THE END OF THE AGE
(On the Approaching Revolution)
preceded by

THE CRISIS IN RUSSIA
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Class
THE END OF THE AGE
ERRATA

Page 39, line 12, for "legion" read "legend."

" 47, 4, for "man" read "men."

" 47, 12, for "deprivation" read "depravation."

" 69, 31, for "threads are" read "thread is."
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THE CRISIS IN RUSSIA
Two months ago I received a cable with reply paid for 100 words from a North American paper, asking me what I think concerning the meaning, object, and probable results of the Zemstvo agitations. As I had and have a very definite opinion on this subject, differing from that of the majority, I deemed it right to express it.

I answered thus:

"Object Zemstvo agitation restriction of despotism and establishment of representative government. Will the agitation leaders attain their aim or only continue stirring public? In both cases sure results of whole matter will be delay of true social amelioration. True social amelioration can be attained only by religiously moral perfectioning of all individuals. Political agitation, putting before individuals pernicious illusion of social improvement by change of forms, habitually stops the real progress, as can be observed in all constitutional countries—France, England, America."

This telegram was published—not quite correctly—in the Moscow News, and after this I began to receive—and still continue so to do—letters of rebuke for the thoughts I had expressed, and further inquiries from American, English and French papers as to what I think of the events now taking place in Russia. At first I intended to leave all unanswered, but after the St. Petersburg outrage of January 22–24, and the manifestation of those complex

* From the Times, Saturday, March 11, 1905.
feelings of indignation, fear, exasperation, and hatred which this outrage called forth in society, I have considered it my duty to express with greater detail and precision what I had expressed concisely in the hundred words to the American paper. Perhaps what I have to say will help some to free themselves from the painful feelings of condemnation, shame, irritation, hatred, and desire for strife, for vengeance, and from the consciousness of their helplessness, now experienced by the majority of Russian people, and to direct their energy to that inner spiritual activity which alone gives true welfare to individuals as well as to society, and which is now the more necessary the more complex and painful are the events taking place.

This is what I think of the present events:

I regard not only the Russian Government, but all Governments, as intricate institutions, sanctified by tradition and custom for the purpose of committing by violence and with impunity the most dreadful crimes of murder, robbery, intoxication, stultification, deprivation, exploitation of the people by the wealthy and powerful; and therefore I think that all the efforts of those who wish to improve social life should be directed to the liberation of themselves from Governments, whose evil, and above all, whose futility, is in our time becoming more and more obvious. This object is, in my opinion, attainable by one, and only by one, unique means—the inner religiously moral perfectioning of separate individuals.

The higher men are in religiously moral status the better will be the social forms into which they will combine, and the less Government coercion and corresponding evil will there be. *Vice versa*, the lower men of a given society are in respect of religion and morality, the more powerful will be the Government, and the greater the evil it accomplishes.

So that the evil which people experience from the iniquities
of Governments is always in proportion to the religious and moral state of society, whatever form this society may take.

Yet some people, seeing all the evil which is at present accomplished by the particularly cruel, coarse, stupid, and deceitful Russian Government, think that this is due to the fact that the Russian Government is not organised as they think it ought to be, on the model of other existing Governments (similar institutions for the committal with impunity of all kinds of crimes against their peoples), and for the purpose of correcting this these people use all the means at their disposal, imagining that the alteration of external forms may alter the essence.

Such activity I regard as inexpedient, unreasonable, not right—i.e., that people assert rights they have not got—and pernicious.

I regard such activity as inexpedient because strife with violence, and in general by external means (and not solely by spiritual power), on the part of an insignificant handful of men, against a powerful Government defending its life, and for this purpose holding control of millions of armed disciplined men and of milliards in money, is only comical from the point of view of the possibility of success, and piteous from the point of view of the unfortunate, misled individuals who perish in this unequal strife.

I regard this activity as unreasonable because, even granting what is most improbable—i.e., that those who are now fighting against the existing Government will triumph—the position of the people cannot improve therefrom.

The present coercive government is such as it is only because the society over which the Government rules consists of morally weak people, of whom some, prompted by ambition, avarice, pride, unrestrained by their conscience, endeavour by every means to seize and conserve power, whilst
others from fear, and also from avarice, vanity, or stultification, help the former and submit.

Therefore, however these people may change places, into whatever form they may combine, from such people an equally coercive Government will be composed.

I regard this activity as not right because those who are now fighting in Russia against the Government—Liberal representatives of the Zemstvo, doctors, advocates, writers, students, and a few thousand disaffected working men, torn from the people, and calling and regarding themselves as the representatives of the people—have no right to this claim. In the name of the people, these men present to the Government a demand for freedom of the Press, freedom of conscience, freedom of assembly, for the separation of the Church from the State, for an eight-hours working day, representation, and so forth. But ask the people, the great mass, the hundred million of the peasantry, what they think about these demands, and the true people, the peasants, will be at a loss to answer, because these demands for liberty of the Press, liberty of assembly, for the separation of Church and State, even for an eight-hours working day, have no interest for the great mass of the peasantry.

They need nothing of this, they need something else—that which they have been for long expecting and desiring, of which they are incessantly thinking and talking, and about which there is not one single word in all the Liberal petitions and speeches, and which is only incidentally alluded to in the revolutionary socialistic programmes—they expect and desire one thing, the liberation of the land from the law of property, common ownership of the land. When they are no longer deprived of the land their children will not go to the factories, or if they do they will themselves settle their hours and wages.

It is said, grant liberty, and the people will express their
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demands. This is not true. In England, France, and America there exists complete freedom of the Press, but the liberation of the land is not mentioned in Parliaments, and is hardly mentioned in the Press, and the question about the common right of the whole nation to the land remains completely in the background.

Therefore, the Liberal and revolutionary reformers who compose programmes of the demands of the people have no right to regard themselves as the representatives of the people; they represent only themselves.

Thus is this activity, in my opinion, inexpedient, unreasonable, and unright. It is also pernicious owing to the circumstance that it distracts people from that only activity—of the moral perfectioning of separate individuals—by means of which, and only so, can be attained the objects towards which those who are fighting with the Government are striving.

It will be said, "The one does not interfere with the other." But this is not true. One cannot do two things at once—one cannot morally perfect oneself and participate in political action which draws people into intrigue, subterfuge, strife, spite, extending to murder. Political action not only fails to contribute to the liberation of men from the violence of Governments, but, on the contrary, renders people more and more incapable of that only activity which can liberate them. As long as men are incapable of withstanding the snares of fear, stultification, greed, ambition, and vanity, which enslave some and deprave others, they will always combine into a society of those who use violence and deceive and those who suffer violence and are deceived.

That this should not be the case every man should exert a moral effort upon himself. Men recognise this in the depths of their souls, but they wish in some way, without effort, to attain that which is attainable only by effort.

To elucidate by one's efforts one's relation to the world and
to maintain it, to establish one’s relation to men on the basis of the eternal law of doing unto another as one wishes should be done to oneself, to overcome in ourselves those evil passions which subjugate us to the power of others, not to be any one’s master nor any one’s slave, not to dissemble, not to lie, not to swerve either from fear or for advantage from the demands of the higher law of one’s conscience—all this requires effort; whereas to imagine that the establishment of certain forms will in some mystical way bring all men, including oneself, to all justice and virtue, and for the attainment of this to repeat without any effort of the mind that which all members of a certain party say, to fidget, argue, lie, dissemble, abuse each other, and fight—all this takes place of itself and requires no effort. People are so desirous that it should be so that they assure themselves that so it is. Thus there appears a theory according to which it is proved that people can, without effort, attain the fruits of effort, a theory exactly similar to that according to which prayer for one’s perfection, or faith in the redemption of sins by the Blood of Christ, or in grace transmitted by the sacraments, may replace personal effort. On this same psychological illusion is founded that astounding theory about the improvement of social life through the alteration of external forms which has produced and is producing such dreadful calamities and which arrests more than anything else the true progress of mankind.

Men recognise that in their lives something is wrong, and that something needs improving. Man is able to improve only that one thing which is in his power—himself. But in order to improve oneself one must first of all recognise one’s own deficiencies, and this one does not desire to do. Consequently all our attention is directed, not to that which is always in our power—ourselves—but to those external conditions which are not in our power, and the alteration of
which can improve the condition of men as little as the
shaking up of wine and the pouring it into another vessel
can alter its quality. Thus there follows, first, the idle, and,
secondly, the pernicious, vain (we correct other people) and
evil (one may kill those who hinder the general welfare),
depraving activity.

"We will reconstruct the social forms, and society will
prosper." It would be well were human welfare so easily
attainable! Unfortunately, or, rather, fortunately—for if
some people could arrange the lives of others these others
would be the unhappiest of men—this is not so; human life
changes not from the alteration of external forms, but only
from the internal work of each man upon himself. Whereas
all effort to influence external forms or other people, whilst
failing to alter the position of others, only depraves and be-
littles the life of him who—like all political agitators, Kings,
Ministers, Presidents, Members of Parliament, all kinds of
revolutionists, Liberals—surrenders himself to this pernicious
error.

Light-minded people, judging superficially, especially those
who have been upset by the fratricidal butchery which has
lately taken place in St. Petersburg, and by all the events
accompanying this outrage, think that the chief cause of these
events lies in the despotism of the Russian Government, and
that if the autocratic, monarchical form of the Russian
Government were replaced by a Constitutional or Republican
one, then such events could not be repeated.

But the chief calamity (if one considers its full meaning)
from which the Russian people are now suffering, is not the
St. Petersburg events, but the reckless, disgraceful, and cruel
war which has been instigated by a score of immoral indi-
viduals. This war has already destroyed and mutilated hun-
dreds of thousands of Russians, and threatens to destroy and
mutilate as many more. It has ruined and is ruining not
only men of our time, but, moreover, it imposes in the form of debts an enormous tax upon the labour of future generations, and destroys the souls of men, depraving them. That which took place at St. Petersburg on January 9–22 is nothing in comparison with what is taking place there. There, at the war, are killed and mutilated a number a hundred times greater than that which perished on January 9–22 at St. Petersburg. And the destruction of these men there not only fails to revolt society as does the slaughter in St. Petersburg, but the greater portion of society looks with indifference, and a part even with approbation, upon the fact that more and more thousands of men are being driven there for the same senseless and purposeless destruction.

This calamity is dreadful. Therefore if one does speak of the calamities of the Russian people the principal one is the war, whereas the St. Petersburg events are only an incidental occurrence accompanying the great calamity, and if one is to seek for the means of liberation from calamities, one should find such as would remove both. But the alteration of the despotic form of government into a Constitutional or Republican form will not deliver Russia from either of these calamities. All constitutional States, equally with the Russian, are incessantly and senselessly arming themselves, and, as with the Russian, when it suggests itself to a few individuals in power, these States send their nations to commit fratricide. The Abyssinian, Boer, Spanish, Cuban, Philippine, Chinese, Tibetan, and various African wars—all these are wars conducted by Constitutional and Republican Governments, and, just in the same way, these Governments, when they find it necessary, crush with armed force any risings and manifestations of the will of the people, which they regard as transgressions of the law—i.e., of that which these Governments at a given moment regard as the law.

When in a State, whatever may be its Constitution, there
exists an organised coercive power, which by such or other methods can be seized by a few individuals, there always does and always will take place, in some form or other, events similar to those now taking place in Russia—both war and the suppression of revolt.

So that the significance of the events which have taken place in St. Petersburg does not at all consist, as superficial people think, in that these events have shown us the exceptional harmfulness of the Russian despotic Government, and that, therefore, one should endeavour to replace it by a constitutional one. The significance of these events is much more important; it consists in this—that through the action of the particularly stupid and coarse Russian Government, more clearly than by the action of other more decent Governments, we can see the harm and futility, not of this or that, but of every Government—i.e., of a group of people who have the possibility of enforcing the majority of the people to submit to their will.

In England, the United States, France, and Germany the pernicious character of Governments is so masked that those belonging to these nations point to the events in Russia and naively imagine that what is done in Russia is done only in Russia, but that they enjoy complete freedom and need no improvement in their position—i.e., they are in the most hopeless state of slavery, the slavery of slaves who do not understand that they are slaves, and pride themselves on their position as slaves.

In this respect our position as Russians is at once more painful (in that the violence practised in our country is coarser) and better (in that it is easier for us to understand the state of things).

The relations, the position, and the frame of mind of the Russian people and the European nations, and especially the Americans, are exactly the same as the relations, position, and frame of mind attributed to the two men who entered
the Temple, as related in the Gospel of Luke xviii. 10, 11, 13 (the Pharisee and the Publican).

The fact is that every coercive Government is in its essence a great and unnecessary evil, and that, therefore, the aim both of us Russians and of all men enslaved by Governments should not be to replace one form of Government by another, but to free ourselves from every Government—to abolish it.

Therefore my opinion regarding the events now taking place in Russia is this: The Russian Government, like every Government, is a dreadful, inhuman, and powerful robber, the pernicious activity of which incessantly has been and is now manifesting itself equally with the pernicious activity of all existing Governments—American, French, Japanese, or British. Therefore all rational men should endeavour with all their power to free themselves from all Governments, and the Russians from the Russian.

That one may free oneself from Governments it is not necessary to struggle against them by external means (ludicrously insignificant in comparison with the means at the disposal of the Governments), it is only necessary to abstain from participating in them, from supporting them. Then they will be abolished.

In order not to participate in Governments and not to support them it is necessary to be free from those weaknesses owing to which people are caught in the nets of Governments and become their slaves or participators. And free from those weaknesses which make people slaves of or participators in Governments can only be the man who has established his relation to the All, to God, and who lives according to the one supreme law flowing from this relation—i.e., a religiously moral man.

