

But in addition to the hostile attitude of sect toward sect and of orthodoxy toward heresy, there is another far more fatal obstacle to the uninterrupted course of evangelical truth in Russia. I refer to the influences which centre in the great lay *procureur* of the Holy Synod, M. Constantine Pobedanostseff. This able man, notwithstanding a temporary eclipse at the accession of the present Czar, is still the most powerful statesman in Russia. He is thoroughly sincere in his notion that the welfare of the empire depends upon the intimate connection of Church and State, and no pains are too great and no labor is without reward, which has for its object the welding together the closest interests of both. Dissent from the Church is, in his view, disloyalty to the empire. The dissenter who, enamored of Luther's doctrines, hangs up a picture of the great reformer in his room, is not far from hanging up a picture of the German Emperor, or from deposing the picture of the Czar.

These are in reality M. Pobedanostseff's views more than once expressed. The passionate love which this statesman bears to his church is part of the fibre of his being. In a well-known passage he once declared to the leaders of the Evangelical Alliance, that it was the Russian Church which stood for two hundred years between Western Europe and the Mongolian invaders from the East, that if the East had left its impress too deeply on the Russian character, it is because Russia took upon herself what might have destroyed Europe, and that instead of the of the Western churches sneering at the supposed intolerance and immobility of their Russian sister, they should be filled with admiration at the constancy and fortitude which has enabled her to preserve inviolate her holiest traditions and her undying hopes.

Both as churchman and as politician, therefore, Pobedanostseff will tolerate no defection from the standards of the orthodox faith, and if a handful of peasants here and there in the interior maintain their right to liberty of conscience, or if the Lutheran pastors of the Baltic provinces interfere with the rights of the Russian clergy, or if the Roman Catholics of Poland attempt any undue assertion of the rights of the Latin Church, they are one and all summarily crushed.

We can have nothing but admiration for zeal properly directed and guided by discretion into right channels, but when a highly-placed statesman, a man of great culture and knowledge of the world, thinks that he can advance the cause of true religion by petty restrictions, by vexatious harryings of peasants' cottages and kidnapping of their children, by prison and stick and banishment, by depriving hundreds of innocent men and women of their personal rights and privileges, by conduct, in a word, which ap-

proaches in its ferocity the methods of the Spanish zealots of the seventeenth century, we have nothing but reprobation for such a statesman, we have nothing but condemnation for his principles, and our most entire sympathies are wholly with the wretched victims who for the faith that is in them remain undaunted in face of the priests and police who hound them on to prison and exile.

It was the foolish notion of many well-wishers of Russia that the persecutions which had disgraced the last years of Alexander's III.'s reign would cease under the sway of Nicholas, but such hopes have turned out to be groundless, and after a short spell of quiet the jails are again receiving the more prominent of the Stundists and Baptists, and almost every chain of prisoners which crosses the snows of the Caucasus from Russia contains one or more representatives of that patient and heroic body of Protestant peasants who have done far more for the real advance of Russia than all the statesmen in Petersburg.

But despite persecution and many a dark cloud on the horizon, the outlook in Russia is anything but gloomy. Even if we abide by the somewhat uncertain test of numbers, there is every reason to believe that the Protestant or evangelical sects are increasing. If in one or two places the Orthodox Church can boast that it has eradicated dissent, there are innumerable districts all over Russia which now contain isolated bodies of Stundists where ten years ago there were none. The very dispersal of these brethren must tend to their rapid increase. Filled with zeal for his cause, the banished man and his family at once start to make known to their neighbors the great truths which have done so much for them.

Perhaps no factor in the situation is so important and far-reaching as the extraordinary circulation of the Scriptures, which is effected year after year in the mighty empire stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific. Between five and six hundred thousand copies of the Word of God are circulated every year in Russia, and he who would learn what is being actually done in bringing the Gospel to the people of Russia has only to study the deeply interesting reports of the agents of the British and Foreign Bible Society and the report of the Russian Society for Circulating the Scriptures. From all parts of the huge country the colporteurs of these societies meet with encouragement.

It is not merely in the towns and cities that this work is being done. We read of hundreds of copies being distributed in a village, of the peasants on steamboats sitting all day long reading the Gospels, of employers buying copies for their workmen, and officers for their soldiers. The writer of this article has seen the colporteurs at their work, and more than once has noticed the tears start to the eyes of great rough fellows as they became possessed for the first