

Le Sémaphore de Marseille

Nr. *27474* vom *18 April* 191 *7.*

Billet Parisien

Dans le monde des dames politiques françaises qui avaient entrevu l'Impératrice de Russie au moment du voyage de Compiègne, on compatit peu à ses malheurs, — pour des motifs d'ailleurs peu élevés, bien terre à terre, si on peut dire, — en rappelant ces journées qui furent égayées par la célèbre poésie d'Edmond Rostand qui faisait parler le tapis des salons foulés par la souveraine, et lui faisait tenir ce langage :

— « Oh ! oh ! c'est une Impératrice ! »

Il est à peine besoin de rappeler quel empressement enthousiaste accueillit la femme de Nicolas II, qu'on acclamait avec conviction. On oubliait que c'était une grande duchesse de Hesse, belle-sœur du prince Henri de Prusse, pour ne se souvenir que de la souveraine du grand pays allié, pays qui était le pivot de la politique extérieure de la France.

Autant Nicolas II témoignait de cordialité pour les hommes politiques avec lesquels il se trouvait en relations, autant l'Impératrice se montrait raide, hautaine, distante, avec les dames des sommités républicaines ; elle recevait toutes les prévenances avec une déconcertante froideur. C'est elle qui créa et gâta le fameux incident des chapeaux au déjeuner de Compiègne. Vous savez qu'en matière de chapeaux pour les déjeuners commandés, il y a deux écoles, si le mot n'est pas trop gros ; il y a, dans tous les cas, deux habitudes. Dans certains milieux les dames gardent leur coiffure au déjeuner, dans d'autres on les quitte et on se met à table en cheveux.

A la Cour de Russie, on est pour la coiffure et la mode a subsisté jusqu'à l'arrestation de Tsarkoïé-Selo. A Paris, dans les milieux officiels, les dames se rendaient à la salle à manger en cheveux. Pour le fameux déjeuner de Compiègne, auquel l'Impératrice devait assister, la question se posa et les femmes des ministres allèrent demander à Mme Loubet quelle était l'étiquette : le chapeau comme en Russie ? en cheveux comme en France ?... Mme Waldeck-Rousseau et Mme Loubet décidèrent que puisqu'on était en France, on agirait à la française et qu'on enlèverait les chapeaux ; discrètement on fit prévenir l'Impératrice par la marquise de Montébello, femme de l'ambassadeur de France à Saint-Petersbourg. On pensait qu'ainsi tout était arrangé. La règle de la politesse la plus élémentaire, même pour une Impératrice, voulait qu'elle se conformât aux usages de ceux qui s'efforçaient de la recevoir avec toutes sortes de prévenances. Or, quel ne fut pas l'étonnement des dames françaises, qui toutes étaient en cheveux, en voyant la souveraine, — et la marquise de Montébello aussi —, entrer dans la salle à manger en chapeau.

L'Impératrice, ayant été prévenue, voulait donc, ou donner une leçon, ou montrer du dédain, dans les deux cas c'était déplacé.

On se garda bien de récriminer ; mais, à plusieurs reprises, les femmes politiques françaises montrèrent qu'elles avaient été froissées, bien inutilement et sans raison. La Princesse allemande n'avait pu dominer ses antipathies ; aussi n'est-il pas surprenant que, dans sa disgrâce, l'ancienne souveraine n'ait pas éveillé des sentiments favorables

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C'est ce qu'on pourrait appeler les « miettes de l'histoire de l'alliance ».

JEAN-BERNARD.

Neue Freie Presse (Wien)

Nr.

19407

Zarin Alexandra und ihre Töchter.

Unbefätigtes Gerücht von ihrer Ermordung.

Wien, 4. September.

Das Los der deutschen Fürstentöchter, die in das russische Kaiserhaus hineingeheiratet haben — die erste war eine Prinzessin von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, die 1711 den unglücklichen, vom Vater so tödlich gehaßten und schließlich in den Formen eines Gerichtsverfahrens ermordeten Sohn Peters des Großen heiratete — ist mit wenigen Ausnahmen ein Leben tragischer Enttäuschung, wo nicht noch schlimmeren Leides gewesen. Jene geniale Frau freilich, die sich aus der kleinen, zuerst von der Mutter und dann vom Mann mißhandelten Prinzessin von Anhalt-Berbst in die große Zarin Katharina II. verwandelte, hat dem Los einer

russischen Heirat für immer einen großen Reiz verliehen, der die Romantik sowohl wie den Ehrgeiz fesselte. In Wirklichkeit hat jedoch hier die Erwartung noch viel mehr enttäuscht, als es sonst in der Welt üblich ist. Fast wird man an jene byzantinischen Prinzessinnen erinnert, die in den Bedrängnissen von Byzanz den Fürsten und Häuptlingen der Barbaren zur Gewinnung ihres Wohlwollens in die Ehe gegeben wurden. Das fast sprichwörtliche Mißgeschick, das sich an die Herzen der nach Rußland verschlagenen deutschen Fürstinnen heftete, ist aber wohl noch nie zu so fürchterlichem Unglück emporgebrochen wie im Falle jener heftigen Prinzessin, die als Gemahlin Nikolaus' II. Zarin Alexandra von Rußland wurde.

Sie wurde am 7. Juni 1872 in Darmstadt geboren als das jüngste Kind des nachmaligen Großherzogs Ludwig IV. von Hessen und bei Rhein und der englischen Prinzessin Alice, einer Tochter der Königin Viktoria. Eine ältere Schwester der nachmaligen Zarin heiratete den Großfürsten Sergius von Rußland, einen der Uebelberufensten aus dem Hause Romanow, der 1905 in Moskau ermordet wurde; nach seinem Tode nahm die Witwe den Schleier und trat in ein orthodoxes Frauenkloster ein. Die älteste Schwester ist die Frau des früheren englischen Flottenchefs, des in Graz gebornen Prinzen Louis von Battenberg oder, wie er jetzt heißt: Marquis von Milford Haven, dessen Bruder Fürst Alexander von Bulgarien war, während die Tochter eines anderen Bruders jetzt Königin von Spanien ist. Die vorjüngste der hessischen Schwestern ist Prinzessin Heinrich von Preußen, der einzige Bruder der gegenwärtigen

Großherzog von Hessen, Ernst Ludwig, dessen erste Gemahlin, eine Schwester der Königin von Rumänien, nach der Scheidung den Großfürsten Cyrill von Rußland heiratete. Die jüngste, Prinzessin Alice von Hessen, heiratete am 14. November 1894 den Zaren Nikolaus, nachdem sie zwei Wochen vorher zur orthodoxen Kirche übergetreten war und den Namen Alexandra Feodorowna erhalten hatte.

