

CHAPTER I

Mysticism of the Empress and "Prophets" from the West—Bishop Feofan and the appearance of Rasputin—Secret of his influence on the Empress—Conflict between Bishop Hermogen and the Monk Iliodor and the High Procurator of the Synod, Sabler.

My more or less intimate acquaintance with Russia's high governing circles dates back to the time when, after the Japanese War, I was elected a member of the Council of the Empire by the Zemstvo of the province of Ekaterinoslav. Thus many details of official life became familiar to me of which the general public knew nothing.

~~There existed a widespread opinion in society, undoubtedly correct, that the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna had had from her childhood a strong tendency towards mysticism. This disposition, in the opinion of many, hereditary, increased with advancing years till, at the time I am speaking of, it had attained a state of religious mania, more of religious ecstasy—a firm belief in the possibility of foretelling the future, plus a considerable dose of superstition.~~

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The causes of this psychological phenomenon cannot, of course, be easily explained. Whether it was the effect of frequent childbirth and of the passionate desire for an heir, when she always gave birth to daughters, or whether this state of mind was purely temperamental, it is not for me to say. But the fact of her mysticism, with its attendant tendency towards the supernatural and even the occult, remained beyond doubt.

The far-sighted politicians of Western Europe, who always made a closer study of the Imperial

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Court than we Russians, lost no time in turning this phenomenon to account. Desirous of obtaining a strong hand at the Russian Court, and having, as it were, rapidly taken their bearings, they determined to take advantage of this temperamental peculiarity of the young Empress.

Towards the beginning of 1900, various mysterious apostles of mysticism, hypnotizers and prophets of the future began to appear at the Imperial Russian Court, and gained considerable influence over the mystically inclined mind of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. Owing to the confidence these adventurers inspired in the Imperial pair, they soon became the centre of small groups of courtiers, who thus assumed a certain importance in the life of the Imperial Court. There is no doubt that agents of certain foreign Embassies had secret access to these circles, which enabled them to gain detailed information concerning Russian social and public life.

It was at this time, for instance, that a certain Philippe made his appearance at Court. He was exactly the type of man to place his influence over the minds of the Imperial pair at the service of any cause or person from whom he could expect a suitable remuneration for his "work."

*The
Blair*

This gentleman was introduced at Court by two of the Grand Duchesses. Shortly after his arrival, however, Ratchkovsky, the agent of the Russian Secret Service in Paris, reported to St. Petersburg that Philippe was a shady and suspicious character of Jewish nationality, and had some sort of connection with masonic organizations and the society called the "Grande Alliance Israelite." Philippe, meanwhile, was acquiring an ever-increasing influence. He held meetings, performed various spiritualist "passes," foretold the future and persuaded the Empress that she would soon give birth

to a son. Philippe gained such power at Court that the agent Ratchkovsky was dismissed for denouncing him. ~~Shortly after this, however, Philippe himself disappeared mysteriously during a visit to Paris.~~

No sooner had he made his exit than another adventurer, a certain Papus, claiming to be his disciple, arrived in St. Petersburg, and was in a similar manner introduced at Court.

I cannot but render justice to the leading Russian statesmen of the time and to the prelates of the Russian Church. They were all profoundly perturbed by the growing influence of these mysterious arrivals, who might easily have been emissaries sent for unknown purposes. On the one hand, the civil authorities feared the possibility of political complications and intrigues arising from the confidence these men enjoyed at Court, where they became the centre of cliques of courtiers bent, it is true, on the pursuit of their own private ends, but capable of much worse things. The ecclesiastical authorities, in their turn, feared that sectarianism emanating from the Court might spread among the upper circles of society and injure the Russian Orthodox Church. Such instances had already occurred in the history of Russia, during the reign of Alexander I.

Whether by the united efforts of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, or owing to other circumstances or possible intrigues, Papus was soon dismissed. His place was taken by Bishop Feofan, the Principal of the Theological Academy of St. Petersburg, who was also appointed their Majesties' confessor. According to rumours circulated at the time in St. Petersburg society, of the truth of which I have no documentary evidence, it was decided at a secret conference of Church prelates that it was necessary for the

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Church, as the guardian and defender of the Orthodox faith, to exercise her wise and moderating influence on the mystically inclined spirit of the young Empress, so as to combat the pernicious activities of base foreigners obviously in pursuit of totally different aims.

*D.T.
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The high moral qualities of Mgr. Feofan won universal respect. A man of absolute purity of soul and a firm Christian, he was imbued with the true Orthodox spirit of faith and humility. In this respect all were agreed. Alien alike to politics and personal ambition, he was a true and faithful servant of the Church, and so could not become the centre of any base scheming or intrigues. It appears, therefore, all the more incomprehensible that it was through him that Rasputin was introduced to the Imperial Court. One can only suppose that Mgr. Feofan was profoundly mistaken in his estimate of Rasputin's moral character and personality. The meek, gentle and confiding bishop was cunningly duped by this clever and astute, though almost illiterate, mouzhik; his pure soul was incapable of fathoming all the depths of immorality and licentiousness in such a man as Gregory Rasputin. Presumably Bishop Feofan hoped that the simple and unsophisticated spiritual outlook of a plain God-fearing and believing Orthodox Russian peasant would be most likely to appeal to the harassed soul of the young Empress. He naturally thought that this God-fearing starets, as he pictured Rasputin, would by virtue of his serene simplicity be better able than anyone else to provide an answer to her questionings and disperse the clouds of mysticism which darkened her soul. But fate decreed that the honest bishop should be cruelly deceived by the cunning charlatan and should pay dearly for his mistake.

Who, then, was Gregory Rasputin? His *curriculum vitae* prior to his appearance in Russian politics has been definitely established.

A native of the village of Pokrovskoe in the province of Tobolsk, he was an ordinary peasant of average means, hardly differing from any of his fellow villagers. The evidence in his case disclosed that from his youth he had strong leanings towards sectarianism, his keenly inquiring intellect driving him to seek new paths of religious experience. It is clear that the principles of Orthodox Christianity had never been implanted in his soul, and consequently it lacked the corresponding moral qualities. Even before his appearance in St. Petersburg he was a man devoid of ethical code or conscience, greedy for material gain, of a boldness verging on insolence, utterly unscrupulous in the pursuit of his aims.

Such was the morality of Gregory Rasputin, revealed by the legal evidence which came into my possession. I have been able to gather from the same source the following details concerning his career.

Certain strange doings in and around Rasputin's house attracted the attention of the parish priest of Pokrovskoe. A building without windows, supposed to be a bath house, had been erected in a remote corner of the yard, and in it mysterious meetings were held after dusk. Rasputin himself began frequently to absent himself on visits to the Abalaksky monastery, in which persons exiled for belonging to various religious sects were confined. While the local priest was endeavouring to unravel the secret of the mysterious doings which took place in Rasputin's house, the latter decided to try his luck outside his native village and slipped away to St. Petersburg. I was unable to obtain any exact information as to how Rasputin contrived to worm

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himself into the confidence of Bishop Feofan. Rumours on the subject were so numerous and varied that to credit them all was impossible. According to the most current version, Rasputin was introduced to the bishop by a certain priest named Yaroslav Medvied, the confessor of one of the Grand Duchesses. This man either visited or was exiled to the Abalaksky monastery, where he was alleged to have met Rasputin and brought him to St. Petersburg. This story seems to be the most plausible, but there were many others. In any case, Rasputin was, as early as 1900 and before the Chinese (Boxer) war, on intimate terms with their Majesties' confessor, Mgr. Feofan. That short-sighted prelate introduced him at Court as a *starets* and *natchetchik*.*

At first Rasputin behaved with the utmost caution, never revealing his actual intentions. It was natural that he should take his bearings, study the personalities, life and customs of the Court. Thus, not only did he strengthen Bishop Feofan's confidence in him, but he acquired another influential champion in the person of Bishop Hermogen of Saratoff, later a member of the Holy Synod, who subsequently realized his error and suffered heavily for it. Another of Rasputin's partisans was the notorious monk Ilidor. The latter, however, was definitely accused of being an *agent provocateur* out to make a career, though his passionate temperament and fiery eloquence made him at one time the idol of the Saratoff crowd. Certainly his influence over the populace was enormous, and, moreover, he enjoyed the powerful patronage of Bishop Hermogen.

*A *starets* was a man, not necessarily a monk or in holy orders, who for his high moral qualities and holy life was recognized as a spiritual teacher. A *natchetchik* was a man versed in the Scriptures, an "expert reader."

During this period Rasputin never abandoned the role of a pious and God-fearing *staretz* and zealous intercessor for the Orthodox Church of Christ. During the troubled years of the Japanese war and the Revolution of 1905, he ministered to the spiritual needs of the Imperial Family, praying devoutly in their presence and assuring them that while he was there to intercede for them, no harm would befall either them or the little Tsarevitch. Apparently unnoticed, his influence steadily grew, so that finally he was entrusted with the office of the "Emperor's lampkeeper," whose duty it was to tend the lamps burning day and night before the holy ikons.

He thus obtained free access to the Imperial palace, and in virtue of his office came daily to the Tsar's apartments, which he had hitherto entered only by special invitation. It should be remembered that the Emperor Nicholas II was a great lover and connoisseur of ancient ikons, and possessed a rare and extremely valuable collection which he greatly treasured. It must be supposed that since the Tsar entrusted this precious collection to Rasputin's care, he must have felt a certain amount of confidence in his newly-appointed lampkeeper, and, believing his piety to be genuine, deemed him worthy to become the custodian of these holy images.

Having thus obtained a firm foothold in the palace, Rasputin began gradually to change his tactics and to give a freer vent to his depraved instincts and sectarian impulses.

With the gradual subsidence of revolutionary turmoil and resumption of normal life, rumours, at first vague and indefinite, began to circulate concerning the doings of this knave. Soon, however, these rumours became more precise. It began to be said more and more definitely that Rasputin

was engaged in founding "*khlysty* ships"* , which consisted mainly of young women and girls; also that he was frequently to be met in the private cabins of the St. Petersburg public baths, where he indulged in the most unrestrained immorality. Names of ladies belonging to the highest circles of St. Petersburg society were mentioned as having become adherents of his sectarian doctrine. These rumours gradually grew and gained publicity. People began to say openly that so and so had been seduced by Rasputin; that two sisters, both of them young girls, had been dishonoured by him; that secret orgies and promiscuous immorality were practised in certain flats.

I had in my possession scores of letters from mothers whose daughters had been seduced by Rasputin. I had also in my possession photographs of a "*khlysty* ship." In the centre sat Rasputin, surrounded by about a hundred of his followers, all of them young men and women. Two of them held in front of him a large placard inscribed with *khlysty* texts. Another photograph taken in Rasputin's drawing-room showed him in the midst of the society women who were his followers; to my amazement I recognized many of them. I was also given two photographs of Rasputin himself. In one of these he was wearing his peasant's dress with a pectoral cross, his right hand raised with fingers clasped as though giving a blessing. In the other he was in a monk's habit and cowl and again wearing a pectoral cross.

I had soon collected a whole volume of incriminating evidence. If only a tenth part of the material submitted to me were genuine, it would have amply sufficed for the institution of criminal

* The *khlysty* belonged to a sect whose religious practices were of a most obscene and erotic nature. Each community was called a "ship," with a "helmsman" at its head.

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proceedings against Rasputin. As President of the Duma I received from all sides complaints and disclosures concerning the criminal activities and debauchery of this man. Finally, the matter was taken up by the daily Press. The Censorship Committee and the Minister of the Interior became seriously alarmed, especially as they undoubtedly possessed, through the medium of the Secret Service, far more precise information and much more irrefutable evidence of the truth of the rumours which were circulated in public. The State authorities were faced with a situation of exceptional difficulty. They could not but realize the depth of the abyss into which Rasputin was drawing the Imperial couple, while on the other hand the growth of the influence of this disgusting libertine over them was daily becoming more apparent.

What was the secret of this fatal influence, which undoubtedly led to the commencement of the Russian Revolution, inasmuch as it weakened the Tsar's prestige?

There is no doubt that Gregory Rasputin, apart from being a man of more than average intelligence, extraordinary astuteness, and possessing a will unchecked by any moral scruples, was further ~~gifted with great hypnotic power.~~ I should think that he would have been a subject of extraordinary interest to a scientist. The opinion of all those who came in contact with him was unanimous on that point, while I myself, as will be seen later, experienced the force of his power of suggestion. It goes, therefore, without saying that the neurotic and mystically inclined Empress, whose tortured soul suffered continual agonies of fear for the fate of her son, the Heir to the Throne, and for that of her exalted husband, fell under the influence of Rasputin's hypnotism to an extraordinary degree.

*Alexandra's fear - she has
dared to love one man
totally & has encouraged him?*

I can confidently assert that by this force of suggestion he gained absolute control over the will of the young Empress. By that same force he impressed upon her that while he remained at Court no harm could befall the dynasty. He impressed her with the idea that, as he was a son of the common people, he was best fitted to know their needs and the way to be followed to make Russia prosperous and happy. By his hypnotic power he implanted in the Empress a firm and unshakable faith in himself as the man chosen by God for Russia's salvation.

Besides this the Empress, who according to medical opinion was of a very highly strung and neurotic disposition, was subject to frequent attacks of mild hysteria which caused her acute suffering. These Rasputin was able to alleviate by using his powers of hypnotic suggestion, and herein alone lay the secret of his influence. It was a purely pathological phenomenon and nothing more. I remember speaking of it to I. L. Goremykin, then Premier, who unhesitatingly replied, "*C'est une question clinique.*" It was, therefore, all the more odious to me constantly to hear disgraceful insinuations and stories of alleged intimacy between Rasputin and the Empress. The blameless nature of the family life of the Imperial couple was patent to all, while to those who, like myself, became acquainted with their private correspondence during the war it was proved by documentary evidence. Nevertheless, Gregory Rasputin became the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna's oracle, and for her his opinion was law. On the other hand she, herself strong-willed, almost despotic by nature, exercised over her august consort, who lacked all traces of will or character, an unlimited, almost overwhelming influence. She contrived to make him amiably disposed towards, and even to confide in, Rasputin, though from my own personal

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experience I can positively assert that to the very end of his reign Nicholas II was, in his inmost soul, assailed by painful doubts. In spite of this Rasputin had free access to him and dominated him absolutely.



My old schoolfellow at the Corps des Pages and personal friend, General V. N. Dediulin, then A.D.C. to the Emperor and Palace commandant, told me the following story. "I studiously avoided," he said, "making Rasputin's acquaintance, and even went out of my way to do so, because the dirty *mouzhik* physically repelled me. One day after dinner the Emperor said to me: 'Why is it, V.N., that you so persistently avoid meeting Gregory Efimovitch?' I replied frankly that I disliked him intensely, that he had more than a tarnished reputation, and that it pained me as a loyal subject to see this rascal so close to the sacred person of my Sovereign. 'You are wrong in thinking so,' replied the Emperor, 'he is just a good, religious, simple-minded Russian. When in trouble or assailed with doubts I like to have a talk with him, and invariably feel at peace with myself afterwards.'"

Such was the influence which, by means of the Empress, Rasputin had gained over Nicholas II. Small wonder, then, that all manner of ambitious climbers, careerists and shady characters clustered around Rasputin, in whom they found a suitable instrument for attaining their personal ends. This was a source of trouble for the State authorities, whose duty it was to safeguard and maintain untarnished the prestige of the Imperial Crown. It should also be remembered that Rasputin numbered among his circle certain highly influential personages, as, for instance, Sturmer, Sabler, the High Procurator of the Holy Synod, and the Metropolitan Pitirim.

N II - his exceptional
sensitivity to whoever was
before him.

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As I have said, stories of Rasputin's exploits began to appear in the Press. So far this had been confined to the St. Petersburg and Moscow papers and had not penetrated to the provinces, so that it was not yet too late: the conflagration could easily be suppressed.

Instead, however, of fully realizing the full horror of the situation, and of uniting in their efforts to strike at the very root of the evil which menaced the Throne, and of which the Emperor and Empress were obviously unconscious, the highest officials in the State were themselves divided in two hostile camps—pro- and anti-Rasputinites. There was too, unfortunately, yet a third group—the neutrals. These, while fully realizing and deploring the existing state of affairs and capable of fighting the danger, yet, either from lack of courage or, perhaps, personal motives, obstinately remained silent and passive. The group of Rasputin's active supporters included the High Procurator of the Holy Synod Sabler, his assistant Damansky, the Archpriest Vasilieff, religious teacher of the Imperial children, General Voeikoff, the Metropolitan Pitirim, A. S. Taneieff, Gentleman Usher to the Emperor, his daughter Madame Vyrubova, B. V. Sturmer, and many others of the same stamp. Among the leaders of the second group were: P. A. Stolypin (until his death), with all his fellow-Ministers, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, Mgr. Anthony, and the Bishops Hermogen and Feofan, both of whom had now realized their error.

It is obvious that such a cleavage among the leading statesmen only played into the hands of Rasputin's adherents. The latter, availing themselves of his influence at Court, removed their enemies from their path by calumny and intrigue, thus both clearing the way for themselves and

incidentally enhancing the importance of their patron. It should be noted, too, that the spectacle of the successful careers of Rasputin's followers lowered the moral of his opponents, and secessions from the ranks of the anti-Rasputinites became more frequent. Even the neutral group appeared to be vacillating. If the upper strata of Russian society could have presented a united front and could have offered a steadfast resistance to this abnormal state of affairs; if the Crown could have clearly seen that there was but one opinion about Rasputin, and that it had no one to rely on for support, it is absolutely certain that both Rasputin and his clique would have been completely destroyed.

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The Rasputinites, together with the parties of the Extreme Right, laid the foundations of the Russian Revolution, for they estranged the Emperor from his people and allowed a shadow to be cast on the lustre of the Crown. Faced with this cleavage of opinions in his immediate entourage, being completely under the influence of the Empress, and certain of no other support, Nicholas II was organically incapable of adopting any anti-Rasputin policy. I venture therefore definitely to assert that the blame for the process of disruption which began to manifest itself at this time cannot be laid upon the Emperor Nicholas II alone. The burden of responsibility rests fully on those members of the ruling classes who, blinded by their ambition, cupidity and desire for advancement, forgot the terrible danger which was threatening their Emperor and Russia.

As soon as Rasputin felt that he was standing on firm ground he gradually altered his passive tactics, became aggressive and, encountering no obstacles to his fanatical outbursts, grew daily more insolent. Nevertheless, the rapidity with which he

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acquired followers and disciples was amazing, especially in society, where their number was considerable, particularly among the women. They clung to him like flies to a honey-pot.

I was told the following story, which I know to be perfectly true, of Rasputin's power of suggestion. A lady who lived in the provinces, having heard of Rasputin's influence at Court, determined to try and obtain through him promotion for her husband. This lady was a happy and model wife and mother. On her arrival in St. Petersburg she managed to obtain an interview with Rasputin, who, on hearing her petition, assumed a stern and authoritative air and replied, addressing her as "thou":

"Very well, I'll try. Only to-morrow you must come to me in a low-necked dress with bare shoulders. And don't you dare come to me otherwise."

When he spoke to her his eyes seemed to pierce her through and through, and his whole behaviour was more than familiar. The lady, outraged by Rasputin's words and manner, went away, firmly resolved not to pursue her plea. On her return home, however, she was seized with an unaccountable yearning; she became obsessed with the idea that she had to do something. Next day, having procured a *décolletée* dress, she presented herself at the appointed hour at Rasputin's flat. Shortly afterwards her husband received his promotion.

It can easily be imagined what a repulsive impression the orgies of Rasputin and his women followers made, not only on the servants, from whom nothing ever remains a secret, but also on simple folk in general. How great must have been their contempt for the "gentry" who so cynically indulged in shameful immorality! What religious considerations or what quest of higher truths could

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like all those who pray to
God for personal freedom.

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justify such conduct? It was clear to all that those who sought Rasputin's patronage were guided solely by the lowest of instincts and nothing else. It is worthy of note that all the common people who ministered to the freaks of this libertine, such as the cabmen who drove him and his women to the baths; the bath attendants who showed him to his private room; the waiters who served him during his drunken orgies; the policemen and Secret Service agents who stood freezing at street corners all to protect his precious life—all these people were not in the least imposed upon by Rasputin's sanctity, because his everyday life, which lay open to them, told them quite a different tale. Their comments were pithy and to the point: "The gentry are out for fun." Yet Rasputin was intimate with, and under the patronage of, the most exalted persons. What conclusions were drawn from this my readers can judge for themselves! *

Rasputin's increasing immorality and cynicism at last opened Bishop Feofan's eyes to the true nature of his former protégé. The Bishop overtly joined the camp of Rasputin's opponents and endeavoured to persuade the Empress that the pseudo-righteous *starets* was quite unworthy of the honour and attention bestowed on him, and that he ought to be banished from the Court, which he discredited by his presence. The unworthy *starets* proved more powerful than the righteous prelate. The combat was unequal. Bishop Feofan was soon relieved of his office as the Emperor's confessor and from the post of Principal of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and was transferred to the see of Simferopol, in the Crimea.

