

Michael Davitt in Russia

New Light Shed Upon a Misrepresented Nation

The Register publishes to-day the first instalment of Mr. Michael Davitt's article upon Russia, her people and institutions with some information regarding the Catholic Church. Mr. Davitt says:

The impression one gets from intercourse with people of all classes there is that the war with Japan is not taken seriously. There is not a trace of popular excitement in gatherings, great or small, over the fortunes of the conflict now being waged around Port Arthur. I am assured by foreigners who have resided in St. Petersburg for a dozen years that the public here interested itself a hundred-fold more in the progress of the war in South Africa than in that which is now engaging the daily attention of the whole civilized world.

The explanation of this paradox of popular feeling is not found in any want of general news as to the progress of events in Manchuria. There is no concealment of Russian reverses, as some correspondents of English papers have alleged. The daily press publishes not only the official despatches from the front, but those from special correspondents of St. Petersburg papers with the Russian forces and, likewise, the news cabled from Tokyo to leading London journals. In addition, bulletins are issued daily, as interesting news arrives, and are posted outside Government departments for the information of the passing people. Soldiers, students and workmen may be seen reading these small sheets in groups of four or six; seldom in larger numbers; and passing on as if they had stopped to peruse the programme of a promised theatrical performance.

At the Norodny Dom, or People's Palace, the chief place of popular resort for the working classes, special means are taken to give the thousands who gather there in the summer evenings the day's news of the war. Huge posters, fifteen feet long and three wide, are hung in the centre hall, on which are written in large letters, each day, the latest despatches, including extracts from the "Times," "Daily Chronicle," "Standard," and other London papers having special correspondents at Tokio. In addition to this, there is a map of the theatre of hostilities on land and sea, hung between the posters, and the positions of the Russian and Japanese land forces, and of the enemy's fleet, are shown in colored pegs, the Russian color being denoted by red and the Japanese by black. Port Arthur is clearly seen to be surrounded by the land and sea forces of the Japs, while not a Russian ship is marked outside of Vladivostok or of the harbor which is now sheltering the remnant of the fleet of the ill-fated Admiral Makharoff. This map, thus daily adjusted to the movements of the rival combatants, is fully twenty feet deep and a dozen feet wide. No person can fail to see on glancing at it that it indicates the respective positions of the opposing armies as these are described in the despatches specially supplied, as described above, for the information of those who may not buy the daily papers.

I have sought the views of workmen on the war in their places of employment, in the restaurants where they take their meals at dinner hour, and in all the places of popular resort and amusement in St. Petersburg, and I have found three phases of feeling, or of opinion, prevailing. Artisans and laborers who are reservists are keenly interested. They spoke quite freely and without any hesitation. "We shall have to leave our families and work, if we are called out for service. This will be a hardship, and we are very anxious when reading the despatches, as we may find news any morning that will give us notice to prepare. Our mothers and wives are nervous and apprehensive at the prospect of seeing sons or husbands called upon to go to the front at any time, and this state of things troubles us all; but if we are ordered to go, we must obey our duty."

In the "Traktyres," or tea-houses, which are very numerous near the chief manufactories of the city, views less selfish have been expressed, along with a confidence that Russia could not be beaten in the war with Japan. At the same time, I found a marked sentiment prevailing that Manchuria was not worth the cost this war will entail. Russia was large enough without a slice of China being sought for, as an addition to its territory, at such a cost. Still, Japan had struck the first blow, and General Kuropatkin would settle accounts with the enemy before the combat was over.

