

# SLAV MOUJIKS MEN OF BRAINS SAYS RUSSELL

Russian Peasants Described—Intimate Lives of Muscovite Masses—Influence of Long Sub-Arctic Nights—How They Learn Prohibited Political Facts Secretly.

This is another of the series of articles by Charles Edward Russell, who has just returned from Russia, where he spent three months as a member of the official United States commission to the new Russian government.

(By Charles Edward Russell.)  
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The peasant is the backbone of Russia—also the arms, hands, heart and a lot of the brain.

We think of him as a queer creature with tousled hair growing low over his eyes, a thick tangled jungle of a beard, a blouse with a belt around it high boots and an air of foolish, doddering good nature. We think of him this way, if at all, because this is the way he always has been pictured for us and we stick to tradition, every time.

Also, we think he is very ignorant. Why not? There are no schools in Russia, you know, and the whole population is illiterate. It is a very barbarous country. A few persons of the better order are nice, but the moujik, or peasant, is the human limit. He used to be drunk all the time. Perhaps now that vodka is abolished, or said to be abolished, he has his sober intervals, but all the travelers and all the writers agree that the moujik is the human limit and what is the use of having literature if it gives us always the wrong steer?

### Peasants Can Read.

If this notion about the peasant, which is still held by many of us that ought to know better, were correct, you could say good night to Russia. It would be all off there and the correspondents that belong to the Amalgamated Sons of Gloom would have good reason for their low-pressure stuff. Eighty per cent of the people of Russia are peasants, and if these are besotted and ignorant we might as well give up hoping for her and think about something else.

But it isn't true; it isn't anything near the truth. The typical Russian peasant isn't a Harvard graduate, if that fact gives you grief, and he doesn't know anything about differential calculus or Greek roots. He never carried a cane with a big bulging end and was never under the enlightening influences of the Eata Piece of Pie fraternity. But as a general rule now he can read or has someone in his family that can, and he always has a good mind and very often an amazing stock of good common sense.

There are other ways of training the mind besides learning (and speedily forgetting) how to read the Anabasis, or wearing on your coat lapel the pin of a Greek letter society.

The Russian long winters and the peasant's mode of life have combined to educate him without many books or learned professors.

He lives in a village, always. There is no such thing, so far as I know, as a farmer that lives remotely on his farm. Village life beats isolated farm house life all to bits. Loneliness atrophies the average human mind; association with your fellows keeps it in motion and being. If there are only 16 persons in your village that is 16 times better than communing always with yourself.

### Influence of Climate.

Russia is a very northerly country. A lot of it lies close to the Arctic circle, or within. In the summer at Petrograd the light is never out of the northwestern sky before the new day begins in the northeast. In June and July there are a few weeks when no artificial light is used in the streets all night, and none is needed in the houses that have good windows.

But the other way about, a winter day in Russia is shorter than your mother's pie crust. It is over before it has well begun. It has Whittier's description in "Snow Bound" beaten off the map. "The sun that brief December day," says Whittier, and in Russia there usually isn't any sun to it. A gray light warms up about 10 a. m. and quits in a weary, disgusted fashion at 2 p. m., and that's all. Daylight has gone off the job until the next morning at 10.

Of course, in these conditions farm work practically ceases in September and doesn't get started again until March or April. The farmer has close to his house in the village his

horse, cows and pigs. When he has fed these and put the wood handy to be thrown into the big brick oven that heats the whole house he has nothing else to do.

Heating the house, by the way, is easier than you might think, considering the fiendish climate. The house is built of logs carefully trimmed and fitted together and every chink caulked airtight with moss and plaster, so that not a breath of cold air can penetrate. The windows are double and caulked like the timbers. The house is small and the room in it scanty. The great brick oven easily keeps the temperature at 70—80 or above. And I may say that no national yearning for fresh air in winter complicates the heating problem in any way.

### Peasants' Industries.

It is to these long nights of idleness that Russia owes two developments that have been invaluable to her—the spread of information among the peasants and the perfecting of what are called the peasants' industries.

There is nothing to do but to talk, to carve things, to weave and to knit. So the peasants do all these at the same time.

They sit in a row, talking and working. Every scrap of knowledge possessed by one becomes the common property.

In the old days of the poisonous czar every effort was made to keep the people from knowing anything that might stir them to revolt. For a long time the policy was absolute ignorance of everything except how to plant, reap and serve the czar. After the revolution of 1905 and the institution of the дума a change was forced and schools became common. The great object of government then was to supervise and control this education and to that end no books, magazines or newspapers were allowed in the country except such as the government approved.

### Story of Revolution.

A peasant that could read secreted prohibited literature and read it by stealth to his working compan-

ions. A peasant that heard prohibited doctrine in one village repeated it in another. The men and women sat and carved and wove and knitted and absorbed day after day the philosophy of freedom.

