

They Do Beasts' Work for Their Religion

A Strange Fanaticism That Threatens to Make Odd Colony Extinct.

Creeping wearily, a heavy farm wagon loaded high with sacks of flour and hauled slowly through the principal street of Yorkton, the chief town near the Russian Doukhobor settlement, in the Northwest Territory of Canada, by eight gaunt, heavy looking men and six hopeless looking women, told a story of religious fanaticism that perhaps has never had its parallel in the history of man's mania.

Turning neither to right nor left and leading not the pests of the species, this human freight train advanced at a snail's pace with the huge vehicle over the deeply rutted prairie road. Night and day would this strange procession move over the limitless prairie, scarcely resting until their "village of freedom" more than thirty miles distant, was reached.

Walking at the stout ropes that increased them in pairs together, with bowed heads, and in absolute silence, these peculiar people would patiently endure, hour after hour, the most agonizing labor in order to live up to their religious convictions. The wagon was being taken to the Doukhobor village of Terpenne, and the human beasts of burden were the unfortunate Russians who came to America about four years ago to make new homes in a land where, they were told, they could worship as they pleased and could follow the ancient customs and rites of their forefathers without molestation by the government. The Doukhobors have done so with a vengeance. As a result several thousands of them who have become afflicted with a most peculiar religious mania will either starve or freeze to death this winter if they do not get aid or come to their senses in time to gather in their crops.

The history of these strange people since they arrived in Canada is a remarkable one. Through the influence of the kind-hearted Tzaritza they were permitted to leave Russian territory. Lion hearted men, like Tolstoy and other social reformers, raised hands to assist them to reach a "land of promise." The Dominion government gave them a grant of an immense tract of fertile land in the Saskatchewan district, and the way seemed clear for the oppressed people to make good homes, if not a competence.

Full of hope and rejoicing in the prospect of religious and social liberty, 7,000 of the immigrants reached Yukon and were finally settled on the reservation set apart for them. They adhered to their religious customs, but worked hard and, until the present year, appeared to be on the high road to prosperity. Five all in changed. Religious fanaticism of the most aggravated type has taken possession of the Russians and to all appearances several thousands of them have become burdens on the country.

This "mania," as it is called in the West, first became noticeable several months ago, and the government agents in charge of the settlement attempted to check it. A Russian socialist, whose burning eloquence was more powerful than the calm words of advice of the agents, succeeded, however, in making hundreds of converts to his doctrine in an incredibly short space of time. He travelled through the district preaching and exhorting and found ready listeners everywhere.

The result has been startling, even in this sparsely settled western country, where a religious outbreak must be exceedingly strange to excite more than a passing comment. The sense of the Doukhobor men and women converting themselves into beasts of burden told the pathetic story of their downfall as the result of religious fanaticism.

The present mania has been reached gradually. The Doukhobors are prone to the shedding of blood. One of the reasons they left Russia was because they were forced into military service. The Canadian government guaranteed them exemption from this and accorded them every social and religious liberty. The Doukhobor religion, when its adherents arrived here, was apparently not finished. It developed unsuspected and impracticable tendencies of a fanatic character this year. From the belief that it was a sin to eat meat, these strange people arrived at the conviction that it was also sinful to eat animal products of any kind, and milk, butter, cheese, eggs, etc., were added to the list of "forbidden fruit."

Another step in this direction was taken under the guidance of the Russian socialist mentioned, and this "advancement" has resulted in their undoing. It was wrong to eat the flesh of animals, or their products, the same line of reasoning led them to condemn the use of leather boots and leather harness made from the hides of God's creatures. The condemnation of woollen clothing, because wool grows on the backs of sheep that belong to the

Lord, speedily followed. Finally the edict went forth: "It is wrong to make servants of any of the lower animals; to use them for beasts of burden, or for any other purpose."

This was generally accepted, and hundreds of cattle, horses and sheep were turned out on the trackless prairie to wander at will. Since that time, for all drawing and hauling purposes and farm operations, men and women take the places of horses and oxen at the plough and on the binders.

In order to prevent the turning loose of every head of cattle possessed by these people, the government has been compelled to seize every animal that remained.

When I visited, the settlement of the Doukhobors they had "advanced" still another step in their religious awakening. They said that man is the only animal, spoken of in the Bible as having to work, therefore no one should possess himself of the animals they had turned adrift on the prairie.

They gathered their immense herds together and drove them, night and day to the vast wilderness to the north, which is inhabited only by roving bands of Indians. They had robbed themselves voluntarily of the last resource between them and starvation this winter.

The inevitable happened. Reports just to hand state that the Indians were not long in discovering the cattle and immediately drove them far from the confines of civilization to a district where few white men have recently ventured. Government agents have started out to bring back the animals and punish the Indians, but it is feared they will not be successful.

In the meantime the fanatical settlers continue to worship in their strange manner, to follow out their "God given" ideas and to make progress with their harvests. In fact many of them appear to be indifferent to everything but religion and to be oblivious of the severe winter that is almost upon them.

"Where will it end?" the government officials are anxiously asking each other, and no one seems to be able to answer the question.

The Doukhobors seen by me were, in some cases, rudely made wooden shoes, and in others shoes made of bark. All had adopted cotton garments of the flimsiest material. With such apparel, which they say they will never give up, the misguided people will be unable to exist in this land of terrible cold longer than one month after winter sets in, more particularly as their diet consists largely of bread, water and vegetables.

The mercury after November drops sometimes to forty in that section, and wretchedness, disease and finally death seem to be the inevitable lot of the Russians if their religious fanaticism does not abate. Some persons in the vicinity think that the advent of cold weather will bring the Doukhobors to their senses. The history of religious manias in other countries and in bygone days does not strengthen this conviction.

The government officials are apparently powerless to help the settlers. They offered to buy their stock and to devote this money toward their sustenance during the winter. The Doukhobors immediately took alarm and drove their animals into the wilderness. The only ground on which the Doukhobors can be interfered with is that of insanity, and some steps may be taken by the government in this direction before winter, to save them from a terrible fate.

The Doukhobors have since the mania seized them written to the authorities in different parts of the United States, where the climate is mild, requesting grants of land; so apparently there is some method in their madness. They have, however, received no encouraging replies.

Many interesting details of the life, customs and history of the Doukhobors were learned by a visit to the settlement. One of the leading men gives the following account of their departure from Russia and the causes leading up to it.

"We may not lift arms, according to our religion," he said, "and could not enter military service in Russia to fight, with conscience. We were put in the forestry branch of the army, and for years we served the term of our conscription in planting and caring for the thousands of acres of trees set out by the Russian government.

"In the reign of the last Nicholas they tried to compel us to carry guns. This we would not do, and they drove us from our farms and harried us like wild beasts on the mountains. Our men were imprisoned and our women ill treated. They burned our homes and drove us toward the Caucasus in winter. There many of our little children died of cold and exposure. In a few years we had made homes in our new place and then the government sent the Cossacks upon us again. They took

our crops, our cattle, our money, burned our houses and drove some of us to the salt mines of Siberia.

"The prisons were full of men whose only crime was that they refused to slay their brethren. Some of my relatives are in Siberia now, at a salt mine near Irkutsk, and although they have been there eighteen years, we cannot get them out. They will die there exiled and martyred.

"We did all we could to satisfy the Russian government, and said that we would do anything except learn to fight. We sent letters and petitions to the Czar, but no notice was taken of them. And all the time the cruelty of the Cossacks went on. But the good God gave most of us strength to endure, though it was very dark. And at last the heart of the Tzaritza was moved by our sufferings. One of the petitions reached her, and she spoke in our behalf. We had heard of America, that there men may worship God as they please and we asked to go there. The good Tzaritza got for us leave to go. She sent her messengers to us with the good news, and we knew that God had pity on our sufferings.

"The government offered us \$165,000 for our farm buildings, but nothing for the land. We never got the money, as at the last moment, the government tried to stop us from going. We got away, though, and are now enjoying every social and religious freedom."

When asked if their present religious ideas would not ruin them, the Russian solemnly raised his hand and said: "The good God is guiding us. We have nothing to fear."

A few of the Doukhobors have changed their attitude toward the marriage laws. Marriage is, I was informed, with most of them, not a civil contract, but a religious sacrament, their belief in this regard being in practice what the Catholic belief is in theory. Their tenets in the matter of marriage have never been interfered with by the Russian government. The registration of marriage is there unknown, and, naturally, when they settled in Canada they continued to marry and be given in marriage without notifying the department of vital statistics.

The Doukhobors hold that no man and woman should continue to live together as man and wife unless they love and reverence each other. For two who are incompatible in disposition to live together in the marriage relation they regard as a deep sin. Far better, they say, is it for the unhappy couple to separate and, if so disposed, each seek a more congenial partner. This theory, put in practice, has earned for them the title of "free lovers."

The Tolstoy of the settlement is Mr. Scherbenin, who is one of the followers of the famous Russian author. He is a man of high rank in his own country and is splendidly educated. He renounced a brilliant career to come to America to teach these simple people the communal theology of Tolstoy.

The settlement is about two hundred and fifty miles west of Winnipeg, the centre of commerce and industry in the Canadian west, and can be reached in a day and a half. The territory set apart for the Russians is a rich one, and already land speculators have their eyes upon it. A few years ago it was occupied only by roving bands of Indians.

Several Russian villages have sprung into existence. Each consists of but one long street, running in a straight line and about one hundred and fifty feet in breadth. The buildings are long, low structures, roofed with sod or thatched, all arranged with gable ends to the street. Several families live in each dwelling and all share alike, for everything is conducted on the communal idea. One general bath house, for instance, supplies the needs of a village.

The men usually are of commanding stature, broad of shoulder and deep of chest. The women are not nearly as well built. They are comparatively shorter than the men, stockily and sturdily built, but lacking in any natural grace or charm. Their faces, at about the same age, are very similar. They all appear to have been turned out of the same mould, being round and with little or no play of feature. Their lips are full, their noses short, their eyes set wide apart lacking lustre and expressionless.

The girls and young women are thick of waist and ankle, and like the men, slow, almost ponderous in their movements. The old women are shapeless, with skins like parchment. "The women are clever at decorative weaving, but since they abandoned the use of woollen goods they have almost given up this occupation.

No one can tell what the exact religious belief of the Russians is. It has changed since they settled in Canada, and should they survive the winter may soon assume a new form

that will be equally remarkable.

The problem of what can be done for the Russian Doukhobors is an interesting one and is attracting the attention of the brightest Canadian statesmen. It is generally conceded that if the present religious mania continues to spread among the seven thousand Russians in the settlement and they adhere to their present peculiar ideas a terrible tale of suffering and death will come from the district before many months have passed.

General Colonization Agent Speers of the Dominion government, who has been in the settlement to try to bring the Russians to their senses, says that the trouble is largely due to a Russian agitator from New York, who is also a nihilist. His name is Ngoroff, and he has been among the foreigners for more than two months, preaching and exhorting.

DAWSON MARKETS

Remain in Satisfactory Condition

Eggs Make Another Small Advance - No Corners This Winter.

Now that navigation may be safely considered to be closed it becomes a comparatively easy matter to make a resume of the situation in the provision line with reference to the supply on hand to last the camp until the opening of navigation next season. Dealers generally speaking are agreed that there is enough in the city in every line to last through the winter without any repetition of the high prices in the past. Another important fact, too, is that the stocks are in a sufficient number of hands to prevent any great possibility of a corner on any commodity. The winter of '98 saw sugar retail for one dollar a pound and milk and cream at the same price per can with other goods in proportion, but such a never happen again. The winter of '99 the lowest price for which potatoes were sold was 50 cents a pound which a couple of months before navigation opened in the spring had risen to \$1.25 a pound. The next winter the ruling price on the succulent spud was 25 cents a pound and last winter 10 to 12 cents, a price it is not thought will be exceeded this season as large importations have been made late in the year.

Eggs are a good stock, the price

of which has slowly and steadily been on the advance for the past month or two. Last week they were selling at \$16 while \$18 is being asked at present. There is none too much bacon on hand and quotations on that one essential commodity of the Yukon are liable to advance very materially before the winter is over. Hams are in good demand and will probably command a higher figure before the holidays than they are now selling at. Hay and oats remain stationary at 4 1/2 cents with the demand only normal. Some insist they are a good buy at that price for speculation, but conservative dealers are showing a great deal of hesitancy in loading up on those commodities to any greater extent. The fact that probably 200 tons of hay and oats are left at Whitehorse may have a little to do with stiffening up the price at a later date. There is still quite a quantity of fresh fruit on hand, especially apples of an excellent quality, enough to last well into the winter. Fish, with the exception of frozen stock consisting of halibut and LeBarge whitefish and pickerel, is practically out of the market. Fresh meat remains firm and the outlook is good. Pork has advanced to 30 cents. General quotations for the week are as follows:

STAPLES.	
Flour	\$ 2.75 \$ 3.00
Sugar, per 100	7.00 9.00
Beans, per 100	8.00 9.00
Beans, Lima	10.00 11.00
Roasted Oats, per 100	8.00 9.00
MEATS.	
Beef, pound	20 20 50
Veal, pound	35 30 60
Pork, pound	30 30 60
Ham, pound	27 30
Bacon, fancy	27 35
Mutton, pound	25 35 60
BUTTER, EGGS, CHEESE.	
Agon's butter, 60-lb.	\$30.00 \$ 1.00/can
Elgin butter, 60-lb.	25.00 1.00/can
Coldbrook	23.50 1.00/can
S. & W., 48-lb.	30.00 1.50/can
Eggs, fresh	18.00 .75
MILK AND CREAM.	
Highland, case	\$10.00 \$11.00
Highland, case	8.50 12.00
Carnation Cream	9.00 10.00
St. Charles	7.50 9.00
CHICKENS, FISH AND GAME.	
Poultry, pound	45 50
Droppers, pound	50 60
Greyling, fresh	40
Halibut	30 35
Whitefish	25 35
Pickerel	40 50
CANNED GOODS.	
Roast beef, doz	4.50 3 for 1.00
Mutton	3.50 4.50 2 for 1.00
Ox tongue	12.00 15.00 1 for 1.25
Sausage meat	4.00 3 for 1.00
Lunch tongue, case	9.00 11.00 1 for .50
Sliced Bacon	4.00 4 for 1.00
Roast turkey	7.00 1 for .75
Corned beef	2.50 3 for 1.00
Sliced ham	4.50 2 for 1.00
Salmon, case	10.00 3 for 1.00
Clams, case	10.00 3 for 1.00

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Tomatoes 5.50 4 for 1.00
 Corn 4.25 4 for 1.00
 String beans 4.50 4 for 1.00
 Green peas 4.50 4 for 1.00
 Cabbage 7.50 2 for 1.00
 S. & W. fruits 14.00 2 for 1.00
 Simcoe fruit 6.25 3 for 1.00
 Choice California Mission
 Fruits 5.50 10.00
 Silver Seal 11.50 2 for 1.25
 Succotash 7.00 3 for 1.00
 Lubbeck's potatoes per tin 9.00
 Beets 9.00 2 for 1.00
 Asparagus 12.00 1 for .75
 Asparagus tips 14.00 2 for 1.00
 Celery, 4-5 stalks, doz 12.00 1 for .50

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