Das Schicksal dieser schönen und stattlichen Frau ist nicht bloß enthalten in dem Schicksal ihres Zarengemahls und der Monarchie in Rußland überhaupt; es hat auch die besondere Note eines tragischen Frauenlebens. Sie war nicht glücklich in der Ehe. Der ersten Pflicht einer Monarchin, einem Thronerben das Leben zu schenken, kam sie erst im zehnten Jahre ihrer Ehe nach, nachdem sie bereits vier Töchter geboren hatte und die Thronfolgefrage in mißlichster Weise diskutiert worden war. Und der junge Thronfolger, der sich in den ersten Jahren gesundheitlich gut anzulassen schien, wurde im siebenten oder achten Lebensjahre von einem Leiden befallen — man sprach allerdings auch von den Folgen eines Attentats — dessen wahre Natur nie bekanntgegeben worden ist, von dem es jedoch als ausgemacht galt, daß es kaum die Thronbesteigung des jungen Prinzen ermöglichen werde. Dazu die stete Angst vor Attentaten gegen das Leben des Gemahls und der Kinder. Kein Wunder, daß die Kaiserin immer ängstlicher, immer verschlossener und einsamer wurde. Seit 1907 sprach man von ihr als einer Kranken; erst sollte es eine Herzneurose sein, unter der sie litt, später wurde die Behauptung von einer schweren Nervenzerrüttung in der Welt gesetzt.

Das Unglück Alexandras wollte es, daß sie Zarin wurde in einer Zeit, wo das russische Nationalgefühl besonders hochging und nach dem Abebben der Revolution von 1905/06 alle Schichten der Bevölkerung sich in der gemeinsamen Abneigung gegen alles Deutsche zu finden schienen. Der hiesigen Petersburger Hofgesellschaft war die strenge Lebensführung der Zarin, die wohl aus ihrer Verachtung für ihre Umgebung wenig Hehl machte, ein Aergernis. Die Oppositionsparteien glaubten, den Kampf gegen die Autokratie durch Angriffe auf die Zarin als eine Deutsche dem Volke besonders schmackhaft zu machen. Ein Leben so voll von Enttäuschungen trieb die Zarin, in Glaubensstrenge und allerlei trüber Mystik eine Zuflucht zu suchen; sie, die geborne Protestantin, übertrieb noch die abergläubische Innbrunst der russischen Orthodoxie, und die unheilvolle Persönlichkeit des wunderwirkenden Rasputin trat in

WENDEN!

enge Verbindung mit dem Hof. Der Haß gegen den Zarsismus, der Haß speziell gegen die Unfähigkeit und die Korruption, die die Herrschaft Nikolaus' II. kennzeichneten, konzentrierte sich auf die Zarin Alexandra. Sie wurde vielleicht die bestgehaßte Person von Rußland. Am abscheulichsten aber benahmen sich gerade die Klassen und Personen, die dem alten Regime am nächsten gestanden waren; von dieser Seite sind die stärksten Schmähungen wider sie ergangen. Die siegreichen Revolutionäre hingegen schienen gegen sie nichts Besonderes zu haben, und die Versuche des Vatikans und des Königs von Spanien, die Erlaubnis für die Uebersiedlung der Zarin und ihrer Töchter ins Ausland zu erhalten, stießen auf keine prinzipielle Ablehnung, wenn sie auch zu keinem Resultate führten. Die Ermordung der unglücklichen Frau und ihrer gewiß ganz unschuldigen jungen Töchter (Olga, geboren 1895, Tatjana, geboren 1897, Maria, geboren 1899, Anastasia, geboren 1901), falls dieses Gerücht sich bewahrheiten sollte, ist daher kaum auf eine bewußte Politik der Rätereierung zurückzuführen.

Frankfurter Zeitung

Nr. 254

Rußland.

Ermordung der Czarin und ihrer Töchter?

London, 12. Septbr. (B. B.) Reuter-Meldung. „Daily Express“ erfährt, daß die Kaiserin von Rußland und ihre vier Töchter von Bolschewiki ermordet wurden. Auf die Kaiserin-Witwe wurde kürzlich ein Ueberfall unternommen; sie wurde aber von Matrosen der Schwarzmeerflotte verteidigt. Den Matrosen gelang es, die Roten Garden nach 14tägigem Kampfe zu besiegen. Die Kaiserin-Witwe ist jetzt in Sicherheit. (Erst vor wenigen Tagen wurde eine ähnliche Nachricht verbreitet, die aber bis jetzt nicht bestätigt worden ist. D. Red.)

El Mercurio (Santiago) (Valparaíso)

Nr. 29252

CARTAS DE LA ZARINA DE RUSIA

Las protestas de amor de la zarina a su esposo.—La soberana habría informado a Alemania de que lord Kitchener se embarcaría en el crucero "Hampshire".

NUEVA YORK, 12.— La zarina Alejandra leía con frecuencia la novela "The Rosary" de Florence Barclay, deleitándose con la lectura de esa escritora y adoptando muchas frases de amor que se encuentran en la obra para dirigirse al zar.

"Celeste muchacho" llegó a ser su expresión favorita y la usó con variedad de adjetivos. Las protestas de amor de la zarina a su esposo son tan persistentes y numerosas que se llega a dudar de la sinceridad que las inspira.

En una de sus cartas le dice:

Celeste muchacho mío: He conversado con varios ministros, los que están en favor de la idea de que se levante un empréstito de mil millones a fin de destinarlos a la construcción de ferrocarriles. El empréstito se suscribiría casi inmediatamente, porque los banqueros y los comerciantes tienen fortunas colosales y se han dado cuenta de las enormes utilidades que dejan los ferrocarriles. Ellos tomarían gran cantidad de títulos, y de esa manera, encontrarían luego trabajo los soldados que regresaran del frente, evitándose el descontento y el estallido de posibles trastornos.

