and all it conceals encounters ever less resistance and fewer ob-

stacles in its spread. No wonder the State tolerates vice among old and young, and even among children.

Satan has descended upon earth. Sectarians, priests, priestesses, and devil-worshippers all behold him. But is it Satan, Devil, or Beelzebub? . . .

No! . . . declare the Orthodox ecclesiastics. It is not he, it is his forerunner—the Antichrist.

This problem was very seriously and at great length discussed and considered during the congresses of the clergy in Novgorod, Moscow, Yaroslav, Kiev, Chernigov, and Omsk in 1919.

The movement was originated by the Bishops Yevdokim and Sylvester and the Metropolitan Makar.

It started with a passionate study of the revelations of the Apocalypse by Saint John the Apostle. His fiery, confused, and mystical words called forth prophecies and predictions. Hazy dates and pictures evoked curiosity and a desire to solve the mystery. I knew men of profound learning who studied for hours the tangled texts of the Apocalypse, which in pre-Bolshevik times they only knew by name.

An immense literature has sprung up of commentaries on the Apocalypse, drawing practical deductions for the realisation of its hazy predictions and prophecies. There is no corner in Russia which this mystical literature has not reached. Nothing appealed more eloquently to the comprehension of the infatuated who wanted to believe ardently in the fulfilment of their cherished dreams.

When it was pointed out that all the time limits set by the Apostle John had passed long ago, and nothing had changed in Russia, that the prophesied ruler of the name of Michael could not become the Tsar of Russia because the only Grand Duke of that name had been murdered by the Bolsheviks in Perm; when one laughed at the apocalyptic monster, at the riders on pale, black, and scarlet horses, in which some perceived England, Japan, and France, others Denikin, Kolchak, and Wrangel, one received in reply explanations not less hazy than the Apocalypse itself, one was confronted with an assurance impossible to be shaken, because those who possessed it had no alternative but to believe or to die of despondency and despair.

While the educated classes were engrossed in revelations, the clergy launched an agitation among the popular masses. Hundreds and thousands of monks, priests, and friars, who had lost their employment through the closing of churches and monasteries, set to work among the mass of workmen and peasants.

The Apocalypse, apocrypha, personal ingeniousness, improvisation, eloquence, piety, asceticism—all of it was mobilised for the purpose of propagating the idea of Antichrist in Russia.

Antichrist has already been born, and is already assembling his army of anarchists and criminals. Already he has dispatched his servants to ruin and break up the richest of all countries and nations—Russia and the Russians. And lo! where once were the Bars,

anointed of the Lord, where great Patriarchs used to offer up their prayers, where the sacred remnants of saints are buried, there the rabble of the enemies of God and of the Cross are now doing the will of Antichrist! . . .

This is the leading idea of the movement.

It is necessary to prove this to obtain visible symptoms of its existence.

And here one is thrust back into the Middle Ages with all their dark realities.

Just as at the time of the Napoleonic wars people used to find out from the apocalyptic numbers, from the initials of the people's commissars the name of demon, of Satan, trying to find the proper name of Antichrist, so they find new symptoms of the approach of "the last times" in astronomical phenomena, and even in common, every-day incidents of nature. The eclipse of the sun or the moon, falling stars, the shape and colour of the passing clouds, all impress the conviction of the professors of the Antichrist idea, everything they encounter suggests terrifying thoughts. Here a boy was born with long red hair or green eyes, there a girl with a couple of teeth in her gums or abnormal finger-nails—they are regarded as children of Antichrist, as his forerunners.

Many such babies born during that dark period of spiritual distraction were strangled or drowned.

Or else, the first cry of the new-born babe sounds almost like the name of Beezlebub. Then the child is

regarded as the servant of Satan, whom it is praising on its birth. In the province of Olonetz several sentences were pronounced on parents who had killed their children by pouring boiling water over them in vapour baths.

A double-headed calf, a calf with five legs, the strangely twisted horns of a cow or a goat, entangled or disjoined branches of some trees, acquire a peculiar significance, and cause in diseased, hypnotised brains strange imaginings in a certain definite direction.

Wild beasts, birds, fishes, and insects, reptiles and spiders in particular, furnish numerous proofs of the existence of the Evil One; often the searchers after Antichrist decipher the mysterious syllables of his name from the trail of a snake creeping over sand, or from the artistic web of a spider.

The unexpected cracking of a pot or mirror, the crack of unseasoned wooden furniture, inexplicable voices resounding in the dead of night—all of this stimulates imagination, causing stray guessing or definite assertions.

People remember the words uttered in the distant past by various "men of God," beggars, tramps, idiots, epileptics, "klikushas," village prophets, hysteriomaniacs, and even unknown passers-by, all of whom acquired under the influence of the universal mania a certain seal of mystery. All ancient legends, stories, tales, prophecies, visions, even those existing for ages,

have been dragged out again and submitted to selection and criticism.

In a word, under the very eyes of the twentieth century there has been created a terrible and hopeless legend.

The people are bending beneath its horrors. Drug-doping and self-immolation of the most insane kind are spreading. For although men may still feel capable of fighting men, they cannot reasonably fight against the Power of Evil, who boldly challenges the Maker of the world and plunges the earth into darkness. So they cut their throats, hang themselves in barns and forests, drown themselves in rivers and marshy lakes, pour boiling water over themselves, swallow poison, or fling themselves into flames. . . .

CHAPTER XXII

WITTE, STOLYPIN, AND GOREMYKIN

IT may be interesting if I put down here a few of my own recollections of three of the most distinguished Prime Ministers of Russia: Count Sergius Witte, the creator of the 1905 Constitution and of the first revolution; Peter Stolypin, the author of the Bill intended to transform the peasant into a small bourgeois, and the propagator of the civilised suppression of the revolutionary spirit in Russia; and Ivan Goremykin, the last Imperial Premier. The three personalities were powerful enough to mark a distinct epoch in the history of Russia.