Rasputin was victorious. The ease with which this victory had been carried off made him fully realize the extent of his power. He straightway proceeded, first, to sweep from his path all those

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who opposed him at the Imperial Court, next to apply these tactics to the ranks of the higher clergy, and finally turned his attention to the statesmen and dignitaries of the realm. The fate of Bishop Feofan was shared by Rasputin's other patron, Mgr. Hermogen, who also came at last to realize the true nature of the holiness of the *starets* whom he had so rashly recommended. The removal, or rather the downfall, of Bishop Hermogen was, however, the occasion of a public scandal. Since he had no access to the Court, Mgr. Hermogen decided on another course. Having become convinced of Rasputin's immorality and of the danger that threatened the Imperial Family through their association with him, Mgr. Hermogen summoned him to his house. He then, in the presence of the monk Ilidor, a Cossack officer named Rodionoff (author of a fairly well-known book, "Our Crime"), a lay brother in the bishop's service and a pilgrim named Mitia, arraigned Rasputin for all his disgusting behaviour and admonished him to repent and voluntarily to leave the Emperor's house.

"You are an impostor and a hypocrite," Mgr. Hermogen said to Rasputin (I repeat here the story told me by Rodionoff). "You pose as a holy *starets*, while leading a shameful and unclean life. You duped me in the past, but now I see what you really are and feel that I have sinned in introducing you to the Emperor's family. You disgrace it by your presence, while by your behaviour and conversation you cast a slur on the name of the Empress, whose sacred person you dare to touch with your unclean hands. This can no longer be tolerated. I adjure you in the Name of the living God to depart and to cease from troubling the Russian people by your presence at the Imperial Court."

Rasputin's answers to the indignant bishop were

insolent, and a violent scene followed, in the course of which Rasputin, after abusing Mgr. Hermogen in vulgar language, flatly refused to submit to his command and threatened to "make short work of him." At this Bishop Hermogen, losing his self-control, exclaimed: "So, you dirty scoundrel, you refuse to submit to my episcopal command, and dare to threaten me. Then know that I, as a bishop, anathematize you!"

Rasputin, as if possessed, clenched his fists and flung himself on the prelate, his face, said Rodionoff, losing every trace of humanity. Afraid lest, in his access of fury, Rasputin should murder the bishop, Rodionoff drew his sword and, with the others, hastened to the rescue. With difficulty they managed to drag Rasputin away. His bodily strength was such that he managed to wrench himself from their grasp and take to his heels. He was, however, overtaken by the lay brother and the pilgrim Mitia and roughly handled. Still he managed to escape and ran out into the street shouting: "You wait a bit, I'll pay you out." This threat, taking advantage of the following circumstances, he carried out to the letter.

A bishop, one of the members of the Holy Synod, told me that at a secret conclave of the latter the High Procurator Sabler, one of Rasputin's most influential patrons, recommended Rasputin as a candidate for the priesthood. The Holy Synod rejected this proposal with righteous indignation. In vain Sabler insisted, and intimated that the suggestion emanated from high quarters. The Synod could not be persuaded to yield. Bishop Hermogen on this occasion delivered a fulminating speech exposing the immoral life and activities of the pseudo-holy *starets*. The latter, of course, heard of all that took place from Sabler himself.

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Almost simultaneously the following episode occurred. The Empress's sister, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, presented to the Synod a request stating her desire to found, or rather restore, the ancient Order of Deaconesses. In the early days of the Christian era these semi-monastic communities did many works of charity: they organized prayer meetings, founded hostels and asylums, children's homes and almshouses for aged people, and ministered to the sick and the infirm. The discussion of this question in the Synod almost coincided with the incident concerning Rasputin's ordination. The debate was an extremely heated one. The moving spirit of the opposition to the Grand Duchess's request was again Bishop Hermogen. In opposing the scheme he argued that the foundation of such communities would be contrary to the canons of the Church, for the Order of Deaconesses had been abolished by a decree of one of the Œcumenic Councils.

Meanwhile Sabler, seeing that the Synod remained unyielding on the point of Rasputin's ordination, devised another scheme, which he presented to the Synod at the same time as the Grand Duchess's request. He suggested that a certain Archimandrite Barnabas, an adherent of himself and of Rasputin, an ignorant monk, who before taking the vows had been a common market gardener, should be consecrated Suffragan Bishop of Kargopol. The High Procurator hoped that this bishop would prove an obedient tool in his hands and would ordain Rasputin. In all justice to the Synod, it must be stated that this proposal also met with unanimous opposition and rejection. Nothing daunted, Sabler declared that it was no concern of his personally, but that it was the will of persons more highly placed than himself. The Synod began to waver. The presiding member,

Mgr. Anthony, Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, was so profoundly shocked by this intrigue that he fell seriously ill after the meeting and remained confined to his bed all through the winter, taking no part in the deliberations of the Synod. Sabler finally succeeded in cajoling the majority of the members of the Synod into acquiescence. At a conclave presided over by Bishop Sergius of Finland, acting as deputy for the Metropolitan Anthony, the motion for Barnabas' consecration was put to the vote and carried.

Bishop Hermogen remained true to himself. Refusing to give in, he inveighed against the High Procurator and the weakness of the members of the Synod, and finally created a demonstration by quitting the assembly, declaring that he would not be a party to such wickedness and threatening to excommunicate its participants for their lack of zeal for the honour and purity of the Orthodox Church. By some strange freak of fate all these intrigues happened to coincide. The result of Bishop Hermogen's denunciatory speech was quite unexpected. By an Imperial ukase he was deprived of his membership of the Synod and ordered to return immediately to his diocese. At the same time Ilidor, who had nothing whatever to do with the Synod's decision, was also banished from St. Petersburg.

Such drastic treatment of the two most avowed enemies of the *starets* showed plainly who was the instigator of these proceedings, and who was taking his revenge by sweeping them from his path. Mgr. Hermogen, however, would not accept his disgrace. In a sincere and impassioned letter he implored the Emperor to eradicate the tares which had sprung up around the Throne, and brought irrefutable evidence to prove how cowardly the Synod had been and how morally wrong and

disgraceful the whole affair was. He used all the strength of his fiery eloquence in praying the Emperor to take heed of the danger, to guard himself, the Heir to the Throne and the whole Imperial Family from the terrible evil with which they were menaced. He claimed for himself the right to be tried before a court of bishops, which alone, according to the canons of the Church, could deprive him of his membership of the Synod. The letter remained unanswered, and Hermogen himself was informed by the High Procurator Sabler that, as a punishment for his disobedience to the Emperor's command, he was to be exiled to the distant Zhirovetsky monastery, whither he would be conveyed forcibly should he refuse to go of his own free will. The bishop was taken seriously ill, but on his recovery humbly submitted to the order and went voluntarily into exile.

The monk Iliodor, however, took advantage of his own banishment to create a sensation. Wherever possible, he gave interviews in which he openly pointed to Rasputin as the principal cause and instigator of all that had occurred. Later he disappeared mysteriously, having set off to Saratoff on foot. He was closely pursued by reporters, who described every detail of his pilgrimage, which assumed the character of a triumphant progress. Finally, Iliodor was arrested and domiciled in the place appointed for his exile. All this caused considerable public scandal. Indignation was widespread, and Bishop Hermogen received messages of sympathy from all quarters. I well remember how one day V. M. Purishkevitch*, a member of the Duma, entered my study in a violent state of agitation and, in a voice trembling with horror and grief, said to me: "Where are we going? Our last mainstay, the Holy Orthodox Church, is being

* One of those who murdered Rasputin in 1917.

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destroyed. There was a revolution which attempted to undermine the Crown; it failed. The army remained loyal to its duty; it is now being openly subverted. As a climax, the powers of darkness are now attacking Russia's last hope—the Church. And the most terrible part of it all is that this seems to emanate from the Throne itself. A charlatan, a *khlyst*, a filthy, illiterate peasant is playing his dirty tricks on our prelates. Into what abyss are we being driven? Oh, my God! I want to sacrifice myself and kill this vermin, Rasputin!”

And yet Purishkevitch belonged to the Extreme Right wing of the Duma. But he was a sincere and honest man, a warm-hearted patriot, who did not think of himself or his career. I had the greatest difficulty in calming his agitation and persuading him that all was not yet lost, that the Duma might still have a word to say in the matter, and that perhaps the Emperor might listen to the voice of the chosen representatives of the people.

Scene

It is characteristic of the Emperor Nicholas II that personally he had nothing against the exiled bishop. On his arrival at his new abode Mgr. Hermogen sent his secretary to me with a letter, in which he exhorted me to do my duty by revealing to the Emperor the whole truth and warning him of the approaching danger.

When next I waited on the Emperor to present my customary report, I laid before him the whole inner history of the incident which had taken place in the Holy Synod, and petitioned for leniency for the bishop, who had been made to suffer for no offence at all. The following were the Emperor's very words:

Scene

“I have nothing against Bishop Hermogen. I consider him to be an upright and truthful pastor, a straightforward man capable of fearlessly and

firmly defending the truth, steadfast in his service of upholding the purity and honour of the Orthodox Church. He will soon be allowed to return. But I was obliged to inflict a punishment on him for openly refusing to submit to my command."

Forgiveness, however, did not follow. Probably other influences proved stronger, and overruled the Emperor's feeble will.

Acem The Emperor sent his A.D.C., Mandryka, to Tsaritsin to investigate Ilidor's case. In the course of the inquiry, Mandryka obtained a great deal of information concerning the criminal activities of Rasputin, and, being an honest man, decided on his return to St. Petersburg to acquaint the Emperor with all the facts. At an audience with the Emperor, at which the Empress was present, Mandryka, in a state of the most violent agitation (he actually fainted, and the Emperor himself brought him a glass of water), told the Emperor all he had learned at Tsaritsin of Rasputin's dealings with the *khlysty*. This affords further proof that the Emperor was not left in ignorance concerning Rasputin.

The public conscience was roused and clamoured for the truth. The whole case, with all the minutest details, appeared in the Press. Editors paid heavy fines to the censor, but continued to publish the articles. From whatever standpoint the affair was regarded, truth and justice remained on the side of Mgr. Hermogen.

Such was the powerful influence exercised by Rasputin and his circle even so far back as the end of 1911. How could the Russian public remain an indifferent spectator of all that was taking place? But who did anything to combat the growing and spreading evil?

CHAPTER II

P. A. Stolypin and Rasputin—Case of the Imperial Children's Nurse—Disgrace of the Metropolitan Anthony—Questions about Rasputin in the Duma—Conversation with the Dowager Empress.

I MUST here go back to an earlier date, namely, to the period between 1908 and 1910. I am bound to state that Rasputin's unexpected and steadily growing influence was viewed with considerable apprehension by P. A. Stolypin, who then held the posts of Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior. His anxiety was shared by P. P. Izvol'sky and Lukianoff, both of whom consecutively occupied the post of High Procurator of the Holy Synod during Stolypin's Premiership. Stolypin had more than once drawn the attention of the Emperor to the disastrous consequences which might result from the proximity to the Imperial pair of an avowed sectarian. During the period between 1905 and 1909, however, Rasputin remained comparatively in the background, though slowly and surely paving the way for his future activities. Little by little, as he realized his growing power, this fanatic let himself go. His amorous exploits became more cynical and overt; the number of his victims increased, as also did the circle of disciples and women followers. In view of these circumstances the then Procurator of the Holy Synod, Lukianoff, with the approval of Stolypin, proceeded to investigate all the existing documentary evidence concerning Rasputin in order to cast a light on the hitherto mysterious and obscure personality of this adventurer. The truth was soon revealed in all its unattractive nakedness.

Lukianoff, who had all the secret archives of the Synod at his disposal, found no difficulty in deciphering the actual personality of the "great *starets*." These documents which the investigation brought to light were later studied by me. The results of the inquiry were sufficiently convincing.

Stolypin, on the strength of these documents, drew up a comprehensive report, which he presented to the Emperor. This step led to a somewhat unexpected result. Nicholas II listened attentively to the Premier, but came to no definite decision, and desired Stolypin to interview Rasputin and form his own judgment of the man. A statement to that effect was made to me by the Emperor himself on the occasion of my own report to him on the subject. Stolypin, too, told me of his interview with Rasputin. On entering the Premier's study, the *starets* immediately attempted to hypnotize him.

Scene "He ran his pale eyes over me," said Stolypin, "mumbled mysterious and inarticulate words from the Scriptures, made strange movements with his hands, and I began to feel an indescribable loathing for this vermin sitting opposite me. Still, I did realize that the man possessed great hypnotic power, which was beginning to produce a fairly strong moral impression on me, though certainly one of repulsion. I pulled myself together and, addressing him roughly, told him that on the strength of the evidence in my possession I could annihilate him by prosecuting him as a sectarian. I then ordered him to leave St. Petersburg immediately of his own free will for his native village and never show his face here again."

This happened at the beginning of 1911. The Premier proved to be more powerful than the hypnotizer, who, realizing that matters were assuming a bad turn, suddenly disappeared from St.

Petersburg and was not seen there for some time. Nevertheless, it is worthy of comment that by his hypnotic power Rasputin had been capable of producing an impression even on a man of such iron will as Stolypin. How much greater, then, would his ascendancy be over natures endowed with weaker nerves and less self-control!

In spite, however, of the Emperor's seeming acquiescence to Rasputin's exile, on which Stolypin had insisted, matters soon took a different turn. Soon after the departure of the *starets* to his native village, he was followed by A. A. Vyubova, one of the ladies attached to the person of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna*. Rasputin returned with her, not to St. Petersburg, but to Kieff, where the Imperial Family had arrived for the inauguration of the Zemstvo institutions in South-Western Russia. It should be remembered that Stolypin's position at Court was by now seriously compromised. The bill for the introduction of Zemstvos in South-Western Russia, which was passed by the Imperial Duma, was thrown out by the Council of the Empire. Stolypin offered his resignation to the Emperor. A compromise was reached by which both the legislative chambers were prorogued for three days. The South-Western Provinces Zemstvos Act, as passed by the Imperial Duma, was passed by decree on the strength of Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws, and Stolypin withdrew his resignation. The anger of the members of the Council of the Empire knew no bounds, and a violent agitation against the Premier was started in Court circles. It was rumoured that the Rasputin faction, which was already in existence, took an active part in this campaign. Whether

* Mme. Vyubova never occupied the official post of lady-in-waiting to the Empress. Her position at Court was that of an "intimate friend" of her Majesty.

these rumours were true or not, the fact of Madame Vyubova's journey to Pokrovskoe with the obvious purpose of bringing back Rasputin appeared to corroborate them. It was definitely asserted at the time that Rasputin had already succeeded in persuading the Imperial pair of the beneficent effect of his presence at Court, which would preserve them, and especially the little Tsarevitch, from any possible harm. The mystically inclined Empress, whose love and constant fear for her son almost bordered on distraction, was completely subjugated by the suggestions of the astute hypnotizer. She was firmly persuaded that it was her duty to take every precaution for guarding the safety and welfare of her adored son, and became convinced of the necessity of Rasputin's constant presence in Kieff during the numerous ceremonies and public functions at which the Imperial pair were to appear. At all events Rasputin was brought to Kieff by Madame Vyubova, and later followed the Imperial Family to Livadia, in the Crimea. He did not live at Livadia itself, but at the Hotel Edinburgh at Yalta, under the assumed name of Nikonoff. As soon as the Prefect of Yalta, General Dumbadze, a bluff and honest soldier, heard of this, he immediately expelled Nikonoff-Rasputin from the town, without considering the danger to his own career. When the Imperial Family returned to St. Petersburg Rasputin was already there, and was very soon reinstated in his former position at Court. The apparent victory won by Stolypin and the Procurator Lukianoff had been nothing but a temporary concession to public opinion, and things soon resumed their ordinary course.

In the midst of the Kieff celebrations Stolypin was treacherously assassinated during a gala performance at the theatre. V. N. Kokovtzeff was appointed Prime Minister. Lukianoff, realizing

that he would never retain his post without Stolypin, resigned, and was replaced by V. K. Sabler, a staunch supporter of Rasputin. It was during his tenure of office that the incidents described in the previous chapter, which resulted in the disgrace of Bishop Hermogen and the monk Iliodor, occurred in the Holy Synod.

** D.T. on the power of the devil*

Emboldened by such a series of political victories, Rasputin gave vent to his instincts.

It became known that he had seduced the nurse of the Imperial children, formerly an inmate of the Imperial Home for Foundlings. It came to my knowledge that the girl disclosed her secret to her confessor, and told him she had accompanied her seducer to the baths; later, realizing the gravity of her sin, she had confessed everything to the Empress, imploring her to renounce her faith in Rasputin and guard the children from the terrible influence of this "devil," as she called him. This nurse was shortly after pronounced to be suffering from nervous disorder, and sent to the Caucasus for treatment. She there visited the Metropolitan Anthony, who was taking a water cure at Kislovodsk, told him all, and after describing in detail Rasputin's criminal doings in the Palace, entreated the Metropolitan to save the little Tsarevitch from the "clutches of the devil."

** Rasputin lies*

On his return to St. Petersburg at the beginning of 1911, Mgr. Anthony requested an audience of the Emperor, and presented him with a detailed account of the events which had come to his knowledge. The Emperor heard him with obvious displeasure, and remarked that the Imperial Family's private affairs did not concern the Metropolitan. Mgr. Anthony possessed sufficient strength of character to reply: "No, Sire, this is

not merely a family affair, but the affair of all Russia. The Tsarevitch is not only your son, but our future Sovereign, and belongs to all Russia." And when the Emperor silenced him a second time by declaring he would permit no one to interfere with what was going on within the Palace, Mgr. Anthony, overcome by emotion, replied: "Sire, I obey your command; but I may be permitted to think that the Tsar of Russia ought to live in a palace of crystal, where his subjects can see him."

The Emperor bade the Metropolitan a curt farewell. Soon after Mgr. Anthony had a nervous stroke, from the effects of which he never recovered.

Meanwhile, Rasputin's influence was visibly increasing, as was also the number of his adherents. Appeals and applications for help were addressed to him from all sides. He now had a staff of secretaries; like a person of high rank he received at certain hours and was even difficult of access.

Nevertheless, people came to him from far and near, even from the provinces, with all manner of possible and impossible requests, with a firm belief in the power of the "holy starets." Rasputin himself apparently shared this belief. At any rate, Stolypin, and after him other leading statesmen, began to receive from Rasputin illiterately written notes, couched in peremptory terms, and addressing his correspondent as "thou," with orders to "help so and so," or "grant so and so's request," because "I know him, he is a good man."

These importunities, I regret to say, seldom met with a refusal. I myself once received a similar note, which of course I ignored, and after certain drastic steps on my part the attempt was never repeated.

Owing to the privileged position which he enjoyed, Rasputin soon became the centre of groups of business men of shady character and

doubtful reputation, who hoped to "do good business" with the help of the *starets*. And what is more, there was sufficient evidence that they succeeded. The Imperial Duma, of course, could not remain indifferent to all that was said about the political significance of the growing scandal. There was a feeling of great apprehension among its members. But of its very nature the Duma was, to a certain extent, powerless to take any steps to calm public opinion. Many members feared an open avowal on the part of the Duma of the fact that an adventurer and a *khlyst* had assumed the exclusive role of the Emperor's counsellor and wielded such power as to necessitate the intervention of the legislative assembly. Unfortunately, such intervention could not in the end be avoided. As yet the members of the Duma refrained from direct action in the matter.

There would have been no particular cause for alarm if it had only been a question of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna's infatuation for this man's imaginary gift of prophecy and hypnotic power, which alleviated her nervous complaint and allayed her fears for the safety of her family, particularly for the life of the Tsarevitch. But once Rasputin had gained the complete confidence of the Imperial Family, he proceeded to organize a closely united group of confederates—or rather, it was organized for him by others. This intimate circle, which began by pursuing its own private interests, soon transferred its activities to wider spheres, first interfering in Church matters and finally in affairs of State, removing popular statesmen and replacing them by its own nominees. The Heir Apparent, too, was growing up. Rasputin's interference in the private family life of the Emperor was common knowledge, and the fear that Rasputin's sectarian teachings might have a profound impression on the

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child's receptive mind, and that the young Heir to the Throne would be alienated from the Orthodox Church, was, therefore, not without foundation.

Moreover, the fanatical ideas of this pervert might gradually cloud the boy's spiritual outlook with an unhealthy mysticism, so that he would grow up nervously high-strung and devoid of will-power and self-control. Lastly, the mere fact of the close proximity to the Emperor's Throne of a debauched, illiterate and immoral peasant, the fame of whose disgusting adventures had spread far and wide, was in itself sufficient to undermine and uproot all the respect and reverence due to the Crown.

Dark rumours were current that this was actually the plan of those who inspired Rasputin's group of followers, some of whom were alleged to be acting on directions emanating from foreign countries. At any rate, when I was collecting material for an impending report to the Emperor, I received some foreign Press cuttings. According to these, the Masonic Congress held in Brussels in 1909 or 1910 had, among other things, discussed the question whether Rasputin was a convenient tool for spreading in Russia the slogans of the Order, and whether under his destructive influence the dynasty could last for more than two years. I fully realized, therefore, that taking into account the general state of public opinion, I, as President of the Imperial Duma, would not be in a position to avoid presenting to the Emperor a detailed report on the situation. Events, however, moved quicker than I had anticipated.