"Los presidarios comenzarían a trabajar inmediatamente en la construcción de las líneas. ¿Puedo hablar a Sturmer de estos asuntos? Acuérdate que una vez dijiste que te agradaba la idea.

"Hoy ha sido un día de prueba para Ania Viravoba. Está nerviosísima y desea apresurar su partida. Te envía muchos besos amorosos. No ha tenido tiempo de escribirte. Adiós celeste muchacho, novio mío".

En 1918 circuló el rumor en Europa y los Estados Unidos que la zarina había comunicado a Alemania que Lord Kitchener se embarcaría en el crucero "Hampshire" para Rusia, lo que habría tenido como consecuencia el hundimiento del crucero y la muerte de Kitchener y todos los tripulantes del barco.

condujo muy mal en el asunto de Ilodoro Germóenes, que nunca estuvo por mí. Su nombramiento sería el más grave de los errores.

"El 25 de mayo de 1916 la zarina escribe:

¡Qué terrible lo de Kitchener! Es una verdadera pesadilla. ¡Qué pérdida para Inglaterra. Ania Viravoba olvidó decirte que nuestro amigo envía su bendición a todo el ejército ortodoxo y pide que no avancemos todavía hacia el norte, por si continúan nuestros éxitos en el sur, el enemigo se retirará del norte.

"Ania ha salido para Terioki para ver a su familia. Volverá el martes en la noche. Se olvidó también decirte que nuestro amigo dice que es beneficiosa para nosotros la muerte de Kitchener, porque después podía hacer daño a Rusia., ya que se teme siempre a Inglaterra. He dicho a Ania que te escriba, porque quería hablarte sobre cinco cosas; pero como ella no te ha escrito:

"Nuestro amigo desea to, yo te hablaré.

que procures venir para arreglar esas cuestiones, porque piensa que deben ser muy cuidadosamente tratadas. En primer lugar, debes insistir en que la Duma concluya pronto sus trabajos, y mandes por Sturmer, porque si no las cosas no andarán bien. En segundo lugar, Obolensky debe ser reemplazado. ¿Por qué no nombrarlo gobernador de cualquier parte? Obolensky nunca ha estado contra Gregorio, de modo que éste lamenta que sea cambiado; pero, en realidad, no hace nada.

"Los víveres deben ser repartidos con más rapidez. En tercer lugar, todas las cuestiones de los víveres y el combustible deben ser entregadas al ministro del Interior, a quien corresponden, y no al ministro de Agricultura. En cuarto lugar, no debes dar personalmente gracia a la Unión de Ciudades. Piensa que es necesario saber lo que la unión hace, y

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El primer indicio de que la zarina sabía que lord Kitchener iría a Rusia se encuentra en una carta suya del 22 de mayo, en la cual dice que había oído hablar del asunto. Esa carta fué escrita el día en que Kitchener se embarcó en el crucero que fué torpedeado, o que chocó con una mina el 5 de junio, de manera que los alemanes no podían haber recibido oportunamente esa información para transmitirla a algún comandante de submarino y éste torpedeado al crucero, todo en un mismo día. La carta dice así:

"Se habla de que lord Kitchener vendrá el 28 de mayo. Nuestro amigo desea mucho que no nombres como ministro interino al general Makarov, como su partido desea. Recuerda que se

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"¿Por qué ese ultimátum de Grecia? ¿Es cierto que la Gran Bretaña y Francia están al fondo del asunto? Creo que es duro e injusto. No pude imaginar como se saldrá del paso, sin que se perjudique la popularidad. Debo decirte otra cosa más. El general Selitanoff ha sido nombrado juez del proceso Sukholinov. Sería mejor que se nombrase al general Schumilov, porque éste separó a Selitanov y por eso este último no puede dejar de tener algún prejuicio".

Weser-Zeitung (Bremen)

Nr. *62*

Die letzte Zarin.

Neben der Erforschung der russischen Zarentragödie finden neuerdings ganz allgemein die Zustände am Hofe Nikolaus' II. zahlreiche mehr oder minder unparteiische literarische Bearbeiter. Zu den interessantesten Dokumenten dieser Art gehören sicherlich die kürzlich in ausländischen Blättern veröffentlichten Aufzeichnungen des Schweizer Pierre Gillard, der zehn Jahre hindurch Hauslehrer des kleinen Thronfolgers war. Die Erinnerungen haben um so mehr Interesse, als man hier zum ersten Male einem sympathisch gezeichneten Bilde der ermordeten Zarin begegnet, die so vielfach, u. a. auch in Wittes Memoiren, unsympathisch geschildert worden ist. Gillard schildert den heroischen Kampf, den die Zarin für ihren kleinen Sohn geführt hat. Die Zarin vergötterte den Großfürstenthronfolger. Dieser litt jedoch an einer furchtbaren Krankheit, die unter dem Namen Hämophilie bekannt ist. Diese ist in einzelnen Familien von Generation zu Generation erblich und wird durch Frauen auf die männlichen Nachkommen übertragen, so daß meistens nur Männer Opfer dieser Krankheit werden. Sie äußert sich dadurch, daß selbst die kleinste Wunde den Tod zur Folge haben kann. Gillard schreibt:

„Welche Tortur muß es für die unglückliche Mutter gewesen sein, den Todeskampf dieses Kindes mitanzusehen. Wie gut verstehe ich jetzt das geheimnisvolle Drama ihres Lebens und wie leicht kann man daran die Stadien ihres langen Martyriums erkennen. Die Krankheit des Thronfolgers blieb von entsetzender Bedeutung für die Zarin und die direkte Folge war das Auftauchen des mystischen Mönches Rasputin. Als alle menschlichen Mittel, den kleinen Kronprinzen zu heilen, erschöpft waren, und nur noch die Hoffnung auf göttliche Hilfe blieb, erschien Rasputin und sagte zur Zarin: Vertraue der Wirkung meiner Gebete und der Macht derselben und dein Sohn wird gerettet werden. Nun klammerte sich die Mutter an diese letzte Hoffnung. Sie vertraute dem Mönch und seiner Kraft von ganzer Seele. Bereits lange Zeit hindurch hatte sie zu der Auffassung geneigt, daß das Heil Russlands und die Rettung der Dynastie nur durch das russische Volk selbst erfolgen könne und sie glaubte, daß dieser Mönch von Gott gesandt war, um dem Kronprinzen, die Hoffnung der Nation, zu retten. Die Macht des Glaubens und eine Art Selbstsuggestion in Verbindung mit einer Reihe von Ereignissen überzeugte sie davon, daß das Schicksal ihres Kindes