Witte, a former book-keeper of the South-Western Railway, who became a Minister of State, received the title of Count, and became almost an autocrat in government, was an exceedingly forceful, energetic, and wise man.

The main characteristic of this statesman, and one which gave him a peculiar power, was his absolute amorality. To him there was only *the aim*, and all means to reach an end were equally good, if they were practical. An episode during the Russo-Japanese peace negotiations in Portsmouth is very illuminating in this

regard. The negotiations were dragging on, as the Japanese put forward very stiff claims, and the Russian delegation was totally confused and at a loss what to do. Witte himself was calm and even in high spirits.

One day there called on Witte the leading representative of the Russian Press, Boris A. Suvorin, the son of the well-known editor of the most popular and influential of Petersburg dailies, the *Novoye Vremia*. He came to inquire whether Witte foresaw any developments at the Conference, as he wanted to go to New York to see a lawn tennis match.

"Yes, of course you should go," said Witte with ill-humour. "We are moving in a vicious circle. We can't go either forwards or backwards with those Japs. Go and enjoy yourself, but before you go send a cable to your father saying, 'Witte will not sign the Peace Treaty.' Of course you will send it in your code."

Assured, and in the best of spirits, Suvorin sent the cable off and went to New York.

He told the sequel afterwards.

"Just imagine, I arrived in New York, and already on the station I heard the newspaper boys shouting: 'Peace between Russia and Japan. The triumph of Witte! The Japs have yielded!' What could I do? I got hold of a batch of papers and returned to Portsmouth by the first train. I set upon Witte at once.

"Excellency! What have you done? You have put the *Novoye Vremia* in a terrible position. It's a scandal! We shall be the laughing stock of the whole

press. I am done as a correspondent! What a debacle! What a debacle!

"Witte smiled as if nothing had happened, asked me to sit down, and said in his rather hoarse and halting voice:

" 'It's true that the *Novoye Vremia* is compromised. It's true that for a month you will be the laughing stock of the world. And it is also true that your reputation as a special correspondent has gone to the dogs. But it is not true what you say of the debacle. For you must know how it all really happened. You see, I knew the Japs would intercept your code. As soon as you sent to your editor in Petersburg the cable saying that I would not sign the Peace Treaty, the Japs read the cable and were scared. If the correspondent of the most influential paper cables it so positively to his editor, who is his father as well; if that correspondent goes off to New York to play tennis, they thought, then no change of our position could be expected. The Japs were right in their deductions and yielded.' "

Thus Witte, in order to achieve a higher aim, sacrificed the career of a good and devoted friend. Such methods were quite common with him, and the Ministers and under-secretaries in his Cabinet often suffered through it.

When Witte came to the conclusion that the mood of the great masses of the town population after the Russo-Japanese war threatened revolution, which was

likely to infect the army, he convinced the Emperor of the necessity of convoking Parliament and of proclaiming a new Constitution. Soon he witnessed the increase of reaction, and resented the underhand struggle in which the Court camarilla and the landed gentry engaged against him.

The position of the omnipotent Minister was shaken. It was necessary to prop it up in order to save the situation. Witte resolved to organise a national procession to the Imperial Palace. Who was to lead it? The revolutionary leaders could be of no use, it was necessary to have a reliable man. He was found in the pope Gapon, who was very popular among the labouring classes. He led the multitudes of workmen, students, and intelligentsia in front of the Winter Palace. At the head of the procession went women and old men carrying portraits of the Tsar and the Tsaritsa, crosses, and holy ikons.

We know how the Imperial Guards, let loose by the reactionaries, massacred and dispersed the crowd. In the evening of the same day the streets of the city were bristling with barricades, and the flame of revolution blazed forth from the western front to the shores of the Pacific and to the Indian border. A revolution of the workmen and the intelligentsia which was drowned in blood by the Generals Trepov, Dumbadse, Dubasov, Meller-Zakomelski, Rennenkampf, Rinn, and others.

Witte's hand was active in the march of the revolu-

tion. That hand was the pope Gapon, who was unmasked as an agent of the political police.

Witte attempted at first to work upon the sentiments of the Tsar through a peaceful procession, through the religious fervour of the people, but failed. The guards fired at the defenceless crowds, at the holy ikons, even at the Emperor's portraits.

Then Witte played his last card. He threatened the throne with revolution, hoping through fear to compel the Tsar and his advisers to admit the realisation of the new Constitution, which had been already proclaimed in the name of the Emperor. But the reactionaries, mostly German generals at the head of faithful regiments, strangled the hydra.

Witte fell, and retired from active politics for good. But the shadow which still held the power of his ruin in its hands remained. It was Gapon, the history of whose assassination in Finland remains a mystery. The executioners were one of the social-revolutionary leaders, the engineer Ruthenberg, and an agent of the secret police "Okhrana," who, during that stormy period, was close to Witte's person. According to this agent, Witte knew of the planned assassination of Gapon, but did nothing to prevent it, although at that time he had still great influence and could have easily done so.

Witte's enemies were aware of his part in the murder of the pope and exploited it to arouse the vengeance of the agents of the "Okhrana" against the

dismissed Minister, and endeavoured to revenge for the Constitution of October 17th and the revolution of 1905.

An "infernal machine" was thrown into his motor-car while he, as Member of the Council of State, drove to the Maryiski Palace, but Witte escaped unhurt. The attempt was repeated by sinking a similar contrivance into the chimney over the Premier's cabinet. It was to explode when the stove was lighted. But accidentally a sweep, who happened to clean the chimney early in the morning, discovered the bomb, and the Count escaped again.

He summoned immediately his devoted agent of the political police and instructed him to make inquiries. He learned that the executors were two agents of the "Okhrana," and that the plan had been made by the Chief of Gendarmerie, General Kurlov, and approved by the new Prime Minister, Peter Stolypin.

