

## XII

I had only just despatched the last of the preceding pages of this paper when the dreadful news came of a new iniquity committed in regard to the Russian people by those light-minded men who, crazed with power, have appropriated the right of managing them. Again coarse and servile slaves of slaves, dressed up in various dazzling attires--varieties of Generals wishing to distinguish themselves, or to earn the right to add one more little star, fingle fangle, or scrap of ribbon to their idiotic glaring get-up, or else from stupidity or carelessness--again these miserable men have destroyed amid dreadful sufferings thousands of those honorable, kind, hard-working laborers who feed them. And again this iniquity not only does not cause those responsible for it to reflect and repent, but one hears and reads only about its being necessary as speedily as possible to mutilate and slaughter a greater number of men, and to ruin still more families, both Russian and Japanese.

More than this, to prepare men for fresh iniquities of this kind, the perpetrators of these crimes, far from recognizing what is evident to all--viz. that for the Russians this event, even from their patriotic, military point of view, was a scandalous defeat--endeavor to assure credulous people that these unfortunate Russian laboring men--lured into a trap like cattle into a slaughterhouse, of whom several thousands have been killed and maimed merely because one General did not understand what another General had said--have performed an act of heroism because those

who could not run away were killed and those who did run away remained alive. As to the fact that one of these immoral and cruel men, distinguished by the titles of Generals, Admirals, drowned a quantity of peaceful Japanese, this is also described as a great and glorious act of heroism, which must gladden the hearts of Russians. And in all the papers are reprinted this awful appeal to murder:--

"Let the two thousand Russian soldiers killed on the Yalu, together with the maimed Retvisan and her sister ships, with our lost torpedo-boats, teach our cruisers with what devastation they must break in upon the shores of base Japan. She has sent her soldiers to shed Russian blood, and no quarter should be afforded her. Now one cannot--it is sinful--be sentimental; we must fight; we must direct such heavy blows that the memory of them shall freeze the treacherous hearts of the Japanese. Now is the time for the cruisers to go out to sea to reduce to ashes the towns of Japan, flying as a dreadful calamity along its shores. No more sentimentality."

The frightful work commenced is continued. Loot, violence, murder, hypocrisy, theft, and, above all, the most fearful fraud--the distortion of religious teachings, both Christian and Buddhistic--continue. The Tsar, the chief responsible person, continues to review the troops, to thank, reward, and encourage them; he issues an edict for the calling out of the reserves; his faithful subjects again and again lay down their property and lives at the feet of him they call, only with their lips, their adored Monarch. On the other hand, desiring to distinguish

themselves before each other in deeds and not in words only, they tear away the fathers and the bread-winners from their orphaned families, preparing them for slaughter. The worse the position of Russia, the more recklessly do the journalists lie, transforming shameful defeats into victories, knowing that no one will contradict them; and they quietly collect money from subscriptions and sales. The more money and labor of the people is devoted to the war, the more is grabbed by various authorities and speculators, who know that no one will convict them because every one is doing the same. The military, trained for murder, having passed years in a school of inhumanity, coarseness, and idleness, rejoice--poor men--because, besides an increase of their salary, the slaughter of superiors opens vacancies for their promotion. Christian pastors continue to invite men to the greatest of crimes, continue to commit sacrilege, praying God to help the work of war; and, instead of condemning, they justify and praise that pastor who, with the cross in his hands on the very scene of murder, encouraged men to the crime. The same thing is going on in Japan. The benighted Japanese go in for murder with yet greater fervor, owing to their victories; the Mikado also reviews and rewards his troops; various Generals boast of their bravery, imagining that, having learned to kill, they have acquired enlightenment. So, too, groan the unfortunate working people torn from useful labor and from their families. So their journalists also lie and rejoice over their gains. Also probably--for where murder is elevated into virtue every kind of vice is bound to flourish--also probably all kinds of commanders and speculators earn money; and Japanese theologians and religious teachers no less than the masters in the techniques of armament do not remain

behind the Europeans in the techniques of religious deceit and sacrilege, but distort the great Buddhistic teaching by not only permitting but justifying that murder which Buddha forbade. The Buddhistic scientist, Soyen-Shaku, ruling over eight hundred monasteries, explains that although Buddha forbade manslaughter he also said he could never be at peace until all beings are united in the infinitely loving heart of all things, and that, therefore, in order to bring into harmony that which is discordant it is necessary to fight and to kill men.[2]

[2] In the article it is said: "This triple world is my own possession.