ganz allein von Rasputin abhinge. Als sich Rasputin über die ungeheure Macht, die er über diese verzweifelte Mutter ausübte, deren Kraft im Lebenskampfe gebrochen war, klar wurde, verstand er es mit teuflischer Geschmeidigkeit, sein Leben mit dem des Kindes fest zu verknüpfen. Die Zarin war in jeder Beziehung nur Mutter und Frau. Sie bewunderte ihren Mann und liebte ihre Kinder und fühlte sich nur im Familienkreise wohl. Sie lebte ein stark innerliches Leben, von dem sie sich nur mit großer Kraftanstrengung losriß, wenn sie glaubte, daß einem ihrer Lieben eine Gefahr drohte. Aber die Leiden hatten ihre Widerstandskraft gebrochen und in den letzten Jahren ihres Lebens war sie nur noch ein Schatten ihrer selbst und verfiel zu Zeiten in eine mystische Ekstase, während derer sie keine Kontrolle über Ereignisse und Persönlichkeiten hatte. Von Tag zu Tag wuchs Rasputins Einfluß und so gewann er schließlich auch die Macht über den Zaren. Das russische Volk klagte den Mönch wegen allen Un Glücks, das über dasselbe gekommen war, an, und am 30. Dezember 1916 wurde Rasputin ermordet. Da er wußte, daß sein Leben von allen Seiten bedroht war, hatte er gleichsam als eine Art von Lebensversicherung die Erklärung abgegeben, daß der Thronfolger sechs Wochen nach ihm sterben würde. Und wirklich zwei Monate nach der Ermordung Rasputins wurde der Thronfolger krank. Gillard schließt seine Erinnerungen mit folgenden Worten: Eine Gestalt beherrscht diesen Abschnitt der russischen Geschichte: Alexandra Feodorowna, die tragische Frau und Mutter, vor der man sich in tiefster Achtung neigen muß.“

Das ist allerdings ein ganz neues Bild, das der unparteiische Schweizer aufrollt. Derselbe hatte Gelegenheit, seine Beobachtungen aus nächster Nähe zu machen und sein Urteil ist jedenfalls ein Beweis dafür, daß die ungünstige Auffassung über den Charakter Alexandra Feodorownas jedenfalls nicht allgemein ist.

1880 P. 1.

The Times (London)

Nr.

43099

THE REAL TSARITSA.

SOME WAR-TIME LETTERS.

INFLUENCE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

HER "ADORATION" OF RASPUTIN.

(From Our Berlin Correspondent.)

BERLIN, AUG. 1.

An adoring wife, a tender mother, a self-sacrificing consoler of the wounded, a devoted trustworthy friend, a woman possessing a heart responding with the deepest sentiments to all the suffering caused by the war—such appears the late Tsaritsa in her letters to her husband, Nicholas II. of Russia.

And yet, parallel with all these noble, elevated qualities, and next to a true and deeply religious feeling, one hears the voice of a woman suffering from delusions, who has an adoration akin to worship for the almost illiterate Rasputin, whom she refers to as "God's man," "the envoy of God," and "He." This has an important influence upon her whole outlook.

This feeling is not concealed from her husband; on the contrary, she undoubtedly saw in him a most devoted ally. But since Rasputin had so great an influence upon her, and since she in turn exercised so powerful an influence over her husband, it was indirectly Rasputin who thus virtually directed the Tsar's mind in matters of policy. But whatever has been said of her secret relations with Rasputin by people ignorant of the true character of the Empress must now be definitely discarded.

So, also, must be abandoned the legend of her betrayal of Russia. At the time when the war was raging, when popular passion soared high, a good deal of credence was given to these inventions. From this correspondence one may see that if the ex-Empress did occasionally receive by roundabout ways news of her family, it was invariably in connexion with the welfare of the wounded, or it was of an entirely personal nature.

The first volume of her correspondence will be published shortly by the Russian publishing firm "Slovo," in Berlin. The first volume comprises letters beginning in April, 1914, and ending in January, 1916. The letters were found at Ekaterinburg, after the murder of the Imperial Family, in a black wooden chest.

FAMILY ENDEARMENTS.

They are all written in English, as this was the language of the Empress and Empress always

There are in the first volume (a second is to follow) 199 letters, for the most part very long and comprehensive. They are written in a rather colloquial style, with a feminine wealth of dashes as punctuation, and they do not appear to have been edited in the sense of selection. The little endearments are left as they were found.

The Tsaritsa addresses her husband as "My Sweet Treasure," "My Very Own One," and sends him "a thousand kisses." Sometimes she signs herself "Wify," "Your own old wify, Alice." More often it was "Sunny," in abbreviation of her husband's pet name of "Sunshine" for her. She refers to little events of cryptic meaning to anyone outside the family, and refers by initials to persons whom it is sometimes impossible to identify.

But through the correspondence there flows an undercurrent, illuminating many events of Russia's internal struggle that are still not clear, while some of the pen portraits of prominent personalities add greatly to our knowledge of the late Tsar's advisers. Most clearly, however, does the Tsaritsa illustrate herself. She wrote with freedom and an absence of any literary self-consciousness, and the result is a highly stippled self-portrait. She shows plainly that she is aware of her own character, and that it is stronger than that of her husband.

"BE AN EMPEROR!"

A thousand little touches depict her, powerful and proud, though superstitious, and exercising a far-reaching influence by her interference—there can be no other word—in public affairs. She frankly admits it. "My influence is feared," she writes in one place; "Gregory" (Rasputin) "has said so (not to me) and Voieikova, because they know I have a strong will and because I, better than others, can see through them and help you to be strong. They try to get round you when you are alone."

The Tsaritsa frequently reminds her husband that he is an autocrat, and shows some anxiety that he does not always live up to the part. Evidently she realizes that he is weak, and would stiffen his backbone. "I would like to make you self-reliant," she says in one of the letters, the burden of which is "Nicky, be an emperor!" There are many passages in this strain.

Similarly, she is constantly seen exercising an influence over appointments. "Deary, if a new Com. of the Nijegoroditz is to be named, won't you propose Jagmin? I meddle in things not concerning me, but it's only a hint and it's your own regiment, so you can order whom you wish there." This is an example from many similar requests, occasionally preferred with an almost masculine cynicism.

