

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Editor: DR. PAUL CARUS.

Associates: } E. C. HEGELER
 } MARY CARUS.

VOL. XX. (NO. I.)

JANUARY, 1906.

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CHICAGO

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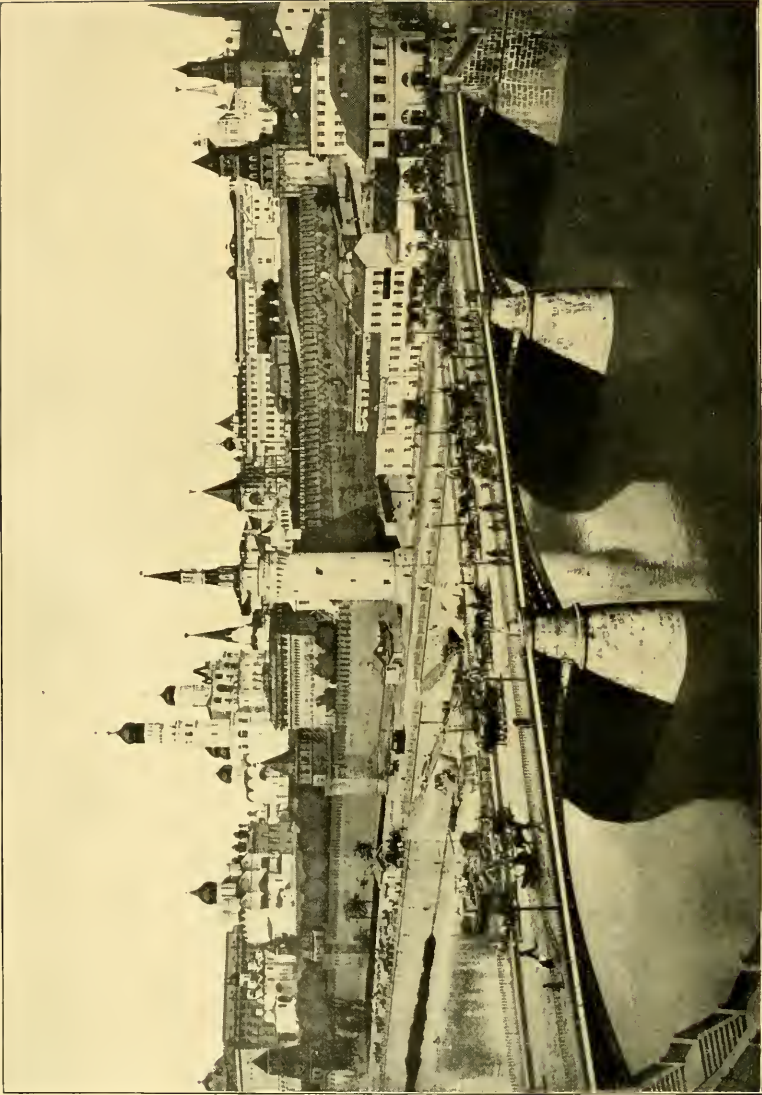
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THE KREMLIN AT MOSCOW.

The Representative Monument of the Old Order in Russia, that is Now Passing Away.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

BY JOSEPH REINACH.*

THE visit which I paid last summer to Russia greatly increased the deep sympathy which I have always felt for that grand country and its great peoples. I came home with a clearer and more precise idea of the real situation in that vast empire. As, during my sojourn there, I had spoken a good deal with the leaders of all the parties, with the supporters of the government as well as with the reformers, I was fully convinced, even before the stirring events now taking place in that unfortunate land, that the old state of things was irredeemably condemned.

I was in Moscow when the Czar issued his proclamation which convened the Douma and was present in the ancient cathedral of the Assumption when this important document was read. This was on August 20. Though the concessions accorded were notable, I received the decided impression that autocracy was too late, that the old Russia had abdicated and that a new Russia was born. I felt that a mighty volume, full of glorious pages, sadness and horrors, was closed for all time, before my very eyes; that this was indeed a historic date. On that day and for some days to come, the Czar still remained, as a matter of form, the Autocrat of all the Russias, but only as the King of England is King of France, or the Emperor of Austria is King of Jerusalem. While the holy music

* Joseph Reinach was private secretary to M. Gambetta, and is best known as the editor of the collected speeches of that great statesman. See *Dictionnaire-Manuel-Illustré des écrivains et des littératures*, s. v. "Gambetta." He enjoyed the confidence of his illustrious friend, and his own name ranks high in contemporary French politics. He has written books and essays on various historical and political as well as economic questions and is still a member of the Chamber of Deputies. Incidentally we will mention that he is one of three remarkable brothers, the other two being Salomon, the archaeologist, and Theodore, the art critic.

was still echoing through that venerable pile where all the Russian rulers have been crowned, like our French kings in the cathedral of Rheims, I saw vanish into the dead night the old régime, while the ideas and even the party cries of our own first revolution came to take its place. With the poet, I repeated the verse:

"Novus rerum nascitur ordo."

One had simply to read this proclamation to see how poorly it suited the situation and to perceive at a glance that it had come too late. It satisfied neither public opinion nor the evident necessities of the hour. On that day and on the following days, I met several leaders of the reform movement, and I found that, though quite accustomed to be deceived by what came from the government, they really expected that something more than this would have been offered. I told them this story of Diderot. A child refused to learn to read. "All I ask you to do is to say A," said the father. "No." "Why not?" "Because if I say A to-day, I will have to say B to-morrow." And at the same time I called their attention to the fact that the Russian alphabet is much longer than our alphabet!