Therefore, the more clearly men see and feel the evil of Governments—as at present we Russians feel especially clearly and painfully the evil of the senseless, cruel, and deceitful
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Russian Government, which has already destroyed hundreds of thousands of men, which is destroying and depraving millions of men, and is now beginning to incite Russians to the murder of each other—the more strenuously should we endeavour to establish in ourselves a clear and firm religious consciousness, and the more undeviatingly should we fulfil the law of God emanating from this consciousness, which does not demand of us the correction of the existing Government, nor the establishment of such a social order as according to our limited views must ensure the general welfare, but demands of us only one thing, moral self-perfection—i.e., the liberation of oneself from all those weaknesses and vices which make one the slave of Governments and the participator in their crimes.

I had finished these remarks, and was in doubt whether or not to publish them, when I received a striking unsigned letter. This is it:

"For many days I have been unable to collect myself.
"When any one begins to speak about the working men I begin to hate him and feel physically sick.
"There have been heaps of corpses and women and children covered with blood, who were carried off in cabs.
"But is it this which is terrible? Terrible are the soldiers with their every-day, unthinking, uncomprehending, kind faces, whilst they are jumping about in the frost and awaiting orders to fire. Terrible are the public, also with every-day, inquisitive faces. Even the kindest people go in order to see for themselves or to ascertain from others about something "dreadful"—bloody, mutilated corpses, and so forth . . . as if there could be anything more terrible than these soldiers who are the same as usual, and these good people who desire one thing—that their nerves should shudder at something dreadful.
"I cannot define what is most terrible in this. I think it is that they do not understand, and that they have their usual
expressions, although in the course of an hour there will be people killed and blood everywhere on the pavement.

"I think the most terrible thing is to realise that between men there is no bond. This, I think, is the most terrible. From the same village, only some in grey cloaks and others in black overcoats, and one cannot understand why the grey ones joke about the frost and peacefully glance at the black ones passing by, when they not only know that each has got cartridges for ten shots, but also know that in an hour or two all these cartridges will have been spent, and the black ones look at them just as if this should be so. About this disuniting element one reads in books, one talks, but one does not feel how terrible it is, till when all this surrounds one as during these days, everything else for a time ceases to be, and there is only this—grey cloaks, black overcoats and elegant furs, and they are all occupied with the same thing, although in different ways. This astonishes no one, none of them know why some shoot, others fall, and others look on. At other times there exists equally the same dreadful and incomprehensible life, in which it is in the order of things to kill by command without any enmity or hatred, but in these days all the rest has temporarily stopped, and there remains only this terror. Such a feeling as if you were separated from every man by a precipice, and you cannot cross it although you are quite near to the other side. This feeling is insupportable.

"I have five times begun to write to you and have given it up, and in the end I still write, perhaps merely because it is insupportable to be silent day after day. Every one speaks of help for the working men and appears to sympathise, but it is not the position of the working men that is dreadful, and help is needed not for them, but for those who shot and trampled down men, and for those who on the following day walked about and examined the broken windows and lamps,
and the traces of bullets, and did not see frozen blood on the pavement, and scraped it with their feet."

Yes, the essence of the matter is that there is something which disunites people, and that there is no connection between them. The whole matter consists in that one should remove that which disunites people and substitute that which unites them. People are disunited by every external coercive form of government, and they are united by one thing—by their relation to God and aspiration towards Him, because God is one for all, and the relation of all men to God is one and the same.

Whether men wish to recognise this or not, before all of us there stands one and the same ideal of perfecting oneself, and nothing but the striving towards this destroys disunion and brings us nearer to each other.

Yasnaya Polyana,
February 2-15.
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(ON THE APPROACHING REVOLUTION)

"Was there ever so much to do? Our age is a revolutionary one in the best sense of the word,—not of physical, but moral revolution. Higher ideas of the social state, and of human perfection, are at work."—W. E. Channing.

"Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free."—John viii. 32.

I

In Gospel language the age and the end of the age does not signify the end and the beginning of a century, but the end of one view of life, of one faith, of one method of social intercourse between men and the commencement of another view of life, another faith, another method of social intercourse. In the Gospel it is said that during such transitions from one age to another all kinds of calamities shall take place—treacheries, frauds, cruelties, and wars, and that owing to lawlessness love will slacken. I understand these words not as a supernatural prophecy, but as an indication that when the faith, the form of life in which men lived, is being replaced by another, when that which is outlived and old is falling off and being replaced by the new, then great disturbances, cruelties, frauds, treacheries, and every kind of lawlessness must unavoidably take place, and in consequence of this lawlessness love, the most important and necessary quality for the social life of men, must slacken. This is what is now taking place not only in Russia but in all the Christian
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world. In Russia it has only manifested itself more vividly and openly, but in all Christendom the same is going on only in a concealed or latent state. I think that at present—at this very time—the life of the Christian nations is near to the limit dividing the old epoch which is ending from the new which is beginning. I think that now at this very time that great revolution has begun which for almost 2000 years has been preparing in all Christendom; a revolution consisting in the replacing of false Christianity and the consequent power of one portion of mankind and the slavery of another,—by true Christianity and the consequent recognition of that equality and true liberty which are natural to all rational beings. The external symptoms of this I see in the strenuous struggle between classes in all nations, in the cold cruelty of the wealthy, the exasperation and despair of the poor, the insane, senseless, ever increasing armaments of all States against each other, the spread of the unrealisable teaching of socialism, dreadful in its despotism and wonderful in its superficiality; in the futility and stupidity of the idle discussions and examinations upheld as the most important mental activity called science; in the morbid depravation and emptiness of art in all its manifestations; and above all, not only the absence of any religion in the leading spheres but in the deliberate negation of all religion, and by the substitution of the legality of the oppression of the weak by the strong, and, therefore, in the complete absence of any rational guiding principles in life. Such are the general symptoms of the approaching revolution, or rather of that preparedness for revolution, which the Christian nations have attained. The temporary historical symptom, or the final push which must begin the revolution, is the Russo-Japanese War just terminated, and along with that the revolutionary movement which has now burst out, and never before existed, amongst the Russian people.
The cause of the defeat of the Russian army and fleet by the Japanese is attributed to unfortunate accidental circumstances, to the abuses of Russian statesmen,—the cause of the revolutionary movement in Russia is attributed to the bad government, to the increased activity of the revolutionists; and the result of these events appears in the eyes of Russian as well as foreign politicians to consist in the weakening of Russia, in a displacement of the centre of gravity in international relations, and in the alteration of the form of government of the Russian State. But I think that these events have a much more important significance. The rout of the Russian army and fleet, the rout of the Russian State organisation is not merely the rout of the army, the fleet, and of the Russian State, but the symptoms of the beginning of the destruction of the Russian State. The destruction of the Russian State in its turn is, in my opinion, a sign of the beginning of the destruction of the whole of the false Christian civilisation. It is the end of the old and the beginning of the new age.

That which has brought Christian nations to the position in which they now are began long ago. It began from the time when Christianity was recognised as a State religion.

A State founded upon coercion, demanding for its existence complete obedience to its laws in preference to the religious law; a State unable to exist without executions, armies, and wars; a State attributing almost divine authority to its rulers; a State extolling wealth and power. And such an institution in the persons of its rulers and subjects professes to accept the Christian religion which proclaims complete equality and freedom amongst men, recognises one law of God as higher than all other laws—a religion which not only repudiates all coercion, all retribution, executions, and wars, but also enjoins love to one's
enemies; which extols not power and wealth, but meekness and poverty—such an institution in the persons of its heathen rulers accepted this Christian religion not in its true sense, but in that distorted form according to which the Pagan organisation of life continues to be possible. Both the rulers and their counsellors in most cases completely fail to understand the essence of true Christianity, and are quite sincerely revolted against those who profess and preach Christianity in its true meaning, and with a quiet conscience they execute and banish them and forbid them to preach Christianity in its true sense. The priesthood forbids the reading of the Gospels, and arrogates to itself alone the right of explaining Holy Writ; it invents complicated sophisms justifying the impossible union of the State and Christianity, and institutes solemn rites for the hypnotisation of the people. And for ages the majority of men live regarding themselves as Christians without even suspecting a hundredth part of the meaning of true Christianity. Yet, however great was the prestige of the State, however long was the duration of its triumph, however cruelly Christianity was suppressed, it was impossible to stifle the truth once expressed which disclosed to man his soul, and constitutes the essence of Christianity. The longer such a position continued the clearer became the contradiction between the Christian teaching of meekness and love and the State—an institution of pride and coercion. The greatest dam in the world cannot retain a source of living water. The water will inevitably find a way either through the dam or by washing it away or circumventing it. It is only a question of time. So it has been with true Christianity hidden by State power. For long the State kept back the living water, but the time has now come and Christianity is destroying the dam which restrained it, and is carrying its wreckage away with it. The external symptoms of the approach of
this time at the present moment I see in the easy victory which the Japanese, almost without effort, have secured over Russia, and in those disturbances which simultaneously with this war have spread in all classes of the Russian people.

II

As always has been, and is the case, in regard to all defeats, so also now people attempt to explain the defeat of the Russians by the bad organisation of the Russian military department, by the abuses and blunders of the commanders, and so forth. But this is not the chief point. The reason of the successes of the Japanese is not so much in the bad government of Russia, nor in the bad organisation of the Russian army, as in the great positive superiority of the Japanese in the military art. Japan has conquered not because the Russians are weak, but because Japan is at the present time perhaps the most powerful State in the world, both on land and on sea; and this is so, firstly, because all these technical scientific improvements which once gave predominance in strife to Christian nations over un-Christian have been assimilated by the Japanese—owing to their practical capacities and the importance they attach to the military art—much more successfully than by the Christian nations; secondly, because the Japanese are by nature braver and more indifferent to death than the Christian nations are at present; thirdly, because the warlike patriotism utterly incompatible with Christianity which has been with so much effort inculcated by Christian Governments amongst their peoples, is yet extant in all its untouched power among the Japanese; fourthly, because servilely submitting to the despotic authority of the deified Mikado, the strength of the Japanese is more concentrated and unified than the strength of those nations who have outlived their servile
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submission. In a word, the Japanese have had and have got an enormous advantage: in that they are not Christians.

However distorted be Christianity amongst Christian nations it yet, however vaguely, lives in their consciousness, and men are Christians. At all events the best amongst them cannot devote all their mental powers to the invention and preparation of weapons of murder; cannot fail to regard martial patriotism more or less indifferently; cannot, like the Japanese, cut open their stomachs merely that they may avoid surrendering themselves as prisoners to the foe; cannot blow themselves up into the air together with the enemy as used previously to be the case. They no longer value the military virtues and military heroism as much as formerly; they respect less and less the military class; they can no longer without consciousness of insult to human dignity servilely submit to authority; and above all they, or at least the majority of them, can no longer commit murder with indifference.

In all times, even in peaceful activities inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, Christian nations could not compete with non-Christian. So it was, and continues to be, in the monetary strife with non-Christians. However badly and fallaciously Christianity may be interpreted the Christian recognises (and the more so the more he is a Christian) that wealth is not the highest good and, therefore, he cannot devote to it all his powers, as does he who has no ideals higher than wealth, or who regards wealth as a divine blessing. The same in the sphere of non-Christian science and art; in these spheres, both of positive experimental science and of art which places pleasure as its aim, the precedence has belonged, does, and always must belong to the least Christian individuals and nations. What we see in the manifestation of peaceful activity was bound to exist all the more in that activity of war which is directly repudiated by
true Christianity. It is this inevitable advantage in the military art of non-Christian over Christian nations which, given equal means of military science, has been so unmistakably demonstrated in the brilliant victory of the Japanese over the Russians.

And it is in this inevitable and necessary superiority of non-Christian nations that lies the enormous significance of the Japanese victory.

The significance of the victory of the Japanese consists in this: that this victory has shown in the most obvious way not only to vanquished Russia, but also to the whole Christian world, all the futility of the external culture of which Christian nations were so proud; it has proved that this external culture which appeared to them to be some kind of a specially important result of the age of long efforts of Christendom is something very unimportant and so insignificant that the Japanese nation, distinguished by no specially superior spiritual qualities when it needed this culture, could in a few decades assimilate all the scientific wisdom of the Christian nations, inclusive of bacteria and explosives, and could so well adapt this wisdom to practical purposes that in its adaptation to the military art, and in the military art itself—so highly valued by Christian nations—it could surpass all these nations.

For ages the Christian nations, under the pretext of self-defence, have competed in inventing the most effectual methods of destroying each other (methods immediately adopted by all their opponents), and they have made use of these methods both for the intimidation of each other and for the acquirement of every kind of advantage over uncivilised nations in Africa and Asia. And lo! amongst the non-Christian nations, there appears one warlike, adroit, and imitative which, having seen the danger threatening it together with other non-Christian nations, with extraordinary facility
and celerity assimilated all which military superiority had given Christian nations, and became stronger than them, having understood the simple truth that if you are beaten with a stout and strong club you have to take a similar or still thicker and stronger club, and with it strike the one who strikes you. The Japanese very quickly and easily assimilated this wisdom, and at the same time all this military science, and possessing besides all the advantages of religious despotism and patriotism, they have manifested military power which has proved stronger than the most powerful military State. The victory of the Japanese over the Russians has shown all the military States that military power is no longer in their hands, but has passed, or is soon bound to pass, into other un-Christian hands, since it is not difficult for other non-Christian nations in Asia and Africa, being oppressed by Christians, to follow the example of Japan, and having assimilated the military technics of which we are so proud, not only to free themselves, but to wipe off all the Christian States from the face of the earth.