The letters under review were, of course, written in the worst years of the war, and they contain a mass of intimate detail. The Tsaritsa was well informed as to events. In addition to information given her from high quarters as to the broad progress of the war, she received letters from her Royal relations in England. These she often copied into her own letters to the Tsar when he was away with his Army. "This miserable war," she writes, "when will it ever end? Wilhelm, I feel sure, must at times pass through hideous moments of despair when he grasps that it was he, and especially his anti-Russian set, which began the war, and is dragging his country into ruin. All those little States, for years they will continue suffering from the after-effects. . . .

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FAMILY ENDEARMENTS.

They are all written in English, as this was the language the Emperor and Empress always conversed in. The period her correspondence refers to may be too close to be seen in perspective and judged in a spirit of detachment, but the striking sincerity and honesty of these letters make them a most valuable contribution to the data which the future historian of the dark period of Russian history will be able to turn to.

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Wenden

RASPUTIN'S INFLUENCE.

Of the figures that pass across the pages and that stand out, the foremost is Aniavirobova, the Tsaritsa's friend and confidant, to a great extent the link between the Tsaritsa and Rasputin. Many of the meetings of the two took place at Virobova House. Goremeykin is another figure—"the old man," as the Tsaritsa calls him, who is wheedled or forced or tricked into doing things against his better judgment—at least, that is an impression of him gleaned from these letters.

But the central figure remains "our friend" Gregory Rasputin. The letters are full of his semi-mystic admonitions. "I always remember what our friend says, and how often we do not enough heed his words," says the Tsaritsa in a characteristic letter on June 16,

1915. "He was so much against your going to the headquarters because people get round you there and make you do things which would have been better not done—here the atmosphere in your house is a healthier one, and you would see things more readily—if you would only come back quicker. I am not speaking because of a selfish feeling, but that I am in a constant dread what one is concocting—you see I have absolutely no faith in N. (Grand Duke Nicholas)—know him to be far from clever, and, having gone against the man of God, his word can't be blessed nor his advice be good."

And at times she forwarded to her husband little homilies worded in an exalted and mystical phraseology which the "man of God" had composed for her comfort.

She is convinced that everyone who goes against the "man of God" will be severely punished by God. The police protocol which was drafted as a consequence of Rasputin's debauches at the fashionable Café Chantant Villiarode does not shake her faith in him.

"They are only intrigues of enemies," she says. She sends Nicholas a stick that Rasputin had touched. Once she succeeded in obtaining from Virobova the remainder of some wine which was sent by Rasputin as a gift for the birthday of Ania. She drinks of this wine, gives some to her children, and sends some to her husband with the express demand that he should drink it.

In her letters she also constantly refers to a comb which Rasputin had given the Emperor. She does not tire of reminding him that before every important conversation he should comb his hair with it, for she is convinced that if he does, God's protection will be with him. Superstition dominates in almost all her letters. Rasputin's sayings and goings are, to her, the symbol of divine sanction. On the faithful carrying out of his revelations the future of the dynasty and the future of Russia seem to her to depend.

With unwavering faith she communicates to the Emperor Gregory's advice on commencing an offensive near Riga, and with the same deep faith describes a visionary dream or transmits a message, like the following, from a monk. "On the day of the Saint Tikhon, during the procession around the church in the village of Barabinsk, there suddenly appeared on the sky a cross, which was seen altogether for fifteen minutes, and just as the Holy Church was praying 'the cross of the Tsar is the support of the kingdom of believers.' I felicitate you on this vision, and believe that God sent this vision and sign in order to uphold visibly with belief his devoted ones. I pray for all of you."

To the message she adds:—"God grant that this be a good sign; crosses are not always." She sees in every step conspiracies against the Emperor, and she considers it her duty to expose his enemies. She suspects the Ministers. A little later she accuses the Synod.

The letters collected in the first volume

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The letters collected in the first volume were written during the frequent, but mostly short, visits of the Emperor to the front. There is, as yet, no indication of the pending disaster. "Do not doubt," writes the Empress in one of her letters. "Believe, and all will be well."

(To be continued.)

THE REAL TSARITSA.

A PITIFUL DIARY.

CHRONICLE OF PRISON LIFE.

IMPERIAL FAMILY'S LAST DAYS.

Following the extracts from the late Tsaritsa's war-time letters which we printed on Wednesday and yesterday, we give below an account of the contents of the diary which her Majesty wrote during the last six weeks of the life of the Imperial family in imprisonment at Ekaterinburg.

(From Our Berlin Correspondent.)

BERLIN, AUG. 3.

The further correspondence of the Tsaritsa is not at present available in the original English text. There is thus a gap to be bridged between the period after the death of Rasputin and the arrival of the Tsar and Tsaritsa from Tobolsk at Ekaterinburg, where, as prisoners of the Bolsheviks, they spent six weeks under close surveillance before they were brutally done to death and their bodies burned in the forest of Kaptiataki.

During this terrible interval the Tsaritsa kept a little diary, in which she entered day by day the events of their circumscribed lives. This diary has come to light with the letters, and will be published in Berlin, together with a further selection of letters, by Messrs. Ullstein, the proprietors of the *Vossische Zeitung*. The Tsar, Tsaritsa, and the Grand Duchess Marie, accompanied by a small suite, were sent on to Ekaterinburg on April 30 (Western date) by the Soviet Government of Ural, and were placed under a strong guard in the house of a merchant named Ipatieff. With their arrival the diary begins.

The entries show that the prisoners were very closely confined. The spring had begun, the days were at first fine and warm, and the Tsaritsa records with some relief that at last they are allowed to go into the garden for half an hour twice a day. The promise is not always adhered to, however; there are several entries that "to-day we were forbidden to go." A man came and painted their windows white from the outside; later the windows were boarded half-way up, afterwards wooden stays were placed across, and finally iron bars were substituted. Only one window was allowed to be open, and this, too, was closely barred. "They always seem to fear we are going to climb out or communicate with the guard," she comments.

PRISON DISCOMFORTS.