There are five or six public gardens, or small parks, with open theatres, all fresco restaurants, military bands, and kindred attractions, so what is called the Petersburg side—the older portion of the city—all frequented by throngs of students, soldiers, and business people each evening. The very marked sociable qualities of the Russian people, and their native courtesy, especially towards strangers, make it quite easy to engage in conversation with them at these places of recreation and amusement. On the subject of the war their remarks create the impression already referred to, that Russia is not called upon to put forth all her strength in such a conflict as that in which she has become entangled. The war with the Turks was a more serious undertaking. It also appealed to the imagination of the people to a degree which the present war does not. It was nearer home. The Turk was an old enemy, and a stubborn fighter. Manchuria is six thousand miles away, and the Japanese are small men with no previous reputation in the field except that gained in the campaign with China nine years ago. The bravery of the enemy in the war with Russia is fully acknowledged; however, and there is no attempt made to disparage the courage and capacity of the Japanese soldiers, which have so far been conspicuous in the engagements fought on land and sea. But, how can Russia be beaten? is the final view expressed. There is no boast behind this view. It is spoken as if it were in relation to a fight between an elephant and a wolf. The smaller animal, in the imagination, injures and evades the direct onslaught of its huge adversary for a time. But, when the elephant shakes himself together and succeeds in getting in a blow, the combat will be over.

In the open theatre at the Zoological Gardens, a very popular resort for the shop-keeping class, clerks, and well-dressed people, there is a play running just now which relates to the war. The opening scene discloses the inhabitants of a Russian village in the act of celebrating the marriage of a young couple—the son and daughter of two leading peasant families. In the midst of the festivities news of the declaration of war arrives, whereupon two old veterans, who had fought against the Turks, harangue the villagers, and evoke their enthusiasm to fight the Japs for Czar and country. The women protest at first, but are finally won over to the patriotic fervour which is kindled in the hearts of the young men to volunteer to go to the front. The next scene is in St. Petersburg. The volunteers are massed in front of the Winter Palace, and the veteran soldier-orator of the village gathering rides in on the stage when they find themselves in face of Russia's enemy. The speech is somewhat long, and, on Wednesday night last, a man in the audience, of some 3,000 people, cried out, "Enough, in the middle of the military eloquence! Instantly, from all quarters of the audience, cries of "Put him out!" arose. He was led out by two attendants, and passed close to where I was standing. He was protesting vehemently against being expelled, and I requested my courier to speak to him and get an explanation of his action. He readily assented, and said he was not opposed in any sense to the sentiment of the play, but he thought "the General's speech" was too long, and he was anxious to see the fighting!" That is, he wished to anticipate the final act of the piece, in which the Russian soldiers and sailors are represented as making short work of their Japanese opponents on both land and sea.

All that I have seen and heard since arriving here, a fortnight ago, has convinced me that there is no sullen, or angry, or hostile feeling among the people, such as meet London and some American papers have described as prevailing, especially among the working classes. The appearance of the city would never suggest that the Government was engaged in a war with a nation numbering over 10,000,000 of people. There is not a trace of excitement in the streets, day or night. Business proceeds as if nothing but working, and selling and buying, and enjoying life occupied the minds of the million and a half of citizens inhabiting this beautiful city, with its island suburbs on the Neva, its quays of palaces, and its resplendent churches on every hand. I am, in fact, convinced that, if necessary, every soldier now in St. Petersburg could be drafted away to Manchuria to-morrow without any fear among the population of the Russian capital.

But the London papers one reads here will insist that the feelings of the Russian people and the events that transpire in Russian cities are seen and noted more accurately from the banks of the Thames than by the quays of the Neva. This is, of course, what might be expected. We all recollect the accounts which "came" from Pretoria and Johannesburg before the outbreak of the late war in South Africa. The "outrages" that were inflicted on English subjects, the "murders" committed by Boer policemen, and the "corruption and demoralization," which characterized the daily existence of the Kruger Government. The London Press would have no mission to perform in the leadership of peoples in paths of freedom and righteousness unless every country disliked by Englishmen could be held up to public opinion as being morally odious, or as wanting in all the love of truth and of fair play, so conspicuously mirrored in the enlightened English nation. Nothing good can exist in Russia, in English opinion, just now; and the better to aid the ally of England in her encounter with the Russian forces in the East, a campaign of falsehood and slander is waged at the same time by the London Press with the object of doing moral injury to Russian credit and character in European and American minds.