Therefore, by the issue of this war, Christian Governments are in the most obvious way brought to the necessity of still further strengthening those military preparations, whose cost has already crushed their people, and while doubling their armaments still foresee that in time the Pagan nations oppressed by them will, like the Japanese, acquire the military art and throw off their yoke and avenge themselves on them no longer by words but by bitter experience. The war has confirmed not only for Russians, but also for all Christian nations, the simple truth that coercion can lead to nothing but the increase of calamities and suffering.

This victory has shown that, occupying themselves with the increase of their military power, Christian nations have been doing not only an evil and immoral work, but a work opposed to the Christian spirit which lives in them—a work in which
they, as Christian nations, must always be excelled and beaten by non-Christian nations. This victory has shown the Christian nations that all to which their Governments directed their activity has been ruinous to them, and an unnecessary exhaustion of their strength, and above all the raising up for themselves of more powerful foes amongst non-Christian nations. This war has proved in the most obvious way that the power of Christian nations can in no wise lie in military power contrary to the Christian spirit, and that if the Christian nations wish to remain Christian, their efforts should be directed not at all to military power, but to something different: to such an organisation of life which, flowing from the Christian teaching, will give to men the greatest welfare, not by means of rude violence, but by means of rational cooperation and love.

In this lies the great significance for the Christian world of the victory of the Japanese.

III

The Japanese victory has shown all Christendom the fallacy of the way along which Christian nations were, and are, advancing. To the Russian people, moreover, this war with its dreadful, senseless suffering and squandering of labour and life has shown—besides the contradiction common to all Christian nations between Christianity and coercive State organisation—the dreadful danger in which they are continually placed by obeying their Governments.

Without any necessity, but for some or other dark personal purposes through some or other insignificant individuals finding themselves at the head of the State, the Russian Government has thrown the nation into an insensate war, which in any case could have but evil consequences for the Russian people. Hundreds of thousands of lives are lost,
the products of the people’s labour are lost, the glory of Russia is lost, for those who were proud of it. Worst of all those responsible for these atrocities, far from feeling their guilt, reproach others for all that has happened, and still remaining in their old position, may to-morrow cast the Russian people into yet worse calamities.

Every revolution begins when Society has outgrown the view of life on which the existing forms of social life were founded, when the contradiction between life such as it is and life such as it should be and might be, becomes so evident to the majority that they feel the impossibility of continuing existence under former conditions. The revolution begins in that nation wherein the greater number of men are conscious of this contradiction. As to the revolutionary methods these depend on the object towards which the revolution tends.

In 1793 the consciousness of the contradiction between the idea of the equality of men and the despotic power of kings, priesthood, nobility, and bureaucracy was felt not only by the nations suffering from oppression, but also by the best men of the ruling classes in all Christendom. But nowhere were these classes so sensitive to this inequality, and nowhere was the consciousness of the people so little stultified by servitude as in France, and therefore the revolution of 1793 began precisely in France. And the most adequate means of realising equality naturally seemed to be to forcibly take back that which the authorities possessed, and therefore the participators of that revolution realised their aims by violence.

At the present date, 1905, the contradiction between the consciousness of the possibility and the lawfulness of free life on the one hand, and on the other of the unreason and disaster of obedience to coercive authority, arbitrarily depriving people of the product of their labour for armaments which can have no end, of authority capable at any
moment of compelling nations to participate in insensate and cruel manslaughter—this contradiction is felt not only by the masses suffering from this coercion, but also by the best men of the ruling classes. Nowhere is this contradiction felt so strongly as amongst the Russian people. This contradiction is felt especially strongly in the Russian nation, owing both to the insane and humiliating war into which they have been drawn by the Government and to the agricultural life yet retained by the Russian people, but above all owing to the particularly vital Christian consciousness of this people. This is why I think that the revolution of 1905 having for its object the liberation of men from coercion must begin and has already begun in Russia. The means of realising the objects of a revolution for the freedom of men obviously must be other than that violence by which men have hitherto attempted to realise equality. The men of the great French revolution wishing to attain equality might make the mistake of thinking that equality is attainable by coercion, although it would seem evident that equality cannot be secured by coercion, as coercion is in itself the keenest manifestation of inequality. But the freedom constituting the chief aim of the present revolution cannot in any case be attained by violence. Yet at the present the people who are producing the revolution in Russia think that the Russian revolution, having repeated all that has taken place in European revolutions with solemn funeral procession, destruction of prisons, brilliant speeches, "Allez dire à votre maître," constitutional assemblies and so forth, they having overthrown the existing Government, and having instituted constitutional monarchy or even a socialistic republic they will attain the object at which the revolution aimed.

But history does not repeat itself. Violent revolution has outlived its time. All it can give men it has already given them, but at the same time it has shown what it cannot
attain. The revolution now beginning in Russia amongst a population of 100,000,000 standing in quite a peculiar mental attitude, and taking place not in 1793 but in 1905, cannot possibly have the same objects, and be realised by the same methods, as the revolutions of sixty, eighty, a hundred years ago amongst German and Latin nations quite differently constituted.

The Russian agricultural nation of 100,000,000 which, as a matter of fact, means the whole nation, required not a Duma and not the grant of a certain kind of rights—the enumeration of which more than anything clearly demonstrates the absence of simple true freedom—not the substitution of one form of coercive power for another, but a true and complete freedom from all coercive power.

The signification of the revolution beginning in Russia and hanging over all the world does not consist in the establishment of income tax or other taxes, nor in the separation of Church from State, nor in the acquirement by the State of social institutions, nor in the organisation of elections and the imaginary participation of the people in the ruling power, nor in the founding of the most democratic, or even socialistic republic with universal suffrage—it consists only in actual freedom.

Freedom not imaginary, but actual, is attained not by barricades nor murders, not by any kind of new institution coercively introduced, but only by the cessation of obedience to any human authority whatever.

IV

The fundamental cause of the impending revolution, as of all past and future revolutions, is a religious one. By the word religion is usually understood either certain mystical definitions of the unseen world, certain rites, a cult
supporting, consoling, and inspiring men in life, or else the explanation of the origin of the universe, or moral rules of life sanctioned by divine command; but true religion is before all else the disclosure of that supreme law common to all men which at any given time affords them the greatest welfare.

Amongst various nations, even before the Christian teaching, there was expressed and proclaimed a supreme religious law, common to all mankind and consisting in this, that men for their welfare should live not each for himself, but each for the good of all, for the mutual service (Buddha, Isaiah, Confucius, Laotze, the Stoics). The law was proclaimed, and those who knew it could not but see all its truth and beneficence. But the customary life founded not upon mutual service but on violence had penetrated to such an extent into all institutions and habits that whilst people recognised the beneficence of the law of mutual service they continued to live according to the laws of violence, justifying this by the necessity of threats and retribution. It seemed to them that without threats, and without returning evil for evil, social life was impossible. Certain people for the establishment of order and the correction of men took upon themselves the duty of applying laws, i.e., violence, and while they commanded, others obeyed. But the rulers were inevitably depraved by the power they used. Then being themselves depraved instead of correcting men they transmitted to them their own depravity. Meanwhile those who obeyed were depraved by participation in the coercive actions of the rulers by the imitation of the rulers and by servile submission. One thousand nine hundred years ago Christianity appeared. Christianity confirmed with new force the law of mutual service and further explained the reasons why this law had not been fulfilled.

With extraordinary clearness the Christian teaching showed
that this reason was the false idea about the lawfulness and the necessity of coercion for retribution. Having demonstrated from various sides the unlawfulness and harmfulness of retribution it showed that the greatest calamities of men proceeded from acts of violence which under the excuse of retribution are committed by some men upon others. The Christian teaching demonstrated not only the injustice but the harmfulness of vengeance, it showed that the only means of deliverance from violence is the submissive and peaceful endurance of it.

"Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matt. v. 38-42).

This teaching pointed out that if the judge as to the cases when force is admissible is the man who uses force then there will be no limit to violence, and therefore that there may not be violence it is necessary that no one under any pretext whatever should use violence, especially under the most usual pretext of retribution.

This teaching confirmed the simple self-evident truth that evil cannot be abolished by evil, and that the only means of diminishing the evil of violence is abstinence from violence.

This teaching was clearly expressed and established. But the false idea of the justice of retribution as a necessary condition of human life had become so deeply rooted, and so many people did not know the Christian teaching, or knew it only in a distorted form, that those who had accepted the law of Jesus yet continued to live according to the law of
violence. The leaders of the Christian world thought that it was possible to accept the teaching of mutual service without that teaching of non-resistance which constitutes the key-stone of the whole teaching of the mutual life of mankind. To accept the law of mutual service without accepting the commandment of non-resistance was the same as to build an arch without securing it where it meets.

Christian people, imagining that without having accepted the commandment of non-resistance, they could arrange a life better than the pagan, continued to do not only what non-Christian nations did, but things much worse, and increasingly departed from the Christian life. The essence of Christianity, owing to its incomplete acceptance, became more and more concealed, and Christian nations at last attained the position in which they now are, namely, the transformation of Christian nations into inimical camps giving all their powers to arming themselves against each other, and ready at any moment to devour each other; and they have reached the position that they not only arm themselves against each other, but have also armed and are arming against themselves the non-Christian nations who hate them and have risen against them; and above all they have reached the complete repudiation not only of Christianity but of any higher law in life whatever.

In the distortion of the higher law of mutual service and of the commandment of non-resistance given by the Christian teaching which renders this law possible—in this lies the fundamental religious cause of the impending revolution.

V

Not only did the Christian teaching show that vengeance, and the return of evil for evil, is disadvantageous and unreasonable since it increases the evil—it showed, moreover, that non-resistance to evil by violence, the bearing of every
kind of violence without violently striving against it, is the only means for the attainment of that true freedom which is natural to man. The teaching showed that the moment a man enters into strife against violence he thereby deprives himself of freedom, for by admitting violence on his part towards others, he thereby admits also violence against himself, and therefore can be conquered by the violence against which he has striven; and even if he remain the victor yet entering into the sphere of external strife he is always in danger of being in the future conquered by a yet stronger violence.

This teaching showed that only that man can be free who sets as his aim the fulfilment of the higher law, common to all mankind, and for which there can be no obstacle. The teaching showed that the one means both, for the diminution of violence in the world and for the attainment of complete freedom is the submissive peaceful endurance of all violence whatsoever.

The Christian teaching proclaimed the law of the complete freedom of man, but under the necessary condition of submitting to this higher law in all its significance.

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."—Matt. x. 28.

Those who accepted this teaching in all its significance, obeying the higher law, were free from any other obedience. They submissively bore violence from men, but they did not obey men in things incompatible with the higher law.

Thus acted the first Christians when they were a small number amongst pagan nations.

They refused to obey Governments in matters incompatible with the higher law which they called the law of God; they were persecuted and executed for this, but they did not obey man and were free. But when whole nations living in established state organisations supported by violence were by
means of the external rite of baptism recognised as Christians, the relation of the Christians to the authorities completely altered. Governments by the help of a servile priesthood inculcated into its subjects that violence and murder might be perpetrated when they were resorted to for just retribution and in defence of the oppressed and weak. Besides this, by forcing men to swear allegiance to the authorities, i.e., to vow before God that they would unreservedly fulfil all that might be commanded by the authorities, the Governments reduced their subjects to such a state that people regarding themselves as Christians ceased to look upon violence and murder as forbidden. Committing violence and murder themselves they naturally submitted to the same when perpetrated upon them. And it came to this, that Christian men, instead of the freedom proclaimed by Jesus—instead of as formerly regarding as a duty the endurance of every violence while obeying no one except God—began to understand their duties in a directly opposite sense. They began to regard as humiliating peaceful endurance—honour and to regard as their most sacred duty obedience to the authority of governments, and became slaves. Educated in these traditions they were not only unashamed of their slavery, but were proud of the power of their Governments as slaves are always proud of the greatness of their masters.

From this distortion of Christianity there has latterly developed yet a new deceit which secured the Christian nations in their oppression. This deceit consists in inculcating in a given nation—by means of a complicated organisation of suffrage and representation in governmental institutions—that by electing the one who will then with others elect this or that score of candidates unknown to him, or by directly electing their representatives, they become participators in governmental power, and that therefore in obeying the Government they are but obeying themselves and so are
presumably free. This deceit, it would seem, ought to have been obvious both theoretically and practically, as even with the most democratic organisation and universal suffrage the people cannot express their will; they cannot express it, first, because there does not and cannot exist such a universal will of a nation of many millions; and secondly, because even if such a universal will of the whole people did exist a majority of votes could never express it, and they do not themselves know nor can know what they require. And this deceit, not to mention the circumstance that the elected representatives who participate in the government, institute laws and rule the people, not with a view to their welfare, but in most cases are guided only by the object of retaining their position and power amidst the strife of parties. Not to mention the corruption of the nation by every kind of fraud, stultification, and bribery produced by the deceit, the deceit is especially pernicious in the voluntary slavery to which it reduces men who fall under its influence. Those fallen under the influence of this deceit imagine that in obeying the Government they obey themselves, and never make up their minds to disobey the ordinances of human authority, even though the latter be contrary not only to their personal tastes, interests, and desires, but also to the higher law and to their consciences. Yet the actions and measures of the Governments of such pseudo self-governing nations determined by the complex strife of parties and intrigues, by the strife of ambition and greed, depend as little upon the will and desire of the whole nation as the action and measures of the most despotic Governments. These men are as prisoners imagining that they are free if they have the right to vote in the election of the gaolers for the internal administrative measures in the prison.