All the things therein are my own children ... the ten thousand things in this world are no more than the reflections of my own self. They come from the one source. They partake of the one body. Therefore I cannot rest, until every being, even the smallest possible fragment of existence, is settled down to its proper appointment.... This is the position taken by the Buddha, and we, his humble followers, are but to walk in his wake. Why, then, do we fight at all? Because we do not find this world as it ought to be. Because there are here so many perverted creatures, so many wayward thoughts, so many ill-directed hearts, due to ignorant subjectivity. For this reason Buddhists are never tired of combating all productions of ignorance, and their fight must be to the bitter end. They will show no quarter. They will mercilessly destroy the very root from which arises the misery of this life. To accomplish this end, they will never be afraid of sacrificing their lives...." There follow, just as is usual with us, entangled

arguments about self-sacrifice and kindness, about the transmigration of souls and about much else--all this for the sole purpose of concealing the simple and clear commandment of Buddha: not to kill. Further it is said: "The hand that is raised to strike and the eye that is fixed to take aim do not belong to the individual, but are the instruments utilized by a principle higher than transient existence." ("The Open Court," May, 1904. "Buddhist Views of War," by the Right Rev. Soyen-Shaku.)

It is as if there never had existed the Christian and Buddhistic teaching about the unity of the human spirit, the brotherhood of men, love, compassion, the sacredness of human life. Men, both Japanese and Russians, already enlightened by the truth, yet like wild animals, nay, worse than wild animals, throw themselves upon each other with the sole desire to destroy as many lives as possible. Thousands of unfortunates groan and writhe in cruel sufferings and die in agony in Japanese and Russian field hospitals, asking themselves in bewilderment why this fearful thing was done with them, while other thousands are already rotting in the earth or on the earth, or floating in the sea, in swollen decomposition. And scores of thousands of wives, fathers, mothers, children, are bemoaning their bread-winners; uselessly destroyed. Yet all this is still too little; new and newer victims are being prepared. The chief concern of the Russian organizers of slaughter is that on the Russian side the stream of food for cannon--three thousand men per day doomed to destruction--should not be interrupted for one minute. The Japanese are preoccupied with the same thing. The locusts are incessantly

being driven down into the river in order that the rows behind may pass over the bodies.

When will this cease, and the deceived people at last recover themselves and say: "Well, go you yourselves, you heartless Tsars, Mikados, Ministers, Bishops, priests, generals, editors, speculators, or however you may be called, go you yourselves under these shells and bullets, but we do not wish to go and we will not go. Leave us in peace, to plough, and sow, and build,--and also to feed you." It would be so natural to say this now, when amongst us in Russia resounds the weeping and wailing of hundreds of thousands of mothers, wives, and children, from whom are being snatched away their bread-earners, the so-called "reserve." These same men, the majority of the reserve, are able to read; they know what the Far East is; they know that war is going on, not for anything which is in the least necessary to Russia, but for some dealings in strange land, leased lands, as they themselves call them, on which it seemed advantageous to some corrupt speculators to build railways and so gain profit; also they know, or might know, that they will be killed like sheep in a slaughterhouse, since the Japanese possess the latest improvements in tools of murder, which we do not, as the Russian authorities who are sending these people to death had not thought in time of furnishing themselves with the same weapons as the Japanese. Knowing all this, it would indeed be so natural to say, "Go you, those who have brought on this work, all you to whom war is necessary, and who justify it; go you, and face the Japanese bullets and mines, but we will not go, because we not only do not need to do this, but we cannot understand how

it can be necessary to any one."