At the time of the sensational affair of Bishop Hermogen and the monk Iliodor, which occurred towards the end of 1910, a M. Novoseloff, a lecturer at the Moscow Theological Academy and an expert on sectarianism, published a pamphlet containing detailed and documentary evidence

exposing Rasputin as belonging to the sect of the *khlysty*. In this pamphlet Novoseloff accused the highest dignitaries of the Church of tolerating sectarianism. The pamphlet was immediately withdrawn from sale and confiscated by the police. The daily paper *Golos Moskvyy*, in which a spirited article by the same author appeared, together with excerpts from the pamphlet, was heavily fined by the censor, and copies containing the article were seized by the police. These measures of suppression, of course, produced exactly the opposite effect. There was a general rush for the pamphlet and the remaining copies of the *Golos Moskvyy*, which fetched fabulous prices, and articles on Rasputin and the illegal confiscation of Novoseloff's book appeared in all the daily papers. Letters from Rasputin's former victims were openly published, as well as photographs of himself surrounded by his followers. The greater the zeal displayed by the police and the censor's committee, the more numerous became the articles, notwithstanding the heavy fines paid by the editors. The case of Bishop Hermogen had already aroused great excitement and apprehension in the Duma; the publication of the Novoseloff pamphlet, with the attendant scandal of its seizure by the police, merely added fuel to the fire. In view of these circumstances I resolved no longer to delay my request for an audience with the Emperor.

Quite unexpectedly, however, and without previously consulting me, a group of members of the Duma presented a written interpellation on the illegal action of the Government in confiscating the Novoseloff pamphlet and the number of the *Golos Moskvyy*. By the order of procedure of the Imperial Duma I had not the right to disallow a debate on a question raised as urgent. As, however, the debate on the urgency of the interpellation

would itself probably lead to an outburst in the Duma, I invited the various party leaders to a private conference on the subject, and endeavoured to persuade Gutchkoff, who was the first signatory of the interpellation, to postpone the motion in order to save the Crown from becoming the subject of a heated debate in the Duma. I felt that the time had not yet come for exposing all these events to the judgment of the nation, and considered such publicity to be premature. I urged that a wiser course would be to attempt, by means of a report by the President of the Duma, to demonstrate to the Tsar, on the strength of irrefutable evidence, the dangerous trend of events, and secure the banishment of the pernicious false teacher from the Court.

A. I. Gutchkoff replied that public feeling was running so high that, if the interpellation were dropped by the moderate parties, it would be taken up by the Socialists, whose tactics would only thicken the atmosphere instead of clearing it. On the other hand, if the interpellation were moved by the moderate parties, a compromise might be arrived at, and a scandal averted. Gutchkoff was of opinion that a debate on the present interpellation could be confined to the subject of Bishop Hermogen and the Novoseloff pamphlet, whereas otherwise the whole question would be brought up during the debate on the Synod Budget Estimates. Gutchkoff's opinion carried the day, and the question of the urgency of the interpellation was submitted to debate.

In justice to the Duma it should be said that the attitude of all the members was perfectly correct during the debate, which passed off without any unseemly demonstration. A. I. Gutchkoff and V. N. Lvoff spoke in favour of urgency, and the motion to that effect was carried unanimously.

The attitude of the Government towards this

incident is worth mentioning. The post of Minister of the Interior was then occupied by A. A. Makaroff. When the interpellation on the seizure of the Novoseloff pamphlet was laid before the Duma, I wrote him a letter requesting that a copy of this pamphlet should be forwarded to me for perusal, to enable me to control the debate. Makaroff replied that he had no copies of the pamphlet at his disposal, neither did he see any reason for circulating it. This reply made me exceedingly angry, and I resolved to call on the Minister myself. My visit obviously came as a surprise, for on being ushered into his study, I observed to my astonishment that several copies of the notorious pamphlet were lying on the Minister's desk. This proved that even such a perfectly honest man as Makaroff undoubtedly was was nevertheless not entirely free from servility when it came to shielding Rasputin. After a stormy scene, I succeeded in securing a copy of the pamphlet. Here was another clear example of Rasputin's power: Government officials thought it necessary to shield him instead of devoting their energies to more important affairs of State.

Thanks to the interpellation in the Duma, the whole affair was brought to the public notice. The article from the *Golos Moskvyy*, which led to the seizure of the paper, figured in the stenographic reports of the debate and was therefore reprinted in all the papers. This article, entitled "The Voice of an Orthodox Layman," and signed by Mikhail Novoseloff, editor and publisher of the review, the *Religious and Philosophical Library*, had appeared in No. 19 of the *Golos Moskvyy* in the form of a "Letter to the Editor," and began with the words:

"*Quo usque tandem!*" Such is the cry of indignation escaping from the lips of all Orthodox

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men and women against that cunning conspirator against our Holy Church, that fornicator of human souls and bodies—Gregory Rasputin, acting under the holy cover of that Church. "*Quo usque?*"—such are the words which, in anguish and bitterness of spirit, the sons of the Orthodox Church are compelled to address to the Synod, in view of the unheard-of tolerance exhibited towards the said Gregory Rasputin by the highest dignitaries of the Church. . . . How much longer will the Synod remain silent and inactive in the face of this shameful comedy, enacted for years before its very eyes? . . .

The letter ended with an "apology for its author's boldness," and the "respectful request to be allowed to produce before a supreme ecclesiastical court conclusive evidence proving the justice of the charge laid against the heretic seducer—Rasputin."

The appearance in the Press of the Novoseloff pamphlet, together with the interpellation to the Government concerning its confiscation, placed the whole case of Gregory Rasputin's activities and influence at Court on a documentary footing. No doubt whatever could now be entertained as to the truth of all the rumours and stories that were circulated about him. Now that an interpellation on the subject of Rasputin, based on circumstantial evidence, had been moved in the Duma, the Crown was faced with the necessity of deciding once and for all whether Rasputin was or was not to be. Everyone realized that the combat between Rasputin and Russia must be decided by the victory or the defeat of one of the opposing sides. But the forces were too unequal. On Rasputin's side was the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, strong-willed, despotic, and exercising unbounded influence over the Emperor. She was supported by the Court clique, who knew what they wanted. On the other hand, indecision and

fear of incurring the displeasure of highly-placed personages reigned in the opposing camp. Solidarity and singleness of purpose were lacking there, because none really cared for what ought to have been paramount in their thoughts—the good of Russia.

The Emperor was vacillating between the two and waiting for events which would force him to dismiss Rasputin, for in those days he was still dimly conscious of the true significance of what was passing, but he was entirely dominated by the stronger will of his consort. The whole burden of the struggle, therefore, fell upon the Imperial Duma. This gave certain circles an opportunity of accusing the Duma of revolutionary tendencies, while, as a matter of fact, the Duma was fighting for the inviolability of the Emperor's prestige.

After the interpellation in the Duma, the Prime Minister, Kokovtzeff, was summoned to the Emperor. He told me afterwards that the Empress had insisted on the dissolution of the Duma. If before the interpellation I had entertained any doubts as to the expediency of presenting a report to the Emperor, my mind was now firmly made up, and I resolved to request an audience, in the course of which I determined that I would speak to the Emperor about Rasputin.

A whole month was spent in collecting evidence. I was assisted by Gutchkoff, Badmaieff, Rodionoff and Count Sumarokoff, who was in touch with agents abroad. Prince Yusupoff kept us informed of what was going on at the Palace. Badmaieff supplied us with *data* concerning Mgr. Hermogen and Iliodor and their connection with Rasputin. Rodionoff produced the original letter of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna to Rasputin, which had been wrested from him by Iliodor during the scuffle in the corridor of Bishop Hermogen's

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house, when the *starets* had been roughly handled by Ilidor and the lay brother. Rodionoff also produced letters written by the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana and Marie.

In February, 1912, I learnt through Prince Yusupoff that the Dowager Empress Marie Feodorovna was greatly perturbed by all she had heard of Rasputin. Prince Yusupoff was of opinion that I ought to wait on her and acquaint her with the details of the case.

Soon afterwards I received a call from General Oseroff, general in waiting on her Majesty, who transmitted to me the desire of the Dowager Empress to see me and learn from me all there was to hear. Before this, the Empress had summoned Prince Yusupoff, questioned him about me as a man, and asked him whether the President of the Duma was in a position to tell her all there was to know. Prince Yusupoff replied: "He is the only man, thoroughly informed, on whom you may rely to tell you nothing but the absolute truth."

The whole Imperial Family awaited my audience with the Emperor in a state of keen excitement: would I dare speak of Rasputin? and what would be the impression produced by my report? The Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna told Prince V. M. Volkonsky that she very much hoped the President of the Duma would speak to the Emperor about Rasputin.

A few days before the date fixed for my audience with the Emperor, I received a telephone message bidding me wait on the Empress Marie Feodorovna next morning at eleven o'clock. Collecting all the documents in my possession I started for the Dowager Empress's Palace. I was immediately introduced into her boudoir, where the Empress was awaiting me. She received me with the words: "You are of course aware of the object of our

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interview? First of all, however, I wish you to explain to me the cause and meaning of the interpellation. Were not its actual motives of a revolutionary character, and, if so, why did you not prevent it?"

I explained to the Empress that though I was myself opposed to the interpellation, I nevertheless resolutely denied its having been inspired by revolutionary motives. On the contrary, it had been a necessary step for the calming of public opinion; the rumours had gone too far, and the attitude of the Government merely served to increase the general irritation.

The Empress then desired to see all the documents in my possession. I read her extracts from the Novoseloff pamphlet and told her all I knew. She informed me that she herself had only recently learnt the whole story. She had certainly heard of Rasputin before, but had never attached much importance to his existence.

"I only learnt all these details a few days ago from a person of my acquaintance, and I was absolutely aghast. It is terrible, terrible," she repeated. "I know, too, that there is a letter from Iliodor to Hermogen"—(a copy of this denunciatory letter was actually in my possession)—"and a letter from the Empress to that dreadful man. Show it me," she added.

I replied that I was unable to do so. At first she insisted on having it, but finally, laying her hand on mine, said:

"You will destroy it, will you not?"

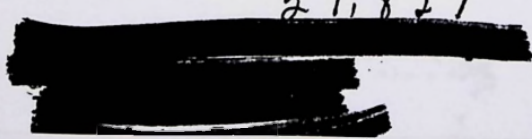
"Yes, your Majesty, I will destroy it."

"That is good."

This letter is still in my possession. I soon learnt that distorted copies of it were being circulated and deemed it wiser to preserve the original.

The Dowager Empress said to me:

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"I hear that you intend to speak to the Emperor about Rasputin. Do not do so. Unfortunately he will not believe you, and it will cause him much pain. He is so pure of heart that he does not believe in evil."

I replied that to my great sorrow I could not leave such an important matter unmentioned in my report. It was my duty to speak and inform my Sovereign. The affair was too serious, and the consequences might be too dangerous.

"Have matters gone so far then?"

"Madam, it is a question of the dynasty. We Monarchists can no longer keep silent. It is a great joy to me, your Majesty, that you have given me the pleasure of seeing you and speaking frankly on the subject. You see me now profoundly perturbed by the thought of the responsibility which rests upon me. I most humbly ask you to give me your blessing."

She raised her gentle eyes to my face, and laying her hand on mine, said in a voice trembling with emotion:

"God bless you."

I was on the point of leaving the room, when the Empress made a few steps forward and added softly:

"Do not hurt him too much."

I subsequently heard from Prince Yusupoff that after my audience the Empress Marie Feodorovna visited the Emperor and declared to him, "Either I am here or Rasputin," intimating her intention of departing if Rasputin remained.

On my return home I had calls from Prince V. M. Volkonsky, and Prince F. F. and Princess Z. N. Yusupoff. The Prince said to me: "We have overcome a big intrigue."

It appeared that the Court clique had endeavoured to prevent my interview with the

Dowager Empress, and when this failed, V. N. Kokovtzeff (the Prime Minister) visited the Empress Marie Feodorovna in order to ask her to dissuade me from speaking of Rasputin to the Emperor. Meanwhile, everything was ready for the report, and I presented my request for an audience to the Emperor.

CHAPTER III

Audience of the Emperor concerning Rasputin—Documents on the Case—Interview with the Emperor's Confessor—The Emperor's Refusal to grant an Audience.

I PERFECTLY realized the relative uselessness of a report presented solely by the President of the Duma, for it could not possess sufficient weight for the Emperor to adopt, on the strength of it, an irreconcilable attitude towards Rasputin, and defy any efforts made in defence of the favourite. My idea was to prevail on the Prime Minister and the Metropolitan presiding in the Holy Synod to present with me a joint report to the Emperor. Such a step would surely demonstrate to him that it was not the Duma alone, but all sections of the nation, that realized and feared the depth of the abyss into which Russia and the Emperor were being precipitated through Rasputin's influence.

Unfortunately my efforts were not successful. For one reason or another the persons mentioned above demurred from supporting me, and I was therefore compelled to act alone, thus taking upon myself the full responsibility for the ultimate consequences of my decision.

The Emperor sent for me at six o'clock on February 26. That morning my wife and I drove to the Kazan Cathedral, where we heard a special service of intercession. My report to the Emperor lasted nearly two hours. I first spoke of current affairs, touching also on conditions in the Artillery Department, administered by the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch*, and referring to the doubtful

* Second cousin to the Emperor.

safety of the Caucasus under the equally doubtful administration of Count Vorontzoff-Dashkoff. I then broached the principal subject of my report.

I said :

"Your Majesty, my report to-day extends to matters far beyond its usual scope. Granted the gracious permission of your Majesty, I intend to lay before you the detailed and documentary evidence concerning a process of destruction which has begun, pregnant with the most disastrous consequences to all concerned . . ."

The Tsar glanced at me in some astonishment.

I continued :

"I refer to the *starets* Rasputin and to the inadmissible fact of his presence at your Majesty's Court. I beseech you, Sire, as your Majesty's most loyal subject—will it be your pleasure to hear me to the end?—if not, say but one word, and I will remain silent."

With bowed head and averted gaze the Tsar murmured in a low voice :

"Speak."

"Your Majesty, the presence of this man of more than tarnished reputation in the most intimate Court circles is an event unparalleled in the history of the Russian Monarchy. The entire nation, all circles of the community, view with profound apprehension the influence this man exercises on the affairs of Church and State. The whole machinery of government, from Ministers to the inferior ranks of the secret police, is mobilized for the purpose of shielding this adventurer. Rasputin is a tool in the hands of Russia's enemies; he is their instrument for undermining the Church and the Monarchy itself. No revolutionary propaganda could achieve as much as Rasputin's mere presence at Court. Everyone fears his intimacy with the

Imperial Family. Public feeling is running very high."

"But why such attacks on Rasputin?" interrupted the Tsar; "why is he considered so harmful?"

"Your Majesty, the fact that Rasputin has created a split in the Synod has become common knowledge, both by hearsay and through the Press. Everyone knows that bishops are being transferred from their posts owing to his intrigues."

"Which bishops?" asked the Tsar.

"The case of Mgr. Hermogen aroused universal indignation, as being an undeserved insult to a prelate. Mgr. Hermogen has many supporters. I have received a petition signed by ten thousand people, begging me to intercede on his behalf before your Majesty."

"I think Mgr. Hermogen is a good man," said the Tsar; "he will soon be permitted to return. Still, I could not allow him to remain unpunished for his flagrant disobedience to my Imperial order."

"Your Majesty, according to the canons of the Church, an episcopal court can alone sit in judgment on a bishop. Mgr. Hermogen was sentenced to banishment on the sole charge of the High Procurator and on the strength of his personal report. It was an infringement of the canons of the Church."

The Tsar listened in silence.

"The case of Iliodor, too, has made a most painful impression on the people. After the inquiry held by order of your Majesty, his trial was cancelled a year ago. Now, without trial, he is confined in the Floristchevo hermitage—and this was done after he had dared to speak openly against Rasputin. These two were not the only ones to suffer. Bishop Feofan was deprived of his office of the Empress's confessor and removed to Sim-

feropol. Bishop Anthony of Tobolsk, who was the first to inform the Synod of Rasputin's adherence to the *khlysty* sect and to demand his trial, was transferred to Tver. Anyone who dares utter a word against Rasputin is persecuted by the Synod. Such a state of affairs cannot be tolerated, your Majesty. How can Orthodox Christians stand by in silence, when Orthodoxy is being defiled and destroyed by the pernicious activities of this rogue? One may well understand the general outburst of indignation which followed the disclosure that Rasputin was a *khlyst*."

"What proofs have you?"

"The police discovered that he went to the baths with women. That is one of the peculiarities of their religious practices."

"What of that? It is merely a custom among common people."

"No, your Majesty, there is no such custom. Perhaps husbands and wives go together, but what we have here is sheer debauchery. Permit me, in the first place, to read you letters from those of his victims who fell into the trap and repented afterwards. Here is a letter from a priest in Siberia, addressed to several members of the Duma [I did not like to mention Gutchkoff by name], and imploring them to inform the authorities of Rasputin's exploits, his immoral conduct and the rumours he circulated concerning his position and influence at the Imperial Court." (This letter I read out from end to end.)

"Here is another letter written by a lady confessing having been seduced and morally corrupted by Rasputin. She afterwards recoiled from him and repented of her fall . . . and met him one evening coming out of the baths in the company of her two daughters. . . The wife of an engineer, Mme. L., also fell a victim to Rasputin's teachings.

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She became insane and is now in a lunatic asylum. Will your Majesty order this evidence to be verified?"

"I believe you," said the Tsar.

I read him other letters and extracts from Novoseloff's pamphlet; I laid stress on the painful impression which the prohibition of any publication in the Press concerning Rasputin had made on the public mind. He did not belong to the category of persons of whom it was forbidden to write. He occupied no exalted position, neither was he a member of the Imperial Family. Ministers of the Crown, the presidents of the Imperial Duma or of the Council of the Empire were freely criticized in the Press. Why, then, this enforced silence concerning Rasputin? Such a policy naturally led the public to suppose him to be intimately connected with the Imperial Family.

"But why do you assume him to be a *khlyst*?"

"Your Majesty should read Novoseloff's pamphlet. He made a special investigation of the case. He states that Rasputin was prosecuted on the charge of belonging to that sect, but that for some reason or other the prosecution was stopped. Moreover, as has been ascertained, meetings of Rasputin's followers were held at Sazonoff's flat, where Rasputin himself was staying at the time. Permit me to show you a foreign newspaper cutting, in which it is said that at the Masonic Congress in Brussels Rasputin was mentioned as being a useful instrument for carrying out the freemasons' policy in Russia. The whole intrigue, with all its subsequent developments, is as clear as daylight. It is not the fate of the dynasty and the prestige of the Imperial Family alone which are involved."

"How?" inquired the Tsar, greatly agitated.

"Your Majesty, there is no serious or responsible person in charge of the Tsarevitch; he is

entrusted to the care of a country yokel, Derevenko, who may be a very good man, but is a simple peasant. Ignorant folk are naturally inclined towards mysticism. What if anything were to happen to the Heir Apparent? This is a subject of profound anxiety to all. . . . Such a charming child, so universally beloved."

The Tsar was evidently struggling to overcome his emotion. He nervously lit one cigarette after another, then threw them down again.

I here decided to approach the subject from another side and to persuade the Emperor that Rasputin was a sycophant. I produced a photograph of the *starets* wearing a pectoral cross.

"Your Majesty knows Rasputin is not in holy orders; yet here he is depicted as a priest."

The Tsar replied:

"Yes, this is really going too far. He has no right to wear a pectoral cross."

"It is blasphemy, your Majesty. He is an illiterate peasant and not entitled to wear a cowl, which appertains to the priesthood. Here is another photograph. It is a '*khlysty* ship.' This was reproduced in the *Ogonek** and circulated throughout the country. Here is Rasputin surrounded by young girls; there are also boys with him in their midst. Here he is with two young men. They are carrying a placard inscribed with *khlysty* texts, and he is holding a *khlysty* ikon of Our Lady in his hands. It is a 'ship' bearing its inmates towards fornication."

"What is that?" asked the Tsar.

"Read Novoseloff's pamphlet, which I will submit to you. Here is another photograph of Rasputin with two women, and inscribed: 'The Way to Salvation.' . . ."

"The suppression of any mention of Rasputin

* An illustrated weekly.

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in the Press encourages the idea that the *khlysty* enjoy the patronage of the Tsar. What if a war broke out? Where is the prestige of the Tsar's name and authority? A number of persons closely connected with the Court are openly designated as Rasputin's followers. Rumours are current that the highest society is contaminated with his sectarian teachings. Thus a slur is cast on society and on the Court. In defiance of the censorship all the rumours and stories about Rasputin are being feverishly seized upon and reproduced by the provincial Press."

"Have you read Stolypin's report?" asked the Emperor.

"No, I have heard it spoken of, but never read it."

"I rejected it," said the Tsar.

"It is a pity," I replied, "for all this would not have happened. Your Majesty, you witness my profound emotion. It pains me exceedingly to be obliged to speak the cruel truth. But I dared not keep silent, I had no right to conceal from my Sovereign the menacing state of affairs with their possible terrible consequences. I believe that God has placed me as a mediator between the Tsar and the representatives of the people summoned together by his august command. It is my duty, Sire, as a Russian and as your Majesty's loyal subject to warn you that our enemies are striving to undermine the Throne and the Church and to cast a shadow on the beloved name of the Tsar. I always bear in mind the text of the oath of allegiance. In the name of all you hold sacred, in the name of Russia, and for the sake of the welfare and happiness of your successors—I implore you to banish this villainous rogue, and so dispel the fears which assail those who are loyal to the Throne."

"He is not here now," replied the Tsar in a low voice.

"Will you authorize me to tell everyone that he will not return?"

The Tsar remained silent for a while, then said:

"No, I cannot promise you that. Nevertheless, I fully believe all you have told me."

"Do you believe, Sire, in the absolute loyalty and trustworthiness of all those who raised the question in the Duma? Will you believe that they were inspired by the same motives which prompted my coming to lay the whole case before you?"

"I felt the sincerity of your report, and I trust the Duma because I trust you."