I saw the other day in the Washington Post (U.S.A.) of the 26th of last month, a sensational cable from London asserting that there had been "600 Executions in Warsaw," presumably of Poles who had manifested disaffection; that "numbers of men had been shot in Moscow, and had been buried outside the city at midnight"; that "presumably Russians who were disaffected; and that a sanguinary encounter" had taken place in Odessa between workmen and soldiers. The source of this sensational news was given as the London "Standard." This "news" doubtless appeared in every newspaper in America and Canada. I have taken steps since my arrival here to investigate, through correspondents in each of the cities referred to, these alleged executions and outbreaks. My correspondents are not Russians, but Americans who reside in Russia in connection with manufacturing concerns, or the United States Consular Service, and I am assured that there is not an atom of foundation for these allegations. They are each and all pure fabrications, invented deliberately in London with the object of doing injury to Russia in her name and reputation, while England's ally is attacking her adversary in the more manly and honorable way of regular warfare. One of my friends, writing from one of the cities mentioned above, says in his letter: "No such affair as you allude to took place here, nor did any outbreak of any kind occur. I read the account you quote, which was false from beginning to end. However, you will not give much time to spare if you intend to follow up and contradict all the false statements which the English newspapers are publishing. Russia will cease to be an interesting country to English readers when such accounts as those referred to cease to appear in the London press."

My correspondent has lived during the past twenty years in Russia. There is not a correspondent from any Continental newspaper now in St. Petersburg who does not know that the "Standard" statements are false, nor an English correspondent who does not laugh at the mention of this specimen of London journalism, with a kind of apology, spoken or implied, about "a press campaign against Russia, you know." Because a power which England dare not challenge to open combat, is that and on other accounts, obnoxious to English feeling, it is permissible to fight her in the press with

the poisoned weapons of malignant lies. Another English method in constant use in this press campaign is to represent Russian feeling as being bitterly hostile to the United States, on account of the attitude of most American newspapers on the war. There is no such feeling in existence. There is in high official circles, and among well-informed Russians, a sentiment of pained surprise at this unaccountable partisanship of American feeling for a yellow race and against the one nation in Europe that has been conspicuously and consistently friendly to the United States since its very foundation as an independent Republic. But there is nothing "bitterly hostile" in the very natural feeling that is thus expressed. One or two papers in this city may have given expression to some words of anger when the news of the alleged refusal of a United States naval officer to render help to some Russian sailors was circulated, following the surprise attack of the Japanese warships on the "Varyag," but when the true explanation of the incident was given on behalf of the captain of the "Vicksburg," it was accepted by the Russian official press as disposing of the original and incorrect report. What one hears on all sides at present on the attitude of the trans-Atlantic press is consistent with the old feeling of amity for America which one always heard in all parts of Russia before this war began. It is felt that the London Press and English cable agencies, and the well-known Anglo-American leanings of certain New York papers, are largely responsible for the present unfriendly attitude of so many organs of opinion in the United States. And, inventions like those palmed off on the American newspaper readers on the authority of the London "Standard," which I have alluded to above, explain how this anti-Russian sentiment is kept alive on the other side of the Atlantic.

I have been shown some very interesting documents dealing with the former Anglo-Russian relations existing between Russia and the States, since my arrival here. They will shortly be published, I hope. One is a letter from President Jefferson to the Emperor of his time, voicing the friendliest possible sentiments towards this country. The greatest and best exponent of American Democracy bore generous testimony to Russia's encouragement to the young Republic in the days of the infancy, and its conduct with England, and expressed the hope that the ties of friendship thus cemented would never be broken.

Another State document of special importance is a letter of the Emperor Alexander II, to the then Emperor of the French, Louis Napoleon, point-blank refusing the invitation of France and England to join them in a recognition of the Confederate States. Any other Government but the United States would have given these and similar documents to the public long ago, in reply to those English and Anglo-American critics who deny that Russia offered any help to the United States when England and Napoleon III. had contemplated the disruption of the Federal Republic. The Russians are not like other people in this respect. They underrate the power and importance of public opinion, or they are proudly reluctant to seem to engage in a public controversy as to the part their Government may have played in what are now more or less remote historic situations.