My expectations have been realized much sooner than I imagined would be the case, and doubtless much sooner, too, than these Russian friends of mine imagined, though they were full of sanguine ardor in their fine fight for liberty and justice. In August, the Imperial Government had said A. But I do not pretend to know at what letter of the alphabet they are to-day, and who can tell what one they will have reached when these lines are in print on the other side of the Atlantic? But what is evident even to the most careless observer is that in no country of the world has liberty advanced with such rapid strides as in Russia during the present revolution.

In this twentieth century, revolutions are not made as in the nineteenth and the eighteenth, when the gun and paving stones played such a prominent part. The up-to-date Russian revolution has utilized the arms put in its hands by the modern social system. The magnificent idea of a great pacific strike of the railways and all the industries is something new in the history of revolutions. Was the plan conceived by a single man, or did it spring from the people itself, from the soil, from the force of circumstances? I cannot answer the question. Perhaps history will tell us some day. It would be finer, if it came from the people, spontaneously, as gushes forth the sources of those great Russian rivers, the Volga, on whose waters I have passed never-to-be-for-

gotten hours, or the mighty Dnieper. However this may be, all the noble idealism of the Russian soul has burst forth upon the world, which at one and the same time, is astonished and terrified at this well organized movement.

Thus, as I have said above and as I stated to my Moscow friends last August, I have never doubted that once under way, the Russian revolution would succeed, would triumph over all the accumulated obstacles, sooner or later, after ups and downs, and terrible tragedies. He who doubts it to-day is blind. Blind and criminal he who strives to stop this great on-flowing river. No one has ever seen a stream turn back to its source. They often, however, overflow their banks. If an attempt is made to dam the present Russian torrent, the inundation will be awful!

The men who, for years and years, have been preparing the nation for this grand regeneration, and who will soon be called upon to build up the new Russia, free Russia, are not of the calibre to need advice from foreigners, however great may be our sympathy for their cause and for the nation of which they stand to-day the best representatives. But I will venture to suggest to them not to push ahead the hands of the clock which is to strike the hour for the introduction of universal suffrage. Though it is true that universal suffrage is the necessary form of all true national sovereignty, it fails to become an instrument of progress in the hands of a people where the illiterate class, if not in the majority, is nearly so. If the figures which have been given me are correct, there are in Russia about 130 millions of inhabitants, of whom over seventy per cent. cannot either read or write.

I am afraid of the ignorant voter. Here in France, more than sixty years after the French Revolution, in the very midst of the nineteenth century, our new and ignorant system of universal suffrage inflicted on the nation Napoleon III, and the second empire, with Sedan and the rest. Prudhon has well said: "Democracy is demopædia." In other words, it is in the school that a people is taught how to govern itself. Make the basis of your electorate as broad as is rationally possible, my Russian friends, but do not begin with universal suffrage. Let that come slowly and later.

While you are establishing individual liberty, do not neglect to put in your laws a clause in favor of liberty of conscience. In politics, establish the representative régime. Unfetter the press. Cut off without hesitation abuses of caste and privileges. Sweep away bureaucracy, which since the time of Gogol, has been going from bad to worse and which dishonors Russia in the eyes of the

whole civilized world. Place the finances and the employment of the public funds under the strictest control. Democratize your body of army and marine officers. Suppress without pity all your administrative tribunals. Abolish your Russian latifundia, which are as baneful and unfair as were those of Roman times, the destruction of Italy, and adapt to Russia the land system which the French Revolution created in France and which established that admirable class of small land-owners, who, attached firmly to the soil which they cultivate, have been the rock on which have been wrecked all the efforts of the counter-revolution in France. And above all, open schools everywhere, where will be enforced compulsory education and where education will also be free. Thus will you kill ignorance, that eternal and latent enemy of right and liberty. Such are some of the suggestions that I venture to make to my Russian friends.

I perceive another consequence of this Russian revolution, and I trust that this will come to pass also. Free Russia must repair the historic crime of which poor Poland has been the victim throughout so many long years. It is scarcely necessary for me to say that I do not believe possible the realization of an independent kingdom or republic of Poland. In fact, I do not think the Poland of to-day desires such a thing. The Poles know too well what a tempting morsel they would then be to their German neighbors. But the administrative autonomy of Poland, a return to the constitution of 1814, this would be an act of justice, equity, and wisdom, which new Russia owes to the world.

To Poland must be given back again the free use of her own language, the prohibitory employment of which has been a cruel and continual source of suffering to her. She must be granted all the liberties which she has been demanding for so many years, and to which she has a perfect right. In a word, instead of an enslaved Poland, always in a state of fear and trembling, must be raised up a Poland that will be a sister and friend of the new Russia. It must always be remembered that Russia and Poland are children of the same Slavonic mother. Free and united in the same federation, under the same general laws, they would supplement one another.

And now a final word on the effect which the Russian revolution will have on European politics and especially its effect on the relations between Russia and France. However paradoxical has appeared to many the alliance between autocratic Russia and republican France, I, for one, have always favored that understanding;

for, after all, it is not more extraordinary than that of Catholic France of the days of royalty with the "unspeakable Turk," in the time of Francis I, or with Protestant Germany, Holland and Sweden under the great Cardinal Richelieu. Behind Russian autocracy, I always saw the Russian people, which was rising like a tide. But to-day there is not even an apparent paradox. -Based so solidly on the common interests of the two countries, how much stronger this alliance will be when it is the bond that unites not only two policies but two free peoples. It is our French "Marseillaise" that the Russian reformers and revolutionists have been singing during the past few weeks all over that vast empire.

PARIS, November, 1905.