

# System of Graft that Would Appall Tammany Saps Russia's Life Blood

Here in St. Petersburg the fate of Russia is hanging in the balance. The war with Japan might close tomorrow, and Russia's destiny would be but little affected by the episode. All the real elements in the crisis are here, and here will be decided the momentous question of the rise or fall of the present dynasty and government.

Revolution in the form of popular revolt will not come. In no country on earth are the precautions against rebellion so complete, and nowhere else would its attempt be so hopeless. But governments are sometimes overthrown from the top; and this danger is never absent in an autocracy which is presided over by a weak and vacillating monarch.

The Russian people have been many times during the past few months that the real rulers of Russia are a group of nobles, who, by one means or another, control the emperor and dominate the policy of the empire. The emperor is compelled to point out who are these mysterious individuals and what are their motives and methods.

The late M. de Plehve was merely their representative, and a very able executor of their will. His tragic and well deserved fate has produced a temporary confusion and uncertainty in the plans of his successors. The uncertainty is not due to any intention in the tyrannical designs of the real oppressors of Russia, but to the fact that the emperor has been induced to make a natural resistance on the part of the czar to sanction still sterner measures of repression.

The people of a free country can have little conception of the peril to which this unhappy man would expose himself, in a serious rupture with his ministers. But it is remembered that the assassin of his grandfather were not nihilists, as Russia gave the world to suppose, but the agents of his own encourage, who took this means of the acquaintance of his attention to grant a constitution to his people.

The Russian passport system is the most effective safeguard against crime known to modern institutions. Its rules are stringent and they are strictly enforced.

No person may remain away from his ordinary domicile more than one night without the collector of a wife, or the police by the household, condescend or other person in control of the building.

The arrival of any person for a similar length of time must likewise be reported. The effect of this surveillance, combined with the severe punishments imposed, is that larceny, embezzlements and all minor offenses are far more rare in Russia than in any country on earth. Escape is practically impossible, once a crime is discovered.

So it comes about that Russia is honest in the non-criminal sense of the word. It is an honest country, and it is this form of Russian "honesty" that is just and equitable. Only in its public service is the country hopelessly corrupt, and there the corruption exists by tacit consent, and it is willingly universal.

The admiral who buys coal for his ships in a foreign port secures as vouch-

ers through a middleman receipts for a much larger sum than the actual price, and he and certain of his subordinates pocket the difference. Almost every contractor who furnishes supplies must pay tribute to officials amounting to the full actual value of the goods or even more, and the price to the government is increased accordingly.

Even the boldest of such crimes, however, often go unpunished. The last great robbery of the publicly subscribed Red Cross funds, one of the most detestable national scandals of the time, has brought no contribution to the high-placed thieves. These thefts, according to common report, amounted to no less than 75 per cent of the whole sum contributed in Russia and abroad.

As it is in high places, so it is in low. As soon as inquiry is directed to the vast machinery of the civil service the secret of the policy adopted for safeguarding the Russian aristocracy is disclosed.

The greater number of public servants are simply useless parasites upon the body politic. In no other country has the bureaucracy developed into such an immense burden upon the state. Nowhere else is there such an involved and absurd system of circumlocution.

There are two methods of dealing with individuals or groups whom the government may regard as dangerous. One is repression in some form—banishment to Siberia or a distance province; the other is to add them to its own ranks, as officers from the public crib.

The latter plan has been followed to an extent that is almost beyond belief. Department after department has been created, five after five of great office buildings has been built in St. Petersburg for this purpose, and there are as many clerks upon the pay roll of the office for dog licenses in St. Petersburg as there are dogs in the capital.

It is unnecessary in the interests of truth to speak in the frankest terms of the influence of the Greek church upon Russian life. It is a subject of the utmost national importance, for it is the church more than the government, more indeed than any other obstacle, which has held back the march of progress in Russia.

To mention first what may seem a trivial matter, is the church which insists upon the retention of the Russian calendar, which is 15 days slower than the true record. It may be imagined that religious traditions and conservatism account for the opposition to such an obvious reform. Not so. The real reason is that the change would confuse the arrangement of the calendar of religious holidays, and would operate to abolish many of them.

We must go still deeper for the underlying motive. Last week the czar received a heavy petition from southern Russia, praying him to grant the church as well as head of the state to cancel some of the compulsory holidays which now restrict the energies of his subjects. This suggestion will be especially well received, as it is opposed by all the influences which the Greek church can bring to bear.

Will it be believed that there are in the Russian calendar some 40 secular days in each year when ordinary labor is prohibited? It must be obvious that a heavy handicap is thus imposed upon the prosperity of a nation.