To give but one illustration, a chapter in history that the czar particularly desired to have kept from his people was the American revolution. The story of it spread over all Russia.

The soil was good. The natural instincts of the Russians are all democratic. For centuries their land was a collection of small republics. Every time they heard of a struggle for liberty anywhere the lesson came home to them and slowly under the watchful eyes of the police the revolution ripened. The long nights and the village gatherings made their school-house and tuition. Without them there might have been no revolt. The czar and the police spy might have reigned on indefinitely.

## FRENCH WAR CROSS FOR AMERICANS

AMERICAN HEADQUARTERS IN FRANCE, Sept. 19.—(By the Associated Press.)—Brigadier General George B. Duncan and Major Campbell King are the first American officers to receive the war cross in the French awards growing out of American participation in the recent Verdun offensive, when they acted as observation officers in forward artillery posts. Whether the officers will be permitted to accept the decoration is not known.

The citation for General Duncan reads:

"He assisted our forces under circumstances of extreme danger during a very violent bombardment at Verdun."

A piece of shrapnel struck the steel hat of the officer.

Major King also visited the forward dressing stations.

## PERSHING FAST DEVELOPING REAL WAR MACHINE

Young Officers Making Good and Enlisted Men Showing Wonderful Aptitude in Learning Trench Warfare Methods From French Instructors—Almost Ready to Meet Germans.

BY C. C. LYON.

WITH THE AMERICAN TROOPS IN FRANCE, (Controle Americain), Sept. 20.—The American troops have now had three months training in France.

What are the big outstanding features?

1. General Pershing is fast developing his forces into a real fighting machine.
2. Young officers from the American training camp schools are making good with a whoop.
3. The enlisted men are showing wonderful aptitude in learning trench warfare methods from their French instructors.

### At High Speed.

In developing the American troops into a high speed, enthusiastic war machine, Gen. Pershing and Gen. Sibert make an ideal combination. Sibert is field commander of the first expedition.

Pershing has furnished the iron discipline that was needed by the new army.

Sibert, now affectionately called "Papa" Sibert, by his men, has furnished the pats on the back.

Pershing recently visited his troops. Since he went back to Paris there has been a general clicking of heels;

officers give their commands with more pep and the men go thru their work with more energy and earnestness; there has been a noticeable perk up in personal appearances; and the whole military works have moved more swiftly and smoothly.

Pershing is a commander with a big punch. Nothing escapes his eagle eye. He knows exactly what is needed to put the American army on a par with the French and English.

### American Aptitude.

Of course, the final success of the American army in France is going to depend, not on the generals who command, but on the enlisted men themselves—the boys who'll "go over the top" and into the German trenches.

Already, the French marvel at the aptitude of the average American private—at his quick wit and his ability to grasp and master new things.

In a hand grenade class the other day the distance became so great that the French instructors thought the Americans couldn't put the grenades over the barriers.

But the American boys, every last one of whom had played baseball since he was knee-high to a prasshopper, stepped up and hit the bull's eye with the grenades.

Most folks back home imagine it may take months to prepare "our boys" for this war game. Not at all. If he keeps up the pace he is now going, the Germans may meet him very, very soon.

## PEACE SHARES BOOM GERMAN MARKETS

STOCKHOLM, Sept. 20.—Conditions in Russia occasioned a small peace boom this week on German stock markets. So-called peace shares, such as shipping and colonial stocks, made gains, while munition stocks were correspondingly depressed. The movement, however, according to Berlin and Hamburg newspapers, was on a limited scope.

## SHARP SKIRMISHES CONTINUE AROUND LENS COAL MINES

CANADIAN HEADQUARTERS IN FRANCE, Sept. 19.—Sharp outpost actions occurred west of Lens yesterday and today, in which the enemy were the aggressors. The objective of today's skirmish was a house in the western part of Lens, occupied by us as an outpost. Last night a strong party of Germans attacked the house, but were driven off. They returned to the attack in stronger force and captured the house. The Canadians who had held it at once organized a counter-attack, driving out the Germans.

Artillery activity has been greater today, aided by brilliant sunshine, than for several days. The tendency of the enemy already noted to devote more attention to shelling our back areas with long-range, high velocity gas increases, as does his use of gas shells in sections where non-combatants live. The object apparently is to terrorize mine workers and their families and make more difficult the work of raising coal.

Beyond a doubt, in no part of the western front, not even at Verdun itself, has there been so prolonged and steady a gunfire maintained during the past three years as around Ypres. This tragic city of the dead looks hideous, but it doubtless is true that in the moonlight, when the shadows of pinnacles and mounds of crumbling stone that mark the site of the Cloth hall, one of the chief architectural glories of the middle ages, fall upon the grand place, Ypres has a beauty that not all the malevolence of the people can destroy.

John M. Scott, general passenger agent of the Southern Pacific, is in the city today from Portland.

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