A subject of the most despotic—Dahomeyan—Government can be completely free although he may be subjected
to cruel violence on the part of the authorities he has not established; but a member of a constitutional State is always a slave because, imagining that he has participated or may participate in his Government, he recognises the legality of all violence perpetrated upon him; he obeys all the orders of the authorities, so that people in constitutional States imagining that they are free, owing to this very imagination lose the idea itself of what true freedom is. Such people imagining that they are freeing themselves, more and more surrender themselves into increasing slavery to their Governments. Nothing demonstrates so clearly the increasing enslavement of nations as the growth, spread, and success of socialistic theories: that is, the tendency towards greater and greater slavery.

Although the Russian people in this respect are placed in more advantageous conditions since hitherto they never have participated in power, and so have not yet been depraved by such participation, still the Russian people like other nations have been subjected to all the deceits of the glorification of authority, of oaths, of the prestige and greatness of the State, and of the fatherland, and they also regard it as their duty to obey the Government in everything. Latterly, too, short-sighted men of Russian society have endeavoured to reduce the Russian people also to that constitutional slavery in which the other European nations find themselves.

So that the chief consequence of the non-acceptance of the law of non-resistance, besides the calamity of universal armament and of war, has been the greater and greater loss of freedom for those who profess the distorted law of Jesus.

VI

The distortion of the teaching of Jesus with the non-acceptance of the commandment of non-resistance has brought
Christian nations to mutual enmity and to consequent calamities as well as to continually increasing slavery, and people of the Christian world are beginning to feel the weight of this slavery. This is the fundamental general cause of the approaching revolution. The particular and temporary causes, owing to which this revolution is beginning at this very time, consist first in the insanity of growing militarism of the peoples of the Christian world as it stands revealed in the Japanese war, and secondly, in the increasing state of calamity and dissatisfaction of the working people proceeding from their being deprived of their legitimate and natural right to use the land.

These two causes are common to all Christian nations, but owing to special historical conditions of the life of the Russian nation they are felt by it more acutely than by other nations and at this particular time. This misery of its position flowing from obedience to the Government has become especially evident to the Russian people, not, I think, only through the dreadful insane war into which their Government has drawn them, but also because the attitude of Russian people to the ruling powers has been always different from that of European nations. The Russian people have never struggled with their rulers, and, above all, having never participated in power, have not been depraved by such participation.

The Russian people have always regarded power, not as a good thing towards which it is natural for every man to strive, as the majority of European nations regard power (and as unfortunately some corrupt people of the Russian nation are already regarding it), but it has always looked upon power as an evil which man should avoid. The majority of the Russian nation have therefore always preferred to bear all kinds of physical misery proceeding from violence rather than accept the spiritual responsibility of participating
in it. So that the Russian people in its majority has submitted to power, and is submitting to it, not because they cannot overthrow it as the revolutionists wish to teach them to do, and not because they cannot attain such participation as the Liberals wish to teach them to attain, but because in their majority the Russian people have always preferred, and do prefer, submission to violence rather than strife with it or participation in it. This is how a despotic government was established and has maintained itself in Russia, that is, the simple violence of the strong and pugnacious over the weak or those not desirous of struggling.

The legion of the call of the Variags* obviously composed after the Variags had already conquered the Slavonians fully expresses the relation of the Russian people towards power even before Christianity. "We ourselves do not wish to participate in the sins of power. If you do not regard it as a sin, come and govern us." By this same attitude towards power can be explained the submission of the Russian people to the most cruel and insane autocrats often even not Russian, from Ivan IV. down to Nicholas II.

Thus in older times did the Russian people regard power and their relation towards it. Even now the majority look upon it in the same way. It is true that, as in other States, the same deceits, by which Christian people have been unconsciously compelled not only to submit but to obey in deeds contrary to Christianity, have been perpetrated also in relation to the Russian people. But these deceits reached only the upper, corrupt layers of the people, whereas the majority have retained that view of power by which man regards it as better to bear suffering from violence than to participate in the violence.

* Leaders of Scandinavian origin which are said to have been invited in 862 by the Slavonic tribes of Russia to rule over them.—(Trans.)
The cause of such an attitude of the Russian people towards power consists, I think, in this: that in the Russian nation more than in other nations has been conserved true Christianity as a teaching of brotherhood, equality, humility, and love, the Christianity which sees a radical difference between submitting to violence and obeying it. A true Christian may submit, he even cannot but submit without strife to every violence, but he cannot obey it, i.e., recognise its lawfulness. However much Governments in general, and the Russian Government in particular, have striven, and are striving, to replace this truly Christian attitude towards power by the orthodox "Christian" teaching, the Christian spirit and the distinction between "submission" to power and "obedience" continues to live in the great majority of the Russian working people.

The incompatibility between governmental coercion and Christianity has never ceased to be felt by the majority of the Russian people, and this contradiction has been especially keenly and distinctly felt by the more sensitive Christians, who did not embrace the distorted teaching of orthodoxy, by the so-called sectarians. These Christians of various denominations did not recognise the lawfulness of governmental power. From fear the majority submitted to Government demands which they regarded as unlawful, whilst some of the minority circumvented the demands by various devices, or else fled from them. When with the introduction of universal conscription State coercion threw, as it were, a challenge to all true Christians, demanding from every man readiness to kill, many orthodox Russian people began to understand the incompatibility of Christianity with power. At the same time non-orthodox Christians of the most various denominations began categorically to refuse to become soldiers. And although there were not many such refusals (hardly one in a thousand conscripts), still their
significance was great, since these refusals—which called forth cruel executions and persecutions on the part of the Government—opened the eyes no longer of sectarians only but of all Russian people to the un-Christian demands of the Government, and an enormous majority of people who previously had not thought about the contradiction between the divine and human law saw this contradiction, and amongst the majority of the Russian nation there began the invisible, persistent, incalculable work of the liberation of consciousness. Such was the position of the Russian nation when the utterly unjustifiable Japanese war broke out. It is this war—coupled with the development of reading and writing, with the universal dissatisfaction, and above all with the necessity of calling out for the first time hundreds of thousands of middle-aged men dispersed over all Russia, and now torn from their families and rational labour (the reservists), for a glaringly insane and cruel purpose—this war served as the final impetus which transformed the invisible and persistent inner development into a clear consciousness of the unlawfulness and sinfulness of obedience to a Government requiring such actions.

This consciousness has expressed itself, and is now expressing itself, in the most varied and momentous events: in the conscious refusals of reservists to enter the army; in desertions from the army; in equally conscious refusals to shoot and fight, especially in refusals to shoot at one’s comrades during suppression of revolts; and above all, in the continually increasing number of cases of refusal to take the oath and enter the military service. Such are the conscious manifestations of the unlawfulness and needlessness of obeying the Government; whilst the unconscious manifestations of the same are to be found in all that which is now being accomplished both by the revolutionists and by their enemies: such are the sailors’ revolts in the Black Sea and in Cronstadt,
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the military revolts in Kief and other places, wreckings, self-constituted violence, peasants’ riots. The prestige of the authorities is destroyed, and before the Russian people of our time—for an enormous majority of them—there has arisen in all its great significance the question as to whether one should—whether it is one’s duty to—obey the Government.

In this question arisen amongst the Russian nation consists one of the causes of the great revulsion which is approaching and perhaps has already begun.

VII

The second external cause of the approaching revolution consists in this: that the working people are deprived of their natural and lawful right to the use of the land, and that this deprivation has brought the nations of the Christian world to the continually increasing misery of the working people and their increasing exasperation against those who exploit their labour. This cause is especially perceptible in Russia because it is only in Russia that the majority of the working people still live an agricultural life, and the Russian people, owing to the increase of the population and the insufficiency of land, are only now placed under the necessity either of abandoning their accustomed agricultural life in which alone they see the possibility of the realisation of the Christian commonwealth, or else of ceasing to obey the Government which keeps in the hands of the landowners the land taken from the people.

It is generally thought that the cruellest slavery is personal slavery: when one man can do anything he likes with another—torture, mutilate, kill him—while that which we do not even call slavery—the deprivation of man of the possibility of using the land—is thought merely a certain somewhat unjust economical institution.
But this view is quite false.

That which Joseph did with the Egyptians, which all conquerors have done with the vanquished nations, which is now being done by men to men in the deprivation of the possibility of using the land—is the most dreadful and cruel slavery. The personal slave is the slave of one, but the man deprived of the right to use the land is the slave of all. Even this is not the principal calamity of the land slave. However cruel might have been the owner of the personal slave, in view of his own advantage and that he might not lose the slave, he did not force him to work incessantly, did not torture him, did not starve him, whereas the man deprived of the land is always obliged to work beyond his strength, to suffer, to starve, and can never for one minute be completely provided for—i.e., set free from the arbitrary will of men, and principally from the arbitrariness of evil and avaricious men. Yet even this is not the chief calamity of the land slave. His chief calamity is that he cannot live a moral life. Not living by labour on the land, not struggling with nature, he is inevitably obliged to struggle with men to endeavour to take from them by force or cunning that which they have acquired from the land and from the labour of others.

Land slavery is not, as is thought even by those who recognise deprivation of land as slavery, one of the remaining forms of slavery, but is the radical and fundamental slavery, from which has grown and grows every form of slavery, and which is incomparably more painful than personal slavery. Personal slavery is merely one of the particular cases of exploitation by land slavery, so that the emancipation of men from personal slavery without their emancipation from land slavery is not emancipation, but merely the cessation of one form of exploitation by slavery, and in many cases, as it was in Russia (when the serfs were emancipated with but a small portion of land), is a deceit
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which can only for a time conceal from the slaves their true position.

The Russian people always understood this, during serfdom, saying, "We are yours, but the land is ours," and during the emancipation they unceasingly and unanimously demanded and expected the emancipation of the land. During the emancipation from serfdom the people were cajoled by a little land being given them, and for a time they subsided, but with increase of population the question of the insufficiency of land again arose before them, and that in the clearest and most definite form.

While the people were serfs they used the land as much as was necessary for their existence. The Government and the landowners had the care of distributing the increasing population on the land, and so the people did not see the essential injustice of the seizure of the land by private individuals. But as soon as serfdom was abolished the care of the Government and landowners concerning the people's economic agricultural—I shall not say welfare but—possibility of existence was also abolished. The quantity of land which the peasants might possess was once for all determined without the possibility of increasing it whilst the population increased, and the people saw more and more clearly that it was impossible to live thus. They waited for the Government to rescind the laws which deprived them of the land. They waited ten, twenty, thirty, forty years, but the land has been seized ever more and more by private landowners, and before the people was placed the choice: of starving, ceasing to multiply, or altogether abandoning rural life and forming generations of navvies, weavers, or locksmiths. Half a century passed, their position kept becoming worse and worse, and reached such a state that the order of life which they regarded as necessary for Christian life began to fall to pieces, and the Government
not only did not give them land, but gave it to its minions, and, securing it for the latter, intimated to the people that they need never hope for the emancipation of the land, while on the European model it organised for them an industrial life, with labour inspection, which the people regarded as bad and sinful.

The deprivation of the people of their legitimate right to the land is the principal cause of the calamitous position of the Russian people. The same cause lies at the basis of the misery and discontent with their position of the working people of Europe and America, the difference is only this: that the seizure of the land from the European peoples by recognition of the lawfulness of landed property has taken place long ago; so many new relations have covered up this injustice that the men of Europe and America do not see the true cause of their position, but search for it everywhere: in the absence of markets, in tariffs, in unfair taxation, in capitalism, in everything save in the deprivation of the people of their right to the land.

To the Russian people the radical injustice—not having yet been completely perpetrated upon them—is clearly seen.

The Russian people living on the land clearly see what people wish to do with them, and they cannot reconcile themselves with it.

Senseless and ruinous armaments and wars, and the deprivation of the people of their common right to the land—these, in my opinion, are the causes of the revolution impending over the whole of Christendom. And this revolution is beginning in no other place but in Russia, because nowhere except amongst the Russia people has the Christian view of life been preserved in such strength and purity, and nowhere save in Russia has been so far conserved the agricultural condition of the majority of the people.
The Russian people before other nations of the Christian world, owing to their special qualities and conditions of life, have been brought to the consciousness of the disasters proceeding from obedience to coercive State power. And in this consciousness and in aspiration to free themselves from the coercion of their rulers lies, in my opinion, the essence of the revolution which is approaching, not only for the Russian people, but also for all nations of the Christian world. But to people living in States founded upon violence, it seems that the abolition of the power of governments will necessarily involve the greatest of disasters.

But the assertion that the degree of safety and welfare which men enjoy is ensured by State power is altogether an arbitrary one. We know those disasters and such welfare, if it exists among people living under State organisation, but we do not know the position in which people would be were they to get clear of the State. But if one takes into consideration the life of those small communities which happen to have lived and are living outside great States, such communities, whilst profiting by all the advantages of social organisation, yet being free from State coercion, do not experience one-hundredth part of the disasters which are undergone by people who obey State authority.

The people of the ruling classes for whom the State organisation is advantageous speak most about the impossibility of living without State organisation. But ask those who bear only the weight of the State power, ask the agricultural labourers, the 100,000,000 peasants in Russia, and you will find they feel only its burden, and, far from regarding themselves as safer for State power, they could altogether dispense with it.