It means that no less than 35 per cent of ordinary labor productive opportunity is cancelled. In other words, a livelihood for 44 days must be gained by 233 days' work.

Here lies the secret of the hard struggle of the Russian masses with poverty. No nation under the freest political institutions could prosper under such conditions.

Russia is an agricultural country. A smaller proportion of her population live in cities than in any other civilized nation. The imposition of enforced idleness upon the peasant farmers is particularly onerous.

Before the emancipation of the serfs, the manifold holiday system was a welcome boon to them. They cared little for the material prosperity of their masters, for their livelihood depends upon their own exertions.

They cannot win enough from the soil for themselves and their families unless they are permitted to make full use of their powers. Hence the holidays are today a social phenomenon never known elsewhere—an agitation by toilers themselves in favor of the abolition of holidays.

The church will not let it avoid it, yield a single one of its compulsory saint days. Why? Simply because on every such day the people go at least once to church, and each attendance means a contribution of kopecks or more to the priest's coffers.

The treasure of the church is money and jewels amounting to a fabulous sum. It is in fact, unless well informed Russia are deceived, better able to supply the needs of the war in the present struggle in the far east than the imperial treasury itself.

Let it be said without reservation that it is the emperor's sincere desire to be at peace with all the world, to infringe no rights of other nations, and to defend and foster in every way the best interests of his people. The common saying in St. Petersburg is that the czar's views are those of the last man with whom he has conversed. The matter has been so stated, and it is far from Russia that this thing should be true.

It is inevitable, even in an autocracy, that men of influence should be divided between two rival political policies. There are not two parties in Russia, for such a definite division of political opinion is not permitted to exist. Two ill-defined groups is a better designation. One group may be roughly defined as liberal and reactionaries, the other as the autocracy.

Let it be said, nevertheless, is the ablest and most progressive public man in Russia. His enemies, who have deprived him of much of his power, and who would destroy him if they could, are unable to do so, because his services are almost indispensable to the country in dealing with the financial problems of the war.

The story of his overthrow is the record of the triumph of the great duke over the czar, and which is responsible for the present situation.

The grand dukes regained their ascendancy over the emperor but gradually. Mr. Burrell was the czar's favorite expert courtier, and they were not able

to spend much time in sympathy or in safeguarding the emperor's confidence in themselves. They were undermined with elaboration and insidious skill.

Their danger first became apparent when the czar created the post of minister of commerce for Grand Duke Alexander. De Witte vigorously opposed the project, and having failed, he was instructed enough to make difficulties in the financing of the new department.

Alexander soon demonstrated his superior influence at court, and the decline of the De Witte policy was rapid. It became the aim of the grand duke group to throw all possible political power into the hands of De Plehve and Alexander. In this they succeeded completely.

De Plehve won his position by sheer ability and force of character. He was the ideal executor of the reactionary policy. He was honest, broad and impartial. He was also cruel, merciless and mistaken.

Alexander's retention in power, by the way, is a mystery which excites no surprise in Russia. The explanation so generally accepted, that it almost amounts to common knowledge is to the effect that the Asiatic victory is the son of Alexander II by an Armenian mother, and therefore the natural uncle of the czar. It is quite the custom in Russia to provide liberally for the "left-hand side" of the family.

The mad recklessness of the grand duke policy which has plunged the country into a war for which it was utterly unprepared, which has driven its most prosperous provinces to the verge of rebellion and has alienated the sympathy of the entire world is bitterly resented even by many who are opposed to Witte's liberalism. The war is intensely unpopular outside the official classes.

Open resistance to the prevailing policy is hopeless. Passive resistance is exercised to an extent which Russia is striving to conceal from the outside world.

The orders for reserve troops to join the colors are entirely ignored in whole provinces, and the government has not force enough to compel obedience. The czar's attempt to arouse a patriotic response by his public appeals during his recent tour was a complete failure. His name is openly reviled daily in the streets and cafes of Odessa. Throughout southern Russia his prestige is gone and loyalty has disappeared.

But a people without arms cannot rebel. Authority is maintained in each district by troops drafted from some distant province usually unacquainted with the people whom they are assigned to control. The danger of a refusal of the soldiers to fire upon a mob is thus obviated.

Intelligent Russia is learning, fortunately, to analyze the evil influences of which the emperor is the victim. Honest reactionaries are becoming thoroughly alarmed by the crimes and corruption of the small group who have brought the empire to the verge of ruin. These plunderers of Russia are all

members of the imperial family, near relatives of the czar. They are: Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovich who married the emperor's favorite sister, Grand Duchess Xenia. Grand Duke Vladimir, Alexis and Serge, the brothers of Alexander III.