I was anxious to learn whether the Emperor was pleased with my report. I continued:

"Your Majesty, I came here fully prepared to pay the penalty if I had the misfortune to incur your Majesty's displeasure. If I have overstepped my rights, you have but to say a word, and I will resign my office of President of the Imperial Duma. I sought but to do my duty in laying the whole matter before you. In view of the excitement raised by this affair in the Duma, I did not think it right to conceal it from my Sovereign."

"I thank you. You acted as an honourable man and a loyal subject."

"Your Majesty, may I, as a special favour, be granted the happiness of being presented to his Imperial Highness the Tsarevitch?"

"Do you not know him?"

"I have never seen him."

The Tsar sent for the Tsarevitch, to whom I introduced myself as "the biggest and fattest man in Russia," at which the boy broke out into a merry laugh. On my asking him whether yesterday's collection on behalf of an "Ear of Corn" had been successful, the child's singularly attractive face lit

up with pleasure, as he answered quickly: "Oh yes! I alone collected fifty roubles. That is a lot, you know."

The Tsar added, smiling tenderly at his son: "He would not part with his collecting box all day."

Then the Tsar rose from his chair, and holding out his hand to me, said: "*Do svidaniya*, Mikhail Vladimirovitch."*

As I left the room I heard the Tsarevitch's loud whisper: "Who's that?" and the Tsar's answer: "The President of the Duma."

The little Tsarevitch ran after me into the hall, and all the time stood peeping at me through the glass door.

"Don't catch cold," I said to him; "it is draughty here."

"No, no, it's all right!" he shouted back.

The smiling Derevenko† appeared on the scene. I scrutinized the faces of the footmen, soldiers and Cossacks standing at attention in the hall. How lovingly they all looked at the Tsarevitch!

A typical glimpse into the state of mind prevailing among the Court servants was given me at my departure. On seeing me to the door the Emperor's head valet, Tchemoduroff, said to me: "Come more often, your Excellency. So few people visit us, and we never hear any news."

I was deeply moved by the Emperor's mark of confidence in me and the patience with which he had heard me to the end. And this was in spite of the warnings received by me from all sides: he will not listen to you, he will be angry, he will assume his stubborn mood, etc.

That same evening I had a curious conversation

* *Au revoir.*

† The sailor attached to the Heir Apparent.

by telephone with A. S. Taneieff*, who was at the head of his Majesty's Private Chancellery. He called me up at my flat.

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, would you mind telling me what was it two members of the Duma wished to see me about?"

"I can't tell you, because I know nothing about it."

"I am afraid it might have something to do with Gregory."

"What Gregory?"

"Oh, you know. . . Gregory. . ."—stammer—

"Rasputin. . ."

"What connection is there between you and Rasputin?"

"Well, you know . . . I thought . . ."

"I am glad you admit there is a reason for speaking to you about this disgusting sectarian. Let me tell you that if you are an honourable man you ought to turn him out of Tsarskoe . . . And you know how."

"I know nothing at all."

"Yes, you do. And if you fail in your duty as an honest man, all Russia will hate you for it. As it is, your name is everywhere coupled with that of Russia's curse—Rasputin."

(Inarticulate murmurs) . . . "*Au revoir.*"

That same evening I drove to the Duma, where I was immediately surrounded by groups of deputies. I gave them a brief account of the interview and of the gracious reception accorded me by the Emperor. My narrative produced a most excellent impression on all. I gave a *verbatim* account of the whole interview to my most intimate associates.

On the morning of February 28, General V. N.

* Mme. Vyubova's father.

Dediulin, Commandant of the Imperial Palace and A.D.C. to the Emperor, telephoned to me from Tsarskoe Selo, asking me to call on him at his flat in town. General Dediulin was an old schoolfellow of mine and a personal friend; hence the conversation which ensued was of an intimate nature. Dediulin imparted to me the following news.

"After your visit to Tsarskoe Selo," he said to me, "it became known that the Tsar had scarcely touched his dinner and remained all the time extremely taciturn and thoughtful. When I reported to him next morning I took the liberty of saying to him: 'Your Majesty, you have received Rodzianko. It appears he has fatigued you very much.'"

The Tsar replied: "No, I am not in the least tired. I see that Rodzianko is a loyal subject who is not afraid of speaking the truth. He told me much that I knew nothing about. You are an old schoolfellow of his. Tell him, from me, to investigate Rasputin's case. Let him take from the Synod all the secret documents concerning Rasputin, thoroughly examine them and report the results to me. But tell him to keep the whole affair secret for the time being."

I was astounded by the news. That same evening I invited V. I. Karpoff, a member of the Council of the Empire, and the members of the Duma Kamensky, Shubinsky and Gutchkoff, to come to see me. We discussed far into the night the best means for proceeding with the mission entrusted to me by the Tsar. Next day I asked M. Damansky, Assistant High Procurator of the Synod, to come to the Duma and bring me the secret *dossier* on Rasputin's case. Damansky arrived. In order the better to draw him out, I decided to feign complete ignorance. This manœuvre met with complete success. My informant divulged all I

wished to know. In his endeavours to persuade me of Gregory's holiness and purity, he declared that the *starets* was honoured and respected by many highly placed persons, who enjoyed and found edification in his conversations. Damansky revealed many names and confirmed much evidence already familiar to me through other channels. He said that Rasputin lodged with the Sazonoffs, a very respectable family with whom he, Damansky, was on intimate terms; that the house was visited by M. Taneieff, Gentleman Usher to the Emperor, by the wife of General Orloff, Countess Witte*, "such a universally respected man" as Bishop Barnabas, and many others. I expressed my astonishment at all this, and nodded in assent.

All this time Damansky kept a firm hold on the file of documents in his hands, and kept repeatedly assuring me the case was in itself too trivial to be worth looking into. While dwelling on the virtues of the *starets*, Damansky professed profound indignation at the gossip and calumny of which he was the subject. "He is accused of being a *khlyst* and a libertine. Some people go so far as to allege an intimacy between him and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna . . ."

Here I dropped the mask, struck the table with my fist, drew myself up to my full height†, and looking as ferocious as I could, shouted at the top of my voice so as to be heard in the adjoining room:

"Are you mad, sir? How dare you utter such abominations in my presence? You forget of whom and to whom you are speaking! I refuse to listen to you any further."

My outburst was so unexpected that he turned pale, cowered and hastened to excuse himself. The

* Wife of the ex-Prime Minister.

† M. Rodzianko was an exceptionally tall and powerful man.

object of his mean behaviour was obvious. He imagined me to be his dupe, and hoped to lead me on to talk scandal with the intention of reporting it in certain quarters afterwards. He expected to convince me by his explanations, and prevent my claiming the documents. He was, therefore, completely taken aback when I wrenched the file from his grasp, locked it up in my desk and, placing the key in my pocket, declared: "By order of his Majesty the Emperor, I shall examine these documents, and inform you later of the results."

Having obtained possession of these important documents, I at once ordered the clerical staff of the Duma and the sworn-in lady typists to make complete copies of them. With the aid of J. V. Glinka, the head of the Duma clerks' office, I myself proceeded to draft a plan of procedure for the task in hand—a task demanding great circumspection in view of the extremely delicate nature of the case.

The very next day Damansky telephoned asking for a private interview at my flat. Suspecting a trap, I replied that I did not give private interviews on matters of State; I therefore requested his presence in my room at the Duma at three o'clock that afternoon, and to avoid any further explanations I immediately hung up the receiver.

On my arrival at the Duma I found Damansky waiting for me. To my astonishment he was accompanied by the Archpriest Alexander Vasileff, the religious teacher of the Imperial children. The reverend father's presence at the Duma was rather surprising. I at once realized that some plan for putting pressure on me was afoot, and decided to separate them. They were, therefore, shown into different rooms.

First I tackled Damansky. He explained that he was entrusted with a mission to reclaim from

me the file containing the documents on Rasputin. I expressed surprise at this request, and replied that the documents had been placed in my keeping by the Emperor's orders, and that their surrender could only be claimed by a similar act, i.e., by an Imperial order transmitted either verbally through an adjutant-general or a Secretary of State, or by written decree. At this juncture, looking somewhat perturbed and agitated, and lowering his voice, Damansky explained that though he did not bear an order from the Emperor, the demand came from a very exalted person.

"Who was it?" I asked. "Sabler?"

Damansky made a deprecating gesture.

"No, someone much more highly placed," he replied.

"Who was it, then?" I repeated, putting on an expression of astonishment.

"The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna."

"If that is the case, will you kindly inform her Majesty that she is as much a subject of her August Consort as myself, and that it is the duty of us both to obey his commands. I am, therefore, not in a position to comply with her wishes."

"What!" exclaimed Damansky, "must I really tell her that? But it is her desire."

"I am very sorry," I replied, "but nevertheless I am unable to accede to it." And to prevent further insistence on Damansky's part, I ended the interview.

I then passed on to Father Vasileff. He was instructed by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, he said, to communicate to me his opinion on the *starets*.

"He really is a God-fearing and pious man, absolutely harmless and even rather useful to the Imperial Family," said Father Vasileff.

"What part does he play in the intimate life of

the Imperial Family, particularly in relation to the children?"

"He has talks with them about God and about religion"

At these words I flew into a passion.

"You dare tell me that! You, an Orthodox priest and the religious teacher of the Tsar's children! You tolerate that a stupid, ignorant *mouzhik* should speak to them on matters of faith; you tolerate his pernicious hypnotic influence on their pure childish souls? You are a witness to the part played by this sectarian *khlyst* in the family life of the Tsar, and yet you keep silent. By countenancing this man's criminal activities you betray your holy office and your oath of allegiance. You know everything that is going on, and yet out of cowardice and servility you prefer to hold your tongue when, as a servant of the Church of God, your duty bids you raise your voice in defence of our faith. By your criminal connivance you, too, become a sectarian and a participator in the devilish conspiracy engineered by the enemies of Russia and of the Tsar, who aim at defiling the Throne and the Orthodox Church."

The unfortunate priest, completely taken aback by my vehemence, grew pale and murmured tremulously:

"No one has ever spoken to me like this before. You have opened my eyes. Tell me what I am to do."

"Go and tell the Empress from me, that if she does not want to see the ruin of her husband and son and the collapse of the Throne, she must dismiss this obscene *khlyst* from her presence for ever. The position is serious. No revolutionary propaganda could inflict greater injury on the Monarchy nor degrade the prestige of the Imperial House as does Rasputin's presence at the Palace. If you

continue to be silent and fail to disclose the truth—then the cross you wear upon your breast will brand your very heart and soul.”

He told Prince Volkonsky afterwards: “When I left the President I was trembling all over, and fully realized the force and truth of his arguments.”

Father Vasilieff, however, as I was subsequently informed, gave a completely distorted account of our interview to the Empress, thereby merely strengthening the disfavour in which she already held me. He continued to encourage her infatuation for Rasputin, and persevered in his ambiguous behaviour.

From Gutchkoff I learnt that my prolonged interview with the Tsar had seriously agitated all Rasputin's followers, and that they had decided to recall him to St. Petersburg.

Princess Z. N. Yusupoff informed us by telephone that the Empress was so distressed by Rasputin's dismissal that she took to her bed. It is interesting to recall that after the questions on Rasputin in the Duma, the Empress wrote a despairing letter of eight pages to Princess Yusupoff complaining of the unjust attacks and calumnies of which they were the object. “No one loves us,” wrote the Empress; “everyone is trying to do us harm. This interpellation was a revolutionary act.”

The Empress's complaints of their tragic position were so bitter that Princess Yusupoff felt sorry for her and sent a telephone message that she would come to see her next day. Owing, however, in all probability to some intrigue on the part of Mme. Vyubova, Princess Yusupoff was informed that the Empress was indisposed and unable to receive her.

It was not till March 9, 1912, that Princess Yusupoff was admitted to see the Empress. Her

visit took place after Gutchkoff's speech in the Duma on the Synod estimates, in which he made a further allusion to Rasputin. Princess Yusupoff spoke very gravely on the subject and tried to impress the Empress with the same arguments I had submitted to the Tsar, but in vain. The Empress remained obdurate, working herself into a state of great indignation and excitement. She expressed her displeasure at the tenor of my report to the Tsar, and was particularly angry at my refusal to return the Rasputin documents.

"What right had he to keep them and refuse their surrender?" the Empress repeated.

Princess Yusupoff tried to persuade her to believe the word of the President of the Duma.

"He is an honest and truthful man," she said.

"No, no! You don't know what he told Father Vasilieff! Hanging is too good for men like Rodzianko and Gutchkoff!"

"How can you say such things?" the Princess exclaimed indignantly. "You ought to thank God for sending you honest men who speak the truth to the Tsar. Rasputin must be turned out. He is a *khlyst* who abuses your confidence."

"No, no, that is a calumny. He is a holy man."

A thorough examination of the documents produced by Damansky revealed the history of Rasputin in all its sordid reality.

The first time that Rasputin was arraigned as a *khlyst* was as far back as 1902, when, on the strength of an official intimation from the parish priest of Pokrovskoe, the head of the district police denounced him to the Governor of Tobolsk. The Governor handed over the case to the local bishop, Mgr. Anthony, who ordered one of the diocesan

missionaries to carry out a detailed investigation. The latter, being an energetic man, made a domiciliary search in Rasputin's house, carried off various material proofs, and brought to light numerous obscure facts all tending to prove irrefutably Rasputin's adherence to the *khlysty* sect. A detailed report on the case, supported by important circumstantial evidence, was presented to the bishop. Some of the details mentioned in the report were of so obscene and revolting a nature, that it was impossible to read them without a feeling of repulsion.

On receiving the report Mgr. Anthony handed it over for study to an expert on sectarianism, a M. Berezkin, inspector of the Theological Seminary at Tobolsk. The affair dragged on indefinitely. Rasputin, meanwhile, had made his way to St. Petersburg, where, as I have previously described, he gradually wormed himself into the confidence of highly-placed persons and was introduced at the Palace.

A survey of the very thorough and conscientious investigation carried out by Berezkin, confirmed, moreover, by the evidence of numerous witnesses, letters and references to the teachings of the *khlysty*, revealed beyond the shadow of a doubt Rasputin's adherence to that disgusting sect. He was, moreover, a *khlyst* of a superior order, a clever propagandist and a pernicious corrupter of souls of simple-minded Orthodox folk. The evidence in hand established beyond doubt his connection with many of the *khlysty* "prophets," among whom he occupied a more or less important position.

In his report to the Bishop of Tobolsk, M. Berezkin declared that he had no doubt whatever that Rasputin belonged to the *khlysty*, and recommended that the whole case should be referred to

the civil authorities in order that Rasputin might be prosecuted. Before doing so, however, M. Berezkin advised the Bishop to collect certain additional evidence on the case. Acting on the strength of this report Bishop Anthony ordered the consistory of Tobolsk to carry out M. Berezkin's injunctions and hand over the case of Gregory Efimoff Rasputin to the judicial authorities.

While this inter-departmental procedure was going on, Rasputin returned from St. Petersburg to his native village. He brought with him considerable sums of money and proceeded to build himself a large, well-furnished house. He openly boasted of favours received from members of the Imperial Family, and exhibited to everyone the presents they had given him—for instance, a richly ornamented gold cross on a golden chain, a medallion containing a portrait of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, and photographs of exalted personages with appropriate inscriptions. He flaunted about in expensive sable-lined coats. In a word, the prosecuted sectarian was transformed into an influential personage, whose patronage was already beginning to be sought by many.

After Bishop Anthony's resolution recommending Rasputin's prosecution, the affair was brought to an end by an ukase of the Holy Synod appointing, by Imperial warrant, Bishop Anthony of Tobolsk to the archbishopric of Tver and Kashin, i.e., the removal of Mgr. Anthony from his former diocese. As I learnt afterwards from competent sources, to avoid a public scandal over the Rasputin case, Bishop Anthony was given the choice of two alternatives: either to withdraw his charge against Rasputin and receive promotion to the see of Tver, or to retire to a monastery. He chose the former, and Rasputin's prosecution was suppressed.

Having completed a thorough and all-round examination of the documents submitted to my investigation, I drew up a comprehensive and concise summary of the case, and on March 8, 1912, presented a request for an audience with the Emperor for the purpose of reporting on the result of the mission entrusted to me by his Majesty.

For a long time my petition remained unanswered. The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, I learnt, was absolutely opposed to my having a second interview with the Emperor, particularly as I should confront him armed with official and incriminating evidence against Rasputin.

A few days prior to the Imperial Family's departure for the Crimea, my petition for an audience was at last returned, not to me, but to the Prime Minister, V. N. Kokovtzeff. The Tsar had written on it the following note: "I request V. N. to inform the President of the Duma that I am unable to receive him, nor do I see any necessity for so doing, as I received him a week and a half ago. The Duma debates on the Synod's budget estimates have taken a turn of which I disapprove. I desire you and the President of the Duma to take steps to prevent a recurrence of this in the future."

We were both dumbfounded on reading these lines, which contained a direct affront to the Duma and a slight on its president. According to the Fundamental Laws of the country the presidents of the legislative chambers enjoyed the right of direct communication with the Sovereign. Now the Premier was charged with a mission he was not entitled to execute, as he did not possess the right to act as intermediary between the Crown and the president of one of the legislative chambers. I declared to Kokovtzeff that as the dignity of the

Duma had been slighted, I should be obliged to tender my resignation and divest myself of my Court rank.*

Such a step would inevitably create a state of conflict between the Duma and the Crown, and give colour to the charge of revolutionary tendencies already made against the Duma, thus further complicating a sufficiently unpleasant situation.

We finally arrived at the following decision. Kokovtzeff would go to Tsarskoe Selo on the very next day, point out his blunder to the Tsar, and insist that he should either grant an audience or send a personal letter to the President of the Duma. This plan was carried out to the letter. Kokovtzeff discharged his mission exceedingly well. He repeated my words to the Tsar and emphasized my intention of resigning and giving up my Court rank. To this the Tsar replied :

"I did not mean to hurt his feelings; on the contrary, I am very well satisfied with him. The Duma under him is quite changed; they have voted credits for the Navy and the Artillery Department.

. . . What is to be done?"

Kokovtzeff advised the Tsar to write an autograph letter, which I received next day. It ran as follows: "Being pressed for time and unable to receive you before my departure for the Crimea, I request you to forward me a written report."

This letter I have kept.

I did not consider it necessary to inform the Duma of this incident, merely stating that I had received an autograph letter requesting me to forward a written report.

This of itself aroused considerable displeasure, many of the members expressing their indignation at the Tsar's having found time to receive Balashoff, a delegation of students, and various other

* Honorary Court ranks were given for distinguished service.

people, and refused to see the President of the Duma.

I immediately proceeded to draw up a written report, in which task I was rendered valuable assistance by V. I. Karpoff and the head of the Duma office, J. V. Glinka.

The report was very convincing, particularly the latter part of it, which dealt with the measures to be taken to pacify public opinion and reform the Church. Mgr. Hermogen must be recalled, Rasputin banished, and a Church Convocation summoned. While engaged in this task I had a visit from Rodionoff, who brought me a message from Bishop Hermogen saying he knew of my conversation with the Tsar in defence of the Orthodox faith. The bishop sent me his blessing, said he remembered me in his prayers, and bade me stand firm.

In the meantime Rasputin again made his appearance at St. Petersburg and, according to the papers, received a great welcome from his admirers assembled at the flat of Mme. Golovina. This time he was closely tracked both by the police and by pressmen. Rasputin was brought by his friends to Tsarskoe Selo, but their attempts to gain him admittance to the Empress suffered a defeat.

In the sixth week of Lent the Imperial Family left for the Crimea. Mme. Vyrubova succeeded in smuggling Rasputin on to the suite's train, where he was concealed in Prince Tumanoff's compartment. Someone informed the Emperor, who was exceedingly angry at such flagrant disobedience to his command and ordered the train to be stopped at Tosno.* Rasputin was removed from the train and, under surveillance of a secret

* A station on the Nicholas railway between St. Petersburg and Moscow.

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service official, conveyed to the province of Tobolsk.

My words had struck home. After that Rasputin ceased for some time to appear at Court. Now and again he returned to St. Petersburg, never daring to remain for more than two or three days. The chief of the police department used to complain to me: "I am utterly sick of him. He has to be watched. Directly he arrives, off he goes, straight from the station to the baths, with two ladies."

The Empress, I feel sure, never forgave me for my interference. No news reached me concerning the fate of my report; I received neither reply nor reproof. Had the Tsar read it? I did not know. A rumour was current that he read it in the Crimea with his brother-in-law, the Duke of Hesse.

CHAPTER IV

Imperial Levée for Members of the Duma—The Emperor's Displeasure—Effects of the Reception—Borodino Anniversary Celebrations—The Fourth Duma Election Campaign—M. V. Rodzianko's Re-election—Audience of the Emperor.

IN May, 1912, I was present in Moscow at the unveiling of the memorial to the Emperor Alexander III in the presence of the Imperial Family. The Emperor's attitude towards me was cool; the rest of the Imperial Family, on the contrary, treated me with particular cordiality.

Many members of the Duma belonging to the parties of the Right and the Octobrists, and especially the peasants of all parties, expressed their wish to be presented to the Emperor before the end of the spring session. Such a desire, in my opinion, was inspired by a feeling of sincere patriotism and loyalty to the Throne. I therefore began to work hard, through Kokovtzeff, to secure the granting of this request. The Emperor treated it somewhat suspiciously and—probably influenced by the Empress, who was present at the interview with Kokovtzeff and kept repeating all the time that it was absolutely unnecessary—at first flatly refused to receive the members of the Duma. Meanwhile pressure in favour of their being received was being applied from other quarters through the intermediary of Baron Fredericks, Minister of the Imperial Court. Only when both Kokovtzeff and Baron Fredericks declared that they would resign if the Duma were not received, did the Emperor give a grudging consent.