In many of my writings I have repeatedly endeavoured to show that what intimidates men—viz., that without govern-
mental power the worst men would triumph whilst the best
would be oppressed—is precisely what has long ago happened,
and is still happening, in all States, since everywhere the power
is in the hands of the worst man; as, indeed, cannot be other-
wise, because only the worst men could do all those crafty,
dastardly, and cruel acts which are necessary for participation
in power. Many times have I endeavoured to explain that
all the chief calamities from which men suffer, such as the
accumulation of enormous wealth in the hands of some people
and the deep poverty of the majority, the seizure of the land
by those who do not work on it, the unceasing armaments
and wars, and the deprivation of men, flow only from the
recognition of the lawfulness of governmental coercion; I
have endeavoured to show that before answering the question
whether the position of men would be the worse or the better
without governments, one should solve the problem as to who
the government consists of. Are those who constitute the
government better or worse than the average level of men? If
these individuals are better than the average run, then the
government will be beneficent; but if they are worse it will
be pernicious. And that these men—Ivans IV., Henrys
VIII., Marats, Napoleons, Arakchéyefs, Metternichs and
Tallyrands, Nicolais—are worse than the general run: history
proves this.

In every human society these are always ambitious, un-
scrupulous, cruel men, who, I have already endeavoured to
show, are ever ready to perpetrate any kind of violence, rob-
bery, murder for their own advantage; and that in a society
without government these men would be robbers, restrained
in their actions partly by strife with those injured by them
(self-instituted justice, lynching), but partly and chiefly by
the most powerful weapon of influence upon men—public
opinion. Whereas in a society ruled by coercive authority,
these same men are those who will seize authority and will
make use of it, not only without the restraint of public opinion, but, on the contrary, supported, praised, and ex- tolled by a bribed and artificially maintained public opinion.

It is said, How can people live without governments—i.e., coercion? On the contrary, one should say, How can people—rational beings—live recognising as the inner connecting link of their life violence and not rational agreement?

Either one or the other: men are either rational or irrational beings. If they are not rational beings, then all matters between them can, and should be, decided by violence, and there is no reason for some to have and others not to have this right of violence. But if men are rational beings, then their relations should be founded, not on violence, but on reason.

One would think that this consideration should be conclusive to men recognising themselves as rational beings. But those who defend State power do not think of man, of his qualities, of his rational nature; they speak of a certain combination of men to which they apply a kind of supernatural or mystical signification.

What will happen to Russia, France, Britain, Germany, say they, if people cease to obey governments?

What will happen to Russia?—Russia? What is Russia? Where is its beginning or its end? Poland? The Baltic Provinces? The Caucasus with all its nationalities? The Kazan Tartars? Ferghana Province? All these are not only not Russia, but all these are foreign nationalities desirous of being freed from the combination which is called Russia. The circumstance that these nationalities are regarded as parts of Russia is an accidental and temporary one, conditioned in the past by a whole series of historical events, principally acts of violence, injustice, and cruelty, whilst in the present this combination is maintained only by the power which spreads over these nationalities.
During our memory, Nice was Italy and suddenly became France; Alsace was France and became Prussia. The Trans-Amur Province was China and became Russia. Sakhalin was Russia and became Japan. At present the power of Austria spreads over Hungary, Bohemia, and Galicia, and that of the British Government over Ireland, Canada, Australia, Egypt, India, &c.; that of the Russian Government over Poland, Guria, &c. But to-morrow this power may cease. The only force uniting all these Russias, Austrias, Britains, and Frances is coercive power. And coercive power is the creation of men who, contrary to their rational nature and the law of freedom as revealed by Jesus, obey those who demand of them evil works of violence. Men need only become conscious of their freedom, natural to rational beings, and cease to commit acts contrary to their conscience and the Law, and then these artificial combinations of Russia, Britain, Germany, France, which appear so splendid, will no longer exist—i.e., that cause, in the name of which people sacrifice not only their life but the liberty proper to rational beings.

People need simply cease to obey power in the name of the idols existing only in their imagination—of Russia, France, Britain, the United States—and straightway these dreadful idols which now ruin the physical and mental welfare of men will of themselves disappear.

It is usual to say that the formation of great States out of small ones continually struggling with each other, by substituting a great external frontier for small boundaries, thereby diminishes strife and bloodshed and their attendant evils. But this assertion also is quite arbitrary, as no one has weighed the quality of evil in the one and the other positions. And it is difficult to believe that all the wars of the confederate period in Russia, Burgundy, Flanders, Normandy in France, cost as many victims as the wars of Napoleon, of Alexander, or as the Japanese war lately ended.
The only justification for the expansion of the State is the formation of a universal monarchy, the existence of which would remove all possibility of war. But all attempts at forming such a monarchy by Alexander of Macedon, by the Roman Empire, or by Napoleon, never attained this object of pacification, but, on the contrary, were the cause of the greatest calamities for the nations. So that the pacification of men cannot possibly be attained by the increase and strengthening of States. This can be attained only by the opposite means: the abolition of States with their coercive power.

There have existed cruel and pernicious superstitions, human sacrifices, burnings for witchcraft, "religious" wars, tortures . . . but men have freed themselves from these superstitions; whereas the superstition of the State as something sacred continues its hold upon men, and to this superstition are offered perhaps more cruel and ruinous sacrifices than to all the others. The essence of this superstition is this: that men of different localities, habits, and interests are persuaded that they all compose one whole because one and the same violence is applied to all of them, and these men believe this and are proud of belonging to this combination.

This superstition has existed for so long and is so strenuously maintained that not only those who profit by it—kings, ministers, generals, the military and officials—are certain that the existence, confirmation, and expansion of these artificial units serve the welfare of those who are caught in these combinations, but even these latter become so accustomed to this superstition that they are proud of belonging to Russia, France, Britain, or Germany, although this is not at all necessary to them, and brings them nothing but evil.

Therefore if these artificial combinations into great States were to be abolished by people, because of their meekly and peacefully submitting to every kind of violence and ceasing
to obey the Government, then such an abolition would only lead to there being amongst such men less coercion, less suffering, less evil, and to its becoming easier for such men to live according to the higher law of mutual service, which for 2500 years has been revealed to men, and which gradually enters more and more into the consciousness of mankind.

In general for the Russian people, both the town and the country population—it is, in such a critical time as the present, above all important not to live by the experience of others, not by others' thoughts, ideas, words, not by various social democracies, constitutions, expropriations, bureaux, delegates, candidatures, mandates, &c.; but—to think with their own mind, to live their own life, constructing out of their own past, out of their own spiritual foundations new forms of life proper to this past and these foundations.

IX

The revolution now impending over mankind consists in their liberation from the deceit of obedience to human power. As the essence of this revolution is quite different from the essence of all former revolutions in the Christian world, therefore also the activity of those participating in this revolution must be quite different from the activity of participators in former revolutions.

The activity of the participators in former revolutions consisted in the violent overthrow of power and in its re-seizure. The activity of the participators of the present revolution should, and can, consist in the cessation of that obedience to any violent power whatever, which has now lost its meaning, and in the ordering of one's life independently of government.

Besides the activity of the participators in the coming revolution being different from that of the participators in
former revolutions, the principal participators of this revolution are themselves also quite different, as is the locality where it must take place, and the number of the participators.

The participators in former revolutions were principally people of the higher professions, free from physical labour, and the town working men led by these men; whereas the participators of the coming revolution must, and will, be chiefly the agricultural masses. The localities where former revolutions began were towns; the locality of the present revolution must be chiefly the country. The number of participators in former revolutions was 10 or 20 per cent. of the whole nation; the number of participators in the revolution now taking place in Russia must be 80 or 90 per cent.

Therefore all the activity of the agitated town population of Russia, who, imitating Europe, combine into unions, prepare strikes, demonstrations, revolts, and invent new forms of government, not to mention those unfortunate brutalised men who commit manslaughter, thinking thereby to serve the dawning revolution—the activity of all these men, far from being in harmony with the impending revolution, arrests its progress much more effectually than governments do (for, without knowing it themselves, they are the truest assistants of the Government), and falsely directs and impedes it.

The danger now threatening the Russian nation is not that the existing coercive Government may not be violently overthrown and that in its place may not be established another Government also coercive, however democratic or even socialistic, but that this struggle with the Government may draw the nation itself into an activity of violence. The danger lies in this: that the Russian people, called by peculiar circumstances in which it is placed to point out
a peaceful and certain way of liberation, instead of this may, by those who do not understand all the significance of the revolution taking place, be attracted into a servile imitation of former revolutions, and that, abandoning the way of salvation on which they are now standing, they may advance along the false way by which other nations of Christendom are advancing to their certain ruin.

In order to avoid this danger the Russian people should first of all be *themselves*; they should not seek to ascertain how they should act and what they should do from European nations and American constitutions, or from socialistic programmes. But they should inquire and seek advice only from their own conscience. The Russian people, in order that they may fulfil the great work now before them, should not only refrain from concerning themselves with the political government of Russia and with the securing of freedom to the citizens of the Russian State, but should first of all free themselves from the very idea of a Russian State, and consequently also from all concern in the rights of the citizens of such a State. At the present moment the Russian people, that they may obtain freedom, should not only refrain from taking this or that action, but should refrain from all undertakings, from those into which the Government is alluring them as well as from those into which the Revolutionists and Liberals desire to draw them.

The peasants, the majority of the Russian people, should continue to live as they have always lived—in their agricultural, communal life, enduring all violence, both governmental and non-governmental, without struggle, but not obeying demands to participate in any kind of governmental coercion; they should not willingly pay taxes, they should not willingly serve in the police, the administration, the customs, in the army, in the navy, nor in any coercive organisation whatever. Likewise, and still more strictly,
the peasants should refrain from the violence to which they are being incited by the Revolutionists. All violence of the peasants towards the landowners will call forth strife with reacting violence, and will end in any case by the establishment of a Government of this or that kind, but unavoidably coercive. And with any coercive Government, as happens in the freest countries of Europe and America, the same senseless and cruel wars will be proclaimed and carried on, and in the same way the land will continue to be the property of the wealthy. It is only the non-participation of the people in any violence whatever which can abolish all coercion from which they suffer, and prevent all possibility of endless armaments and wars, and also abolish private property in land.

Thus should the agricultural peasants act that the revolution now taking place may produce good results.

As to the urban classes, the nobles, merchants, doctors, scientists, writers, mechanics, &c., who are now occupied with the revolution, they should first of all understand their insignificance—be it only numerical—of one to a hundred in comparison with the agricultural people; they should understand that the object of the revolution now taking place cannot, and should not, consist in the foundation of a new political coercive order, with whatever universal suffrage, whatever improved socialistic institutions, but that this object can, and should, consist in the liberation of the whole people—and especially of their majority, the 100,000,000 agricultural workers—from every kind of coercion: from military coercion—soldiery, from fiscal coercion—taxes and tariffs, and from agrarian coercion—the seizure of the land by the landowners, and that for this purpose that fretful, unreasonable, and unkind activity with which Russian Liberals and Revolutionists are now occupied is not at all necessary, but something quite different. These men should understand that revolutions cannot be made to order—"Let us organise
a revolution”; that revolution cannot be produced by imitating the ready-made patterns of what has taken place a hundred years ago under utterly different conditions. Above all, these men should understand that a revolution can improve the condition of a people only when they, having recognised the unreasonableness and calamity of former foundations of life, strive to arrange a life on new foundations capable of giving them true welfare—when people possess ideals of a new better life.

But those who are now endeavouring to produce in Russia a political revolution according to the model of European revolutions possess neither any new foundations nor any new ideals whatever. They strive merely to substitute for one old form of coercion another new one, also to be realised by coercion, and carrying with it the same calamities as those which the Russian people now suffer from—as we see in Europe and America, groaning under the same militarism, the same taxation, the same seizure of the land.

As to the circumstance that the majority of revolutionists put forward as their ideal a socialistic organisation which could be obtained only by the cruellest coercion, and which, if it ever were attained, would deprive men of the last remnants of liberty, this demonstrates only that such people possess no new ideals. The ideal of our time cannot be the alteration of the forms of coercion, but only its complete abolition attainable by disobedience to human rule.

In order to free themselves from all the evils which now oppress them, the working men should, without strife, without coercion, cease to obey the authorities. And this same—the submissive suffering of violence and disobedience to the authorities—is also necessary for the fulfilment of that law which Christian nations profess. A Christian, as a Christian, cannot obey (and obeying thereby necessarily participate in) an authority which is entirely based on violence, maintained
by violence, and unceasingly committing acts of violence the most contrary to the Christian law: soldiery, wars, prisons, executions, the depriving of the people of the possibility of using the land. So that both the bodily welfare of man, as well as the higher spiritual welfare, can only be attained in one way: by the suffering without struggle of all violence, but at the same time by the abstinence from participation in it, by disobedience to the authorities.

So that if people of the urban classes really desire to serve the great revolution which is taking place, the first thing they should do is to desist from the cruel, revolutionary, unnatural, artificial activity with which they are now occupied, and to settle down in the country and share the people's labour—learning from the people their patience, their indifference and contempt towards the exercise of power, and, above all, their habits of industry—endeavouring not only to refrain from inciting people, as they now do, to violence, but, on the contrary, restraining them from all participation in acts of violence and from any obedience to coercive power of whatever kind, and to serve them, should it be necessary, with their scientific knowledge, to elucidate those questions which will inevitably arise with the abolition of government.

X

But how and in what forms can men of the Christian world live if they will not live in the form of States obeying government rule?

The answer to this question lies in those very qualities of the Russian people, owing to which I think that the impending revolution must begin and must happen in Russia rather than in other countries.

