

had not tried to do her bidding in another matter she would have told the Czar the real story of the "faith miracle" that restored the heir to all the Russias to consciousness. To that matter Steffens makes no allusion. It concerned the passion which Anna had for Prince Felix, who also was in real romantic love with the eldest daughter of the Czar Anna, to oust the Princess, demands that Rasputin make of her the same kind of creature that she herself had become under his influence. He undertakes the task; fails; the Court learns about it; the Czar and Czarina have their doubts—the Czar both ways.

Instead of the Princess, Steffens tells us of a Duchess who lured Rasputin to "get" her that the Prince—name unmentioned—and his accomplices might get Rasputin. For by this time after twelve years of black art in the court, Rasputin was considered superhuman; a man whom it might be impossible to kill. Many had sworn to do it, some had tried, all had failed. Rasputin survived. Was this "Grand Duchess" mentioned by Steffens the Princess shown on the screen? We merely guess. Anyway it matters little. Rasputin's the thing.

Steffens says nothing about Ilidor, the mad monk, whom the screen, impersonated by Ilidor himself, makes the second most interesting character in the story. But Ilidor can't be left out. He was the religious scholar and orator, who, according to the version of the story given in Photo Play, himself falls a victim to the lure of Rasputin, plunges into a carnival of lust and repents, as Rasputin was so fond of doing—always sinning that he might repent—and becomes the able instrument of the Czar in putting down the revolution of 1905. The strange relations between this saintly young scholar and the mountebank, who ruled Russia through credulity,

are not well enough depicted on the screen.

Ilidor, says the Photo Play Journal, was an exile living in New York when the revolution broke out. All his eloquence and the fire of his idealism had, for many months previously, been directed towards the destruction of the very autocracy he had at one time worked so diligently to defend. But he was still a priest of the orthodox Greek church. The possibilities of the screen as a field for the projection of his propaganda had been pointed out to him but his ecclesiastical training had taught him to regard the theatre, the movies and all kindred entertainments as "coming directly from the devil." Yet—and here is a glimpse of the perplexing quality in the Russian character—he finally threw all of himself and much of his knowledge of the backstairs intrigue of the Russian court into the filming of a "popular" picture.

F. V. Bruner records an interview given by Ilidor through an interpreter, in which the monk tells why he did it.

"I consented to take part in this picture, and play the role that I had taken in the recent events in Russia simply because I wished to condemn all evil and to make public to the world the wrongs of Russia. My friends in this country, especially those who were priests in the Greek Church, persuaded me against it. They advised me to keep away from moving pictures on the grounds that such occupations were not fitting to the dignity of a priest. I was in a strange country. I did not know what to do or whom to believe. I longed to give the world by means of the screen my knowledge of Russia's woes and injustices."

The picture was made under the direction of Herbert Brenon, who was, no doubt, "inspired" by

the timeliness of the subject and the "popular" appeal in the subject. Ilidor, the idealist, takes this view of it: "I look upon it as the will of destiny that Mr. Brenon undertook to accomplish this great work. I consider Mr. Brenon chosen by God to be the man through whom these revelations are given to the world."

"The Russian people never knew what was happening," continues Ilidor. "They never realized how they were being mistreated and misgoverned."

"I feel, too, that 'The Fall of the Romanoffs' will be the means of my moral rehabilitation. Of that I am convinced. Whatever mistakes I have made in my life this picture will wipe away. The good that it will do in the world and for Russia in particular will compensate, I know, for any wrongs I have committed."

Rasputin, in ruling Russia, ruled also the church. He was himself not an orator, but he knew the Russian's weakness for oratory when he sent Ilidor out on a circuit of speechmaking to show the people what a monster revolution was. In the Saturday Evening Post, William T. Ellis, writing on Russia's Substitute for Vodka, says:

"Instead of Vodka, Russia has betaken herself to a wild debauch of speechmaking. Public address has gone to her head. Concerning the hearing and making of orations it may be written: 'Everybody's doing it.' Spellbinding is the highest gift of New Russia."

Ten years after Rasputin had made the first revolution a failure, Rasputin was the emissary of the Czarina to Berlin, the medium of the separate peace so much desired by the Czarina and feared by Nicholas, and the reason why the Grand Duke was removed from the supreme command to be replaced by the Czar, who, between the Czarina and Rasputin was as near crazy as he could be. So the screen says, and is agreed with by other authorities less melodramatic.

"When I die the Romanoffs shall fall," was one of Rasputin's cock and bull prophecies. Like most of his other post-hoc-propter-hoc predictions, it came true. How Rasputin was killed is dramatically told by Steffens, who is considerably supported by the screen. Lured to a banquet by "the Duchess," he took the poisoned cakes and the drugged wine given him by "the Prince." He survived them both. The Prince hysterically shot him and reported him dead to his fellow conspirators hidden on the stairway. A few minutes later Rasputin came through the door. Then they all fired and "got" him. He was flung into the Neva.