The news of the coming reception was received

with acclamation by the Duma, and the members started for Tsarskoe Selo in high spirits. Great was their disappointment and mortification at the Emperor's words of displeasure and criticism concerning "the impassioned and immoderate tone of the debates on certain questions." That was all. No allusion whatever was made to the patriotic work of the Duma—the credits for the Navy, the progress of the agrarian reform, the legislation concerning the province of Kholm or the Zemstvos in Western Russia, the question of Finland—all this work was ignored by the Emperor. The impression created by the reception was that the Emperor was dissatisfied—indeed, angry with the Duma. Everybody understood that the cause of this was the Rasputin case and the influence of the Empress. In the official statement to the Press, the text of the Emperor's address to the Duma was much toned down. But those of us who listened to it well remember how bitterly we all felt the undeserved affront.

The Emperor's final words contained a reminder concerning the bill for the provision of funds for the parish elementary schools. He expressed the hope that the credits for the development of institutions particularly dear to the heart of his late father would be passed by the Duma. Next day a gloom seemed to pervade the Duma. On my questioning the various party leaders and influential members as to the probable results of the vote on the Parish Schools' Credits Bill, they all (with the exception of a few belonging to the Extreme Right) emphatically declared that the bill would be rejected. Even the Nationalists openly said that the Emperor had no esteem for us. "God knows how he treats us. He thinks more of Rasputin and Sabler . . ." and so on. My own position was a most delicate one. It was impossible to place on the agenda a bill in

which the Emperor took an interest, knowing that it would be immediately thrown out. By so doing I should be creating a conflict between the Crown and the Duma, and the session would close, as it were, with a demonstration against his wishes. I resolved to strike the bill off the agenda. By so doing I took all the blame for the incident on myself and shielded the Duma. My decision aroused great resentment among members of the Right wing, especially the clergy. Without troubling to go into the matter they raised an uproar, and declared that they would make a disturbance at the close of the session. As I walked through the Duma to take the chair, I had to be escorted by a bodyguard of Duma serjeants-at-arms to avoid the possibility of an unpleasant demonstration on the part of the clerical members. In the interval of the sitting I sent for Bishop Eulogius to my room and explained the motive of my action. He realized his error and apologized, as did many of the Conservative members who had previously expressed their resentment.

During my stay at Nauheim that summer (I was there taking a cure), I learnt from the papers as well as from a letter written to me by a member of the Duma, Kovzan, that the Government intended to dissolve the Duma three days before the centenary anniversary of the Battle of Borodino on August 26, so that the representatives of the people would not take part in the festivities. Knowing what an unfavourable impression such a step would be bound to create, I wrote at once to Kokovtzeff urging him at all costs to persuade the Emperor to postpone the dissolution of the Duma until after August 26. I received a reply a few days later to the effect that the Duma would be dissolved on the 30th.

On my return to St. Petersburg I at once went

to the Duma, where I found about twenty deputies, among them several who had arrived in the hope of obtaining tickets for the celebrations. They were keenly disappointed when, on reading the programme of the ceremony, they saw that no places had been reserved for the members of the Duma either on the battlefield of Borodino or in Moscow. After studying the arrangements for the ceremony I noted that, although the President of the Duma was everywhere placed on an equal footing with the President of the Council of the Empire, the members of the two houses were not treated as equals. Such an attitude towards the representatives of the people made me extremely angry, and my first impulse was to refuse to take part in the celebrations. The members of the Duma, however, especially the peasants, persuaded me to revoke my decision. "If we are not there," they said, "then at least let the President of the Duma be present at this great anniversary of our national glory."

After some hesitation I decided to attend the unveiling of the memorial at Borodino, while avoiding the rest of the celebrations. I explained the cause of my absence from Moscow to Kokovtzeff and to the Master of Ceremonies, Baron Korff. The latter's reply was characteristic: "Members of the Duma do not enjoy the right of access to the Court," to which I retorted: "This is not a Court, but a national celebration. Besides, Russia was saved, not by masters of ceremonies, but by her people."

The Emperor, who passed quite close to me on the field of Borodino, looked askance at me and did not acknowledge my salutation. I understood that the causes of his dissatisfaction with me were the elimination of the Church Schools' Bill from the agenda of the Duma and my report on the Rasputin case.

After the Borodino celebrations, the Government apparently decided on a most drastic course of action to ensure, during the coming electoral campaign for the fourth Duma, the election of such candidates as would be willing blindly to support the Government's policy. No stone was left unturned to discover some point of law which could be utilized to eliminate candidates of "undesirable" or independent views.

I was re-elected President of the Imperial Duma. The Extreme Right and the Nationalist parties found themselves in a quandary. They left the assembly in a body as a protest against my election, and in order to demonstrate their unwillingness to hear the inaugural speech of a President who had been elected by the votes of the Left (I obtained a majority by the vote of the Cadets; the Socialists and Labourists, as usual, abstained from voting). A number of members of the Right, however, did not obey their leaders, but crowded at the door, where they stood silently watching the "revolutionary" (as they called it) Duma cheering the President's statement on the recovery of the Tsarevitch from his illness. Even the deputies of the Extreme Left, on purpose, applauded and cheered their loudest. The discomfited Conservatives said afterwards that had they known the contents of my speech beforehand, they would certainly have remained in the hall.

This incident was taken up by the Press; only papers of the Right said nothing about it.

Immediately after my election I solicited an audience with the Emperor. On receiving me the Emperor appeared somewhat agitated and, contrary to his usual custom, remained standing throughout the interview, which only lasted twenty minutes.

I said :

"I have the honour to present myself as the newly-elected President of the Duma."

"Yes, fancy . . . how quickly it has all happened," the Emperor began, seemingly ill at ease, and added: "I learnt with pleasure of your re-election, Mikhail Vladimirovitch. I thank you for your splendid speech. Every Russian ought to think and feel like that. But why do you call our form of government constitutional?"

"Sire, it was your Majesty's magnanimous desire to summon the representatives of the people to take part in the work of legislation. Such participation means constitutional government, and I therefore deemed it impossible to oppose even by a single word your Majesty's sovereign will."

"Yes, yes, now I understand you. But tell me, why, then, did the members of the Right and Nationalist parties leave the hall during your speech? How very tactless and out of place that was, while you were delivering your highly patriotic speech!"

"Sire, they were expecting a different speech, and had decided to protest in advance, and not to take part in revolutionary manifestations. Yet I dare assure you, that in spite of the numerous acts of injustice which your Government committed during the election campaign, the Imperial Duma, or at any rate the majority of it, is not revolutionarily inclined. My speech was a true reflection of the feelings actually animating the members of the Duma. As a matter of fact, by absenting themselves from the hall during my address, the Nationalists and the Right wing placed themselves in opposition. They took no part in the loyal demonstration made by the Duma in response to my motion for expressing to your Majesty our joy at the recovery of the Tsarevitch, and were thus punished for their tactlessness."

"The Empress and I were deeply touched by your words, and I beg you to convey our thanks to the Duma."

Two days after the audience I received the following intimation from the Minister of the Imperial Court :

"DEAR MIKHAIL VLADIMIROVITCH,

In reply to the petition presented by the member of the Duma, Jägermeister Balashoff, on behalf of a group of deputies, soliciting the honour of being presented to his Majesty the Emperor, his Imperial Majesty has graciously pleased to accord in principle his consent to receive the members of the fourth Duma in accordance with the precedents of 1907 and 1908.

In informing your Excellency of this his Majesty's pleasure, I beg you to forward me the list of those members of the Imperial Duma who have signified their desire to have the pleasure of being received by his Imperial Majesty.

Believe me,

Yours respectfully and sincerely,

BARON FREDERICKS,

November 27, 1912."

It transpired that the Nationalists and members of the Right, desirous of justifying their strange behaviour, had decided as a group of "loyal Conservatives" to petition for an audience from the Emperor, without the knowledge of the President of the Duma. This step apparently displeased the Emperor, and without replying to Balashoff, he addressed an answer direct to the President.

The deputies proceeded to register their names for the reception. I called on Baron Fredericks to

inquire whether it would be the Emperor's pleasure to receive members of the Cadet party. The Baron replied that the Emperor was willing to receive anyone desirous of being presented, even the Socialists. A large number of Cadets signified their wish to go, and at a meeting of the party it was decided to give individual members liberty to act as they pleased in the matter. I took great pains to induce as many members as possible to go to the reception. For a long time I tried to persuade Miliukoff. Our conversation took place in the corridor of the Marie Opera House, during the performance of "Judith" with Shaliapin in the leading part. Miliukoff brushed my arguments aside. "I am afraid the mere sight of me will recall too many unpleasant recollections in the Emperor's mind," he finally said, evidently hinting at the Viborg manifesto.*

Miliukoff did not go, but the members of the Opposition who did attend numbered 26 Cadets, 44 Progressives, the Poles, the Lithuanian and White Russian group, the Mussulmans and the non-party members—87 in all, while the number of deputies who attended the reception was 374 out of the total of 440. This was a momentous event, as it was the largest attendance at a reception ever recorded, and the Cadets had never before taken part in one at all.

The Emperor gave us a most cordial welcome. He shook hands with the President and made a tour of the deputies, who were grouped according to their constituencies. The Master of the Ceremonies, Baron Korff, began to present them by

* After the dissolution of the first Imperial Duma in 1906, a group of members of the Constitutional Democratic Party assembled at Viborg, in Finland, and issued a manifesto to the people urging them to refuse to pay taxes and supply recruits to the army, as a protest against the action of the Government. This appeal produced no impression whatever.

name, but the Emperor waved him aside, saying: "Do not trouble, Baron, the President of the Duma will present the deputies to me." The Emperor found a word to say to each member, and appeared to treat the Conservatives more coolly than the rest.

One of the deputies, Khvostoff, appeared decorated with a large badge of the Union of the Russian People.* This was a breach of etiquette, because no fancy orders or decorations might be worn with uniform. The Emperor asked him: "What is this badge?" Khvostoff replied: "It is a sign of membership of the Union of the Russian People." The Emperor passed on, shrugging his shoulders with a murmured: "Strange,"—after which Khvostoff removed his badge.

After the Emperor had made a tour of the assembly, the members of the Right moved forward as if to encircle him, but the Emperor walked into the centre, said a few words conveying his wishes for our united and fruitful labours, and wished everyone a happy Christmas.

* A patriotic and extremely reactionary society.

CHAPTER V

*The Tercentenary of the Romanoff Dynasty—Rasputin's
Expulsion from the Cathedral—Radko Dmitrieff's
Visit to St. Petersburg.*

FRESH rumours of Rasputin's reappearance in St. Petersburg began to be persistently circulated in the Duma. I received a letter from Tsaritsin, confirmed by numerous signatures, informing me that to the certain knowledge of the inhabitants, Rasputin was staying at the house of V. K. Sabler, and had been re-admitted at Court. I forwarded this document to Sabler, accompanied by a letter requesting him to give these people a conclusive reply. Sabler wrote me a somewhat unpleasant note to the effect that he had never met Rasputin or had anything to do with him.

Shortly after I had received this letter, the new Minister of the Interior, Maklakoff, paid me an official call and stated that the Emperor had received information that the Duma was preparing a fresh interpellation on the question of Rasputin, and that this step had the support of the President. Maklakoff had been commissioned by the Emperor to express his Majesty's disapproval and his wish that the question of Rasputin should not again be raised in the Duma. I replied that nothing of the sort had happened, that this was probably an intrigue of Sabler's, and acquainted him with the contents of the letter from Tsaritsin. Soon after I met Sabler at a dinner party at Kokovtzeff's, and expressed to him my indignation at his having thus misrepresented the complaint of the citizens of Tsaritsin concerning Rasputin's presence in the High Procurator's

house. Sabler was exceedingly abashed and assured me that I had misunderstood him. I, for my own part, warned Sabler that I should report the affair to the Emperor. And at my first audience I presented the following version of the incident.

"I take the liberty," I said, "to lodge a complaint to your Majesty against the High Procurator of the Holy Synod in that he intentionally misinformed your Majesty concerning the petition of the citizens of Tsaritsin, to which were affixed nearly 500 signatures. As the petition was directed against the activities of the High Procurator, the normal course would have been to refer the case for investigation at its source, that is to say, to the High Procurator himself. He therefore had no business to trouble your Majesty. With regard to the second part of the question transmitted to me by your Imperial command through the medium of N. A. Maklakoff—it is all absolutely untrue. The spirit which animates the Duma is wrongly interpreted; all mention of Rasputin has died down, there is no question of any interpellation, and I am therefore of opinion that the High Procurator of the Holy Synod has simply slandered me, for reasons of which I am, of course, in ignorance."

After listening attentively to my report, the Emperor admitted the validity of all my arguments.

Seeing the Emperor was graciously disposed towards me, I took advantage of the opportunity offered to plead the cause of the priest Dmitrieff. The priest Dmitrieff, a member of the third Duma, was, after its dissolution, subjected to persecution by Bishop Agapit of Ekaterinoslav for belonging to the Octobrist party. The bishop deprived him of his parish, and dismissed him from the post of divinity teacher at the high school. The

unfortunate priest was left without any means of livelihood, was dependent on the charity of his former parishioners, and suffered a regular persecution. I pleaded that complete restitution should be made to Dmitrieff. The Emperor wrote down the whole case in his note-book and promised to accede to my request, which, in fact, he did.

In spite of my having been obliged to touch upon the delicate topic of Rasputin, the audience terminated graciously. My request for permission to deliver a congratulatory address at the forthcoming Romanoff jubilee celebrations was graciously granted by his Majesty.*

These celebrations were fixed for February. A rumour that the members of the Council of the Empire intended to present the Imperial Family with an ikon became current in the Duma. Having verified this report, the members of the Duma determined not to be outdone by the Council.

I convened the Seniorens-convent, at which it was decided to present an ikon to the Imperial Family from the Duma. The President's secretary, Stchepkin, was dispatched to Moscow to consult Professor Ostroukhoff, who advised the purchase of a beautiful ikon of rare antiquity. Professor Ostroukhoff also proposed to buy an antique tapestry on which was depicted Mikhail Feodorovitch Romanoff (the first Tsar of the Romanoff dynasty) welcoming his father Filaret Nikititch on his arrival in Moscow. This tapestry was made of white linen cloth, twenty yards long, on which were embroidered processions of boyars and their wives in multi-coloured garments, armed *ryndys* (guards), Filaret descending from his coach, peasants offering the bread and salt, and Mikhail Feodorovitch prostrating himself before his father. In the back-

* According to the programme, there were to be no speeches at the celebrations.

ground rose the golden cupolas of the Moscow Kremlin, and above was an image of the Holy Trinity surrounded by angels blowing trumpets of glory. A cloth of gold of antique design was bought, out of which two cases were made tied by long gold cords; on their ends were suspended gold tassels and antique eagles ornamented with precious stones. The effect of the whole was beautiful and most appropriate.

The Duma approved and consented to make good the overdraft on the sum originally intended.

The Romanoff tercentenary celebrations were to be inaugurated by a liturgy and special thanksgiving service in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan, which were to be celebrated by the Patriarch of Antioch, clad in the vestments presented to him by the Emperor. That very morning I learnt that the places reserved in the Cathedral for members of the Duma were not in accordance with the dignity of that institution. As a matter of fact the space reserved for the Duma was not only far in the rear of that set apart for members of the Council of the Empire, but also of that reserved for the Senate. If the Romanoff jubilee was intended to be a national rejoicing, it should not be overlooked that in 1613 it was an assembly of the people and not a group of officials that elected Mikhail Feodorovitch Romanoff Tsar of Russia.

I pointed this out to Baron Korff and Count Tolstoy, the Masters of the Ceremonies, and, after an unpleasant argument, insisted that the members of the Duma should occupy the places reserved for the Senate, the latter being removed to the far end of the Cathedral. Having achieved my object, I walked out into the Cathedral porch for a rest, as there was still plenty of time before the arrival of the members of the Duma. I must add that in order to "fortify" our newly occupied "positions,"

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I surrounded them by a cordon of the available Duma serjeants-at-arms. I had not been in the porch ten minutes when Baron Fersen, the senior serjeant-at-arms, rushed out of the Cathedral, looking very excited, and told me that an unknown man, in peasant's dress and wearing a pectoral cross, had placed himself in front of the space reserved for the Imperial Duma and refused to move. I guessed at once who it was, and hastening to our places found there the individual described by Baron Fersen. Sure enough, it was Rasputin. He was dressed in a magnificent Russian tunic of crimson silk, patent-leather top boots, black cloth full trousers and peasant's overcoat. Over his dress he wore a pectoral cross on a finely-wrought gold chain.

I drew quite close to him and said in an impressive whisper: "What are you doing here?"

He shot an insolent look at me and replied: "What's that to do with you?"

"If you address me as 'thou,'* I will drag you from the Cathedral by the beard. Don't you know I am the President of the Duma?"

Rasputin faced me, and seemed to run me over with his eyes; first my face, then in the region of the heart, then again he stared me in the eyes. This lasted for several moments.

Personally I had never yielded to hypnotic suggestion, of which I had had frequent experience. Yet here I felt myself confronted by an unknown power of tremendous force. I suddenly became possessed of an almost animal fury, the blood rushed to my heart, and I realized I was working myself into a state of absolute frenzy.

I, too, stared straight into Rasputin's eyes, and, speaking literally, felt my own starting out of my head. Probably I must have looked rather formid-

*The conversation was carried on in the second person singular.

able, for Rasputin suddenly began to squirm and asked: "What do you want with me?"

"Clear out at once, you vile heretic, there is no place for you in this sacred house!"

"I was invited here at the wish of persons more highly placed than you," Rasputin answered insolently, and pulled out an invitation card.

"You are a notorious swindler," I replied, "no one can believe your words. Clear out at once, this is no place for you."

Rasputin shot a sidelong glance at me, fell heavily on his knees and began to pray, bowing down to the ground. Outraged by such insolence, I nudged him in the side and said: "Enough of this tomfoolery. If you don't clear out at once, I'll order my serjeants-at-arms to carry you out."

With a heavy groan and a murmured: "O Lord, forgive him such sin!" Rasputin rose slowly to his feet and, shooting a parting look of anger at me, slunk away. I followed him to the western doors of the Cathedral. There a Court Cossack helped him on with his magnificent sable-lined coat and placed him in a car, and Rasputin drove away.

Much later, Rasputin himself recounted this episode to a member of the Duma, Kovalevsky, whom he accidentally met in a train in the summer of 1913. Rasputin began by abusing me, asked why the President of the Duma was so popular among the members, and finally declared: "He is not a good man. Do you know what he did at the celebration? He actually turned me out of the Kazan Cathedral, and never even gave me a chance of telling him that the Tsar himself had asked me to be there."

In repeating this to me Kovalevsky had added: "To tell you the truth, till now I always thought your story of how you turned him out of the church was a bit of brag!"

The whole Duma was present at the *levée* at the Palace. I delivered my address and presented the ikon and tapestry, which was held unfolded by the deputy-presidents. The fact that the President of the Duma was the only one to deliver an address, when it was officially declared there were to be no speeches, was particularly significant.

The Balkan war with Turkey was by that time nearing a climax. The heroic struggle for liberty of the Slav peoples was watched with attentive enthusiasm by the Duma. Sympathy with their cause was whole-hearted. This feeling increased in proportion to the growth of indignation against the blunders of our diplomacy, particularly against the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sazonoff. The Duma held him responsible for the insignificant part played by Russia in the crisis. Outside the Duma, this feeling of general resentment and national humiliation found expression in the Press of all shades of opinion.

In March, 1913, the Bulgarian General, Radko Dmitrieff, the national hero of the war, with the President of the Bulgarian National Assembly, arrived in St. Petersburg. They were met at the station by Slavonic associations, crowds of young men and women and many members of the Duma, and received an enthusiastic ovation. The day after their arrival, I believe, there came the news of the fall of Adrianople. This event made a tremendous impression in the Duma. The sitting was interrupted, there were enthusiastic cheers and demands for a *Te Deum*.

Several deputies were dispatched to fetch Radko Dmitrieff, Daneff and the Bulgarian Minister Bobcheff. On their arrival they were borne shoulder high amid wild cheering, embraced and kissed.

The enthusiasm was general. Party and personal quarrels were forgotten, all shook hands and congratulated one another on this pan-Slavonic triumph. The Slavs were moved to tears. The Te Deum was celebrated in the Catherine hall by the priests who were members of the Duma. The deputies formed a choir, which I conducted. The Russian and Bulgarian national anthems were sung.

At the height of this outburst of enthusiasm I was called up on the telephone by the Prime Minister, Kokovtzeff.

"What is going on in the Duma? Couldn't these demonstrations be stopped?"

I replied: "It is impossible. Popular enthusiasm cannot be stifled. Besides, why should it?"

"Look here, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, this may provoke Austria and give rise to unpleasant complications."

"Try yourself. Come here and try to quell this enthusiasm! I can't!"

It turned out that news of this demonstration had reached the Austrian Embassy, and representations had been made to the Prime Minister.