The absence of government power in Russia has never
prevented the social organisation of agricultural communes. On the contrary, the intervention of government power always hindered this inner organisation natural to the Russian people. The Russian people, like the majority of agricultural nations, naturally combine like bees in a hive into definite social relations fully satisfying the demands of the common life of men. Wherever Russian people settle down without the intervention of Government they have always established a mutual order not coercive, but founded upon mutual agreement, communal, and with communal possession of land, which has completely satisfied the demands of peaceful social life. Without the aid of the Government such communes have populated all the eastern boundaries of Russia. Such communes have emigrated to Turkey, like the Nekrassovisi, and retaining their Christian communal organisation, quietly have lived, and are living there, under the power of the Turkish Sultan. Such communes have without knowing it passed into Chinese territory, into Central Asia, and have lived there for a long time, without needing any government beyond their own inner organisation. And in precisely the same way do the Russian agricultural people—the enormous majority of the population of Russia—live without needing the government, but merely suffering it. The government for the Russian people has never been a necessity but always a burden.

The absence of government—of that same government which retains by force the right of using the land in the hand of the non-labouring landowners, can only contribute to that communal agricultural life which the Russian people regard as a necessary condition of good life—it will contribute to it in that the power of maintaining property in land being abolished, the land will be freed and all will have equal right to it.

Therefore the Russian people, when abolishing govern-
ment, need not invent any new forms of combined life with which to replace the former. Such forms of combined life exist amongst the Russian people, have always been natural to them, and have satisfied their social demands.

These forms are a communal organisation with the equality of all the members of the Mir, a co-operative system in industrial undertakings, and a common possession of the land. The revolution which is impending over Christendom and is now beginning amongst the Russian people, is distinguished from former revolutions precisely by this, that the latter destroyed without substituting anything for that which was destroyed by them, or else replaced one form of violence by another; whereas in the impending revolution nothing need be destroyed, it is only necessary to cease participating in violence—not to extirpate the plant, putting in its place something artificial and lifeless, but merely to remove all which has hindered its growth. And therefore those hasty, bold-faced, and self-assured people who, without understanding that the cause of the evil with which they are violently striving, and without realising to themselves any form of life without violence, blindly and thoughtlessly overthrow the existing violence in order to replace it by new violence, will not contribute anything to the revolution now taking place. Those who will contribute to it are those who, without overthrowing anything, without breaking anything, will organise their life independently of the Government, will peacefully endure any violence inflicted upon them, but will not participate in the Government, and will not obey it.

The Russian nation, the agricultural nation, the enormous majority, need only continue to live as it lives now—an agricultural communal life, only with no participation in the works of the Government and without obedience to it.

The closer the Russian people will stick to the combined
life which is natural to them the less possible will be the
interference of governmental coercive rule into their life, and
the easier will this power be removed, finding fewer and
fewer occasions for interference, and fewer and fewer assistants
in the doing of its deeds of violence.

Therefore to the question as to what consequences will
follow the cessation of obedience to government, one can say
for certain that the consequence will be the abolition of the
coercion which has compelled men to fight with each other
and deprived them of the right to use the land. Men
liberated from violence, no longer preparing for war nor
fighting with each other, but possessing access to the land,
will naturally return to the most joyous, healthy, and moral
agricultural labour proper to all men, in which man's effort
will be directed to a struggle with nature and not with men;
to a labour on which rest all other branches of labour, and
which can be abandoned only by those who live by violence.

The cessation of obedience to governments must bring
men to agricultural life, and agricultural life in its turn will
bring them to the communal organisation most natural under
the conditions of life in small communities placed in similar
agricultural conditions.

It is very probable that these communities will not live in
isolation, but owing to unity of economical, racial, or religious
conditions, will enter into new free mutual combinations,
completely different, however, from the former State
combinations founded upon violence. The repudiation of
coercion does not deprive men of the possibility of combina-
tion, but combination founded upon mutual agreement can
be formed only when those founded upon violence are
abolished.

That one may build a new and durable house in the place
of one falling into ruins one must take down the old wall,
stone by stone, and build it anew.
So with those combinations which may develop amongst men after the abolition of the combinations founded on violence.

XI

But what is to become of all which mankind has elaborated—what will become of civilisation?

"The return to monkeys"—Voltaire's letter to Rousseau about learning to walk on all fours—"the return to some kind of primitive, natural life," say those who are so certain that the civilisation they possess is so great a good that they cannot even admit the idea of the loss of anything which has been attained by civilisation.

"What! a coarse agricultural commune in rural solitude long ago outlived by mankind instead of our cities with underground and overground electric ways, with electric suns, museums, theatres, and monuments?" cry these people. "Yes, and with paupers' quarters, with the slums of London, New York, and all large cities, with the houses of prostitution, the usury, explosive bombs against external and internal foes, with prisons, gallows, and millions of military," say I.

"Civilisation, our civilisation, is a great boon," people say. But those who are so certain of this are the few people who not only live in this civilisation, but live by it, they live in complete content, almost idly in comparison with the labour of the working people, just because this civilisation does exist.

All these people—kings, emperors, presidents, princes, ministers, officials, the military, landowners, merchants, mechanics, doctors, scientists, artists, teachers, priests, writers—No, they know for certain that our civilisation is such a great boon that one cannot admit the idea not only of any possibility of its disappearance, but even of its alteration. But ask the enormous mass of the Slavonian, Chinese, Indian,
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Russian agricultural people, nine-tenths of humanity, whether the civilisation which appears so precious to the non-agricultural professions is indeed a boon or not?

Strange to say, nine-tenths of humanity will answer quite differently. They know that they require land, manure, water, irrigation, the sun, rain, woods, harvests, certain simple implements of labour which can be manufactured without interrupting agricultural pursuits; but as to civilisation, either they are not acquainted with it or else when it appears to them in the form of town depravation or unjust law-courts with their prisons and hard labour; or in the form of taxes and the erection of unnecessary palaces, museums, monuments; or in the form of customs impeding the free exchange of products; or of guns, ironclads, armies devastating whole countries—they will say that if civilisation consists in these things then it is not only unnecessary but exceedingly harmful to them.

Those who profit by the advantages of civilisation say that it is a boon for the whole of mankind, but then in this question they are not the judges, nor the witnesses, but one of the litigants.

It is beyond doubt that we have advanced a long way on the road of technical progress, but who has advanced along this road? that small minority which lives on the shoulders of the working people; whilst the working people themselves, those who serve these other men who profit by civilisation, continue in all Christendom to live even as they lived five or six centuries ago, profiting only at times and in rare cases by the refuse of civilisation. If they do live better then the difference separating their position from that of the wealthy classes is not less, but is rather greater, than the one which separated them from the wealthy six centuries ago. I do not say that upon understanding that civilisation is not the absolute advantage that so many think it is we should throw
aside all that men have attained in their strife with nature; but I do say that before we can know that what has been attained by men does indeed serve their welfare it is necessary that all should profit by these advantages, and not a small number; it is necessary that people should not be compulsorily deprived of their own welfare for other people's benefit in the hope that the same advantages shall some day reach their descendants.

We look upon the Egyptian pyramids and are horrified by the cruelty and insanity of those who ordered their erection, as well as of those who fulfilled these orders. But how much more cruel and insane are those ten- and thirty-six-storey houses which men of our time erect in cities and are proud of. Around lies the land with its grass, its woods, its pure water, pure air, sun, birds, animals, but men with dreadful effort shut the sun from others and erect thirty-six-storey houses, rocked by the wind, where there is neither grass nor trees, and where everything, both water and air, is contaminated, all the food adulterated and spoilt, and life itself is tedious and unhealthy. Is not this a sign of manifest madness in a whole society of men, not only to accomplish such insanities but also to pride themselves upon doing so? This is not the only example: look around you and you will see at every step what equals these thirty-six-storey houses and Egyptian pyramids.

The justifiers of civilisation say: "We are ready to correct the evil, but only on the condition that all which mankind has attained should remain intact." Why, this is what a dissipated man who has ruined his life, his position, and his health, says to his doctor. He is ready to agree with all the doctor will prescribe, but only on condition that he may continue his depraved life. To such a man we say that if he is to improve his state he must cease to live as he is living. It is time for Christian humanity to say and understand the same. The unconscious and sometimes conscious mistake
which those who defend civilisation make is that they regard civilisation, which is only a means, as an end or a result, and deem it always an advantage. It might be an advantage if only the rulers of society were good. Explosive gases are very useful for opening means of communication by blasting rock, but they are pernicious in bombs. Iron is useful for ploughs but pernicious for shells and for prison bars.

The Press may disseminate good feelings and wise thoughts but with yet more success—that which is immoral and false. The question as to whether civilisation is useful or pernicious is solved by the consideration whether in a given society good prevails or evil. In our society, where the minority crushes the majority, civilisation is a great evil. It is merely an extra weapon for the oppression of the masses by the ruling minority.

It is time for those of the higher classes to understand that what they call civilisation and culture are both the means and the result of the slavery in which the smaller non-working portion of the nation keeps the enormous majority of the workers.

It is time for us to understand that our salvation lies, not in continuing along the road on which we have been moving, and not in the retention of what we have elaborated, but in the recognition that we have advanced along a false road, and have entered a bog out of which we must extricate ourselves, and that we should be concerned, not in retaining that which we have, but, on the contrary, should boldly throw aside all the most useless of that which we have been dragging upon ourselves, so that in some way (be it on all fours) we may scramble out upon a firm bank.

A rational and righteous life consists only in man or men from amongst the many actions or ways before him or them choosing the most rational and good. Christian humanity in its present condition has got before it the choice of two
things; either the continuation on the way on which existing civilisation will give the greatest welfare to the few, keeping the many in want and servitude, or else at once, without postponement to some far future, abandoning a portion or even all those advantages which civilisation has attained for the few, if such advantages hinder the liberation of the majority from want and servitude.

XII

That men of our time talk about certain separate liberties—the freedom of speech, of the Press, of conscience, the right of meeting, of this or that kind of elections, of associations, of labour, and of much else—clearly demonstrates that such people—as at the present time our Russian revolutionists—possess a very fallacious idea, or have no idea whatever of freedom in general—that simple freedom, comprehensible to all, which consists in there being no power over man demanding from him actions contrary to his desires and advantages.

In this non-comprehension of what constitutes freedom and in the consequent idea that the permission of certain people given to other people to do certain actions is freedom, lies a great and most pernicious error. This error is that men of our time imagine that the servile subjection to violence in which they stand, in relation to the Government, is a natural position and that the authorisation by governmental power of certain actions defined by this power, is freedom; somewhat as if slaves were to regard as freedom the permission to go to church on Sundays, or to bathe in hot weather, or in their leisure time to mend their clothes, and so forth.

One need only for one minute reject established customs, habits and superstitions, and examine the position of every man in Christendom, whether belonging to the most despotic or to the most democratic State, in order to be horrified at
the slavery under which men are now living while imagining that they are free.

Over every man, wherever he may have been born, there exists a group of individuals completely unknown to him, who establish the law of his life. What he should and what he should not do. The more perfect the state organisation the closer is the net of these laws. It is defined to whom and how he shall swear allegiance—i.e., promise to fulfil any laws that may be invented and proclaimed. It is defined how and when he should marry (he may marry only one woman, but he may make use of houses of prostitution); it is defined how he may divorce his wife, how he should maintain his children, which of them he should regard as legitimate, which as illegitimate, and from whom and how he should inherit and to whom transmit his property. It is defined for what transgressions of the law and how and by whom he shall be judged and punished. It is defined when he must himself appear in court, in the capacity of juror or witness. The age at which he may make use of the labour of assistants, of workmen, is defined, and even the number of hours per day which his assistants may work, and the food he must give them; it is defined when and how he should inoculate preventative diseases into his children. The methods are defined which he must undertake, and to which he must submit in case of this or that disease afflicting him, his family, or his cattle. The schools into which he must send his children are defined as well as the proportions and the stability of the house which he must build. It is defined how he should maintain his animals, horses, and dogs, how he must make use of water, and where he may walk without a road. For the non-fulfilment of all these and many other laws the punishments are defined. It is impossible to enumerate all the laws upon laws and rules upon rules to which he must submit, and the ignorance of which (although it is impossible to know them) cannot
serve as an excuse for a man even in the most democratic State. He is, moreover, placed in such a position that in buying every article which he consumes: salt, beer, wine, cloth, iron, oil, tea, sugar, &c., he must surrender a great portion of his labour for certain undertakings unknown to him, and for the paying of interest on debts contracted by somebody or other in the times of his grandfather and great-grandfathers. He must also surrender a part of his labour on the occasion of any removal from place to place, or of any inheritance he may come into, or of any transaction whatever with his neighbour. Further, for the portion of the land he occupies, either by his abode or by cultivation, a yet more considerable part of his labour is demanded from him, so that if he lives by his own labour and not by that of others, the greater part of his labour, instead of being used for the alleviation and improvement of his own position and that of his family, goes to pay these taxes, tariffs, and monopolies.

More than this! This man, in some States (the majority), as he comes of age, is ordered to enter for several years the military service, the most cruel servitude, and to go and fight, and in other countries, Britain and America, he must hire other people for this same purpose. Yet people placed in this position not only fail to see their own slavery, but are proud of it, regarding themselves as free citizens of the great States of Britain, France, or Germany; they are proud of this just as lackeys are proud of the importance of the masters they serve.

It would appear natural to a man with undepraved and unweakened spiritual powers, on finding himself in so dreadful and humiliating a position to say to himself: "But why should I go through all this? I desire to live my life in the best way! I wish to decide for myself what it is pleasant, useful, and necessary for me to do. Leave me in peace with your Russia, France, Britain. Who wishes all this, let
him take care of these Britains and Frances, but I do not require them. By force you can seize from me everything you like and kill me, but of my own accord I do not wish my own enslavement and shall not participate in it.” It would appear natural to act thus, yet no one does thus act.

The belief that to belong to some State or other is a necessary condition of human life has become so firmly rooted that men cannot make up their minds to act as their own reason, their own sense of right, or their direct advantage bids them.