By the way, if some of my American readers will consult the VI. Volume of Hay and Nicolay's "Recollections of Lincoln," they will find from the pen of the present State Secretary, Mr. John Hay, a full and generous appreciation of Russia's services in the conflict with England, and her co-conspirator, Napoleon, the Little, were planning the dismemberment of the United States. These "Recollections" have more or less the character of State papers, and will be found in any first-class American library.

There are many institutions, customs and laws here in this city that would be very welcome to people in London or New York who are schooled to think that England and the United States have a monopoly of "enlightened rule." The City of St. Petersburg owns its own water supply; its street tramways (still run by horse traction), and all its various markets. No meat of any kind can be exposed for sale without being inspected and being stamped, in carcase, as being free from disease. Some years ago the Government took away most of the licenses for the sale of vodka in order to assist the cause of temperance. No compensation was given to previous license-holders. It was done as an act of public service, for the protection of the people against the growing evil of drunkenness. The State also assumed the monopoly of vodka manufacture, and the sale of this popular drink now brings in an immense revenue to the Government.

When vodka shops have been closed by imperial decree "traktyres," or tea-houses, have been opened close by, and every inducement is held out to the working classes to frequent these places and to take their meals there. I have been in dozens of them in the working class quarters, and it was very gratifying to learn that the growth of these substitutes for the "vodka shops" was having a marked effect upon the drinking habits of the lower classes. There is still much intemperance to be observed here on Sundays and holidays, but nothing like what prevailed before the closing of the places which offered a daily temptation to workers and others to indulge in the "white brandy" which has been such a social curse to the peasants and the industrial classes generally.

The "Norodny Dom," already mentioned, is also an institution for the promotion of temperance. It comprises an opera house and a theatre of varieties in the one building—a structure that more than favorably compares in architectural design and appearance with any theatre in Great Britain. Attached to the "Dom" there is a pleasure garden and restaurant, while a military band, an open theatre, and a show for children are also provided. The entrance fee to all these, including the Opera, is ten copeks; that is 24 d. In addition to this, each seat in the Opera House is provided with an opera glass, and for this there is no charge. These opera glasses are not fastened to the chairs, nor enclosed in locked boxes, as in English theatres. They are in open cases fixed to the back of each seat. "Are there any of them stolen?" was an

obvious question put by me to an attendant. "None now," was the reply. "There were a few missing after the theatre was first opened; but we very rarely miss one now." In the restaurant, and out in the grounds under the trees, you can buy a pot of the incomparable tea you get in Russia, and the price, including ten pieces of sugar and two slices of lemon, is fifteen copeks—three pence halfpenny. Four persons can thus enjoy "a five o'clock tea" at a cost of one penny each. No intoxicating drinks of any kind are allowed to be sold inside the grounds of the Norodny Dom. Thousands of workmen can be seen here every evening, enjoying the music and the plays, and pieces provided for their entertainment. Not a trace of roydism or of horse play can be observed here, or in any of the other places of popular resort in the city. The people are good-tempered, most courteous, especially towards strangers, easily amused, and very fond of fun. They love singing and dancing, and seem to me to enjoy life as thoroughly and as soberly as any people I know of within the compass of my many wanderings in different countries, gathered in some few wanderings in many lands, in both the Old and the New World. And the more I see and know the Russian people the more their simple and good-natured qualities impress themselves favorably upon my liking.

MICHAEL DAVITT. St. Petersburg, June 15, 1904. P.S.—I was present on Sunday last at a beautiful ceremony in the Catholic Cemetery, north-east of the city, behind the Fortress' old Arsenal. Over 15,000 people assembled, and around the Church of St. Mary Magdalen. They came to decorate the graves of their relatives, and this touching tribute to the dead is yearly paid at this time each year. An accompanying priest, in a procession through the chief portions of the cemetery, reciting the prayers for the dead. After this, men, women, and children got down on the grass, near the graves of their kindred, and partook of the food with which they came provided; most of their having come from distant parts of the city. It was a most interesting scene, as fully three-fourths of those present were Poles. The Polish "Boze Biele wola" (Tavja), could be seen on every of the plain wooden crosses which denoted the last resting place of the departed.