But no, they do not say this; they go, and they will continue to go; they cannot but go as long as they fear that which ruins the body and not that which ruins both the body and the soul. "Whether we shall be killed," they argue, "or maimed in these chinnampos, or whatever they are called, whither we are driven, we do not know; it yet may happen that we shall get through safely, and, moreover, with rewards and glory, like those sailors who are now being feasted all over Russia because the Japanese bombs and bullets did not hit them, but somebody else; whereas should we refuse, we should be certainly sent to prison, starved, beaten, exiled to the province of Yakoutsck, perhaps even killed immediately." So with despair in their hearts, leaving behind a good rational life, leaving their wives and their children,--they go.

Yesterday I met a Reservist soldier accompanied by his mother and wife. All three were riding in a cart; he had had a drop too much; his wife's face was swollen with tears. He turned to me:--

"Good-by to thee! Lyof Nikolaevitch, off to the Far East."

"Well, art thou going to fight?"

"Well, some one has to fight!"

"No one need fight!"

He reflected for a moment. "But what is one to do; where can one escape?"

I saw that he had understood me, had understood that the work to which he was being sent was an evil work.

"Where can one escape?" That is the precise expression of that mental condition which in the official and journalistic world is translated into the words--"For the Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland." Those who, abandoning their hungry families, go to suffering, to death, say as they feel, "Where can one escape?" Whereas those who sit in safety in their luxurious palaces say that all Russian men are ready to sacrifice their lives for their adored Monarch, and for the glory and greatness of Russia.

Yesterday, from a peasant I know, I received two letters, one after the other. This is the first:--

"Dear Lyof Nikolaevitch,--Well, to-day I have received the official announcement of my call to the Service; to-morrow I must present myself at the headquarters. That is all. And after that--to the Far East to meet the Japanese bullets. About my own and my household's grief I will not tell you; it is not you who will fail to understand all the horror of my position and the horrors of war; all this you have long ago painfully realized, and you understand it all. How I have longed to visit you, to



have a talk with you! I had written to you a long letter in which I described the torments of my soul; but I had not had time to copy it, when I received my summons. What is my wife to do now with her four children? As an old man, of course, you cannot do anything yourself for my folks, but you might ask some of your friends in their leisure to visit my orphaned family. I beg you earnestly that if my wife proves unable to bear the agony of her helplessness with her burden of children and makes up her mind to go to you for help and counsel, you will receive and console her. Although she does not know you personally, she believes in your word, and that means much. I was not able to resist the summons, but I say beforehand that through me not one Japanese family shall be orphaned. My God! how dreadful is all this--how distressing and painful to abandon all by which one lives and in which one is concerned."

The second letter is as follows: "Kindest Lyof Nikolaevitch, Only one day of actual service has passed, and I have already lived through an eternity of most desperate torments. From 8 o'clock in the morning till 9 in the evening we have been crowded and knocked about to and fro in the barrack yard, like a herd of cattle. The comedy of medical examination was three times repeated, and those who had reported themselves ill did not receive even ten minutes' attention before they were marked 'Satisfactory.' When we, these two thousand satisfactory individuals, were driven from the military commander to the barracks, along the road spread out for almost a verst stood a crowd of relatives, mothers, and wives with infants in arms; and if you had only heard and seen how they clasped their fathers, husbands, sons, and hanging round their necks

wailed hopelessly! Generally I behave in a reserved way and can restrain my feelings, but I could not hold out, and I also wept. [In journalistic language this same is expressed thus: "The upheaval of patriotic feeling is immense."] Where is the standard that can measure all this immensity of woe now spreading itself over almost one-third of the world? And we, we are now that food for cannon, which in the near future will be offered as sacrifice to the God of vengeance and horror. I cannot manage to establish my inner balance. Oh! how I execrate myself for this double-mindedness which prevents my serving one Master and God."

This man does not yet sufficiently believe that what destroys the body is not dreadful, but that which destroys both the body and the soul, therefore he cannot refuse to go; yet while leaving his own family he promises beforehand that through him not one Japanese family shall be orphaned; he believes in the chief law of God, the law of all religions--to act toward others as one wishes others to act toward oneself. Of such men more or less consciously recognizing this law, there are in our time, not in the Christian world alone, but in the Buddhistic, Mahomedan, Confucian, and Brahminic world, not only thousands but millions.

