

# RUSSIA AND HER CZAR

(Copyright, 1904, by New York Journal.)

The map of Russia makes the other nations of Europe look insignificant by comparison. Moscow is called "The Heart of Russia," and yet the trans-Siberian railway from Moscow to Vladivostok is about 6,000 miles long, nearly one-fourth the circumference of the globe. From St. Petersburg to Sebastopol is more than 2,000 miles, and yet Russia's territory extends much further north than St. Petersburg and much farther south than Sebastopol. In a book recently issued by authority of the Russian government some comparisons are made that give an idea of the immensity of Russia's domain. For instance, Siberia is about one and one-half times as large as Europe, 25 times as large as Germany, and covers one-thirteenth of the continental surface of the globe. Besides having great timber belts and vast prairies, Siberia has a hill and lake region ten times as large as Switzerland, and it is claimed that some of the lakes are as beautiful as those of "The Mountain Republic." Lately the government has been encouraging immigration into the country opened up by the trans-Siberian railway and the success of the movement is shown by the fact that the number of passengers carried on the western section of the road increased from 160,000 in 1896 to 379,000 in 1898, and on the middle section from 177,000 in 1897 to 476,000 in 1898, with a similar increase in freight traffic. The government gives a certain area of land to each settler, and when necessary advances sufficient money to build homes and barns for the storage of crops and for the purchase of agricultural implements. The territorial greatness of Russia is the first thing that impresses the tourist and the second is that it is as yet so sparsely settled that it can without fear of crowding accommodate a vast increase in population.

Russia embraces all varieties of climate and resources.

My journey was confined to the northeast portion. I entered the country below Warsaw, went west to Moscow, then north to St. Petersburg and thence southeast to Berlin. This, with the exception of my visit to Tula, gave me my only opportunity to see the people of Russia. They impressed me as being a hardy race and the necessities of climate are such as to compel industry and activity. I never saw elsewhere such universal preparation for cold weather. As yet Russia is almost entirely agricultural, but manufacturing enterprises are continually increasing. The peasants live in villages and for the most part hold their lands in common—that is, they belong to the commune or village as a whole and not to the individual. When Alexander freed the serfs the land was sold to them jointly on long-time payments. These payments have in only a few instances been completed, wherefore not many of the peasants own land individually. There is just now much discussion in Russia about the method of holding land. Some contend that communal holding tends to discourage thrift and enterprise, and there is some agitation in favor of individual ownership.

Moscow, the largest city of Russia, has a trifle larger population than St. Petersburg, the capital, which has more than a million. Moscow, which is the commercial center of the empire, gives the casual visitor a much better idea of the characteristic life and architecture of Russia than does St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg, however, is laid out upon a broader, more generous plan, has wider streets, more impressive public buildings and private residences, and there is more evidence of wealth in the capital than in the commercial center. Both cities possess admirable museums and art galleries. The chief gallery of Moscow devotes nearly all its wall space to pictures by Russian artists, and they are sufficient in number to prove Russia's claim to an honorable place in the world of art.

The Hermitage at St. Petersburg, which is an annex of the emperor's palace, contains an extraordinary number of masterpieces of modern and ancient art. The museum of the academy of sciences possesses a remarkable collection of fine specimens of prehistoric animals, among them mammoths, the largest and best preserved of which was found only a few years ago in the foot of a Siberian glacier.

The visitor to Russia comes away with conflicting emotions. He is impressed by the wonderful possibilities of the country, but is oppressed by the limitations and restrictions which the government places upon individual action and activity. As soon as the traveler reaches the border of Russia his passport is demanded. It is again demanded the moment he arrives at his hotel, and it is demanded and inspected at every

place he stops. When he is about to leave the country he must send his passport to the police office and have it indorsed with official permission to depart. Not only is a passport demanded at every place from the foreigner, but native Russians, high and low, must also bear passports and be prepared to submit them for inspection upon demand. Not even officers of the army are exempt from this rigid rule.

The censorship over the press and over private mail is very strict. I brought away with me a copy of Stead's Review of Reviews which had been posted to a subscriber in Russia and which had passed through the hands of the censor. Its pages bore abundant evidence of the care with which he scrutinized foreign publications, for objectionable cartoons, articles and even paragraphs had been made illegible by an obliterating stamp.

The government of Russia, as the world knows, is an autocracy. All power is vested in the emperor, and all authority emanates from him. Being an autocracy, Russia has, of course, no legislative body, such as is now a part of the government of nearly every civilized country on the globe. It has no trial by jury and it knows not the writ of habeas corpus. The custom of exiling or banishing without trial persons objectionable to the government is still practiced. A large number of Finns, many of them persons of prominence, have been deported from Finland since the decree of 1899, which limited the self-government which the Finns had enjoyed since Russia annexed their country.

While in St. Petersburg I was, by the courtesy of the American ambassador, Mr. McCormick, given an opportunity of meeting and chatting with the czar of all the Russias, Emperor Nicholas II. I found him at his winter residence, the palace of Tzarskoje Selo, which is about an hour's ride from St. Petersburg.