Witte understood that he would be utterly lost if he should try for the high office and take part in the active policy of the Government. Through secret channels he informed the Tsar that he had given up his political career, and intended to devote himself entirely to the work of the Council of State, which was the Upper Chamber of the Russian Parliament.

He was then left in peace and his life was spared.

Still Witte was able from time to time to vex his enemy and successor in the ministerial chair.

Once I witnessed a very fascinating conversation

between the late and the actual Prime Minister. The meeting took place in the lobby of the Council of State.

"Your Excellency!" Witte opened the conversation. "Can you tell me when the police inquiries into the double attempt with the infernal machine against my person will be concluded?"

Stolypin looked at Witte suspiciously and answered: "You know, Count, that the inquiries are being carried on. On their conclusion the results will be communicated to the Prosecutor, who will notify you immediately."

"I think," continued Witte, "that the case is rather a mystery, and should be interesting enough for the Government to hurry up with its clarification."

Stolypin, touched to the quick, exclaimed excitedly:

"Do you think, Count, I am an imbecile or a criminal?"

"Allow me, Excellency, not to answer this question of yours," replied Witte emphatically with a mocking smile.

And turning his back on the Prime Minister, he left him pale with rage.

Witte hated the Tsar Nicholas II. I was with Witte at the moment when the Tsar called him on the 'phone, intending to send him to Rome at the beginning of the World War, in order to bring in Italy on the side of the Allies. This meant a diplomatic battle royal with the "old fox" Prince Bülow, the Kaiser's envoy.

"I thank your Imperial Majesty for the honour. I

shall be glad to undertake the mission if, at my age, I have enough strength to carry it through," said Witte with joy.

He listened while the Tsar spoke again.

Then Witte replied once more.

"I beg to thank your Majesty humbly, but I am obliged to make one condition. In my actions I want to be guided by your Majesty's instructions alone, and I want to be entirely independent of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister."

In the interval Witte listened attentively, while his hand, holding the receiver, was visibly trembling.

"Yes, such is my unbending determination, Sire! The Emperor, on whose behalf I spoke at Portsmouth and where I obtained good results, could persuade himself that the happiness of the Fatherland is my first care. Since my dismissal, your Majesty, my views in this matter have not changed."

A long silence followed, during which I could hear the whistling rattle of the membrane in the microphone which repeated the Tsar's words.

"I am very sorry, but I cannot withdraw this condition. I am your Majesty's humble servant!"

The conversation was finished. Witte put the receiver down and paced his study nervously. At last he halted in front of the bronze statue of Alexander III, whom he adored, embraced the Tsar's knees, and exclaimed with a voice hoarse and strangled with emotion:

"Thou, O wise Emperor, seest my pain and his crime. Thou instructest!"

Witte did not go to Rome, and the Russian envoy Giers settled the matter single-handed; true he had an easy task, as the excellent and energetic action of British and French diplomacy frustrated all the plans and efforts Prince Bülow undertook at Rome.

On hearing of the declaration of war against Germany, Count Witte became pale like death, crossed himself with his usual wide gesture, reflected for a long time, gazing at the statue of Alexander III and the portrait of William II bearing the Kaiser's own dedication. After a long silence Witte said:

"Those two always dreamed of war. The Tsar wanted it to come in fifty years' time, the Kaiser wanted it at once. The Tsar knew that the people are bereft of patriotism, intelligence, nerves; that the Treasury is empty; that there are no resources in the stores! The Tsar knew that the revolutionary spirit penetrated deeply the popular masses. Therefore he became the 'apostle of peace' in Europe and tried to prevent war. William knew it too and was confident of victory. The Tsar and myself, we both thwarted his plans. Now all is lost. The Japanese war taught Russia nothing, it has made her even more reckless and hysterical. Remember, this war will ruin Russia; we shall lose the war and Europe will be lost in revolution. Under its debris the dynasty will perish! I am sorry for Nicholas II, for he is the son of the greatest

of Emperors. I shall not live to see this disgrace and disaster . . . which shall shake the foundations of other States."

Witte was right. Early in February 1915 he died suddenly. Rumour has it he was poisoned. This is not true. He caught a severe cold during his long speech on the financial and industrial policy of Russia at the Congress of Russian industrialists. The speech led to the resignation of the Minister of Trade and Industry, Timashev, and of a number of responsible officials in that Ministry. On the eve of Witte's death I brought him a memorandum on the intended monopolisation of manganese ores; Witte studied the document carefully, made some remarks and requested me to have it printed.

Next morning, on opening my paper, I read the notice of his death.

He was a real, ruthlessly immoral, forceful, and wise man. He seemed to be living exclusively for politics, indifferent to the common aspects of every-day life. But in truth, this giant of Russian policy had one soft spot. He was madly in love with his wife, whom he married after having helped her to get a divorce from her first husband.

Their married life passed in deep love. When the Countess travelled and stayed in her villa at Biarritz, leaving Witte behind at home in the Kamenno Ostrovski Prospect until the end of the Parliamentary session, he invariably fell ill. He suffered much from

heart attacks, strong nervous excitement, and artretism. Then he would send for his old friend, the Polish physician Wolanski, and spend with him the long evenings in endless talk, which was the best medicine for his illness. For what he really suffered from was his heart's longing, bordering on melancholy. He died in the arms of the wife he had worshipped. Before death he handed to her his famous *Memoirs*, which were several times the object of thievish attempts, since they contained severe and sweeping statements on the reputations of statesmen who bulked large upon the political stage of Imperial Russia.

* * * * *

Peter Stolypin was a provincial Governor on the Volga before he became Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior. He rose to the very top of bureaucratic career thanks to his energy, prudence, and profound knowledge of the manifold tendencies pervading the Russian society and nation. He was one of the first Russians who had the courage to foretell openly that Russia was sinking fast into the abyss of anarchy and revolution, and forecast with great precision—as the history of the Empire proved—the immediate fate of his country.