People maintaining their servitude in the name of their belief in the State are exactly like those birds which, notwithstanding that the door of their cage is open, continue to sit in their prison partly by habit and partly because they do not realise they are free.

But this error is more remarkable in those who themselves satisfy their own necessities, such as the agricultural population of Germany, Austria, India, Canada, Australia, and especially of Russia. These have neither need nor advantage in the slavery to which they voluntarily submit.

One can understand why the townsfolk do not thus act because their interests are so intertwined with the interests of the ruling classes that the enslavement in which they find themselves is advantageous to them. Mr. Rockefeller cannot desire to refuse to obey the laws of his country because the laws of that country give him the possibility of gaining and conserving his milliards, to the detriment of the interests of the masses of the people; neither can the directors of Mr. Rockefeller’s undertakings and those who serve these directors, and the servants of these servants, desire to refuse obedience. So it is with the inhabitants of towns. Their position is similar to that of the Russian household retainers of old times towards the peasants—the enslavement of the peasants is advantageous to the former.
But why should agricultural nations, the majority of the Russian people, submit to this power so unnecessary to them? There lives a family in the Government of Tula, or in Posen, in Kansas, in Normandy, in Ireland, in Canada. These people of Tula have no concern whatever in the Russian State, with its St. Petersburg, Caucasus, Baltic Provinces, with its Manchurian annexations and diplomatic artfulness. So also a family live in Posen and have no concern in Prussia, with its Berlin and its African colonies; nor has the Irishman—in Britain, with its London and its Egyptian, Boer, and other interests; nor the man in Kansas—in the United States, with their New York and the Philippines. And yet these families are compelled to surrender a stipulated portion of their labour—are obliged to participate in preparations for war, and in war itself, also brought on not by themselves but by some one else—are obliged to obey laws established not by themselves but by others. They are, it is true, assured that whilst obeying certain unknown individuals in all these cases of the utmost importance for their life, they obey not others but themselves, since they have elected one out of a thousand representatives unknown to them. But this can be believed only by him who wishes and requires to deceive himself and others.

Whilst belonging to a State a man cannot be free. And the greater the State, the more is violence necessary, and the less is true freedom possible. To form one combination out of the most diverse nationalities and people—such as Britain, Russia, Austria—and to retain them in this combination, very much coercion is necessary.

Although less coercion is necessary for maintaining the unity of men in small States, such as Sweden, Portugal, or Switzerland, yet, on the other hand, in these small States it is more difficult for the subjects to evade the demands of the authorities, therefore the sum of non-freedom, of coercion, is the same as in large States.
To bind and keep together a bundle of wood, a strong rope is necessary and a certain degree of its tension. So also to keep together in one State a great collection of men, a certain degree of applied coercion is necessary. In the case of the wood, the difference may be only in its relative position, in such and not other pieces of wood being directly submitted to the pressure of the rope, but the power holding them together is one and the same in whatever position the pieces may be placed. It is the same with any coercive State of whatever kind—a despotism, a constitutional monarchy, an oligarchy, a republic. If the union of men is maintained by coercion—i.e., by the establishment by some people of laws forcibly applied by others, then there will always exist coercion, equal in extent, of some people over others. In one place it will manifest itself in coarse violence, in another—in the power of money. The difference will be only that in one coercive State organisation, the coercion will weigh more upon a certain section of people, whilst in another organisation—on another.

State coercion may be compared to a black thread upon which beads are loosely strung. The beads are men. The black thread is the State. So long as the beads are on the thread, they will not be able to move freely. They may all be gathered together on one side, and on this side the black thread will not be visible between them; but on the other side a large portion of the thread will be bare (despotism). One may arrange the beads together in separate groups, leaving corresponding intervals of black thread between these groups (constitutional monarchy). One may leave a small portion of thread between each bead (republic). But so long as the beads are not taken off the thread, so long as the threads are not severed, it will not be possible to conceal the black thread.

So long as the State and the coercion necessary for its maintenance exist, in whatever form, there will not—there
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cannot—be freedom, true freedom, that which all men have always understood, and do understand, by that word.

"But how can men possibly live without the State?" is generally asked by those who have become so accustomed to every man, not alone being the son of his parents, the descendant of his ancestors, living by the labour he has chosen, and, above all, not alone being a man, but being also a Frenchman or an Englishman, a German, an American, a Russian—i.e., belonging to this or that coercive organisation which is called France, with its Algeria, Annam, Nisés, &c.; or Britain, with its alien populations of India, Egypt, Australia, Canada; or Austria, with its nationalities not united internally in any way; or to such mixed and enormous States as the United States or Russia. These men have become so accustomed to this, that it seems to them as impossible to live without belonging to these combinations, possessing no internal union, as thousands of years ago it appeared to people to live without offering sacrifices to gods, and without oracles directing the actions of men.

How can men live without belonging to any government?

Why, exactly as they now live, only without doing those silly and objectionable things which they now do for the sake of this dreadful superstition. They will live as they now live, but without depriving their families of the products of their labours that they may devote them in the form of taxes and duties to the evil deeds of men unknown to them; they will live without participating either in coercion, or law-courts, or wars organised by these men. Yes, it is only this superstition which in our time has no sense, which gives to some hundreds of men an insane and utterly unjustifiable power over millions, and deprives these millions of true freedom. A man living in Canada, Kansas, Bohemia, Little Russia, Normandy, cannot be free so long as he considers himself, and often with pride, a subject of Great Britain, the
United States, Austria, Russia, France. Nor can Governments, whose vocation consists in maintaining the unity of such impossible and senseless combinations as Russia, Britain, Germany, France, &c., give their subjects real freedom and not its mere counterfeit, as is the case with all the artful constitutions, monarchical, republican, or democratic. The principal, if not the only, cause of the absence of freedom is the State superstition. People can indeed be deprived of liberty in the absence of the State. But whilst they belong to a State there cannot be liberty.

Those now participating in the Russian revolution do not understand this. They are striving for various liberties for the subjects of the Russian State, imagining that in this consists the purpose of the revolution now taking place. But its purpose and ultimate result is much more far-reaching than the revolutionists see. This object is emancipation from State coercion. And towards this great revulsion is leading that complex work of mistakes and evil-doings now taking place on the decaying surface of the enormous Russian population, amongst a small portion of urban classes, the so-called intellectuals and factory workmen. All this complex activity, chiefly proceeding from the lowest impulses of vengeance, spite, or ambition, has for the mass of the Russian nation only one significance: it serves to show the nation what they should not do and what they can and should do. It must serve to demonstrate all the futility of the substitution for one form of government coercion and evil-doing, of another form of government coercion and evil-doing, and to destroy in their consciousness the superstition and spell of Statedom.

The Russian people, their great majority observing present events and all the new forms of violence manifested in the cruel revolutionary activity of wreckings, devastations, strikes depriving whole populations of their livelihood, and above all, fratricidal strife—are beginning to understand the evil not
only of the former State coercion under which they have lived
and from which they have already suffered so much, but also
of that new thing, still State coercion, which is now being mani-
fested by similar, but new, deceptions and evil-doings, and that
neither the one nor the other is better or worse but that both
are bad, and that therefore they should free themselves from
all State coercion, and that this is very easy and possible.

The people, especially the Russian agricultural people, the
great majority who have lived and are living, solving all their
social questions through the village assembly without needing
any government—contemplating present events will unavoid-
ably come to understand that they require no government at
all, whether the most despotic or the most democratic,
just as a man does not require to be bound by any chains
whether of brass or iron, whether short or long. The nation
requires no special separate freedom, but only one true, com-
plete, simple freedom.

And as it is always the case, that the solution of apparently
difficult problems is most simple, so also now: for the att-
tainment, not of these or those forms of freedom, but of this
one, true, complete freedom, it is not strife with the govern-
mental power which is necessary. Nor the invention of any
particular kind of representation which could but conceal
from men their State slavery, but only one thing—dis-
obedience.

Let the people only cease to obey the Government—and
there will be neither taxes, nor seizure of land, nor prohibi-
tions from the authorities, nor soldiery, nor wars. This is
so simple and appears so easy. Then why have not men
done this hitherto and why are they yet not doing it?

Why, because if one is not to obey the Government one
has to obey God—*i.e.*, to live a righteous and moral life.

Only in that degree in which men live such a life—*i.e.*,
obey God—can they cease to obey men and become free.
One cannot say to one's self, I will not obey men. It is possible not to obey men only when one obeys the higher law of God, common to all. One cannot be free whilst transgressing the higher universal law of mutual service, as it is transgressed by the life of the wealthy, and of the town classes who live by the labour of the working, especially the agricultural, people. A man can be free only in the degree in which he fulfils the higher law. The fulfilment of this law is not only difficult but almost impossible in the town and factory organisation of society, where man's success is founded upon contest with other men. It is only possible and easy under agricultural conditions of life, when all man's efforts are directed to a struggle with nature. Therefore the liberation of men from obedience to government, and from the belief in the artificial combination of States and of the fatherland, must lead them to the natural, joyous in the highest degree, moral life of agricultural communities, subject only to their own regulations realisable by all and founded not on coercion but on mutual agreement.

In this lies the essence of the great revulsion approaching for all Christian nations.

How this revulsion will take place, what steps it will go through, it is not given to us to know, but we do know it is inevitable, for it is taking place and partly has already been realised in the consciousness of men.

The life of men consists only in this: that time keeps further and further unfolding that which was concealed, and showing the correctness or incorrectness of the way along which they have advanced in the past. Life is the enlightenment of the consciousness, concerning the falsity of former foundations, and the establishment of new ones and the realisation of them. The life of mankind, as well as that of the individual man, is a growth out of a former state into a new one. This growth is inevitably accompanied
by the recognition of one's mistakes and liberation from them.

But there are periods in the life of the whole of mankind, as well as in that of the separate individual, when the mistake committed in the direction of past life is suddenly clearly revealed and the activity which should correct this mistake is elucidated. These are periods of revolutions. And in such a position the Christian nations now find themselves.

Mankind lived according to the law of violence and knew no other. The time came when the progressive leaders of humanity proclaimed a new law of mutual service, common to all mankind. Men accepted this law, but not in its full meaning, and although they tried to apply it they still continued to live according to the law of violence. Christianity appeared and confirmed the truth that there is only one law common to all men which gives them the greatest welfare—the law of mutual service—and indicated the reason why this law had not been realised in life. It was not realised because man regarded the use of violence as necessary and beneficent for good ends, and regarded the law of retribution as just. Christianity showed that violence is always pernicious, and that retribution cannot be applied by men. But Christian humanity, not having accepted this explanation of the law of mutual service common to all men, although it desired to live according to this law, involuntarily continued to live according to the pagan law of violence. Such a contradictory state of things kept increasing the criminality of life and the external comforts and luxury of the minority, at the same time increasing the slavery and misery of the majority amongst Christian nations.

In later times the criminality and luxury of the life of one portion, and the misery and slavery of the other portion of Christendom have attained the highest degree, especially
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amongst those nations which have long ago abandoned the natural life of agriculture and fallen under the deceit of imaginary self-government.

These nations, suffering from the misery of their position and the consciousness of the contradiction they are involved in, search for salvation everywhere; in imperialism, militarism, socialism, the seizure of other people's lands, in every kind of strife, in tariffs, technical improvements, in vice, in anything except the one thing which can save them—the freeing of themselves from the superstition of the State, of the fatherland, and the cessation of obedience to coercive State power of any kind whatever.

Owing to their agricultural life, to the absence of the deceit of self-government, to the greatness of their number, and above all, to the Christian attitude towards violence preserved by the Russian people, this people, after a cruel, unnecessary, and unfortunate war into which they had been drawn by their Government, and after the neglect of their demands that the land taken from them should be returned, have understood sooner than others the principal causes of the calamities of Christendom of our time, and therefore the great revolution impending over all mankind, which can alone save it from its unnecessary sufferings, must begin precisely amongst this nation.

Herein lies the significance of the revolution now beginning in Russia. This revolution has not yet begun amongst the nations of Europe and America, but the causes which have called it forth in Russia are the same for all the Christian world; the same Japanese war which has demonstrated to the whole world the inevitable advantage in military art of pagan nations over Christian, the same armaments of the great States reaching the utmost degree of strain and unable ever to cease, and the same calamitous position and universal dissatisfaction of the working
people owing to their loss of their natural right to the land.

The majority of Russian people clearly see that the cause of all the calamities they suffer is obedience to power, and that they have before them the choice either of declining to be rational, free beings, or else of ceasing to obey the Government. And if the people of Europe and America do not yet see this, owing to the bustle of their life and the deceit of self-government, they will very soon see it. Participation in the coercion of the government of great States, which they call freedom, has brought and is bringing them to continually increasing slavery and to the calamities flowing from this slavery. These increasing calamities will, in their turn, bring them to the only means of deliverance from them; to the cessation of obedience to Governments, and, as a consequence of this cessation of obedience, to the abolition of the coercive combinations of States.

For this great revulsion to take place it is only necessary that men should understand that the State, the fatherland, is a fiction, and that life and true liberty are realities; and that, therefore, it is not life and liberty that should be sacrificed for the artificial combination called the State, but that men ought in the name of true life and liberty to free themselves from the superstition of the State and from its outcome—criminal obedience to men.

In this alteration of men's attitude towards the State and the authorities is the end of the old and the beginning of the new age.

LEO TOLSTOY.
NOTE BY
ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO

LETTER TO V. TCHERTKOFF
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LETTER TO V. TCHERTKOFF

DEAR FELLOW WORKER,

I return to you this most admirable article of Tolstoy's, after making the few and slight corrections which its excellent translation required. I trust it will appear very soon, and will pass through as many forms as possible. It makes very clear the futility of looking for social betterment in changing forms of government while people themselves remain unchanged.