Next day I gave a large dinner party in honour of our Bulgarian guests Bobcheff, Daneff and Radko Dmitrieff, and later a reception, at which over sixty members of the Duma, all the party leaders, the members of the Committee of the Octobrist party in the Duma and prominent Octobrists were present. The reception was extremely animated. Everyone clustered round Radko Dmitrieff to hear his accounts of the war and the general situation in the Balkans. The Slavs behaved with great tact and calmness. They never so much as hinted at our diplomatic policy, nor did they even show much resentment against Austria, though they did not conceal their distrust of that country.

In proposing the toast of "the heroic Slavonic peoples," I said: "We all watch with tense admiration their glorious advance in the name of the Cross and liberty." We never doubted, I said, the victorious termination of the war, but the fruits of every campaign were judged by the success of the peace treaty following on war. "Permit me I continued, "to offer you good advice in the name of Russia, the elder sister of the Slavonic nations: keep peace among yourselves, as allies and fellow-fighters. Beware of dangerous and ill-advised jealousies and rivalries, and we, your brothers, now rejoicing at your military prowess, implore you to strain every nerve to preserve your unity of purpose in the days of coming peace . . . I drink to the success of our victorious brother Slavs, and to the unity and welding together of the Slavonic family. . . ."

After exchanging looks with his companions, Radko Dmitrieff rose to reply. We were right, he said, in calling them our younger brothers, because the Slavonic peoples had of old been accustomed to look up to Russia with love and reverence. The Slavonic nations would never forget that they owed their new life and freedom to the sacrifices and magnanimity of the Russian people. . . . In their first independent fight against their age-long foe, they still looked to their elder brother and asked him to remove all pernicious alien influences. It was for Russia to avert or suppress any misunderstandings which might arise between the Slavonic nations. Great Russia alone had the right to intervene in their domestic quarrels, and the Slavonic peoples would submit them to her alone. His voice quivered with emotion as he said this.

During the after-dinner talk the Slavs said to us: "You have no idea of the extent of Russia's

prestige in the Balkans; with what hope and trust we all look towards her, how she is feared in Europe. Now or never, Russia must say the word." Our only answer to this could be: "You have seen the expression of public opinion and of the Press, you witnessed the enthusiasm of the representatives of the people. We can say nothing more, nor guarantee you anything."

Radko Dmitrieff led me off to my room and said: "I have come on a secret mission to lay Constantinople at his Majesty's feet. What am I to do—how shall I speak of it to the Tsar?"

I replied: "Be frank. He loves the truth, and in any case, this would be much the safer course. For my part, I think it would be better, before your interview with the Emperor, for me to ask for a special audience."

Radko Dmitrieff thanked me and asked me to do so. One longed to believe, and did believe, that Russia would utter the decisive word, advance victoriously southward and support the Slavs. As events soon proved, these were but empty hopes.

On March 16 there were popular street demonstrations in honour of the fall of Adrianople. The Slavonic Society celebrated the event by a *Te Deum* in the Church of the Resurrection.* On leaving the church Radko Dmitrieff was carried shoulder high amid deafening cheers. A huge crowd of people poured into the Nevsky Prospect singing "God save the Tsar" and "Shumi Maritsa,"† and marched to the Bulgarian Legation. Bobcheff came out on the balcony and made a speech ending with: "Long live Great Russia!" The crowd answered by singing the Bulgarian and

* Erected on the site of the assassination of the Emperor Alexander II (1881), who fought for the liberation of the Balkan Slavs in the Turkish War of 1877-1878.

† The Bulgarian national anthem.

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Russian national anthems. Then, swelled by fresh numbers, it marched to the Serbian Legation. The Serbian Minister, too, stepped out on the balcony, but no sooner had he uttered a few words than up came a squad of mounted police, dealing blows to right and left. Remonstrances to the effect that the crowds were perfectly peaceful and singing "God save the Tsar" were of no avail. The police, having apparently received definite instructions, worked with a will. They were particularly careful to guard the Foreign Minister Sazonoff, whose house was surrounded by two squadrons of mounted gendarmes, and the Austrian Embassy, whither the crowds had not the slightest intention of going. Besides, the crowd consisted of serious, well-conducted people—officers, society ladies, senators, Government officials, etc. It was even said that one senator was badly bruised in the *mêlée*.

That same night Sazonoff had a dinner-party, to which I was invited.

"I had a pleasant surprise on entering your house," I said to him. "I rejoice to see that at last our diplomacy is following the right course."

"What do you mean?" inquired Sazonoff in astonishment.

"I see you are arming to help the Slavs; there are two squadrons of soldiers in your courtyard."

Next day there was an interpellation in the Duma on the subject of the police attack on the demonstrators. The Minister of the Interior, Maklakoff, gave absolutely unsatisfactory explanations in excuse of the action of the police. Similar incidents were repeated during the next two days. The Prefect of the city, Drachevsky, himself drove up in a car to disperse the crowds who were singing "God save the Tsar." Shouts arose of: "We're singing the national anthem; please stand up!"

He rose reluctantly and stood at attention. The Government was, nevertheless, perturbed by this popular effervescence, and Sazonoff determined to offer some explanations. He invited the members of the Duma to "a cup of tea," but divided them into two groups, Right and Left, and received them on different days.

As a matter of fact Sazonoff gave no explanations at all. The Cadets alone were satisfied, and sang his praises in their party organ, the *Retch*.

The pressure exerted during the election, the spirit of the Duma was different from what they had anticipated. They had reckoned on a majority of the Right, which did not materialize, and moreover, the provisional body was elected by a majority of the Left. As time went on the Government's hostility to the Duma increased. The pro-Slavonic and anti-Semitic, the criticisms of the Government's policy, the stern rebuke given by the Duma to General Sakhovskoi* for the illegal modification of the Statutes of the Military Medical Academy, which even the Senate refused to publish—all these irritated the Government. Rumours of the Government's desire to "disperse" the Duma cropped up persistently. Prince Meshchersky, chief of a journal of the Extreme Right, the *Grahdanski* ("The Citizen"), wrote denunciatory articles against the Duma and its President. Everyone knew that the *Grahdanski* was the only paper read by the Emperor, and it seemed almost as if the Government's policy depended on the influence exercised by this subsidized publicist. All this was most disheartening.

There was an obvious desire on the part of the Government to do away with the Duma by passive if not by active methods. In spite of blatant

* The Minister for War.

CHAPTER VI

*The Intrigues of the Right—Boycott of the Duma—
Unveiling of the Stolypin Memorial—Bishop Agapit
—A. I. Gutchkoff's Warnings.*

FROM the very beginning of the new session a feeling of unrest pervaded the Duma. The Government was disappointed that in spite of all the pressure exercised during the election, the spirit of the Duma was different from what they had anticipated. They had reckoned on a majority of the Right, which did not materialize, and moreover, the presidential body was elected by a majority of the Left. As time wore on the Government's hostility to the Duma increased. The pro-Slavonic demonstrations, the criticisms of the Government's policy, the stern rebuke given by the Duma to General Sukhomlinoff* for the illegal modification of the Statutes of the Military Medical Academy, which even the Senate refused to publish—all these irritated the Government. Rumours of the Government's desire to "disperse" the Duma cropped up persistently. Prince Mestchersky, editor of a journal of the Extreme Right, the *Grazhdanin* ("The Citizen"), wrote denunciatory articles against the Duma and its President. Everyone knew that the *Grazhdanin* was the only paper read by the Emperor, and it seemed almost as if the Government's policy depended on the influence exercised by this subsidized publicist. All this was most disheartening.

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* The Minister for War.

promises to introduce new reform bills the Government stubbornly refused to do anything, and nothing was left to the Duma except the Budget Estimates and interpellations. Even the data necessary for the work of the Budget Commission was withheld by the Ministries. The members of the Extreme Right, who resented being in a minority, launched, with the support of the Government, an intrigue against the majority in the Duma. They called a joint conference of all the Monarchist organizations, the first point on the agenda being a discussion on the necessity for dissolving the fourth Duma. They tried to keep this a secret, but of course it all came out at once, while the full text of the agenda appeared in the *Vechernie Vremia* and other papers. The absence in the Duma of a solid majority, the uncertainty and constant expectation of a speedy dissolution, the absolutely fruitless work—all the most important interpellations and bills brought no response from the Government—could not but affect the general spirit.

During Holy Week I presented my report to the Emperor. He greeted me graciously, as usual. Nevertheless, I was obliged to tell him many unpleasant facts. Referring to the Statutes of the Military Medical Academy and the Duma interpellation, I pointed out the illegality of the proceedings of the War Minister Sukhomlinoff, who had thrown the responsibility for his action on to the Crown.

I said: "Your Majesty was misinformed and given to ratify a statute passed by Order in Council, whereas, according to the law, it should first have been submitted to the legislative chambers."

The Emperor said nothing to this.

With regard to the activities of the police during the street demonstrations, I remarked that the

feeling of resentment and wounded national pride would rankle for a long time. The Emperor appeared to agree with me, and commented on the Minister of the Interior's want of tact. I urged decisive action. Troops could be moved against Erzerum from the one side, and against Constantinople from the other. I repeated several times :

"Your Majesty, there is still time. We must take advantage of the popular enthusiasm. The Straits must become ours. A war will be joyfully welcomed, and will raise the Government's prestige."

The Emperor maintained a stony silence.

I spoke of administrative tyranny, and recounted how the chairman of the Zemstvo Board of the province of Tchernigoff, Savitsky, a popular and respected public servant, was prosecuted for the escape of a political prisoner. His prosecution was engineered by N. A. Maklakoff, then Governor of the Tchernigoff province. Its object was perfectly clear. Persons who were the subject of preliminary legal proceedings, or had been committed for trial, were deprived by law of both active and passive electoral rights. N. A. Maklakoff, who at that time was Governor of Tchernigoff, was ill-disposed towards Savitsky. The mere fact of a political prisoner's escape from the Zemstvo hospital was not in itself sufficient ground for a prosecution. If responsibility for what occurred at the hospital was thus shifted from the senior medical officer to the chairman of the Zemstvo Board, then, in ascending order, first the Governor, and finally the Minister of the Interior, must be held to blame, especially as the latter was now that same Maklakoff who was then Governor of Tchernigoff.

To this the Emperor remarked : "Yes, you are right."

Towards the close of the session there occurred an incident trivial in itself, but pregnant with far-reaching effects. During a debate on the Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Finance, Markoff II rapped out: "No stealing allowed." Prince Volkonsky, who was presiding, failed to call him to order, and the Minister of Finance, Kokovtzeff, treated this sally as a personal insult. He declared that the whole Duma was in fault for not having censured the deputy, and that it ought, therefore, to apologize to the Government. "Until this is done by the President of the Duma," added Kokovtzeff, "the Cabinet Ministers will abstain from attending the Duma."

The Duma refused to consider itself responsible for a remark made by an individual member, and I had no intention of tendering any apologies. The whole incident—both the sharp words used against the Government by a deputy of the Extreme Right, and the unexpected touchiness of the Ministers, rather savoured of a deliberate provocation. At first it was treated as a joke, but the situation soon became impossible. Owing to the Ministerial boycott work in the commissions practically came to a standstill. Explanations of the estimates of the various Ministries were given, not even by the Assistant Ministers, but by secretaries of departments, with whom the Chairman of the Budget Commission, Alexeyenko, finally refused to deal.

In a report presented by me to the Emperor in June, 1913, after the close of the session, I again spoke on questions of foreign policy and urged decisive action. Then I mentioned the Ministers.

"Your Majesty, the Ministers no longer come to the Duma, they refuse to take part in legislative work. This may inspire the nation with rather a bold idea."

"What idea?"

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"Well, that they could be dispensed with."

To which the Emperor replied: "They will have thought better of it by the autumn."

In the autumn of 1913 we went to Kieff for the unveiling of the memorial to P. A. Stolypin. It was characteristic that the elements which were hostile or unfriendly to the Duma in general and its President in particular took advantage of the occasion to emphasize their disdain. Thus the most uncomfortable compartment was reserved for me on the official train. No one came to meet me on my arrival, no accommodation was reserved, and the Governor permitted himself a somewhat incorrect and even rude behaviour towards us. The public, on the other hand, vied with one another in their endeavours to express due regard for the Duma delegation.

At the laying of the foundation stone of the Zemstvo council building I had the following conversation with the Prime Minister. I approached Kokovtzeff, who was standing slightly apart, and said to him:

"Well, Vladimir Nicolaevitch, are you going to stop the boycott of the Duma? Is there any hope of seeing you there in the autumn?"

"Until the Duma apologizes we have all decided not to go there."

"I must tell you that the Emperor, at my last audience, expressed the hope that you would think better of it by the autumn."

A few days later this conversation, with a strong tendency to caricature my part in it, appeared in the newspaper *Russkoe Slovo*. A paragraph was added announcing Kokovtzeff's forthcoming departure to Livadia with a report to the Emperor. As no one was present during our conversation with Kokovtzeff, I realized that he himself was the author of this paragraph. His object was probably

to show a cutting to his Majesty and point out how lightly the Sovereign's words were treated by the President of the Duma, who even permitted himself to print them in a more or less Opposition newspaper.

Having read this paragraph, I published a refutation stating that the conversation referred to had taken place in *tête-à-tête* and in quite a different form, and that therefore no doubt was possible as to who was the actual author of the newspaper report.

On my arrival at Kieff I was shown the list of speakers. Balashoff was the only one chosen from the Duma. The desire to prevent me or any other member from speaking was obvious from the haste with which the list was submitted to me. The Octobrists were deeply offended and determined to refrain from making any speeches, and Gutchkoff, who laid a wreath at the foot of the memorial, merely bowed to the ground in silence. This silent homage expressed more eloquently than words the profound sorrow caused by Stolypin's death.

After the Kieff celebrations I joined a party of members of the Duma who were going to visit the Dnieper rapids in connection with the proposed credits for sluicing the river. We arrived at Ekaterinoslav by steamer.

Everywhere the population came out to welcome its chosen representatives, the members of the Imperial Duma. At Kremenchug, for instance, almost the whole town assembled on the pier. The mayor presented the bread and salt* and delivered a moving address. Ceremonies like this took place even in the villages, and the elders of the communes greeted the travellers in artless but touching words.

At a reception given by the Ekaterinoslav

* An old Russian custom signifying welcome.

marshal of the nobility, Prince Ourussoff, I had a curious talk with Archbishop Agapit.*

Mgr. Agapit had taken an active part in the election campaign, agitating against the Octobrist party, and after the elections had preached a sermon from the pulpit in which he said: "Whom have you elected? Octobrists who sold Christ!"

I naturally avoided him at the reception, but Mgr. Agapit himself came up to me saying, "Allow me, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, in token of reconciliation to give you my blessing. I know you are angry with me."

"No, Vladiko, I will not accept your blessing. You insulted me profoundly during the elections, and afterwards you said that we had 'sold Christ.'"

"Not you personally, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, not you," interrupted the archbishop, clasping his hands to his breast.

"It makes no difference whether it referred to me or to those I stand for. In insulting the Octobrists you insulted me. Though perhaps I am much more Orthodox than many of your priests, particularly those ignoramuses who receive parishes so liberally at your hands. Remember that when I came to Ekaterinoslav last year, I called on you at once out of respect for your rank. Really, it would be much better if you kept away from politics. Your place is the church; you ought, like a good shepherd, to draw your flock together by love and charity, instead of sowing discord by denunciatory sermons and instructing your priests how to vote. Let the priests remain pastors of the Church. What have you gained by it all? You have destroyed the last vestige of respect which still existed for the office of priest."

* This prelate, after the Revolution, delivered an address of welcome to Petliura when the latter occupied Kieff before the arrival of the Bolsheviks.

"Forgive me, Mikhail Vladimirovitch," murmured Mgr. Agapit, in consternation.

"You may well say 'forgive,' but forget I cannot. I did not seek this interview; you came up to me yourself. I suppressed my feelings, but now I can remain silent no longer. I must speak out and let you feel my indignation. Remember what you told me when I called on you. I did not ask for your support; you yourself assured me that you considered the Octobrists trustworthy Orthodox men. You repeatedly told me and others that I was your candidate. And what happened during the elections? You cannot deny that the clergy were mobilized to work against us."

"Pardon me, Mikhail Vladimirovitch," the archbishop said, trying to interrupt me. But I was too excited to let him speak.

"No one forced you to express your opinions. Why did you act against your conscience? Why profess one thing before the elections and practise another? What is the result? You have merely dishonoured your high calling and demeaned the clergy in the eyes of the electors."

Champagne being brought in at this juncture, Mgr. Agapit took a glass, saying: "Your health, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, and may our next meeting be more friendly."

"I am willing to drink your health," I replied. "As for our next meeting, it will probably occur in the world to come. And I may confidently assert that I shall not be called upon to answer before God for what I have said to you to-day."

We touched our glasses, and I moved away. All through this conversation Mgr. Agapit gave one the impression of a schoolboy in disgrace trying to excuse himself before his seniors. Our talk soon became public property in Ekaterinoslav. Most people were pleased that the archbishop had

received a "drubbing" for his disgraceful role at the elections; others criticized me.

Next day I called on Prince Ourussoff to apologize for my curt behaviour in his house to a guest of his. Great was my surprise when I learnt from him that on taking leave, Mgr. Agapit had particularly thanked him for the opportunity of having "such a good talk with Mikhail Vladimirovitch."

The result of this conversation was that appointments of semi-illiterate priests ceased entirely, and Mgr. Agapit's general behaviour became much subdued.

With the opening of the new session of the Duma the question of the "Ministerial strike" was again brought into the foreground. Before the opening I called on the State Comptroller Kharitonoff, who advised me not to invite the Cabinet for the opening ceremony, as the Ministers would decline to come, thus merely creating a fresh pretext for misunderstandings. This advice was followed, and the Ministerial box was conspicuous by its emptiness. Such a state of affairs went on for about a fortnight. The Government at last realized the disadvantages of its policy and made a move towards reconciliation. The Ministers decided that they would be satisfied by an apology from Markoff alone. This was conveyed to Markoff; at the sitting of November 1 he read out an abridged formula of apology and the incident was closed. The Duma preserved its dignity, while the Ministers became still more unpopular. This victory of the Duma was particularly gratifying, as rumours were still current of the Government's intention to "disperse" it. Frequent remarks to that effect in the *Grazhdanin* made one think such an event to be within the range of possibility.

Shortly before this, the Prime Minister Kokovtzeff had returned from abroad, where, in an interview with a French reporter, he had complacently affirmed that "no one in Russia within a hundred versts' radius from the capital and thirty from the district towns gave a thought to politics."

This statement was ridiculed by the Press. As a counterpart to Kokovtzeff's statement Gutchkoff made a brilliant survey of the internal and international situation of Russia in a speech delivered on November 8 at a Congress of the Octobrist party in St. Petersburg. The Government, he said, were heading towards Russia's ruin; the country was on the eve of a second revolution, and the time had come to turn over a new leaf. As a matter of fact, Gutchkoff's speech was anti-dynastic, and the Octobrists as a loyalist party ought not to have followed the course urged on them by their leader.

The Congress passed the following resolution regarding the policy of the party in the Duma: "It behoves the parliamentary faction of the Union of October 17, as an organ of the party best equipped with the means of influencing the Government, to assume the duty of combating the dangerous and pernicious tendencies of the policy of the Government, as well as all the instances of abuse and violation of the law from which the country is continuously and grievously suffering. The parliamentary faction should resort in full measure to all legal forms of parliamentary combat, such as the freedom of the tribune, the right of interpellation, the rejection of bills and the refusal of credits."

The impression made on the Government by this resolution was instantaneous, almost ludicrous. The very next day all the information and data withheld for a year were presented by the Ministers concerned.

The time for the elections to the presidential body approached. My more intimate friends tried to dissuade me from standing for the presidency.

"The Tsar will not listen to you. There is no majority in the Duma, the situation is uncertain; it will only mean endless nerve-racking."

Unfortunately events admitted of no refusal. No other candidate was even nominated. Moreover, the political situation was such that after my inaugural address a refusal would have been tantamount to a repudiation of our programme, a surrender of our positions without a fight. The initiator and promoter of a definite political course would be likened to a captain abandoning his ship. I was therefore compelled by sheer force of circumstances to accept, and was elected by an enormous majority of 272 against 70 votes, larger than on any previous occasion. I delivered a speech, which, though applauded, was less appreciated than that of the year before. I myself thought it inferior, weaker and, above all, more colourless than the former. I had been uncertain whether I ought to make a speech at all, and whether I should repeat what had been said a year ago.

After the elections, disaccord set in in the parliamentary group of the Octobrist party. At their very first meeting the Right wing, under pressure from the Government, contested and even condemned the resolution passed by the Octobrist Congress. The Centre decided to "take note of it," while the Left wing insisted on its being laid down as the basis of the group's policy in the Duma. The deputies of the Left, led by Gutchkoff, held meetings in which the Centre took no part. The Centre declared that they refused their adherence to the Right wing, but, at the same time, declined to submit themselves blindly to Gutchkoff's orders.

A split occurred. I summoned a conference and endeavoured to patch up the party, but failed. Twenty-two members of the Left seceded from the group. The chief among them were Sergei Shidlovsky, Khomiakoff, Zvegintzoff, Godneff and others. A second conference met at my flat to try and save the situation. Savitch, Nicholas Shidlovsky, Alexeyenko and myself resolved to form a new party—the "Zemstvo-Octobrists." The party determined to be distinct from the Right wing. When this became known in the Duma a great many members wanted to join our group, which soon numbered fifty members, and rose to seventy during the Christmas recess.

Thanks to this successful move the party again obtained a majority. On the other hand the need arose of providing it with an energetic leader. The former chairman of the parliamentary group (Gutchkoff) had failed to weld it together during a split, and when matters came to a climax hastened to withdraw. I began to contemplate resigning the presidency of the Duma and putting myself at the head of the new party.