Stolypin maintained that the revolution would be started by the working masses, the bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia, and that it would quickly spread to

the peasants and the army. In the whirl of struggles would perish the dynasty, the aristocracy, the landed gentry, and the educated classes.

Stolypin did not undertake to arrest the flight of revolutionary thought, which continued with growing speed, hastening through the "slow and treacherous time towards the reign of Count Witte," the author of the 1905 revolution. According to Stolypin that revolution was the *ballon d'essaie,* and the school of a speedy and more powerful upheaval.

But Stolypin intended to weaken its progress through an iron regime in internal politics, hoping to create within a few years an immense anti-revolutionary army, composed of peasants, who were to be transformed into a new middle class. In conjunction with the Minister of Agriculture, A. W. Krivoshein, Stolypin convoked a meeting of the landed gentry and announced that the Government was obliged to purchase from them a considerable portion of their estates, in order to re-sell it on easy terms to the peasants for the purpose of raising them to the status of small landowners. The Government was to assist the latter to employ modern methods of agriculture. The small landowner-peasant was to be in turn the mainstay of the Government and the foe of anarchistic revolution.

The Emperor Nicholas II approved of this new scheme, but the great landowners were terrified at the prospect of being forced to sell their land. Stolypin

was assailed from two sides. The gentry launched in their press organs a violent attack upon the Prime Minister, calling him the "slayer of the gentry," and inciting against him the Court camarilla. On the other hand the revolutionaries, both at home and abroad, conducted an agitation against Stolypin, rightly apprehensive that the abolition of the communal peasant proprietorship and the creation of peasant-bourgeois would postpone revolution in Russia for many years to come.

Stolypin did his best to impress the landed gentry with the imperative necessity of granting concessions. To his representations of the horrors of the future revolution, the landowners had but one reply: "Do not try to frighten us! You have the Cossacks, the gendarmes, and the army to suppress any revolution!"

The gentry endeavoured to dissuade the Tsar from the bold schemes of the Premier, and, having failed, they intensified their attacks in the press, at the same time operating with the usual Russian methods of provocation, denunciation, and conspiracy. The willing executors of the plotters' designs were found in two men standing nearest to Stolypin as Minister of the Interior; they were the Chief of the Gendarmes, General Kurlov, and the Director of the Department of Police, Bieletski. These two dignitaries set to work through the agents of the secret police, who, at the same time, were members of the revolutionary party. The fighting terrorist-revolutionary organisations re-

ceived through mysterious channels considerable sums from the landed gentry for the purpose of making an attempt on Stolypin, and were furnished with a complete plan for his assassination. Even the most cautious and suspicious revolutionary leaders, who, however, ignored the fact that the terrorist "comrades" who put the scheme forward were agents of the police, approved of the scheme as possible of execution.

The attempt was put into execution in Stolypin's villa situated in the most fashionable quarter of Petersburg. A young and enthusiastic revolutionary, slightly cracked, and entirely under the suggestion of one of his comrades, exploded a powerful bomb in front of Stolypin's study. The villa was considerably damaged, the Premier's son was wounded, and a large number of officials, gendarmes, and private persons killed. The assassin himself perished in the explosion, but Stolypin escaped unhurt, having left the villa a few moments before the explosion. But the police failed to discover either the initiators or the accomplices of the attempt.

Then the Tsar, fearing a second attempt, counselled Stolypin to leave the capital for a time. The latter, who had already received private warnings, agreed, and under the pretext of studying the conditions of colonisation of Asiatic Russia, went to Siberia in company with the Minister Krivoshein. During the journey two attempts to derail the train were made by revolutionary railwaymen.

On his return from Siberia he had another conversation with the Emperor, to whom he put the direct question, whether he intended to fight the approaching revolution by the only practical means of issuing a new law of peasant ownership. Failing such a measure Stolypin threatened to resign. The Tsar promised to support the project, and to exact from the landed gentry submission to the new law.

When the landowners learned of the impending measure, they pressed General Kurlov to remove Stolypin for ever. A new plot was being hatched in the bureau of the secret police when unexpectedly Stolypin left for Kiev to take part in some celebration. General Kurlov seized the occasion to issue the order for the execution of the Prime Minister. It was carried out by an agent of the secret police, who was also a member of the social-revolutionary party. Stolypin was hit by several revolver bullets on entering the Kiev theatre and expired soon after. The assassin was hanged amidst rather mysterious circumstances, and all subsequent descriptions of the case are either inventions or vague rumours on a forbidden subject.

How was it possible for the murderer to enter the theatre, for which all tickets were distributed individually only to officials and to the best known people of Kiev, and of which all entrances were guarded by gendarmes, the metropolitan and secret police, and the military?

Behind the murder were the hands of Kurlov and

Bieletski; behind them were arrayed the aristocratic latifundists and the old landed gentry.

* * * * *

The last pre-revolutionary Prime Minister of Russia was old Ivan L. Goremykin, a rich, lazy, and cynical snob.

The official career of this dignitary ran its normal course. He was several times Minister of the Interior, but was unfortunate enough to be disturbed by the first ripples of the revolutionary waves. The governors of various provinces inundated the Minister with their wires, but the man, lazy by nature, never read those "stupid" telegrams, as he called them, stowing them away in the drawers of his desk. Someone informed Emperor Alexander III of it, and he sent his aide-de-camp to inquire. The latter found whole heaps of even unopened telegrams, many of which were sufficiently disquieting and even alarming.

Goremykin was obliged to resign.

When, shortly before the revolution of 1917, Goremykin was, through the influence of Rasputin and the Empress, appointed Prime Minister, the Dowager-Empress exclaimed:

"This old idiot again!"

But he was no idiot. He knew every inch of Russia, and the only escape from revolution he saw in the conclusion of peace with Germany. He threw all his influence in the direction of such a policy.

During the rule of Kerensky, Goremykin was arrested, but released soon afterwards and allowed to leave Petersburg. I met the ex-Premier a few weeks before his death.

In the middle of September 1917 I went for my holidays to the "Caucasian Riviera"—Sochi on the Black Sea. Everywhere one could already perceive the approach of Bolshevism and the moroseness of the masses. The passenger boats along the Caucasian shore ceased to ply, and I was obliged to hire a motor-boat in order to get from Tuapse to Sochi. I was just engaged in placing my luggage in the boat when a distinguished old lady approached me and requested permission to go by our boat to Sochi, accompanied by her husband and maid.

Mutual introductions followed, and I learned it was Madame Goremykin. A few minutes afterwards the maid brought the ex-Premier. The old man was almost completely paralysed, but still retained a remarkable clearness of mind.

We chatted on recent events when I mentioned the Germans, who had demoralised the Russian army, reducing it to a maddened mob of robbers. Goremykin defended the Germans and accused the Duma and the Entente diplomacy as the authors of revolution.

On our arrival in Sochi, the Goremykins stayed in a "pension," and I went to the hotel "Riviera." A few days afterwards a gang of armed and masked men

burst into the "pension" and stole all Madame Goremykin's jewellery, money, and documents.

On reflection, after this event, I was astonished that such notorious and hated people as the Goremykins should have chosen Sochi as their residence, where conditions were particularly favourable for an attack.

Soon after my departure from Sochi, about the middle of October, Goremykin moved with his wife into a villa belonging to his married daughter. Here he was assaulted at night by a gang of Bolshevik sailors, who murdered with appalling cruelty the ex-Premier, Madame Goremykin, and their son-in-law, while wounding seriously their daughter, who was saved afterwards.

Such was the end of the last Imperial Premier and leader of reaction.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Last of the Mohicans

THE most prominent figure in the history of the Great Revolution in Russia was Admiral A. W. Kolchak, a man whose name has become familiar in Western Europe and America. By calling him the most prominent figure I do not mean to say that he was a man of genius. Not at all!

I was very near to the Siberian Government, and I knew Kolchak well. My opinion of him can be stated concisely: he was an excellent admiral, but a very poor politician, a man possessing all the characteristics of the misty and hesitating Russian nature.

How is it then that he undertook the heavy task of creating the Republic of Siberia, and afterwards of attempting the liberation of the whole of Russia from her Bolshevik autocrats?

I remember well the time when the Siberian Government was looking for a leader, whose name should resound through the whole world.

The name of the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaievich was put forward, but the Duke refused the honour; the late Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Sazonov, was invited, but he likewise refused. For a time General Horvat, who ran his own "government" round the

Eastern Chinese railway, was mentioned and dropped. There were no men in Siberia suitable for such high and difficult tasks. Just at that time there arrived in Omsk, the residence of the Siberian Government, one of the former members of the Duma, S. W. Wostrolin. He started an agitation on behalf of Admiral Kolchak. Thanks to him the Admiral first became the Minister of War, and later the head of the Siberian Government.

I remember when, after taking the oath before the Senate, the Admiral entered the hall where a banquet was held in his honour, he said in his grave tone:

"A moment ago I signed my death sentence!"

His vision was fulfilled in less than a year and a half.

From the very first he had to struggle against overwhelming odds. There were not enough men to go round. Siberia never had a numerous educated class, and the refugees from Russia were mostly traders and bankers who were on their way to the countries with a stable exchange, Japan and America. Thus all those entirely unknown, young, inexperienced, and party-ridden Ministers: Michaylov, Gine, Telberg, Pietrov, and Gudkov, with the "Prime Minister," the provincial banker Wologodski—an old gambler and profligate—at their head, were unable to direct the politics and the life of the country in a clearly defined direction. Everything went wrong, without any plan and purpose, while the Government drifted with the current till it

was landed in the Omsk prison, where the Prosecutor of the Soviet Republic scoffed at them, saying:

"I should demand the death penalty for them if they were a little more capable."

And it cannot be denied that the original plan, the one for which Kolchak stood, to organise a powerful Siberia as an independent republic, to enter into negotiations with foreign Powers, and to defend the western frontiers in the Ural Mountains, was perfectly sound.

But soon there began struggles to change this plan, started by a group of monarchist refugees who had arrived from the Volga, and comprised Prince Krapotkin, the millionaire merchant Sterladkin, and the lawyer Zardetsky. They were joined by the Cossacks with their hetman, General Ivanov-Rinov. The opposite camp, consisting of the social-revolutionaries, were opposed to the idea of creating a great and indivisible Russia, and the election of a monarch, desired by the Krapotkin group. The social-revolutionaries insisted on strengthening Siberia, and on making a bid for gaining the sympathies of the peasantry in support of the Government.

In the ensuing struggles the monarchists had recourse to terrorism. Some of the more prominent of the social-revolutionaries were murdered; when members of the Constituent Assembly, which was suppressed by the Bolsheviks, arrived with Avksentyev at their head, they were accused of treachery against the

army, imprisoned, and banished beyond the frontiers of Siberia.

The social-revolutionaries started a powerful agitation among the peasants, and Siberia became the scene of a revolution of its own.

The dissolution of the Russian groups reached its climax when Kolchak fell ultimately under the influence of Krapotkin and his group, and began the war against the Bolsheviks by a march on Moscow. The peasants refused to supply recruits and mutinied; the workmen struck work and formed their own fighting organisation in preparation of an uprising; and Bolshevik agents worked incessantly in this dense atmosphere.

The armies were permeated with the revolutionary spirit, and offered but feeble support to the Government of Siberia. A further source of weakness were the intrigues of the Russian officers of the General Staff against the foreign troops, particularly against General Hayda, the Commander of the Czechoslovaks. The Czech Commissioner in Tomsk openly delivered revolutionary speeches of a strong Bolshevik flavour.