Still, people are apt to read Tolstoy's words so superficially as to imagine they are applicable chiefly to Russia and her affairs, instead of going to those roots of human life which are the same in all countries. On that Monday in January,* when we heard the news of the Sunday afternoon's work in St. Petersburg, I had to ask many friends and neighbours to pause in their unbridled condemnation of "Russian autocracy" as the sole cause of the terrible effect. I reminded them how, within the last quarter of a century, an armed constabulary had dealt with evictions and "no rent" agitation in Ireland, when a member of the Liberal Government got the name of "Buckshot Forster"; and that it was also a Liberal Government which, during a strike at Featherstone, Yorkshire, sent

* January 1905, when the Imperial troops slaughtered the crowds of peaceful working men desirous of conveying a petition to the Emperor.
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down soldiery to fire on the people, whereby Mr. Asquith, Home Secretary at the time, in his turn received from the working classes the unenviable title of “Assassin Asquith.” Yet the Liberal Government surely had not even the excuse—at least in Yorkshire—of being surrounded by the smouldering fires of general revolution, fears of whose up-leap inevitably terrify Russian autocracy into brutal self-defence.

During the late Queen’s visit to Ireland, what happened to any Irish newspaper which, instead of joining in the tribute of dictated loyalty, ventured to issue an article of criticism and protest? Was the Commission convened after the Jameson Raid eminently searching and satisfactory?

Again, even more recently, during the late Boer War, of what avail were our boasted “free Press” and “constitutional rights of public meeting and free speech?” The South African Press, wherever adverse to the Government, was censored and muzzled. The clever South African native paper the Imvo was actually suppressed, because its editor uttered truths unpalatable to the War party. The Peace party at home in Great Britain also found practically no free Press: some of the very prints which are now loudest in condemnation of what cannot be undone were, by some means, cowed or enticed into silence for so long as their utterance might have helped to avert bloodshed, desolation, and “conquest.” The very Peace Societies themselves (being organisations, and therefore no stronger than their weakest member), at their Congress in Glasgow, in 1901, while pretending to deprecate all other war, strove to stifle reference to the war then actually proceeding!

What always goes on in India, presumably governed for her good by the constitutional powers of Great Britain? Her native Press is gagged. Within the last few years, Mr. Tilak, editor of an important Indian journal, received a long term of penal servitude for printing a poetical article, in which a deceased Indian patriot was depicted as returning
to earth and deploving certain constantly prevalent conditions of British rule in his country. Another editor also underwent a term of imprisonment for daring to wish that India might become as Canada—a more prosperous dominion within the British Empire. The conditions of Finland, and even of Poland during her darkest period, can scarcely be worse.

In countries where the Press and all public agencies are avowedly the slaves or tools of the Government, they are discredited, and people know they must find the truth by other means. But under constitutional governments, while landowning, capitalist, and military influences remain active and dominant, the Press and public agencies, in boasting of their freedom, verily but the more delude the people to believe a lie; and must continue to do so, until human nature develops beyond the sphere of these influences.

There are many who, to-day, do not wish to vaunt the Boer War, and who grudge their own paltry share of its suffering in the damaged trade and increased taxation which it has left behind it; but who, less than five years ago, glorified in being with the “majority” who hurled chunks of stone and leaden weights among the tiny minorities who, faithful to peace principles, dared to ask them to simply pause and consider. The Prime Minister of this Constitutional Government, so far from disallowing this tyranny or even reprobating it, openly encouraged it by the easy phrase that “some things” (i.e., exercise of the rights of public meeting and free speech) “were more than human nature could bear.” Despite all nominal law, incitements to violence were allowed to appear in newspapers and on placards—men of “science” and “culture” permitting such promptings to inflame unruly youth at seats of learning, a dereliction of duty for which they were never arraigned, but for which they have since paid some penalty, as the brutalisation thus engendered presently went so far in
other directions as to cover certain universities with deserved obloquy.

In Edinburgh, five years ago, the little Peace party, headed by an aged and respected citizen and his guest from South Africa, heard ringing through the streets the frenzied yell, "Kill them!" and it was not through any form of constitutional protection, but through their own agility, that the threat was not carried out. The few—startlingly few—ministers of the gospel of Peace and Love who stood true to their standards, were hooted, pelted with rotten eggs, and in some cases deprived of their livelihood. Others of us had to accept the spoiling of our goods as joyfully as we could, without either police protection or civic redress. People—even cowardly sympathisers who stood aloof—used to ask, "And what good have you done?" The one answer—and it amply sufficed—was, "We have freed our own souls from blood-guiltiness."

Law failed to protect us against the evil will of the democracy so far as that will was prepared to go.

Constitutional government can be an improvement on autocracy only in so far as the majority of the nation it represents consists of better men than the autocrat. A great number of weak or bad men are not better than one weak or bad man. Truth and right and justice can prevail under democratic institutions only as the greater number of men become true and righteous and just. Governmental power in itself certainly does not tend to improve those who receive it. Experience teaches the reverse. Everybody knows that a Cabinet or a Board has limitations which many of its members would not, as individuals, endure for a moment, but which they speedily accept as inevitable when they consent to become as links in any of those chains which can never be stronger than their weakest link.

It seems, indeed, that the new institutions fall from their
ideals even sooner than did the older ones. Socialism, as understood at present, is scarcely more than half a century old, yet already some of its loudest advocates, yielding to personal preposition or interest, have become enthusiastic champions of military conquest, or participators in public companies whereby lands and mines in new countries are exploited, and while one man works, another reaps the profits. These Socialists are evidently unable to resist the influences to which kings and bishops have succumbed.

Let us pass from public rights to public interests as presumably safeguarded by constitutional government, and we must remember the political "suspects" of Kilmainham; we must recall the forcible deportation of Miss Hobhouse from South Africa. Further, we may well ask whether it does not remain possible (it has been proved by certain events) for an unhappy being to be accused of an offence of which he is entirely innocent, to be put through a perfunctory trial, and on police evidence or police-prepared evidence (i.e., the evidence of those personally interested in securing conviction and who are disgraced by failure in the attempt) to be convicted and sentenced to a long term of penal servitude, while no full report of the trial is made public, and there is no authentic report to be referred to in future? Has such a person any power of appeal for justice? No; he can only cry for the "mercy" of a secret and irresponsible tribunal—the Home Office, which avowedly lends its ear to whispers it will not divulge—a tribunal which it is well-nigh impossible to stir into action or even inquiry, since action or inquiry might cast discredit on fellow Government officials, especially when these happen to be allied or aristocratic. Even questions put in the House of Commons on such matters are easily negatived or evaded. The prisoner's local Parliamentary representatives may be on the Ministerial side of the House, and loath to interfere with the functions of
their own official, the Home Secretary. Or they may be withheld by the same private social considerations which may influence the Home Secretary himself. The best machinery of law can thus be easily clogged by personal considerations. In the Republic of the United States, lawless men can, with impunity, publicly put fellow citizens, untried, to lingering and cruel death. There are laws against this. But the laws are inoperative, because the democracy is adverse to them.

Again, in India, under British rule, the death penalty for murder is supposed to be enacted as in Great Britain. But though Indians are repeatedly slain by Anglo-Indians, both military and civilian, and that without any provocation and under most atrocious circumstances, are Anglo-Indians ever executed? Indeed, are not the most flimsy excuses accepted, that they may evade all punishment, even that of a paltry fine? An Indian physician of high repute was done to death with most wanton cruelty by certain English soldiers. The men received only terms of imprisonment. Other English soldiers on returning to India from the Boer War barbarously killed a native regimental servant because he refused to provide his countrywomen for their lust. They also escaped with terms of imprisonment. In front of the great pagoda at Rangoon, a Burmese woman was outraged by British soldiery, and the matter almost escaped official attention altogether. Yet in no country are capital sentences more common than in India, being constantly executed on natives, tried for killing each other, by judges ill acquainted with the language in which evidence is given, the crime sometimes committed under circumstances of great provocation or rash anger. All this is, of course, in flat contradiction to British "proclamations" in India, in 1858, 1877, &c. In the democratic Commonwealth of Australia the life and liberty of the aborigine are held of no account. Thus
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we see that the carrying out of law can only reach the moral level of the community in which it is administered.

In cases of flagrant personal injustice, is much help given to the wrongfully condemned by the most influential section of the boasted "free Press" of Britain or America? No; it generally preserves a modest silence, until, here and there, justice is tardily and imperfectly evoked, through no activity of constitutional agencies, but rather through the determined efforts of a few individuals who find voice only in those minor journals which are ever becoming fewer and weaker because borne down by the forces of combined capital. Popular journals—i.e., those most favoured by the democracy—being inextricably bound up with many "interests," can find little space for the cry of him who has no helper. Yet some of these very journals thus deaf to the cry of living tragedy can devote columns to the discussion of the unreal immoralities or sorrows of the stage, whole pages to the delineation of women's trailing skirts—a feature new to recent journalism—and many "pars" to the record of Royal game-bags.

Where, then, is the boasted security of justice and personal freedom under constitutional government? Of what avail are the sanctions of law and the conduct of courts? All can be waived when national fury, or personal or class prejudice or prepossession, comes upon the scene.

Again, have constitutional governments anywhere ever yet taken up seriously the question of the rights of the workers to the land on which they work? Have they faced the fact that these burdens on the community—which they heap up so recklessly—are, in the ultimate, all borne by the labourer, since the moment that other classes feel them they recoup themselves in raised rents and increased charges for the bare necessaries of life? In the democratic United States, though a new country, where land is abundant, do we hear nothing of labour troubles or of slums? In certain Southern States, it
appears there is unrestricted child labour in mills. In Great Britain, last century, did not some of the Radical Members of Parliament, being themselves in the cotton interest, strenuously oppose restrictions on such labour? Does not such labour still exist in India and in Egypt, countries supposed to be enjoying every blessing under the protection of constitutional Britain?

It may not be pleasant to the pride of British people to be reminded of these facts. But one can scarcely refrain from such reminder, when they are so ready to urge as a universal and sufficient panacea the very remedy they have themselves proved to be, in itself, no conspicuous success. They would do better to reflect on the old saying that "a coach and horses can be driven through any Act of Parliament."

Laws may be on the Statute-book, but they must ever remain inoperative, unless either they are enforced by violence, or the people are in full sympathy with them—in which latter case, being little needed, they can well fall into the background. For example, there are laws in Britain against every kind of vice, down to the vicious pictorial suggestion offered to childhood and youth in our public streets. Of what use are those laws? They serve only to lap people into false security, when, without them, they might be up and doing.

State children and the State feeding of children, at first advocated as measures of justice and charity, are already openly spoken of as the best machinery for providing willing and efficient tools of Imperial violence and militarism.

The ideal government would appear to be that which has fewest links in its official chain; imposes fewest restrictions on individual human action; and most leaves each being, so far as government is concerned, to reap as he has sown, thereby increasing that sense of individual responsibility from which alone true progress can advance, and along which it is
advancing, slowly but steadily, even in despite of its mistaken faith in the efficacy of "governments."

Better, therefore, lay aside all false hopes of justice and regeneration through governments and legislation, and devote ourselves to the culture of the principles of universal brotherhood to be considered and carried out by each individual as he can (with no fantastic "exclusion" whatever), and to those practices of self-denial, disinterested service, and bread-labour, which have been inculcated by all world-religions, and which can alone rob Mammon of his dire power to corrupt or to stultify. Said the Roman Curius: "A man who can sup on a turnip can do without gold," and such men have been found in all races and religions and under all forms of government.

Only by the spread of such principles and practices among the people themselves can their government or legislation be pure and righteous; and with such principles and practices in their subjects, any government, autocratic, constitutional, or republican, becomes a mere matter of form.

One has the deepest sympathy for all Russia just now—from its pitiable Czar to its smallest orphaned or murdered child. One knows, too, all about "Sergius"—the published facts of his career, and all the sinister rumours. Yet when one thinks of his heredity, breeding, and environment, who can cast a stone? How many of us have set ourselves so free from the conditions of our own lives, whatever they be, as to have any right to marvel that he did not free himself from his?

Assassinations startle and horrify the world, which forgets how it is itself poisoned in every part by this same idea that it is possible to do evil and to secure good. "By removing this one man, we shall remove the suffering of millions," says the political murderer. But another says, "Let me only make a fortune by a few speculations—or keep a fortune, made by what iniquity I know not—and see how much good I shall be able to do with it!" "By torturing these dumb
creatures, we shall learn how to alleviate human pain,” whispers the vivisector. “By making this war we shall advance civilisation,” argues a Constitutional Government. “And through this same war we can send out more missions,” add the Churches. “By shooting down troublesome people we shall preserve order,” affirms an Autocracy. All the while, the millions must remain miserable, till they will to be otherwise; and there is no evil which is really ended by means of money. The vivisectors forget that, in place of hoping for occasional, uncertain, incredible “cures” of disease, they might have its wholesome (and wholesale) prevention if they would inculcate (first by example) chastity, temperance, industry, and contentment. The Constitutional Governments never pause to question the value of their war-bought civilisation, with its desolations, its pauperism, and its lapsed masses. The Churches forget that when they hang up the banner of conquest, they also raise that of materialism; and Autocracy ignores that a fusilade but projects the germs of future and wider-spread riot and assassination.

Freedom lies open to every human soul who does not barter it away for something else! An old English author (1613–67) propounded the same thesis as Tolstoy, when he wrote:

“No man can make another man to be his slave, unless he hath first enslaved himself to life or death, to pleasure or pain, to hope or fear: command these passions, and you are freer than the Parthian kings.”
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