Of all the emperor's palaces, Tzarskoje Selo is his favorite. It stands in a magnificent park which at this time of year is covered with snow. The emperor is a young man, having been born in 1868. He is not more than five feet seven or eight inches in height and apparently weighs about 160 pounds. His figure is slender and erect, his face boyish and his eyes a light blue. His hair, which is blonde, is cut rather short and combed upward over the forehead. The czar wears moustache and short beard. The general expression of his face is gentle rather than severe and he speaks English perfectly. He informed me that about 65 per cent of the adult men of Russia can read and write and that the number is increasing at the rate of about 3 per cent a year. This increase, the czar said, was shown by the recruits to the army and as these came from all provinces of the empire and all classes of society, he believes it to be a fair test of the people as a whole. The czar declared himself deeply interested in the spread of education among the people and seemed to realize that opportunities for education should be extended to men and women equally. I referred to a decree issued by him about a year ago promising a measure of self-government to the local communities. The czar said: "Yes, that was issued last February, and the plan is now being worked out." He manifested great gratification at the outcome of the proposals submitted by him which resulted in the establishment of The Hague court of arbitration and it is a movement of which he may justly feel proud, for while it is not probable that The Hague tribunal will at once end all wars, it is certain to contribute largely to the growth of a sentiment that will substitute the reign of reason for the rule of brute force. The czar spoke warmly of the friendly relations that had existed for years between Russia and the United States. He said that the people of his country had rejoiced in the growth and greatness of the United States. Then, speaking with considerable feeling, the czar said: "The attitude of Russia in the Kischinoff affair has been very much misrepresented by some of the press and I wish you would tell your people so when you return to the United States."

The Russian officials deny that the government was in any way responsible for the massacre and I was informed that the government had caused the prosecution and secured the imprisonment of many of those implicated. The emperor showed in his conversation that he respected public opinion in the United States and was anxious that his administration should not rest under condemnation. It seems to be the general opinion of those with whom I had a chance to speak in Russia that the emperor himself is much more progressive and liberal than his official environment. If he were free to act upon his own judgment, it is believed that he would go further

and faster than the officeholding class surrounding him in broadening the foundations of the government, and from his words and manner during my conversation with him I am inclined to share this opinion.

What Russia most needs today are free speech and a free press—free speech that those who have the welfare of the country at heart may give expression to their views and contribute their wisdom to that public opinion which in all free countries controls to a greater or less extent—those who hold office. To deny freedom of speech is to question the ability of truth to combat error; it is to doubt the power of right to vindicate itself. A free press would not only enable those in office to see their actions as others see them, but would exercise a wholesome restraint. Publicity will often deter an official from wrong-doing when other restraints would be insufficient and those who are anxious to do well ought to welcome anything that would throw light upon their path. With free speech and a free press it would not be long before the participation of the Russian people in government would be enlarged, and with that enlarged share in the control of their own affairs would come not only contentment, but the education which responsibility and self-government bring. It is impossible to prepare people for self-government by depriving them of the exercise of political rights. As children learn to walk by being allowed to fall and rise and fall and rise again, so people profit by experience and learn from the consequences of their mistakes.

That the Russian people are devoted to their church is evident everywhere. Every village and town has its churches, and the cities have cathedrals, chapels and shrines seemingly innumerable. St. Isaac's cathedral in St. Petersburg is an immense basilica and is ornamented in nave and transept with precious and semi-precious stones. The superb portico is supported by a maze of granite monoliths seven feet in diameter. There is now in process of construction at Moscow a still more elaborate cathedral. Russia is not a good missionary field for two reasons: First, because the people seem wedded to their church, and, second, because no one is permitted to sever his connection with the church.

The child of an orthodox Russian becomes a member of the church of his parents and if he desires to enter another church he must leave the country. If one of the orthodox church marries a member of another church the children must of necessity be reared in the Russian faith. It will be seen, therefore, that the church is very closely connected with the government itself, and quite as arbitrary.

De Tocqueville some fifty years ago predicted a large place for Russia among the nations of Europe and my visit to the great empire of the northeast convinced me that Russia with universal education, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion and constitutional self-government would exert an influence upon the destinies of the old world to which it would be difficult to set a limit. W. J. BRYAN.

The District of Columbia is offering some superior inducements to corporations. The laws are much easier than those of New Jersey, and besides this there is the added inducement of having the corporation headquarters right where the legal representatives are talking for the Congressional Record.

## THE COMMONER'S SPECIAL OFFER

Application for Subscription Cards

5	Publisher Commoner: I am interested in increasing The Commoner's circulation, and desire you to send me a supply of subscription cards. I agree to use my utmost endeavor to sell the cards, and will remit for them at the rate of 60 cents each, when sold.
10	
15	
20	
25	
50	Name .....
75	Box, or Street No. ....
100	P. O. .... State .....

Indicate the number of cards wanted by marking X opposite one of the numbers printed on end of this blank.

If you believe the paper is doing a work that merits encouragement, fill out the above coupon and mail it to The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb.