

24 LITTLE GRANDMOTHER OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

oughly try his government before he rises against it. We searched the laws and edicts; we found certain scant and long-neglected peasants' rights of local suffrage; and then we began showing the peasants how to use these rights that they already had."

Catherine proved an effective speaker at the meetings they held among the peasants. She had a clear, strong voice; she could talk to the people in words that they understood; and she exercised the power that always emanates from a great personality and a great heart.

The peasants flocked to the local elections, and began electing men of liberal views as judges, arbiters, and other officials. One of Catherine's brothers was chosen as a judge, and so was her friend Kovalik, whose plan of starting a colony in America had encountered many difficulties and had been indefinitely postponed. While he was on a visit to the Verigos, Catherine persuaded him to become a candidate. As a resident of another province he was disqualified; but Constantine Verigo made a nominal lease of his estate to Kovalik, and thus rendered him eligible. He was a man of marked ability, and a natural leader. The other judges elected him as their chief; and in three months he cleared up an accumulation of eight hundred cases that had clogged the docket for years. He and the other Liberal officials decided all cases with strict justice to the peasants, and defended their legal rights against the oppression of the nobility. But when the more despotic landowners were ousted from the positions that they had made a source of graft, they denounced the little group of Liberals to the Minister of the Interior as a band of conspirators against the government. In less than a