These are the men whom the autocrat of all the Russians permits to wield his scepter.

The domination of their will over the emperor is no new thing. All his life Nicholas has been accustomed to subordinate himself to his uncles, and his accession to the throne made no difference. For the past year or two the influence of the brother-in-law has increased above that of the uncles, but there has been no rivalry in policy among them.

Full, dark, with aquiline features and strikingly handsome is Alexander Michaelovich. He is 44, eight years the senior of the emperor. He is the fourth son of the Grand Duke Michael and the wife of the late Grand Duke Michael.

Alexander's first appointment was that of vice-admiral-in-chief, under his uncle, Grand Duke Alexis. He resigned this post after a short time, but he has now returned it is addition to his cabinet place.

The resignation followed on a quarrel arising from the founding of a Russian battleship in the Baltic about ten years ago. Certain naval officers declared that the vessel was unworthy and that her watertight bulkheads were shams, and they induced Alexander to procure the emperor's consent to a general inspection of other ships.

The result was complete proof that Alexis and his friends had been diverting shipbuilding money to their own pockets and the whole fleet suffered from inferior equipment. The highly placed thieves whom he had helped to expose soon made Alexander's place too hot to hold him, and he left the navy for a few years. In his retirement he made up his mind to leave his nest alone in future, and today "help yourself" is the recognized cry in both the departments with which he is connected.

In character, Alexander is narrow, opinionated, arrogant and unscrupulous. He was solely responsible for the bad upon neutral shipping by the volunteer fleet, and it is an open question whether his real object was not to embroil the powers.

Valdimir is a man of wholly different stamp. It is difficult to understand by what means he maintains his influence over the emperor, unless it be that he is the eldest of the uncles to whom he has always been accustomed to look as his mentors in knowledge of the world.

Valdimir and his two sons, Cyril and Boris, have established notorious records by their prodigal and dissolute lives. Their habits approximate closely those of the detested group of Austrian grand dukes, whom Emperor Francis Joseph has removed from the line of succession and who have been driven from Vienna by the decent sense of their countrymen, noble and humble alike.

Alexis, the head of the fleet, is a much

quiet man. He has succeeded in keeping matrimonial bonds out of his mercantile alliances, which are his chief preoccupation.

Some of the actresses at the French theatre are much beloved by him. It was one of his mistresses who recently acted as go-between in Paris in a deal for the purchase of certain foreign ships for Russia. She succeeded in collecting a cash commission of \$100,000, and then the deal fell through.

The very pharisee of the three is military governor of Moscow. He is the leading Jew-baiter of the family, and he will not allow a Jew to pass the night in the city of Moscow.

All three, but Valdimir more especially, are thieves of public money and private subscriptions. Money for the army, for the navy, for the hospital funds, has to pay toll in millions of rubles as it passes through their hands. Their hangers on, whose name is legion, copy them with seal.

The very pharisee, built on the bones of the assassination of the reforming czar Alexander II, whose death was undoubtedly ordered by his reactionary relatives, stands uncompleted, although it was begun 21 years ago, and the money was subscribed several times over by the Russian people. No one expects that it will be completed in this generation. It is the murdered czar's sons, the three grand dukes above named, who are the treasurers.

Certain provincial governors deplore the existing regime, and their power in the sections over which they preside is supreme. In co-operation feasible between them and some of the military authorities and other dissatisfied leaders and nobles in the empire? If so, there is some ground to hope.

But espionage in Russia has been reduced to such an exact science that a widespread plot of this nature would be exceedingly dangerous, if not certain of detection. The peculiarly Russian weapon of assassination is more likely to be tried first.

There is no doubt that this danger already exists for Alexander if not for the other grand dukes who have been named. Mr. de Witte remarked cynically the other day that De Plehve's successor if a reactionary, would not be allowed to live six months. The blow, however, would be aimed at him alone.

On the other hand, what would happen if the emperor should experience a change of heart and should repudiate the grand ducal cabal and all its works? This is quite too much to expect from a man of his character in the present situation. He is much more likely to seek a policy of impossible compromise.

Open revolt against his present mentors would involve him in dire personal peril, for they are men who scruple at nothing. He would be swept away, and one of the grand dukes, not the younger brother of the emperor, would attempt to usurp the throne under the form of a regency. The infant Czarvitch might or might not live to wear the crown.

It is surprising that many true Russians, seeing no other hope for their country, are praying for a few more salutory assassinations.

**WITHIN HER GRASP.**  
BY GILES WHEATLEY.

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It was the race week at Marlhabad, in India, and a motley crowd thronged the course.