There exist true heroes, not those who are now being fêted because, having wished to kill others, they were not killed themselves, but true heroes, who are now confined in prisons and in the province of Yakoutsk for having categorically refused to enter the ranks of murderers, and who have preferred martyrdom to this departure from the law of Jesus. There

are also such as he who writes to me, who go, but who will not kill. But also that majority which goes without thinking, and endeavors not to think of what it is doing, still in the depth of its soul does now already feel that it is doing an evil deed by obeying authorities who tear men from labor and from their families and send them to needless slaughter of men, repugnant to their soul and their faith; and they go only because they are so entangled on all sides that--"Where can one escape?"

Meanwhile those who remain at home not only feel this, but know and express it. Yesterday in the high road I met some peasants returning from Toula. One of them was reading a leaflet as he walked by the side of his cart.

I asked, "What is that--a telegram?"

"This is yesterday's,--but here is one of to-day." He took another out of his pocket. We stopped. I read it.

"You should have seen what took place yesterday at the station," he said; "it was dreadful. Wives, children, more than a thousand of them, weeping. They surrounded the train, but were allowed no further. Strangers wept, looking on. One woman from Toula gasped and fell down dead. Five children. They have since been placed in various institutions; but the father was driven away all the same.... What do we want with this Manchuria, or whatever it is called? There is sufficient land here. And

what a lot of people and of property has been destroyed."

Yes, the relation of men to war is now quite different from that which formerly existed, even so lately as the year '77. That which is now taking place never took place before.

The papers set forth that, during the receptions of the Tsar, who is travelling about Russia for the purpose of hypnotizing the men who are being sent to murder, indescribable enthusiasm is manifested amongst the people. As a matter of fact, something quite different is being manifested. From all sides one hears reports that in one place three Reservists have hanged themselves; in another spot, two more; in yet another, about a woman whose husband had been taken away bringing her children to the conscription committee-room and leaving them there; while another hanged herself in the yard of the military commander. All are dissatisfied, gloomy, exasperated. The words, "For the Faith, the King, and the Fatherland," the National Anthem, and shouts of "Hurrah" no longer act upon people as they once did. Another warfare of a different kind--the struggling consciousness of the deceit and sinfulness of the work to which people are being called--is more and more taking possession of the people.

Yes, the great strife of our time is not that now taking place between the Japanese and the Russians, nor that which may blaze up between the white and yellow races, not that strife which is carried on by mines, bombs, bullets, but that spiritual strife which without ceasing has gone

on and is now going on between the enlightened consciousness of mankind now waiting for manifestation and that darkness and that burden which surrounds and oppresses mankind.

In His own time Jesus yearned in expectation, and said, "I came to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled." Luke xii. 49.

That which Jesus longed for is being accomplished, the fire is being kindled. Then do not let us check it, but let us spread and serve it.

13 May, 1904.

I should never finish this paper if I were to continue to add to it all that corroborates its essential idea. Yesterday the news came in of the sinking of the Japanese ironclads; and in the so-called higher circles of Russian fashionable, rich, intellectual society they are, without the slightest conscientious scruples, rejoicing at the destruction of a thousand human lives. Yet to-day I have received from a simple seaman, a man standing on the lowest plane of society, the following letter:[3]

"Much respected Lyof Nikolaevitch, I greet you with a low bow, with love, much respected Lyof Nikolaevitch. I have read your book. It was very pleasant reading for me. I have been a great lover of reading your works. Well, Lyof Nikolaevitch, we are now in a state of war, please write to me whether it is agreeable to God or not that our commanders compel us to

kill. I beg you, Lyof Nikolaevitch, write to me please whether or not the truth now exists on earth. Tell me, Lyof Nikolaevitch. In church here a prayer is being read, the priest mentions the Christ-loving army. Is it true or not that God loves war? I pray you, Lyof Nikolaevitch, have you got any books from which I could see whether truth exists on earth or not? Send me such books. What they cost, I will pay. I beg you, Lyof Nikolaevitch, do not neglect my request. If there are no books then send me a letter. I will be very glad when I receive a letter from you. I will await your letter with impatience. Good-by for the present. I remain alive and well and wish the same to you from the Lord God. Good health and good success in your work."

[3] The letter is written in a most illiterate way, filled with mistakes in orthography and punctuation.

(Trans.)