The time during their imprisonment evidently hung heavily on their hands. Sometimes entries are made in the diary hour by hour, and the smallest event recorded as though for the sake of something to do. Sometimes the Tsar read to them from the New Testament, or one of the others read to the Tsaritsa a chapter from one of the minor Prophets (the books of Daniel and Obadiah seem to have contained her favourite passages), while the rest went into the garden.

At times they played patience or bezique. There was no electric light, and they played cards by the light of three candles stuck in bottles. The heat occasionally made the room abominably stuffy, and the whole place was pervaded with the smell of cooking. The food was evidently very bad, and its arrival very uncertain.

On May 13 the Tsaritsa records that she cut the Tsar's hair for the first time in her life. On June 7 she was able to have a bath, but the water had to be brought up from the kitchen. She writes down these discomforts as cold facts, and there is not a word of complaint about them. But she notes with bitterness that she is refused the solace of her religion, and is overjoyed when, at last, an old arch-priest is allowed to say Mass, the first for three weeks, quite simply at the dining-room table, which is decorated with sprays of birch and their own sacred pictures.

On May 10 the Tsarevitch arrived with four maids, and the Tsaritsa's worst anxiety was allayed, though she continued to wonder when the others, the Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana, would come. They subsequently arrived.

TSAREVITCH'S ACCIDENT.

The spring was fickle; a heavy fall of snow occurred on that day, and the cold was intense. The Tsaritsa's hands were soon full of trouble. She had given "Baby" (the Tsarevitch) the Grand Duchess Maria's bed, and in getting into it he had slipped and severely injured his knee. He apparently suffered great pain: his mother spent much of her night time in watching him and treating his injury with cold water compresses. The next day Vladimir Nikolaievitch (Dr. Drevenko) came to attend him. The Tsaritsa tried to have some conversation with him, but Abdieff, the Soviet Commissioner, in whose charge they were, would not suffer them to exchange a single word.

The Tsarevitch's injury became worse, and his knee had to be encased in plaster of Paris. He was taken into the garden in a wheeled chair. Meanwhile, the monotonous round of their daily life continued. The ladies sewed, the Tsar read to them, and occasionally sat in the garden.

The festivals came and went uncelebrated. "To-day is my real birthday," she writes on May 24; "the festival day of my own Lancers" on May 31. On the afternoon of that day, Abdieff entered the room suddenly and ordered them to pack, as they might have to leave at any moment. They spent the rest of the day in packing, but at midnight Abdieff reappeared and informed them they would not be leaving for some days, and next day he told them that they were not to leave at all, but to remain where they were.

JEWELRY TAKEN AWAY.

They dropped back into the old monotony of their circumscribed surroundings. The sprightliness which had crept into the entries of the diary at the prospect of the change disappeared. The petty entries recur.

There is no note of apprehension in any of the entries. The guards are ordered to keep the closest watch on the windows. There are frequent visitations by the Commissioner and Commandant, but no conclusions are drawn from these events. For the first time (on June 15) the Tsaritsa makes a note of her own illness. She is evidently suffering from an old heart trouble, and betrays irritability, due to want of sleep. On the following day she is told, to her great sorrow, that there can be no more religious services. Abdieff has been replaced, and a new Commandant installed, with an assistant who seems a decent man, whereas the other is coarse and unpleasant.

She expresses no surprise when they make an inventory of all their jewelry and take it away from them. They left her two bracelets, given her by Uncle Leopold, which they could not remove, and each of the children a bracelet their parents had given them. The engagement ring which the Tsar had given her they left also, as it

could not be got off her finger. They sealed up the jewelry in a box, and took all the keys of the luggage in the loft. These they promised to return.

The Tsaritsa retired after the perquisition was over. She was exhausted, she writes, and her heart pained her badly. The dull life went on. It was sunny; Anastasia sat with her mother, the others went out after tea, she played cards with "Baby." The Commandant, whose name they discovered to be Yurovsky, returned the Tsar his wrist-watch, which had been found in the servants' room, having been stolen. Vladimir Nikolaievitch did not come any more, and they could get no news of him, though they asked daily.

"Baby" was getting too heavy for the others to carry, and their captors would not let Nagorni (his nurse) come to them. She massaged his knee, and he limped about a little. Next day the Tsaritsa was herself so ill that she had to remain in bed. Anastasia stayed by her. Sometimes they heard troops go by, and once in the night they heard revolver shooting. The Tsaritsa spent most of her time in bed, reading the Bible or pious books.

There comes the entry on July 3. It was a grey morning, which brightened to pleasant sunshine later. "Baby" had caught a slight cold. All of them went out for half an hour in the morning. The Tsaritsa and Olga arranged their medications, Tatiana read to them out of the Bible. They went out—Tatiana remained with her mother, and they read a passage from the Prophet. They sewed. Every day, she notes, the Commandant came into their room. Supper. Suddenly Levka Sednieff (an attendant) was fetched away, having permission to see his uncle, and went off. They wondered if it were true, and whether they would ever see the lad again. "Playing bezique with Nicholas. Half-past ten, to bed."

It is the end of the diary. Soon after midnight Jurovsky, Nikulin, and the guards forced their way in and ordered them to follow. They went out to their fate, the particulars of which are now well known.

Among the letters written by the Tsaritsa, of which some examples have been given in previous articles, the following, addressed to the Tsar on November 15, 1915, is of interest:—

"Now, before I forget, I must give you a message from our friend [Rasputin], prompted by what he saw in the night. He begs you to order that we should advance near Riga, said it is necessary, otherwise the Germans will settle down so firmly through all the winter that it will cause endless bloodshed and trouble to make them move. Now, it will take them so aback that we shall succeed in making them retrace their steps—he says it is just now a most essential thing, and begs you seriously to order ours to advance; he says we can and we must, and I was to write to you at once."

The letters from the Tsaritsa, altogether four hundred, end on December 17, 1916, the date of the murder of Rasputin. When Nicholas II. received the news he immediately left for Tsarskoye Selo and returned to headquarters only in February, when the revolutionary ferment had already started in Petrograd.