Stately Helen Lomez was there with Mrs. Mitford, the collector of a wife. As usual, she was surrounded by admirers, but of her two most faithful ones, Mr. Burrell, the commissioner, and Major Wardrop, only Burrell was by her side.

"I do hope Major Wardrop will win this, don't you, Helen?" said Winnie Maitland, Mrs. Mitford's niece, a bright-eyed girl of 17, just out from Scotland.

"Of course I do," she said quickly.

Helen had made the acquaintance of both men whilst her father was stationed last year at Marlhabad, but he had been suddenly moved away a few months previously and Winnie was sure they had not met again.

But so far the meeting had been full of disappointment. She had been at Marlhabad now for ten days, and in all that time she had never been alone with Gerard, although he had eagerly sought her society on all possible occasions. Her hostess was a veritable dragon, and she was beginning to suspect her of preventing any private conversation.

Was it possible that she wanted Winnie to marry him? The little girl seemed quite ready to lose her heart to him, and he was evidently attracted by her youthful prettiness. Here her train of thought was interrupted by a cheery voice behind her saying:

"A penny for your thoughts, Miss Lomez."

She looked up and saw young Teddy Gordon, a boyish, but very stanch, admirer.

"Oh, they are worth more than that to me, Teddy. I'll postpone the rest of them until you make me a better offer."

"Well, I came to ask you if you would like to watch this next race from the water jump. I expect we shall see a few spills, for it's such a big field."

Looking back she noticed that Winnie was, for the moment, alone and called to her to join them. The girl started eagerly and hurried across to the jump.

"Now, there's off. No, it's a false start. Yes, there they really are off this time. I do think Major Wardrop will win, and Winnie chances her hands, her pretty blue eyes dancing with excitement.

Yellow and nearer came the horses. They seemed to be all together. Would they all clear the jump? And then—

An instant's suspense, and Mr. Carver was over, quickly followed by Wardrop on the chestnut. Those two were ahead of all the rest, and it was a neck and neck race. Only one more

to play her part well enabled her to swallow anything. The champagne, however, pulled her together, and when she made her appearance in the ballroom she looked like a queen indeed.

"Too late, Major Wardrop," she said. "My program is full; there is no room for 'letters by the way,'" and with a smile and a nod she turned to her partner, leaving Wardrop speechless with astonishment.

Dancing gaily through the program, her most favored partner was his own friend Burrell.

Opinions were freely expressed as to her probable acceptance of his suit, and it caused but little surprise to the society of Marlhabad when Mrs. Mitford announced at the club that evening that they were engaged. Only on Wardrop did the news fall like a thunderbolt.

"I swear she loved me," he muttered as he paced his veranda, unable to sleep through the long hours of the night.

"If it had been any other man than Burrell—mine own familiar friend, I would try even at this late hour to put things right between us. But I can't spoil his life. After all, she has her choice. She must have known that I loved her, so she deliberately chose between us."

And what of Helen? Was she happy? She had saved herself out of humiliation by accepting Mr. Burrell as her lover, but would she never forget that she had given her love where it was scorned, as she imagined?

Mr. Burrell was not slow to name an early date for their marriage, so his wishes furnished her with an excuse for returning home.

As Mrs. Mitford wished her an affectionate "goodbye," she said mysteriously, "I expect you will hear some news of Winnie which will surprise you, but things are not really settled yet."

"Well, wish her joy for me, please, Mrs. Mitford, when the time comes. Ah, we are off," and Helen waved her hand to the group assembled to bid her farewell.

One morning shortly after the Burrells had settled down at Marlhabad, Helen received a "note" from Winnie, inviting herself to tiffin that day. "For," she wrote, "I have some great news to tell you which I think will surprise you. Things were only really settled yesterday."

"I suppose I must say 'yes,' but, oh, how can I bear to hear her talk of her happiness with Gerard? How shall I ever bid my own feelings? Still, it must be done, so I'll go," and Helen sat down and wrote a few lines to Winnie saying she would be pleased to see her.

She welcomed Winnie warmly when she arrived.

"Well," she said gaily, "and what is the great news, dear? Or can I guess it; is it that you are going to be married?"

"Yes, but what is the world made you guess so quickly?"

"My child, hasn't Major Wardrop been your shadow for weeks? It was easy to see what was going to happen."

"Major Wardrop?" gasped Winnie

## I Vunder Vere Boliver My Little Elephant Is?

The cartoon depicts a man in a dark suit, white shirt, and bow tie, looking upwards with a thoughtful expression. Behind him is a large, stylized elephant. On the side of the elephant, the words "THE TRUSTS" are written in a bold, sans-serif font. The man's hand is near his chin, suggesting he is pondering a question or a situation. The overall style is that of a classic political cartoon from the early 20th century.