The atmosphere was heavily loaded, and had it not been for the Polish division, the rising of the peasants would certainly have broken out much sooner than after Kolchak's flight to the East.

At Kolchak's Court and in Government circles people behaved just as they had done at the Imperial Court in Tsarskoye Selo.

The Commander-in-Chief, General Diederichs, and his wife were engrossed in Christian and unchristian mysticism. During the day services were held according to the Church ritual, while at night occult mysteries were a passion.

All decisions were taken only after consultations with "spirits" and media. The Zardetsky group was particularly active round Kolchak. Mediumistic and occult seances were arranged, sorcery performances, even shamanism was not neglected when some Mongolian Ostyak from the shores of the Arctic Ocean arrived and enacted his comedies. About the middle of 1919, two officers, who alleged to have come from Deniken, joined this group. One was Captain Timofeyev, and the other Captain Matkowski.

I remembered the first from the Russo-Japanese War, and I did my best to frustrate his schemes at Omsk. As a young officer in Charbin, he, with his detachment, attacked a peaceful Chinese village, robbed and killed off the richer inhabitants, and decamped with the booty. He was court-martialled, deprived of his commission, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

It was the same Timofeyev who arrived in Omsk as captain, with many high decorations adorning his breast.

The two came with letters of introduction, but their real mission was very different from what it purported to be. They gave it out to be occultists able to sum-

mon the soul of some hero who fell during the war with Bonaparte. The hero spirit was supposed to work miracles, to compose poems in Hindu, and to foretell the future. Soon the new-comers started their practices.

The auguries were of the most wonderful kind. Kolchak was promised victory and triumph in Moscow, almost the throne of the Romanovs. But on the sly, and with great secrecy, Timofeyev whispered into the ears of one or the other of the people unfriendly to the monarchist group and to himself that it would be wiser to leave as danger was imminent.

In this way Timofeyev got rid of several people whom he or Krapotkin disliked.

I remember one night in the house of the lawyer Zardetsky. I was invited as a "representative of science."

In a semi-dark room gathered a number of people, among whom were several foreigners. In one corner was a table behind which Timofeyev, pale and excited, was seated in a deep chair. All of a sudden he rose and again sank in the chair, as if exhausted. He opened wide his big grey eyes and started to speak with his penetrating voice of the glorious future of Siberia, of the victorious war, and the speedy advent of a famous and powerful monarch.

When the door leading from the neighbouring room opened and Zardetsky entered, the prophet exclaimed:

"And lo! there comes the great and glorious one,

who will give Russia peace, glory, and an Emperor!" . . .

This time the doors were flung wide open, and Kolchak entered the room. The lights were put on, while he stood with his always austere face and glowing eyes, as if somewhat amazed.

"What bluff!" whispered one of the foreign agents seated beside me.

Several other mystifications were enacted by the Cossack monarchists.

In June 1919 the rumour spread wildly that the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich had arrived in Siberia—the one who was expected to become the future Tsar of Russia. It was alleged that the Cossacks were sheltering him in a secluded village. The news quickly spread all over Siberia. One of Kolchak's Ministers went on a mission of inquiry. He really found in the indicated village a man who bore a marked resemblance to Grand Duke Michael, but the mystification was so obvious that even the Cossacks gave up the hopeless propaganda.

A much more serious affair was the appearance, somewhere in the Altay Mountains in Siberia, of the youthful heir apparent, Alexy, alleged to have been saved by some devoted men.

It was a youth amazingly like the Grand Duke, even in the minutest details, having command of several foreign languages, and extremely amiable. He described with convincing veracity and tenderness the

scene of parting from his adored parents, and his adventures during the perilous flight from Yekaterinburg through the Urals and the Kirghiz country into the Altay Mountains.

Everybody was amazed and at a loss what to do.

The young man knew all the Court dignitaries, generals, and officials, called them by their names, knew them by sight, and knew even their most intimate characteristics.

By pure accident there arrived in Omsk one of the former ladies-in-waiting of the Empress, Madame Sapoznikova, who was invited as an expert to take a hand in this matter. Within a few days she was able to prove that the Siberian Government was confronted by an impostor.

Soon afterwards the young man confessed it himself, but he would not say who was at the back of this imposture, and what was the name of his own family, which undoubtedly belonged to the aristocracy. He did say, however, that he was employed as a telegraphist in a little Siberian townlet, Barnaut.

While the inquiry was proceeding the young man disappeared from the Siberian capital, and all searches remained without result.

It was a very mysterious personality, which will certainly appear again on the troubled waves of perishing Russia.

A short time after the disappearance of the false Alexy, there passed through Siberia, without stopping

at Omsk, the most popular and sympathetic of the Tsar's daughters—the Grand Duchess Tatyana. It was said that she married a humble officer whom she nursed during the war in the Tsarkoye Selo hospital, and who saved her from Bolshevik prison in Tobolsk before the removal of the Imperial prisoners to Yekaterinburg, by substituting for her a devoted girl.

The Grand Duchess visited, on her way, the hospitals situated near the railway stations, and distributed her own and the Empress-Mother's photographs.

The mysterious couple went to the East, remained for a time in Japan, and were said to have gone to the States.

All these personalities were proved on inquiry to have had relations with the monarchist party in Siberia; it may be that those relations extended even further to the die-hard monarchists of the Markov group in Berlin and the Dumbadse group in Yokohama.

For the monarchists refuse to understand that times have changed, and that their programmes are a hopeless anachronism. They still work feverishly for their political aims in all the capitals of the world, poor dreamers whom reality has long ago thrown on to the blood-stained scrapheap of history.