CHAPTER VII

The Audience of December 22, 1913—Dispute over the Purchase of Dreadnoughts—Admiral Beatty's Squadron off Reval—Port Hangö.

ON the Tsar's return from the Crimea I asked for an audience, and on December 22, 1913, was received by his Majesty. It was of urgent importance that the Emperor should be informed of the absence of co-ordination in the Government's policy. Quite recently, the Prime Minister, Kokovtzeff, had defended in the Council of the Empire a bill which Maklakoff had secretly ordered the members to reject. The majority of the members of the Council nominated by the Crown did not attend the sitting, the others voted against the bill and, to the amazement of the unsuspecting Kokovtzeff, it was rejected. It was essential that the Emperor should know of these proceedings. At my next audience I said to him :

"Your Majesty, permit me to inform you that we have no Government."

"What do you mean—no Government?"

"We have been accustomed to think that part of the executive power of the Crown was delegated to the Ministers and to the nominated members of the Council of the Empire. These latter execute the will of the Government and are its dependents in the legislative assembly. We, the members of the lower chamber, have been accustomed to think so. What happens now? During the last session we debated the bill for the admittance of the Polish language in the schools of the Vistula provinces*. It was your Imperial Majesty's wish that the

* Ten Polish provinces in the basin of the river Vistula.

language should be admitted in order to improve the position of the Poles and make it comparable to their position in Austria, and so enlist their sympathies on behalf of Russia."

"Yes," replied the Tsar, "that is just what I had in view."

"So we understood it, and the bill was worked out in the Duma in that sense. Now this bill is being debated in the Council of the Empire, and its leading principle is defended by a representative of the Government. Meanwhile, some of the nominated members of the Council are absent, others vote against it, and the bill is rejected. Your Majesty will agree that members of the Government either do not wish to carry out your will, or do not take the trouble to understand it. The nation feels bewildered. Each Minister has his own opinion. The Cabinet is generally split into two parties, the Council of the Empire forms a third, the Duma a fourth, and your own will is unknown to the nation. This cannot go on, your Majesty; this is not a Government, it is anarchy."

"But what am I to do? I cannot influence the freedom of opinion of members of the Council of the Empire."

"The list of the nominated members of the Council is in your Majesty's possession. Revise it, appoint more liberal members, who agree with your views. Compel the Ministers to obey you."

This conversation had no effect. The list of members of the Council of the Empire remained practically the same, or, if revised, in exactly the opposite way to that which I recommended.

During the same interview I showed the Emperor two Press cuttings: one from the *Kolokol* ("The Bell"), the official Synod review, the other from the *Vechernie Vremia*. The passage from the

Kolokol ran approximately as follows: "That we escaped a war last year is due to the influence of the holy *starts*y who direct our foreign policy, for which we should be profoundly grateful. The appointment of new hierarchs is also due to them. Let us trust that in this sphere their influence will be equally beneficent."

The *Vechernie Vremia* retaliated by pointing out to the *Kolokol* that the direction of foreign policy was a prerogative of the Crown, "and we remind the *Kolokol* that there can be no question of *starts*y. The direction of foreign policy is an attribute of the Crown, and bishops likewise are appointed by the Emperor."

Having read this, the Emperor said: "What *starts*y? Who are the *starts*y alluded to?"

"Your Majesty," I replied, "there is but one *starets* in Russia, and you know who he is. He is the sorrow and despair of all Russia."

The Emperor was silent.

"Your Majesty," I continued, "I have one more question to submit to you. It is of vital importance to the State, and though not directly concerned with my report, one which I should very much like to bring to your notice."

"Please tell me."

The Duma Commission on Military and Naval Affairs, I told the Tsar, was informed that in the yards of Vickers and Armstrong there were five super-Dreadnoughts, which were for sale for the total sum of 120,000,000 roubles. The cost of each was ten million less than the estimates submitted in Russia. By purchasing them we should save 50,000,000 roubles. They were all first-class ships and already finished or nearly so, whereas the building of similar ships in Russia would take years. For some reason or other the Ministry was very averse to purchasing them. The

Duma was taking this matter very much to heart, and had built high hopes on my report to his Majesty.

The Emperor said: "Yes, but what would be the use of buying ships for the Baltic, when we need to strengthen the Black Sea? We cannot transfer them there."

"If the Germans trouble us in the Black Sea, we can trouble them from the north, and in diplomatic conversations we shall always be able to remind them that we are stronger than they are in the Baltic."

"Yes, you are right," said the Emperor. "Do you remember what you said to me a year ago about the Balkan problem? You were right then, too. Had we then acted with greater energy, the Straits would now be ours."

"Your Majesty, it is not too late even now. If we buy those Dreadnoughts we shall be stronger than Germany; then our building can go on without being accelerated, we shall improve our old ships, and by 1915 we shall possess a powerful fleet."

The Emperor appeared greatly interested, thanked me for my information, and expressed his desire to purchase the ships at once.

"Only, do not allow the matter to be discussed in the Ministry of Marine," I said on taking my leave. "Simply order the ships to be bought, your Majesty; for the Ministry will oppose it."

"Why?"

"Because, your Majesty, they will gain nothing from the transaction."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It is not for me to explain, your Majesty. You know better than I do."

"Yes, they were inclined that way, I remember. But what about the Duma? It has risen. The purchase will have to be carried through by means

of Article 87, and there will be unpleasantness with the Duma."

"Your Majesty, I give you my word that the Duma will only applaud you."

Next day the Minister of Marine rang me up on the telephone.

"What did you tell the Emperor? Why am I urgently summoned to Tsarskoe?"

I declined to pursue the conversation by telephone and went to see Grigorovitch* myself. For two hours we shouted at one another, each defending his particular point of view and paying no heed to the orderly who was serving tea.

Soon after a special conference, consisting of Ministers and higher Admiralty officials, was called by order of the Emperor to discuss the purchase. The conference was opposed to it, and the matter was adjourned. Meanwhile Turkey, subsidized by Germany, bought the most powerful Dreadnought out of the five, the one which was most similar in type to ours. Two others, also through German efforts, were withdrawn from sale, while the price of the remaining two was raised. While the higher Admiralty officials were opposing the transaction, the rank and file of naval officers were continually asking: "Will the purchase be arranged soon?" Some said: "Our grandpapa (the Minister of Marine) is making a fool of himself. You must persuade him in the Duma."

In the Commission on Military and Naval Affairs feeling ran high, and on Grigorovitch's arrival he was met in battle array. I purposely refrained from attending the sitting to prevent his thinking that the Commission was acting under pressure from the President. I was kept informed of the progress of the debate by the Duma serjeants-at-arms. Representatives of all parties were unanimous, and

* The Minister of Marine.

all Grigorovitch's arguments were refuted by actual statistics. He was especially nonplussed by the attitude of the Socialists and Labourists, who insisted on the advantages of the transaction. "If we must spend money on armaments," they said, "better save ten millions on each ship."

No alternative was left to Grigorovitch but to state that in his next report to the Emperor he would back the desire of the Commission. This statement was received with tumultuous applause. He kept his word. Before my departure for the Easter vacation I was again received by the Emperor, who said to me:

"Is it not strange?—the Minister of Marine at first opposed this purchase, saying it would create ill feeling in the Duma. Now, it appears, the Duma is in favour of it, and he himself supports this view."

Grigorovitch sent me the following message: "Tell the President of the Duma that the two Dreadnoughts will be bought; and tell him also that the Minister of Marine will have nothing to gain personally from the transaction."

Admiral Stetsenko, known for his sterling integrity, was, by the desire of the Duma, appointed to transact the business.

On meeting me at the wedding of Prince Felix Yusupoff, Grigorovitch said: "I trust we now have your approval."

The general impression during the winter of 1913-14 was as if the higher society of St. Petersburg had suddenly had its eyes opened. Everyone spoke of Rasputin with the greatest apprehension. What had stirred the Duma two years ago had only now reached Court circles. People who so far had kept strictly silent on matters concerning the

Imperial Family, whether from a feeling of decency or simply out of respect for their Sovereign, now spoke of this man, some with fear, others with disgust or with an ironical smile.

I will here mention a characteristic incident illustrating the unbounded influence exercised by Rasputin. The little Tsarevitch had to undergo a slight operation. The Court surgeon Fedoroff, after preparing everything in the operating room, went out to call the Tsarevitch. Imagine his horror, when on his return he found all the requisites—bandages, muslin, etc.—which he had thoroughly sterilized, covered with a dirty nondescript article of clothing. On questioning his assistant he was told that "Gregory Efimovitch" had just been in the room, had prayed over the requisites prepared for the operation, and covered them with a garment of his own. Fedoroff went to complain to the Emperor, but the latter treated the matter lightly.

The whole of the spring session was devoted to conflicts between the Duma and the Minister of the Interior Maklakoff, who was issuing illegal orders and had appointed as governors in the provinces men unfit for their posts. His influence, however, grew at Tsarskoe Selo. According to information from Court sources, he had assumed the role of Court jester. He told funny stories, mimicked various people, birds and animals, amused the young Grand Duchesses by acting "the love-sick panther," and generally posed as the "funny man" on an intimate footing at the Palace. As a member of the Government, however, he was universally despised.

The Duma session was very long and lasted well into the summer. Progress was considerably ham-

pered by the continued boycott on the part of the Government.

In May, members of the Commission of Defence paid a visit to Reval, there to inspect the docks and fortifications. This trip coincided with the arrival at St. Petersburg of the British squadron under command of Admiral Beatty. As this would inevitably entail a visit of the members of the Duma to the British squadron then anchored off Reval, which would have the character of an official greeting to the British guests before their arrival in the capital, I solicited a special audience of the Emperor to ascertain his views on the matter.

The Emperor considered it right for us to meet the squadron, and gave his approval to the most cordial speeches of welcome possible. Armed with the Imperial sanction, a large party of members of the Duma, including the whole presidential body, started for Reval on board the cruiser *Bogatyr*, escorted by the torpedo boat *General Kondratenko*.

We were greeted by a combined salute from the Russian and British squadrons, Admiral Beatty's flagship, the *Lion*, flying the Russian national flag in honour of the Duma. The British Admiral's flag-captain immediately arrived on board the *Bogatyr* with an invitation to us all to lunch on board the *Lion*. I decided to deliver my address of welcome in Russian, and asked a member of the Duma, Zvegintzoff, to act as interpreter.

At the close of my speech Admiral Beatty turned to Zvegintzoff and asked him to translate his reply. As previously agreed, Zvegintzoff replied: "There is no need, as the President of the Duma both understands and speaks English."

To this Admiral Beatty and all the commanders and officers assembled from the ships uttered a long-drawn "Oh—oh," and afterwards signified their appreciation of the motives which prompted

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the President of the Duma to greet the British guests in his own tongue. Later, the officers who showed us round their splendid ship told us they realized the necessity of studying Russian in view of the inevitable future alliance between the two countries. After the festivities attending the visit of the British squadron and an inspection of the Reval fortifications, the members of the Duma made a cruise among the Finnish skerries, calling at Hangö, while the British squadron sailed for St. Petersburg.

The British were greatly impressed by the presence at Reval of a delegation from the Imperial Duma headed by its President. They regarded this as a mark of special courtesy. All the papers were full of it. The incident created a great commotion in Germany. German politicians were disturbed by the British visit and still more by the presence at Reval of the Duma delegates. It may be that this event, or the visit of the French President, hastened the war. It was rumoured that the Kaiser had declared: *Jetzt oder niemals* ("now or never").

On June 4, 1914, news appeared in the Press that Rasputin had been murdered in his native village of Pokrovskoe, in the province of Tobolsk. An ugly, noseless woman had come up to him and "stuck" a knife into his abdomen. Rasputin telegraphed to Tsarskoe Selo a message which may be rendered: "Hussy stuck knife in my belly." The woman proved to be one of his former mistresses. She declared that she wanted to kill him because he was an impostor and a false prophet. She denied having any accomplices. The papers said that she had received Ilidor's blessing for the attempt, but this she also denied. During her examination the woman was in violent hysterics. The Press, glad of the opportunity, again took up

all the old and forgotten stories of Rasputin's exploits. News appeared to the effect that the Court surgeon Fedoroff had been despatched to Pokrovskoe; that Rasputin's women admirers, including Mme. Vyrubova, had left St. Petersburg and were on the way to Siberia; that Rasputin was at the point of death. All this rejoicing, however, proved to be premature. The next news was that Rasputin kept on repeating: "I'll pull through, I'll pull through." His condition soon improved, and the Press ceased to trouble about him. Eventually he did "pull through" and recovered.

Public attention was diverted by the visit of foreign guests from friendly countries—the British and French sailors. They were warmly welcomed in St. Petersburg. While officers and men were being entertained at dinners and receptions the diplomats were busily at work, and the Triple Entente was apparently transformed into an Alliance.

On the return voyage from Reval a group of members of the Duma, at the insistent request of Admiral Essen, visited the port of Hangö, in Finland, opposite Reval. There a harbour had been built, splendidly equipped to facilitate a landing of large German forces. The Finnish authorities explained the construction as being intended for merchant ships, and said it had cost them ten million marks. An inspection proved, however, that all these constructions were designed for a military landing. Meanwhile the promontories on the surrounding coast, on which Peter the Great had ordered forts to be built, remained unfortified.

Essen asked that this fact should be reported to the Emperor. I did this at my audience after the close of the session. The Emperor knew nothing of it. Essen had declared that if war broke out he would cause all these constructions to be blown up. This he did on the very first day of the war.

CHAPTER VIII

*Declaration of War—Disorganization in the Red Cross—
At the Warsaw-Vienna Station—General Rennenkampf
—Army Boots and the Minister N. A. Maklakoff—
The Emperor at Lvoff (Lemberg).*

THE heir to the Austrian Throne, leader of the war party and oppressor of the Slavonic people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was assassinated at Serajevo, with his wife, on June 15 (old style) by a Slav patriot. The blame for the crime was laid by Austria on the Serbian Government. An exchange of diplomatic notes was followed by an ultimatum and finally by the declaration of war. The Austrians crossed the Danube. The Serbs abandoned their capital and retired into the interior of the country.

The days that preceded the outbreak of war found me at Nauheim, where I was taking a cure.

On my return to St. Petersburg from abroad I learnt that the day before I had been repeatedly called up on the telephone by General Sukhomlinoff, the Minister for War. On hearing that I was expected home at any moment, he left a message asking me to telephone to him directly I arrived. I did so, and received a pressing request to call on him at once on a matter of urgent importance, as he himself was unable to come on account of pressure of work. I went at once, and the following conversation took place.

"I asked you to come and see me," said Sukhomlinoff, "because I am in a very awkward situation. Imagine what an awful thing has happened. The Emperor is suddenly vacillating in his decision, and has ordered the mobilization in the

military districts intended for action against the Austrians to be stopped. I am utterly at a loss how to explain this sudden decision. If he insists on this order being carried out, the result may be a catastrophe. All the mobilization notices and orders have already been sent out. It is impossible to recall them, and any delay in the matter will be fatal. What am I to do? Give me your advice."

"I must tell you," I replied to the Minister, "that the declaration of war by Germany is absolutely imminent; if there is the slightest delay, the Germans will cross the frontier unopposed. Passing through Wirballen I saw a cordon of German cavalry stationed along the frontier, in full war kit and ready for action. You must tell the Emperor of all this at once."

"On the contrary, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, I beg you yourself immediately to request an audience at Peterhof and inform his Majesty of these circumstances personally."

"I should be pleased to do so, but time is short. There is not a minute to lose, and the procedure of requesting an audience is long. No, it is you who must go, and at once."

"But I have said it all several times, both by telephone and in conversation. It is obvious that the Emperor does not believe me. I am absolutely at a loss what to do."

I advised him to call immediately on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sazonoff. We found him on the point of starting for Peterhof. Apparently he was ignorant of the Emperor's altered state of mind. We informed him of the actual state of affairs. Moreover, I requested Sazonoff officially to transmit to the Emperor that I, as the head of the representatives of the people, solemnly declared that the Russian people would never forgive a delay which might precipitate the country into

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fatal confusion. Apparently the report of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, backed by the weighty evidence of the Minister for War and of the President of the Duma, obtained the desired effect. The Emperor overcame his scruples; the mobilization was not cancelled and followed its normal course.

Characteristically enough, the rumour of the postponement of the mobilization made the most painful impression on the troops of the St. Petersburg military district. A great number of officers visited me, demanding a definite answer as to whether the mobilization had been postponed. Their attitude to the ruling powers was by no means a friendly one, and had the mobilization been cancelled dangerous complications would undoubtedly have arisen.

St. Petersburg was the scene of ceaseless popular demonstrations, which took place mainly in front of the Serbian Legation, opposite my house. Every day the crowd approached our house and clamoured to see me. I came out on the balcony, and one evening, the clamour having become particularly insistent, I had come down into the street with some other members of the Duma. I was asked to stand up in a motor car and address the crowd.

On the day that the Emperor issued the manifesto announcing a state of war with Germany, huge crowds assembled in front of the Winter Palace. After a special service in the chapel, the Emperor spoke a few words to the assembly in the Palace, concluding with the solemn promise not to lay down arms while a single span of Russian land remained in the enemy's hand. Thundering cheers resounded through the Palace and were taken up by the crowds outside. The Emperor came out on to the balcony, followed by the Empress. A vast

crowd filled the whole square and all the adjacent streets. At the sight of the Emperor, an electric current seemed to pass through the mass of people; a mighty "hurrah" filled the air. Banners and placards, on which were inscribed the words "Long live Russia and the Slavonic cause," were lowered to the ground, and the whole crowd, as one man, fell on their knees before the Emperor. He tried to speak, raised his hand: the front rows endeavoured to silence the rest, but nothing could be heard amid the deafening cheers and roaring of the crowd. The Emperor stood for a while with bowed head, overpowered by the solemnity of the moment, when Tsar and people became one. Then he turned slowly, and withdrew into his apartments.

On leaving the Palace we mingled with the crowd of demonstrators, and came across some factory workers. I stopped them and asked how they came to be here, when they had been on strike, and almost on the point of an armed rising a short time ago. The workmen replied: "That was our own family dispute. We thought reforms came too slowly through the Duma. But now all Russia is involved. We have rallied to our Tsar as to our emblem, and we shall follow him for the sake of victory over the Germans."

The Imperial Duma and the Council of the Empire were convened on July 26 (Old style), 1914. Before the session the members of both Chambers were received at the Winter Palace by the Emperor. All the members attended the reception, even the Labourists. Everyone was stirred to patriotic enthusiasm, and party differences were forgotten. All the Ministers of the Crown, the highest dignitaries of the Court, the whole Council of the Empire, and the Imperial Duma were assembled in the great Nicolaevsky Hall.

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The Emperor entered accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch, and addressed the assembly in the following words :

" I welcome you in these solemn and anxious days through which all Russia is passing. Germany, followed by Austria, has declared war on Russia. The great wave of patriotism and loyalty to the Throne which has swept our native land is to me, and presumably also to you, a token that our great Mother Russia will carry on that war, sent as a visitation by God, to its desired consummation. This unanimous impulse of love on the part of my people and their readiness to sacrifice everything, even life itself, give me the necessary strength, calmly and steadfastly to anticipate the future. We are not merely defending our honour and dignity within the confines of our own country, but are fighting for our congenital brother-Slavs. I rejoice to see that at this solemn moment the Slavs are being so closely and indissolubly united with Russia. I am certain that each of you, at your respective posts, will help me to bear the trials which are sent us, and that we all, beginning with myself, will do our duty to the end. Great is the God of the Russian land."

Ringling cheers resounded through the hall. The following speech was delivered by the Deputy-President of the Council of the Empire, Golubeff (the President, Akimoff, was ill and died soon after). The next speaker was myself. I said :

" Your Imperial Majesty : It was with a feeling of profound emotion and pride that Russia heard the call of the Russian Tsar summoning his people to be one with him in the solemn hour of trial sent to our Motherland. . . .

The representatives of the people, called into political being by the will of your Majesty, now stand before you. The Imperial Duma, which embodies in itself the unanimous impulse of all Russia's component parts and united in a singleness of purpose, has empowered me to tell you, Sire, that your people are

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ready to take up arms for the honour and glory of the Motherland. Without differences of opinion, views and convictions, the Imperial Duma, speaking in the name of the whole Russian nation, says calmly and firmly to her Tsar: 'Sire, be of good cheer, the Russian people are with you. With a firm belief in the grace of God, they will grudge no sacrifice until the foe is vanquished and Russia's honour vindicated.' "

The Emperor's eyes were full of tears. He replied :

"I thank you from my heart, I thank you, gentlemen, for your patriotic spirit, which I never doubted, and of which you have now given me actual proof. With all my heart I wish you every success. God is with us."

The Emperor made the sign of the Cross; so did we all, and sang: "Lord, save thy people."

The general enthusiasm was unbounded. Coming up to me, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch embraced me and said: "Now, Rodzianko, I am your friend till death. I'll do anything for the Duma. Tell me what you want."

Taking advantage of this, I asked that the embargo should be removed from the daily paper *Retch**, which the Grand Duke had ordered to be suppressed for anti-patriotic articles against Serbia.

"Miliukoff has made a mistake," I said, "and himself repents of it. Make him promise to alter his policy. We shall now need all the support of the Press."

The embargo was removed, the *Retch* reappeared next day, and Miliukoff maintained a national policy throughout the war.