Le Temps (Paris)

Nr. 22883

On sait qu'on a récemment publié à Berlin, en un gros volume, les lettres de l'impératrice Alexandra Feodorovna à son époux, Nicolas II. Cette correspondance fut trouvée à Ekaterinenbourg, après le meurtre de la famille impériale. Elle va du 27 avril 1914 au 17 décembre 1916, c'est-à-dire jusqu'à l'assassinat de Raspoutine. M. Bienstock y consacre dans le *Mercure de France* une étude qui précise bien certains aspects du caractère de la tsarine. Ces lettres de l'impératrice furent trouvées dans un coffret de bois noir aux initiales du tsar, et l'on n'en connaissait jusqu'ici que des fragments. C'est la première fois que cette correspondance est présentée intégralement dans son ordre chronologique et complétée par des notes empruntées aux mémoires de personnes qui touchaient de près la cour impériale. « On peut dire sans exagération, écrit M. Bienstock, qu'il est peu de livres où l'âme humaine soit mise à nu comme dans cette correspondance de l'impératrice Alexandra Feodorovna. Elle y exprime ses moindres pensées, ses sentiments les plus intimes... C'est un livre remarquable et terrible. »

Ce qui en ressort surtout, c'est qu'Alexandra Feodorovna adorait son mari et ses enfants. En écrivant au tsar, elle ne l'appelle jamais que « mon chéri », « mon âme », « mon soleil », « époux de mon cœur ». Par contre, on est assez surpris d'y découvrir qu'elle n'aimait guère, du moins au début, sa dame d'honneur, la fameuse Mme Wyroubow, celle qui introduisit Raspoutine dans la famille impériale et qui exerça la plus grande et la plus néfaste influence sur la tsarine. « Ce matin, écrit l'impératrice, elle a été très peu aimable avec moi, on peut même dire grossière; et ce soir, elle est venue bien après l'heure qu'on lui avait fixée. Elle s'est montrée très bizarre avec moi. Elle flirte énormément avec un jeune officier petit-russien; mais toi, tu lui manques, elle s'ennuie après toi et, parfois, elle est excessivement gaie... » Dans une autre lettre, la tsarine se plaint que Mme Wyroubow pense, sans doute, qu'il est de son devoir à elle, l'impératrice, de lui faire des visites. « Elle sait, dit-elle, que je ne manque jamais l'occasion de la voir quand cela m'est possible, même si je

suis terriblement fatiguée, mais cela ne l'empêche pas de bougonner parce que je visite deux fois par jour un officier que je ne connais pas... Sois gentil et ferme, et quand tu seras de retour ne la laisse pas te marcher sur le pied, car après elle devient encore plus insupportable et il faut la doucher. »

Mais tout à coup, l'attitude de l'impératrice change à l'égard de Mme Wyroubow; elle demande même à Nicolas II de lui écrire pour la remercier d'un envoi de livres. La dame d'honneur prend à ce moment une place importante dans la vie des souverains, parce que c'est elle qui vient d'introduire Raspoutine au-

près de l'impératrice. Son influence s'exerce, constate M. Bienstock, même pour la désignation des ministres, et quand l'impératrice recommande un ministre au choix du tsar, pour donner plus de poids à sa recommandation, elle ne manque pas de dire : « Ania (Mme Wyroubow) a causé avec lui et le trouve très bien. »

D'où venait la haine farouche que la tsarine portait au grand-duc Nicolas Nicolaïevitch? Simplement des sentiments que nourrissait le généralissime à l'égard de Raspoutine. Ce dernier ayant un jour demandé à aller au grand quartier général, le grand-duc Nicolas lui avait télégraphié : « Viens, je te ferai pendre! » Raspoutine avait fait croire à l'impératrice que la popularité du grand-duc Nicolas constituait un grand danger pour la dynastie, et l'impératrice avait peur que la gloire du généralissime n'éclipsât celle de l'empereur. Dans chacune de ses lettres, elle insinuait qu'il fallait se débarrasser du grand-duc parce qu'elle redoutait une révolution de palais, « dont on parle ouvertement dans la société », écrivait-elle au tsar, et dont le généralissime devait bénéficier. Quant à Goutchkof, le chef du parti octobriste, elle conseillait au tsar de profiter des lois d'exception en vigueur pendant la guerre pour le faire incarcérer; elle conseilla même de le faire pendre. Bien plus, un jour, ayant appris que Goutchkof partait en voyage, elle se rendit à l'église pour prier Dieu qu'un déraillement ait lieu dont Goutchkof eût été la seule victime!

Neue Freie Presse (Wien)