Walking through the cemetery, I found two white wooden crosses on two otherwise unmarked graves. On one I read, "Catherine Calaghan, 18—191," and on the other, "Sarah Roach, 18—189." They were the only two Irish names in the cemetery. There were no other words or marks given to say where they were born, or at what age they died. My fancy pictured them as, possibly, two poor Irish girls who may have died in this great city unknown to their families or friends elsewhere.

A Polish Priest, who spoke French very fluently, and who was collecting at the church door for the building of a Catholic church in Tashkand, told me that he did not know any Irish Catholics in Russia. There were a few English, he thought, living in St. Petersburg, who were employed in banks. He informed me that there were about 20,000 Roman Catholics in St. Petersburg; that the new Metropolitan, who had just come from Rome, was a Polish Count, that the Emperor had received him kindly two days ago (before Sunday), and that the present Emperor was a very good man who gave every liberty to Catholics. My reverend friend knew absolutely nothing about a country called Ireland! But it is only fair to add that he has lived in Tashkand for many years.—M.D.

Freemasons and the French Law. Freemasons and Franciscans were discussed in the Chamber of Deputies last week. M. Plache called attention to the fact that the Freemasons, holding large property came within the meaning of the Act known as the Associations Law, as well as the Religious Orders. The Deputy delivered a tremendous attack on the lodges, and affirmed that the Masons, while paying attention to children, never troubled about the aged and the infirm, and that their action is more political and electoral than humane and charitable. He also showed the tyranny practiced by the Masons over public officials, and their system of spying. M. Lafferre, a big-wig of the lodges, replied to M. Prache, and retorted that there was an occult clerical party in the country which interfered in elections and politics to an extent dangerous for Republican institutions. Some of the Catholic auditors of M. Lafferre were under the impression that the Masonic big-wig was about to refer to the inevitable Jesuits; but he did not. The dangerous clerical secret society to which he alluded was the Franciscan Third Order. M. Lafferre went on to affirm, amid hilarity, that it was wonderful to find big bankers, merchants, professors, and even members of Parliament, wearing the brown robe of St. Francis in the Basilicas of Montmartre and Lourdes. The Masons will now, no doubt, try to make the great statesman who is at the head of the Government, and his son, the blackmailer of the Carthusians, endeavor to exterminate the Franciscan Third Order men in France. The "Lanterne" practically advises this. After the monks, the priests must be driven away, according to this scurrilous paper, and religion must be destroyed to the accompaniment of Voltaire's blasphemous phrase, "Ecrasons l'infame." It is evident from the fury of the "Lanterne" that the Masons received a serious blow from M. Prache in full Parliament.

Sleeplessness.—When the nerves are unstrung and the whole body given up to wretchedness, when the mind is filled with gloom and dismal forebodings, the result of derangement of the digestive organs, sleeplessness comes to add to the distress. If only the subject could sleep, there would be oblivion for a while and temporary relief. Parnee's Vegetable Pills will not only induce sleep, but will act so beneficially that the subject will wake refreshed and restored to happiness.

We imagine that we lack material things, but what we really need is more and diviner life.

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THE TEMPORAL POWER

(Catholic Times.)