After the reception in the Palace, the deputies

* A Liberal paper voicing the opinions of the Constitutional Democratic (Cadet) Party.

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adjourned to the Taurida Palace, where the Duma sat. There was first a special service of intercession. The Cabinet was present in a body, as were the diplomatic representatives of the friendly Powers. Spectators crowded the galleries. The opening speech was delivered by the President of the Duma, who was followed by the Prime Minister Goremykin and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Sazonoff. The latter was loudly acclaimed by the Duma; he appeared to be deeply moved. It was some time before he could commence his magnificent speech. It was said that it had been written by Prince G. N. Trubetzkoy. Sazonoff was followed by the Minister of Finance, Bark.

After the Cabinet Ministers came the turn of the deputies from all parties and nationalities. All united in the cry—the integrity and honour of the Motherland must be defended. The speech of the Lettish representative was particularly pithy. “In every one of our huts the enemy will meet a deadly foe, whom he may perhaps behead, but even from the dying he will hear the cry: ‘Long live Russia!’”

After the historic session of July 26 the Duma was prorogued.

After the very first battles, news of the highly unsatisfactory state of the medical transport service spread from the front. Chaos reigned supreme. Goods trains arrived in Moscow packed with wounded, who lay on the bare floor of the trucks without straw litter, themselves often without clothes, with badly dressed wounds and having had no food for several days. At the same time my wife, who was patroness of the Elizabeth community of sisters of mercy, received letters from the nurses at the front telling her that their unit was

left without work and was constrained to remain an inactive spectator of the disorder, the nurses not even being allowed to enter the trains at the railway station. This state of affairs was the result of rivalry between the Ministry for War and the Red Cross. Instead of co-ordinating their work, each department acted independently.

The first aid organization on the military side was worst of all. There were no vehicles, no horses, and no medical appliances. In spite of this, no other organizations were allowed at the front. The only possible solution was to lay the matter before the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch. I wrote him a letter, in which I pointed out that the general patriotic enthusiasm had caused numerous voluntary sanitary organizations to spring up, but that all these bodies, which were far better organized and efficient than the corresponding military service, were looked at askance by M. Evdokimoff, the head of the Army Medical Department, who placed difficulties and obstacles in the way of their work wherever he could. Meantime the wounded could not wait. They had to be doctored and looked after, while the advancing troops in the firing line had to be provided with properly equipped flying units. No time could be lost. As co-operation between the Army Medical Department and the volunteer organizations was apparently out of the question, it was necessary to place a dictator at the head of the whole medical and sanitary service, who could be entrusted with the task of bringing order out of chaos.

Having despatched this letter, I called at once on the Empress Marie Feodorovna, who was residing at the Elagin Island Palace, and told her everything. She was horrified.

"Tell me what you think ought to be done," said the Empress.

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I advised her to send a telegram to the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch, requesting him to order the head of the Army Medical Department, Evdokimoff, to improve the existing conditions and permit the volunteer Red Cross organizations, which he was deliberately preventing from working at the front, to take part in the work. The Empress immediately asked me to write out a telegram in her name. The result of our efforts was first a telegram and then a letter from the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch, saying that he was in complete agreement with the President of the Duma, and promising to take the necessary steps. Soon afterwards Evdokimoff was summoned to the Stavka (General Headquarters) and Prince Alexander Petrovitch of Oldenburg was appointed supreme head of the Medical and Evacuation Department with a dictator's powers.

The Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch wrote to me that he had long ago insisted on Evdokimoff's dismissal. It was not carried out because he was in high favour with Sukhomlinoff and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, who persuaded the Emperor to keep him at his post. The reason for this, it was rumoured, was the Empress Alexandra's desire to oppose the wishes of the Empress Marie Feodorovna.

Soon after the opening of military operations it became apparent that the young Empress had nothing to do. In order to give Alexandra Feodorovna a prominent position in the public war work, a Supreme Council was established under her nominal presidency. The composition of this Council was exceedingly cumbersome. Though the Empress was nominally president, the Prime Minister, I. L. Goremykin, presided at the meet-

ings, thus introducing an undesirable dual control in the management of affairs. Goremykin endeavoured to anticipate the wishes of the Empress, while she herself did not know what she was expected to do. The main source of the Council's activities—the financial side—hung, so to speak, in mid-air, as it had no legal funds at its disposal, and grants were expected to be forthcoming from the war fund, which itself was placed under the control of the Council of Ministers.

The members of the Council realized from the outset that debates would be purely academic and that all decisions would depend on other organizations, whose views on the subject were absolutely unknown and undefined. The sittings were purely formal and bored everybody, and the presence of the Empress created an icy atmosphere.

Soon after my arrival in Warsaw in the autumn of 1914, the plenipotentiary delegate of the Zemstvo Union, Vyruboff, called on me and proposed that I should visit the Warsaw-Vienna railway station, at which 17,000 wounded from the battles of Lodz and the Beresina were collected. There we found a heartrending scene: the platforms were strewn with countless numbers of wounded, who lay in the cold rain and mud without so much as straw litter. The air was filled with their piteous cries: "For God's sake, have our wounds dressed, we've been without dressings for five days." It should be noted that after fierce fighting these wounded were removed from the front in goods trucks in complete disorder, and abandoned without help at the Warsaw-Vienna railway station. The only medical staff in attendance on these poor creatures were the Warsaw doctors, assisted by volunteer nurses. This was a

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Polish society unit numbering about fifteen members. One cannot speak too highly of the indefatigable devotion and self-sacrifice of these true friends of humanity. I do not remember their names, but heartily wish my earnest gratitude to reach them as a token of a Russian's heartfelt admiration. At the time of my arrival at the station these splendid people were working the third day at a stretch without rest or respite.

Such treatment of the wounded roused my profound indignation, and I immediately summoned by telephone the chief of the Medical Department, Daniloﬀ, and the Red Cross delegate, General Wolkoff. As soon as they arrived we, with Vyruboﬀ, discussed some means of coping with this horrible and tragic situation. Both General Daniloﬀ and General Wolkoff declared emphatically that they had no medical staﬀs at their disposal; yet, on visiting a Red Cross hospital a short time before, I had found six doctors and about thirty nurses doing nothing. On my pointing out that they ought at once to be turned on to work, General Daniloﬀ replied decidedly that he was unable to do this, as they were for staﬀing hospital trains now in formation. And this was said when 18,000 sufferers were lying unaided on the station platforms.

I demanded that General Daniloﬀ should immediately proceed to organize special trains with heated trucks for the removal of the wounded from the station. Daniloﬀ declared that this, too, he was unable to do, as by orders received from the supreme head of the Medical Department, the wounded were to be evacuated into the interior in hospital trains only, and he had only eight of these at his disposal. Outraged by such heartless indifference to the fate of these suffering men, I threatened to telegraph to the Prince of Olden-

burg and inform him of the disgraceful state of affairs and demand that those in authority should be brought to trial and dismissed for criminal inaction. The fear of the Prince was so great that my menace took effect, and they went energetically to work. Available doctors and nurses were found, and during the next two or three days all the wounded were attended to and removed to the rear.

Such was the state of the Army Medical Department during military operations.

While at Warsaw I visited General Russky. The Commander-in-Chief* made an excellent impression. As a man he was exceptionally modest, almost shy. I alluded to him as a national hero, and said I considered it my duty to call on him on my arrival in Warsaw. He looked terribly uncomfortable, and waved his hands in protest. "Oh no—I've nothing to do with it," he said.

While in Warsaw I asked the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch's permission to visit the Stavka. I wanted to acquaint him with all I had seen and heard in Warsaw. In his conversation with me General Russky had complained of the shortage of munitions and kit, in particular the lack of boots. The soldiers in the Carpathians were fighting barefoot, and the delegate of the Zemstvo Union asked me to see to that. Russky said that the lack of munitions made the situation very difficult; elaborate manoeuvres were necessary to enable the troops to hold their ground.

The Red Cross hospitals and units I came across were all up to the standard. Conditions were bad only in the military hospitals: there carelessness, lack of requisites, and absence of co-ordination between the various departments were very marked. To get from the military clearing stations at the front to the Red Cross hospitals, one was some-

* Of the Western Front.

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times obliged to walk ten miles or more with no chance of even hiring a waggon, as all the population had either fled or been completely ruined.

The Grand Duke greeted me very cordially, told me he was going to a conference of army commanders at Brest Litovsk, and asked me to accompany him. My proposal to use waggons loaded with hay for transporting the wounded met with his approval, and a few days later the Government was commandeering them in our province, and horses and waggons were being despatched to the front.

In general the Grand Duke listened willingly to all I had to tell him, and invited me to come oftener and inform him of what was going on. At the mention of Rasputin I repeated to him the latest Petrograd gossip. The story ran that Rasputin had wanted to go to the Stavka and sent a telegram to that effect, but that Nicolai Nicolae-vitch had replied: "Come—and be hanged." On my asking whether this was true, the Grand Duke laughed and said, "Well, not exactly." It was clear from his answer that something of the sort had actually taken place.

The Grand Duke complained of the fatal influence of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. He said frankly that she was a great hindrance to everybody. When at the Stavka the Emperor agreed to everything, but on rejoining her he altered all his decisions. The Grand Duke realized that the Empress hated him and desired his dismissal. He spoke of Sukhomlinoff, in whom he had no confidence and who was trying to gain an influence over the Emperor. He said that he had been compelled temporarily to suspend operations owing to the lack of munitions and the shortage of boots.

"You have influence," the Grand Duke added,

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“and you are trusted. Do organize the supply of footwear for the army as soon as possible.”

I replied that this could be done by inviting the co-operation of the Zemstvos and other public organizations, particularly the former. Plenty of material could be found in Russia; labour, too, was plentiful, but one province produced leather, others nails, soles and so forth, while the cheap labour, the bootmakers who worked at home, lived in yet another region. The best way to bring all these together was to call a conference of presidents of the provincial Zemstvo Boards and organize the business with their assistance. The Grand Duke entirely approved of my scheme.

On my return to Petrograd I went to the Duma Organization Committee and asked the advice of the members of the Duma as to the best way of organizing the supply of footwear. We decided to send a circular of questions to all the presidents of the Zemstvo Boards and mayors of the towns. This was soon done, and favourable answers came pouring in. As there was reason to expect that this scheme would be opposed by the Government, I decided to call on some of the Ministers separately and talk it over with them. Krivoshein, Sukhomlinoff and Goremykin approved of the idea of a conference and promised to support my proposal before the Cabinet. The interview with the Minister Maklakoff took rather a peculiar turn. On my statement that I was entrusted by the Commander-in-Chief with the urgent task of organizing the supply of boots for the army and of summoning a conference of presidents of the Zemstvo and Municipal Boards in Petrograd, Maklakoff said: “Yes, yes, what you say tallies exactly with the information we have received through our agents.”

“What information?”

"According to my secret information, this conference, under cover of the needs of the army, will discuss the political situation and demand a constitution."

The Minister's declaration was so unexpected and grotesque that it made me actually jump in my chair, and I replied sharply:

"You have gone out of your mind. What right have you to insult me like this? To suppose that I, the President of the Duma, should, at such a time and under pretence of war needs, summon a conference for promoting revolutionary manifestations! Besides that, you are completely wrong, because we have a constitution already."

Maklakoff was visibly abashed and endeavoured to smooth matters over.

"Please, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, don't take my words as a personal offence. In any case I cannot authorize such a conference without the consent of the Council of Ministers, and I will raise this question at our very first meeting."

I informed Maklakoff that some of the Ministers had promised their support, and left him, feeling very indignant and upset.

The proposed conference was spoken of among the members of the Duma, and many presidents of the Zemstvo Boards were unofficially informed of the Commander-in-Chief's desire to enlist the Zemstvos' assistance for war work. The response was widespread. Some sent the necessary information; others, without waiting for an invitation, arrived personally in Petrograd. Then came letters from the Zemstvos reporting that orders had already been placed with the home-working boot-makers and the small workshops, that leather was being bought up and work was in full swing. One Zemstvo, in view of the shortage of tanning materials, despatched its agent to the Argentine.

Even some of the governors responded to the call and expressed their approval of the idea of getting the Zemstvos to supply the army.

Here, too, the Minister Maklakoff did his best to hinder the work. He insisted that all orders should be transmitted through the medium of the governors. The public felt slighted and the work was hampered. Simultaneously Maklakoff issued the famous order prohibiting the transport of supplies from one province to another. This completely disorganized and cramped the plan for utilizing the products and possibilities of the various provinces. A few days later I received a letter from Maklakoff informing the President of the Duma that the latter's scheme for summoning a conference was disapproved of by the Council of Ministers, and that the task of supplying boots for the army was entrusted to the head of the War Commissariat, Shuvaeff, whose business it was to get in touch with the Zemstvos and municipalities. The very next day Shuvaeff came to see me and declared frankly that he was unable to take up the business, and was of opinion that the Zemstvos did not trust the Commissariat and would probably refuse to deal with it direct. Shuvaeff asked for our help. I replied that as the Council of Ministers considered I could not be trusted with the task, there was nothing left for me but to refuse to take any part in it.

Soon after this Goremykin called on me to discuss the summoning of the Duma. I reminded him of his promise to support the proposal in favour of a Zemstvo conference.

"What conference?" asked Goremykin in astonishment. "We never discussed anything of the kind in the Council of Ministers."

I showed Goremykin Maklakoff's letter. He read it with great surprise, repeated that no such

question had been discussed in the Council of Ministers, and, referring to Maklakoff, remarked : "*Il a menti comme toujours.*"

In spite of opposition from the Government the Zemstvos continued to work. Shuvaeff received consignments of boots, while Maklakoff's orders were treated with contempt and indignation. The prohibition to transport produce from one province to another was particularly irritating. Owing to this there was a superfluity of produce in some provinces and a shortage in others, and sometimes it happened that landowners who possessed estates in different provinces were unable to transport their own seeds for sowing their fields.

When I reported all these matters to the Emperor he listened to me, but did not pay particular attention. I asked the Emperor his opinion of my visits to the Stavka, whether he did not consider them inopportune. The Emperor replied that he knew the Grand Duke thought highly of me, and that he personally would be pleased if I went there oftener. This time the Emperor behaved most graciously towards me. I asked that the Duma should be summoned as soon as possible, and recounted to the Emperor the contents of Maklakoff's letter and his unfounded suspicion of the Zemstvos.

The Duma was summoned to debate the Budget Estimates, but the very first sitting developed into a patriotic demonstration, as in the early days of the war. Only the Extreme Left took no part in the manifestation, and the Balts and other Duma Germans maintained a strange silence. It was discovered that they had been conducting an anti-war propaganda, and documents were found proving one of them to have openly written that Germany's victory would benefit Russia. The Social Democratic Party intended to present an interpellation to the Government on the subject.

Had this been done, the atmosphere of unanimity of the sitting would be broken, and the whole business would have made an unfavourable impression. An interpellation (to be valid) needed thirty signatures; the Left wing did not number as many members, and the motion depended on whether the Cadets would add their signature, as they had done on many previous occasions. This time, however, they refused, and everything passed off well. Miliukoff delivered an excellent and patriotic speech, mentioning a member of their party, Koliubakin, who had just been killed at the front, and said it with such feeling that not only the whole House, but members of the Government, rose to do honour to his memory.

The speech of the President of the Duma was followed by speeches from Goremykin and Sazonoff. They both pointed out that the hopes of victory were merging into certainty, that we stood firm in Galicia, and that from a military point of view we were well prepared for war. Goremykin mentioned that many new problems of internal policy had arisen out of the current events, which, however, would have to be dealt with after the war. The Minister for War, Sukhomlinoff, stated that the army was fully provided for, and that by March there would be more munitions and rifles than were actually required. As news was coming from the front of a shortage of munitions, the War Minister's words and categorical assertions had a calming effect on many people.

Soon after this sitting, in February, there appeared the Commander-in-Chief's statement that Colonel Miasoiedoff and his accomplices had been hanged. Colonel Miasoiedoff's friendship and frequent intercourse with the War Minister were common knowledge. After this episode many people became inclined to attribute our first defeat

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at Soldau to Miasoiedoff's activities. Confidence in Sukhomlinoff was being finally undermined; even rumours of treason became current. Faith in the generalissimo, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch, alone remained unshaken. In connection with Miasoiedoff's execution, many recalled the disclosures made by Gutchkoff as long ago as the time of the third Duma, when he had made charges against Sukhomlinoff and Miasoiedoff. Gutchkoff had then pointed out the undoubted connection between Sukhomlinoff and Miasoiedoff and a certain Altshuller, who, with Miasoiedoff, stood at the head of a firm which provided artillery supplies for the army through the medium of Sukhomlinoff. The activities of Altshuller and Miasoiedoff were exposed by General N. I. Ivanoff. At that time Gutchkoff charged Sukhomlinoff with having organized a secret surveillance over the officers' corps, which he had entrusted to Miasoiedoff. In spite of the growing public indignation against Sukhomlinoff, the Emperor continued to hold him in high favour.

At the front, during the winter, we continued our advance in Galicia. Amid untold hardships the troops pushed on over the Carpathians and descended into the plains of Hungary. Przmysl, on the 9th March, fell almost without resistance. Selivanoff, despairing of ever taking Przmysl, was on the point of raising the siege, when almost on the day fixed for the withdrawal the fortress surrendered. We captured 117,000 prisoners. After the fall of Przmysl, the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch received a diamond sword with the inscription: "For the conquest of Chervonnaia Russ."*

* "Chervonnaia (or Red) Russia" was the name of that part of Galicia which had of old formed part of the Russian dominions.

In order to test the accuracy of various reports which had reached members of the Duma from the front, I made a journey to Galicia at the beginning of April. I was able to visit the front up to the river Dunajetz along the lines occupied by the armies of Radko Dmitrieff, Letchitsky and Brusiloff. Everywhere I heard the same thing: the armies lacked munitions. General Russky had complained of this as far back as the autumn of 1914. When I repeated my conversation with Russky to the Grand Duke at the Stavka, the latter assured me that it was only a temporary hitch, and that quantities of munitions would be forthcoming in a fortnight. Now the same complaints were repeated from all sides. The generals were in despair and implored our help. I was accompanied on this trip by my wife, her sister, and J. V. Glinka, who took down notes during our tour of the front. The Grand Duchess Xenia Alexandrovna travelled on the same train with us.

At the railway station at Lvoff (Lemberg) we caught sight of a group of civilians, who appeared to be expecting someone. The Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch, who was meeting his wife, was also standing near them. We alighted from the carriage, and when the group of civilians approached us, we naturally made way for the Grand Duke and his wife, thinking it was they who were being met. A slight delay ensued. Then an old gentleman left the group of civilians and approached me with a greeting. It appeared that these were Galician public men, with Dudykevitch at their head, who had come to welcome the President of the Russian Imperial Duma. (I mention this episode because the Minister N. A. Maklakoff contrived to give the Emperor a totally erroneous account of this modest demonstration and of my whole stay in Galicia.)

Beautiful, gay Lvoff, all in green, made a most pleasing impression. The clean streets, the lively crowds, Russian soldiers, and even policemen at the street corners—there was nothing to remind one of a conquered city. One might suppose we were at home in the midst of friends, with no trace of hostilities; even the peasants, by their dress and manner of speech, reminded one of our Little Russians.

On our return to Lvoff after a visit to Przmysl, we learned that the Emperor and the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch were expected to arrive in two days' time. Preparations were afoot for a triumphant welcome; arches were being built and the town decorated with garlands, flags and bunting. I did not consider this visit very opportune, and in my heart of hearts criticized the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch.

On the day of the Emperor's arrival everyone assembled in the temporary cathedral. Troops were lined up in the streets, crowded with people, and the "hurrahs" rolled and swelled as the Imperial cortege drew nearer. After a *Te Deum* Archbishop Eulogius gave a moving address; everyone was affected and believed in our final victory. That same day there was a big dinner. The Emperor came up to me after dinner and said:

"Did you ever think we should meet at Lvoff?"

"No, your Majesty, I did not; and under the circumstances, Sire, I greatly regret that you have decided to pay this visit to Galicia."

"Why?"

"Because in three weeks' time Lvoff will probably be retaken by the Germans, and our army forced to abandon the positions it now holds."

"You always try to frighten me, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, and tell me unpleasant things."

"Your Majesty, I should not dare to tell an un-

truth. I have been to the front, and I am surprised that the Commander-in-Chief has allowed you to come here under existing conditions. The soil on which the Russian monarch has once set foot cannot be lightly surrendered: torrents of blood will be shed upon it, but nevertheless we shall not be able to hold it."

After dinner the Emperor stepped out on the balcony and spoke to the people, mentioning the ancient Russian territories. The crowd cheered; ladies waved their handkerchiefs. Next day the Emperor, with the Grand Duke, left for Przmysl.

A week later my wife and her sister returned to Petrograd, and I and my son went to the front to inspect the Red Cross organizations. We only just had time to return to Lvoff before our catastrophic retreat began. The warnings of my son and all serious military experts were realized; all our victories and the blood so freely shed were brought to nought by the shortage of munitions.

My son Nicholas, whose unit was attached to Korniloff's division, was surrounded, but thanks to his knowledge of the country managed to escape and brought safely back to the river San, not only his unit and the wounded, but part of the baggage and munitions. For this he received the order of St. Vladimir with swords. General Korniloff refused to abandon his division, which was spread over twenty-five miles. He insisted that the medical unit should depart, while he himself returned to the regiments which lagged in the rear. He was wounded, surrounded and made prisoner, with part of his division.