CHAPTER XXIV

Fetishism of the Word

A REVOLUTION can never be contained within the frame designed for it for a given moment, but rushes on in its impetuous course. The Tsar abdicated the throne in his own and in his heir Alexy's name. Then came those painful moments when he saw those who "worshipped" him while he was Emperor turn their backs on him. The hideous spectacle of the debasement, cowardice, and vulgarity of the aristocracy caused universal disgust. Only a few persons of subaltern positions remained with the Imperial family to the very end, sharing their tragic suffering until the end.

The first revolutionary Government of Prince Lvov and the second Government of Kerensky's cultivated mysticism and fetishism of the word.

"And the Word became flesh," says the Scripture.

But the word of Lvov, Milyukov, Kerensky, and of the thousands of revolutionary orators remained a word which passed without an echo. It was a pitiful picture of the impotence and wretchedness of the Russian intelligentsia.

Till at last the flesh came.

Bolshevism came, drowning the monarchists in a sea of blood, issuing new pass-words founded upon the destruction of Russia.

The Commissars of the people, Dzierjynski, Wolodarski, and Pavlunovski of the Cheka offered the bloody hecatomb, murdering all who believed in the great powerful Russia, in the return to the old order.

Special detachments of Finns, Letts, Hungarians, Germans, and Chinese were at their disposal, and for their protection against the efforts of "counter-revolution."

Sailors of the fleet, inflamed by propaganda, hewed down their officers with axes, tore them to pieces, drowned them in the sea at Wiborg, till their bodies formed dams. They broke up and robbed their ships, and sold the machinery, guns, and scrap metal on the markets in the capital and in Finland.

Blood flowed in streams, covering with a scarlet veil the "bloodless" revolution which was dreamt of and discussed at the British Embassy in Petrograd.

The new lord—Bolshevism—achieved great things during the five years, while throwing out to the civilised countries lofty slogans, bold, new words, and dazzling them with its energy, alacrity, and determination.

It conquered its enemies with the armed hand, destroyed Russia till she was laid bare, dying, imbued with blood; it changed the political configuration of

Europe; on the ruins of monarchism and socialism it founded a new empire. Only its ruler needs not one crown, but five, or sixty-three. . . . Full-fledged autocracy is being floated upon the sea of social-communistic slogans, which remain an empty sound.

Europe, enchanted, listens to the wonderful song of words—fetishes—and does not perceive the spreading licence, disease, famine, and death, remains deaf to the cracking of human bones devoured by human beings, does not look into the caves of the Cheka, does not want to understand that everything in Bolshevism is and will remain as of old, although the scenery is changed, and sometimes the names and even the persons are changed.

Bolshevism rolls on like a ball of snow, and threatens, not only through the propagation of its slogans, but through millions of hungry, despondent men, grown wild, whom it can throw against the West; threatens through "awakened Asia," where the conflagration is already blazing. The flame will have abundant food —eight hundred million men—who gnash their teeth and clench their fists, while treacherous Bolshevism and Communism, concealing its true face, whispers:

"Forward against the white man! Away with Christian civilisation! We are on your side!"

Now they do not whisper it only; they proclaim it aloud and gravely in Thibet, India, Mongolia, and China.

The Circassians, the Calmuks, the Djungars, the

Buriats, and Tartars, the chieftains of the valiant Chinese Chunchuzes, sing songs of this day of revenge.

I listened to the gloomy lays breathing horror in the plain of Caydam, on the slopes of Bogdo-Ulu, in the forests of Tauan-Ola, and the waters of the Hwang Ho.

This is the aim of the hapless "great" Russian revolution, the revolution of nomads, suicides, wizards, witches, and various other fiends, and almost apocalyptic monsters.

It ended in a genuine counter-revolution: Bolshevism, a movement directed against Socialism, nationhood, and civilisation, ultimately leading somebody—unknown as yet—to the throne of the Tsars of a new dynasty unprecedented in its autocracy.

Whom?

Perhaps a new Great Mogol, Jengiz-Temudjin or Tamerlane. . . .

And he will be for Christian civilisation an Antichrist, black or red, an antithesis of the evolution of the spirit and of progress—the first harbinger of the approaching doom of mankind.

That terrible shadow coming from the East has happened more than once before in the history of mankind, and has been always gloomy, like autumnal night, like the soul of suicide.

CHAPTER XXV

Chaos

IT must be clear to everybody whose eyes have seen and whose ears have listened that Russia is lost morally, and that she now stands on the edge of the abyss of physical perdition.

The policy of the Soviets, which was always and is still directed towards the ruin of family, Church, morality, and society, has conquered.

The women, cast into the whirl of a ruthless struggle for the day that is, have ceased to be wives and mothers.

The men, young or old, working hard, have drifted away from the family and are not in a position to assure its existence, to give it protection and moral influence.

The children, corrupted by Bolshevik agents, have become their parents' enemies. They do not see much of them, but they often serve as secret agents of the "Cheka," spying upon their kin, overhearing their conversations, which they report to the blood-stained judges of the "Cheka" and other institutions of a similar character.

The tribal bonds of the peoples and races consti-

tuting Russia have loosened, and there now remains nothing to bind them together again.

Terror, famine, disease, a struggle for existence baffling all imagination, have demoralised the whole of Russian society. The educated man has become degraded, has let himself go, has again approached the state of primitive nomad who only fights for his crumbs of bread, and is even unable to find sustenance for his own family, which has broken up completely, if not physically, sometimes certainly morally.

The workmen, allured by Soviet promises, have ceased to work and have joined the Red Army. When, later on, they wanted to return to work, they had lost the habit, lost the skill, and could not find the workshops amid the general decay, when everything fell into utter ruin. The peasant ceased to till the soil till, confronted by hunger, he was driven with his family into the towns, where he swelled the cadres of hungry men dispossessed of their class, without work, without profession, without a to-morrow, and without hope.

It was they who killed their children for food, it is their peasant women-mothers who, with their starved and enfeebled babes pressed to their bosoms, drowned themselves in the rivers. It is the declassed peasants who form robber bands, who are as the locust migrating from east to west and from north to south in search of bread, in search of life.