An article which appeared in the "Osservatore Romano" of the 14th inst. has aroused unusual attention, especially in diplomatic circles. The writer deals with the question of the Pope's temporal power, and there has been a good deal of speculation as to his exact purport and meaning. We have the full text of the article now before us, and are in a position to judge of the whole bearing of his words with a sense of confidence which a mere summary could not inspire. To describe the writer's aim briefly, he combats the idea that the Sovereign Pontiff persists in the claim to temporal dominion merely for the love of power. The Pope looks upon it as a means of assuring the freedom and independence of the Church; but if that freedom and independence could be gained in any other way, his Holiness, a Catholic might well believe, would be quite ready to renounce the claim to temporal sway. The subject is dealt with historically in order that the drift of the writer, who signs himself "I," may be made more clear. It is shown that the civil principality arose when Byzantine rule, often schismatic and heretical, and always plaguing the Empire and Christian society owing to the intrigues of the Palace, abandoned Rome and Italy to themselves after having plundered them. The Papal authority was gradually acknowledged in contrast to the authority of the Eastern monarchs, and its existence through the gift of the people. No sovereignty could be more legitimate, and the Church could not therefore allow any controversy as to the propriety of its origin or the excellence of its effects with regard to liberty and independence. But the Church is not represented by a dynastic head, whose House enjoys a family succession, nor does earthly grandeur raise the Pontiff above common human conditions. And the office that has been assigned to him for the promotion of the welfare of humanity demands that he be ever ready to subordinate all individual interests, whether of the pastor or of the members of the flock, to the higher interests of the flock as a whole. Whilst, then, the Church defends its right to juridical independence and liberty in the way in which it has been doing, being of itself unable to find any better way, on the day when one better or an equally good one will be found, it may be assumed that the Church will do without the civil principality and will not regret the loss as if it diminished its strength or dignity.

We do not know what the relations between the writer and the Holy Father may be, or whether the views of his Holiness be exactly brought out. It appears to us, however, that such an article would scarcely be published in a journal which, as is well known, usually speaks for the Holy See in at least an unofficial sense, were the sentiments it expresses at variance with those of the Holy Father. If it conveys his mind, its importance cannot be over-estimated, for it opens up a new page in the history of the Catholic Church. Practically the attitude of the writer towards the temporal power of the Papacy is this, that it was designed by Providence for the advancement of Christianity and civilization, but that now, except for the purpose of guaranteeing the Church's liberty and independence, the necessity for it has ceased. In other words, his Holiness only seeks to be guaranteed the freedom and independence essential for the discharge of his exalted duties. The actual terms upon which such an arrangement may be concluded it is for his Holiness to fix definitely. It is pretty clear that he is anxious to be as generous as possible towards the Italian Monarchy, and that if the king is prepared to enter into negotiations he will find his Holiness both conciliatory and moderate. But it is manifest that something more than an agreement with the king of Italy is contemplated. The Catholic Church is a world-wide organization. The Pontiff's subjects are to be found in every country, and his freedom to make provision for their spiritual welfare is a matter which concerns all rulers. A guarantee of an international character is accordingly needed.

The vast change in ecclesiastical policy which this article may perhaps be regarded as the turning point will, we feel sure, cause no misgivings either to the ecclesiastical authorities or to the Catholic Faithful throughout the world. True, the Popes as temporal rulers performed splendid work for the world, breaking down feudal tyranny and asserting the power of the people. As Villamain somewhere remarks, the inalienable liberty of the human spirit availed itself of the tiara in order to fight against material forces. But great as is the work that was accomplished, the side-lights which history casts on the events connected with it are not all of a kind to cause pride. There are humiliating episodes, such as the attempt of the French monarchs to make Popes during their stay at Avignon the instruments of their policy. In the future the power of the Church will be all the purer because it will be entirely spiritual and free from the dross which inevitably clings to whatever is human. And the more thoroughly the Catholic Church prepares itself for becoming a greater spiritual power than it is or ever has been the better will it be for it and for humanity. In a noteworthy article which he contributed a week or so ago to the Daily Chronicle, and which has provoked a good deal of correspondence, the Rev. Dr. Barry

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deploring the tendency to unbelief which is so evident in modern days. Undoubtedly the outlook is not satisfactory. But amidst all the infidelity of the present time there is a restlessness betokening a desire for faith. Through neglect of religious practices, carelessness, indifference, and intellectual pride, men have lapsed into Naturalism, but all the time their hearts keep calling for the consolation of religion and the hopes it begets. Sooner or later many of them will obey its promptings, and when they once turn to Christianity the only Church that can claim their allegiance is the strong, united, independent, fearless Catholic Church.

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