And of course that was the beginning of the revolution whereby the Romanoffs did fall. The rest is newspaper history.

WHAT HANNA CAN'T DO

A Study in Rootless Economics; first of a series of articles on the limits and possibilities of price control, with special reference to food control.

MY household gods, said the essayist Lamb, plant a terribly fixed foot, and they are not rooted up without blood. A like statement can be made of our economic institutions. They ramify deep into our social life. The older they are, the more deeply rooted, as a rule, they are. There is no modern "Bloodless surgery" that can excise them. To tear them out from the soil in which they have grown means toil and travail. There are occasions when the result, the replacement of old by new and better institutions, will justify the toil and travail, but let no one imagine that without it any existing system can be changed, that a mere legislature or executive fiat can of itself create a new system, or do anything but throw confusion into the old.

Yet this impossible result is just what many have hoped to see accomplished by the appointment of a Food Controller. They have thought—and the thought has been fostered by much hasty writing and speech—that all the Food Controller has to do is to dock the ever-rising prices of our necessities with the sharp scythe of his statutory powers. They have thought that all that is necessary is for him to "fix" prices, and the complicated system of economic causes and effects would forthwith accommodate themselves to the prices fixed. Those who entertain such hopes are thinking of a deep-rooted system as though it were rootless—like their own economics. They think effects can be abrogated while their causes remain. The root cause in this case is scarcity. The effect is the higher cost of living. And no power on earth can remove that effect until it first removes its cause.

It is not to be wondered at that disappointment has succeeded expectation. Prices go on rising and people think that there Food Control has failed—or has not begun—not realizing that the success or failure of the Food Controller is not to be measured in that way. Complaints are raised on every hand that the cost of living refuses to yield to the hand of authority, or else that authority is afraid to apply its hand, afraid of the profiteers, the monopolists, the middlemen, or the producers.

There is all justice in the condemnation of those who make their opportunity for extortion out of war's necessity. No conduct could be more detestable, more unpatriotic. No remissness on the part of government could be more reprehensible than its failure to control such rapacity. But such control, necessary as it is, will not turn scarcity into abundance, the desert of war into a garden of plenty. For the scarcity in the first place is due, not to profiteering, not to the demands of workers or producers, not to the remissness of government, but to the war. It is part of the necessary sacrifice it entails, part of the inevitable cost of the most costly of all undertakings. Every soldier who leaves the factory or the farm for the camp or barracks means a further drain on the economic resources of the country, for he consumes more than before and he ceases altogether

to produce. Every worker who is called from normal work to the making of munitions increases the cost, for he or she leaves economically productive for economically destructive work. Every dollar of capital that is diverted from productive investment to the financing of the war decreases the purchasing power of the dollar, and makes the labour of the productive worker less effective, and, therefore, more costly. War makes everything scarce but money, and it makes money less valuable. Furthermore, the greater scarcity that afflicts our war-stricken allies makes heavy demands on our food resources. Their scarcity becomes ours in part, for only so can theirs be lessened. This is an essential part of Canada's service, and we should be willing to recognize the cost and glad to bear it so far as we are able. So long as the causes of scarcity remain, so long must we endure the consequences, the high cost of living. Mr. Hanna is, unfortunately, no magician that his efforts should neutralize the economic consequences of a world at war.

This is no justification of inertia. On the contrary where so much is beyond our powers, it is incumbent on us to be the more determined that nothing which remains within our power is neglected. War necessity has driven us to examine rigorously conditions which formerly we were willing to let alone, to be exigent where formerly we were tolerant, to demand control where formerly we were content with drift. The demand is natural and right. As we are asked by authority to control ourselves, as economic individuals, in ways unknown before, to control our eating, our drinking, our spending, our working; so we may well demand in turn that collective control be exercised by government over those economic activities which lie within its power successfully to regulate. The economic system is no more perfect than the other works of man. There is much room for improvement—but only by those who understand its workings. The same necessity which in three years could so improve the aeroplane is surely not powerless to improve our economic system. It may be made more efficient, less wasteful, not merely for the period of the war but permanently.

Only there is this difference between the improvement of a mechanical thing like the aeroplane and the improvement of a social institution. The former can be effected without touching our interests very closely, the latter demands often a difficult readjustment of our social life. Our economic methods, like Lamb's household gods, plant a terribly fixed foot, and they are not to be rooted up without blood.

Meantime, certain immediate and permanent necessities face us, and they will not brook delay. What they are, what is being done or must be done to meet them I will discuss in a succeeding article.

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"Anything I can do to help you?"

—Marcus in N. Y. Times.