And the Soviet autocrats with their heavy, blood-stained hand, have curbed into obedience the people

they have terrorised and debased, while there in the very depths of the hungry masses, trembling fingers are sewing the gigantic "Black Flag" of an anarchy overflowing all bounds of any external form of nationhood.

There, Solncev-Blejchman, the poet Gordin, Suknotov, all leaders of anarchism, are making ready for a new struggle for a "new Russia," for a few short but "jolly" days.

In a proclamation issued some time ago Solncev said:

"The Soviets are defrauding you every day, prolonging our agonies of hunger and disease. We have had enough of it! Let us hoist our Black Flag on Kremlin, let us take the cities, factories, and estates, with our arms in hand let us share out everything and be safe for a few days. Then, nourished and secure, we can think how we ought and can arrange the life of the entire nation. Be ready! Get your arms! Attention! Our day will soon come! Long live the 'Black Flag'!"

Thus speaks and thereof dreams the minstrel of anarchy.

And at the same time the exiles, the Russian emigrés, split up into ever smaller and uninfluential political groups.

Kerensky, Milyukov, Guchkov, have a policy of their own. The monarchists are forging a crude, concise, and reactionary scheme of the restoration of mon-

archy, and only lack a candidate who would like, as of old, to "love" and to "worship" the mob of one hundred and forty millions of men grown savage, hungry, evil, lascivious, and lazy.

The Homeric task of saving the population of Russia, the dire need of transforming it, of educating it morally, of teaching it how to work, of awakening its cultural instincts anew, will be left as heritage by the Red Flag of Bolshevism or the Black Flag of Anarchy to the civilised world.

CONCLUSION

I HAD no intention of writing on the preceding pages a historical sketch of Russia, whether Tsarist or Soviet. I have recorded simply a number of features of the shady life and psychology of that people which, while remaining behind the curtain of actuality, nevertheless throws a lurid light upon its mind and gives one more cue as to its true character.

I am convinced that civilised mankind will be compelled to go to Russia, not with Trade Missions and sound currency, but with the cross, the learning, and the will, which would constrain men who have lost their reason, their honour, and their country, to work out their salvation. It is a stupendous duty laid on mankind, but there is no other way. And I think that my sketches on the shadow of the gloomy East will conduce in a certain degree towards the fulfilment of that duty.

By history and nature the Russians are akin to the peoples of the East, whose most sinister and criminal traits they exhibit. The brighter side of the psychology and morals of the Eastern peoples, requiring a greater spiritual elevation and rectitude, is alien to the Russians.

Disregard and ill-treatment of their womenfolk, be

it mothers or wives, decline of family morality, political avidity, lack of social cohesion, the gulf between the educated classes and the common people, extremes of democracy in the form of either spiritual idealism or meanest vulgarity, the overgrowth of class hatred, the lust of murder and spoliation, indifference in regard to religious principles or their utter unreality, superstitions, remnants of thirteenth or fourteenth century culture, servility, and social immorality—these are the inverse aspects of the East which has outlived itself.

To-day, when I look back upon the long term of my quest across the most savage and most cultured countries of the Asiatic East, I behold clearly its gloomy shadow cast aslant over the most momentous phenomena of Russian life.

I perceive distinctly the danger threatening Christian civilisation from the East, but not from the real East, which endures in its mystic reverie or its hallowed majesty, defending its culture and independence against the pernicious influences of the new-comers. I perceive the menace of the East, in whose vanguard marches the Russian multitude of Mongolian half-breeds, followed by swarming hosts of utterly despondent Asiatics, burning with hatred, demoralised and revolutionised by Soviet diplomatists, with the blood-stained gold taken from the murdered, broken off the sacred images and crosses, carried away from temples of learning.

In such moments of fear of the East my mind recalls the cynical words of Engelhard, one of the more distinguished Russian publicists, with which he depicted the coming destinies of Russia:

"We are an anarchic, Tartar people, recognising only the superiority of physical strength, of the armed force, of the mailed fist, of the whip! When we refused to pay taxes, the Government gave us spirits, made us drink everywhere, on each step, even in the streets. We paid our taxes by drinking. When we refused to be cultured people, refused to send our children to schools, the pastor denied to baptise, to marry, or to bury us, and the policeman flogged with the lash father and mother for resistance; we refused to give conscripts to the army, whereupon an officer came with a detachment and shot and bayoneted us. Then we became good citizens and patriots: we paid taxes into the Treasury of 'Mother Russia,' we became enthusiasts for education, we went to defend Tsar, Faith, and Fatherland.

"To-day all has collapsed like a house of cards. We are the freest of all the peoples in the world. Now we may ourselves plunder gold, teach the bourgeois to sweep the streets or to scrub the floors, we can battle in the streets of our own cities carolling: 'Let the three of us attack courageously yon man, for victory is good to drink after the stress of the laborious day!'

"We are free, but liberty has brought us an uncommon gift—hunger, a famine the like of which the world

has never seen before. We shall devour carrion, tree-bark, clay, feed on our own brats. Then only will Lenin fall or some other Communist tyrant, and the mob will tear him to pieces in the streets of Moscow, as of yore it tore to pieces Dimitri the Impostor; then we shall pocket the sharpened knife, come out into the streets, into the broad highways, lie hidden in bushes or behind walls and fences, and muttering in our Russian highwayman slang the slogan, 'Kill and go to prison!' we shall cut the throats and rip up the bellies of the passers-by, and we shall exist as long as there will be anything left to be torn to pieces. And then, when there will be nothing more left, we shall fall upon our knees and roar for the whole world to hear us:

" 'We are miserable sinners, we have committed terrible crimes! We have killed our father, conscience, and our mother country! Now we lay our guilt open like a foul wound, imploring you, O civilised nations, to come and deliver us!' "

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