Nr. 21221

[Der Hoffriseur der letzten Zarin.] Pierre Delcroix, der am russischen Hofe als Damenfriseur für den speziellen Dienst der Kaiserin angestellt war, erzählt im Pariser „Eclair“ einige Erinnerungen an diese Zeit. Delcroix besaß am Nemsky Prospekt einen mit größtem Luxus ausgestatteten Friseur salon, in dem nur die russische Aristokratie verkehrte. Ich habe die Kaiserin sehr gut gekannt, schreibt er. Man hat über sie unzählige Verleumdungen ausgestreut und schmutzige Bücher geschrieben, aus Haß oder Gewinnsucht. Die Kaiserin gab sich einfach und liebenswürdig. Sie war vor allem um die Gesundheit ihrer Kinder besorgt, war eine musterhafte Gattin und Mutter. Der chronische Husten des Zarenwitsch machte sie verzweifelt, und bei dem Gedanken, die Krankheit könnte einen schlimmen Verlauf nehmen, zitterte sie an allen Gliedern. Sie hatte dieses nervöse Zittern seit den Schreckensjahren, die sich bei ihrer Krönung ereignet hatten, als bei dem Verteilen der Geschenke an das Volk fünftausend Personen erdrückt wurden. Eine mythische Veranlagung ihres Charakters verstärkte sich später, sie glaubte an allerlei Zauberspruch, an die Verwandlung schuld-beladener Seelen in Verrückter, sie war oft von einer tollen Gespensterfurcht ergriffen. Als in Rußland die Hungersnot wütete, fragte sie mich jeden Morgen, was das Volk denke, ob die Verteilung des Getreides an die Armen auch immer gerecht vorgenommen würde, ob keine Revolte zu befürchten sei. Sie glaubte sich beständig bedroht und hatte eine krankhafte Furcht vor dem Tode; auch prophezeite sie für jeden kommenden Tag irgendeine Katastrophe. Als der Krieg mit Japan ausbrach, sah sie darin den Anfang des allmählichen Zusammenbruches. Ich erinnere mich noch an eine der glanzvollen Hoffestlichkeiten, wie man sie in solchem Prunk nur in Petersburg sah. Während die Majestäten Cercle hielten, während im Ballsaale ein Walzer von Strauß ertönte und die Paare zum Tanze antraten, beobachtete ich in der Nähe des Büfets den japanischen Votschafter, der sich mit zwei Marineoffizieren und einigen jungen Damen unterhielt und ungemein aufgeräumt schien. Um dieselbe Stunde bombardierten bereits die japanischen Kriegsschiffe Port Arthur. In Petersburg wußte man noch nichts davon. Ich erinnere mich auch an die Anfänge der ersten russischen Revolution. Nihilistische Studenten hatten sich in großer Zahl in die Mandschurei begeben und verbreiteten dort Schauernachrichten über den Krieg und über einen Sieg der Revolution im westlichen Rußland. Die Kaiserin las morgens, wenn ich sie frisierte, zitternd die lakonischen Depeschen, die über die Ausbreitung der Revolution berichteten. Und am 6. Januar 1905, als die Kaiserfamilie mit allen Hofwürdenträgern und dem diplomatischen Korps der Wasserweiche am Ufer der Newa heimohnen wollte, krachten die Salutschüsse und eine wirkliche Granate explodierte unweit der Kapelle, die man für das Kaiserpaar am Ufer errichtet hatte. Die Kaiserin wurde ohnmächtig und setzte es am folgenden Tage durch, daß sich der Zar mit seiner ganzen Familie nach Zaritsko-Selo zurückzog. Es war ein Glück für die Kaiserin, daß sie derart nicht die riesige Menschenmenge sah, die sich am 9. Januar unter der Führung des Popen Gapon aus den Petersburger Vorstädten und den Werkstätten Putilow und Obukhow zum Sturm auf das Winterpalais heranzog. Nein, die Kaiserin war sicherlich nicht die bössartige Frau, als die sie von einigen Schriftstellern hingestellt wurde. Aber sie benahm sich unklug ihrer Schwiegermutter gegenüber, Maria Fedorowna, die heute in London ein asketisches Leben führt. Die Zarin war sich ihrer Rechte als Kaiserin bewußt und entzog sich brüsk dem Einflusse der Kaiserinwitwe. Nach dem Aufstiege Kerenskis wurde ich einer französischen Kommission zugeteilt, die über die Ermordung der Zarenfamilie Erhebungen anstellen sollte. Ich begab mich mit dem Leutnant Soberbielle bis nach Jekaterinenburg, woselbst wir die Gewißheit erlangten, daß die ganze Familie erschossen worden war, bis auf die damals dreizehnjährige Großfürstin Anastasia, die von der Tschecha in Perm getötet wurde. Die Leichen der Opfer wurden nicht verbrannt, sondern nach Moskau gebracht, wo wir aber die Spur verloren. Was den Großfürsten Michael betrifft, so soll er sich mit 60.000 Goldrubel losgekauft haben.“

Neue Freie Presse (Wien)

Nr. 21280

[Von der letzten Zarin.] Ueber die Zarin Alix und das Leben der kaiserlichen Familie in den letzten Jahren der Regierung Nikolaus' II. ist jetzt in London ein neues Buch erschienen. Madame Anna Biroubova, die ihre „Erinnerungen an den russischen Kaiserhof“ veröffentlicht, stellt sich als intime Freundin der unglücklichen Fürstin vor. Politisch hat das Buch keine Bedeutung, aber es erweckt tiefes Interesse durch das Bild, das die Verfasserin von der letzten Zarin gibt, eine Schilderung, die fast an Verherrlichung grenzt. Von der Persönlichkeit der Kaiserin sagt sie: Keine Photographie konnte ihr gerecht werden. Denn sie konnte ja weder ihren herrlichen Teint, noch die Grazie ihrer Bewegungen wiedergeben. Die Kaiserin war groß und doch zart und besaß eine wunderschöne Figur mit herrlich weißem Hals und eben solchen Schultern. Ihr reiches, rötlich-goldenes Haar war so lang, daß sie sich leicht darcin hüllen konnte. Der Teint war rein und so rosig wie der eines Kindes. Ihrem Gemahl und den Kindern war die Kaiserin leidenschaftlich zugetan, und es ist wahr, daß sie das Herausziehen des schrecklichen Krieges fürchtete und tief beklagte, gequält von der bangen Ahnung, er bedeute das Ende von allem. Vorbildlich war ihr Liebeswerk für die verwundeten Soldaten. Die Kaiserin schreckte buchstäblich bei diesem Werk vor nichts zurück. Wo es Arbeit gab, tat sie mit und war sich selbst für nichts zu gut. Ob es nun galt, einen gelähmten Körper zu waschen oder zu bandagieren oder zerrissene Gesichter, erblindete Augen zu verbinden. Wenn man einen Soldaten verständigte, erzählt Madame Biroubova, daß er einer Amputation oder einer anderen schwierigen Operation unterzogen werden müsse, da rief er nach der Zarin und bat, sie möge dabei sein und seine Hand fassen, daß er den Mut nicht verliere. Die Zarin willfahrte der Bitte, ob der Unglückliche, der sie stellte, ein Offizier war oder ein einfacher Mann. Keiner appellierte an ihre Güte vergebens. Kein Wunder, daß man in ihr förmlich ein verehrtes Idol sah, daß man es kaum erwarten konnte, wenn sie den Kranken saal betrat, und glücklich war, wenn sie sich fürsorglich über den Kranken beugte. So setzte die Kaiserin ein Beispiel, das, wie die Verfasserin bemerkt, in der Aristokratie allerdings nicht die wünschenswerte Nachahmung fand. Als die Revolution ausbrach, ließen die meisten von den Mitgliedern der höchsten Gesellschaft die kaiserliche Familie im Stich. Am übelsten aber benahm sich des Zarewitsch' Gesellschafter Dorevanko, ungeachtet all der Liebe, die er in der kaiserlichen Familie genossen hatte.

unter
Zar Nikolaus

00327-0013-000

Signatur

Datum 7 Feb. 1924 192

The Manchester Guardian

Nr. 24171

The Crash of the Tsardom.

WE print elsewhere a large batch of extracts from letters exchanged between the last Emperor of Russia and his Empress during the three months before his abdication and arrest. They are of extraordinary interest, not because they throw any unexpected light upon the death-bed of the Tsardom, but because they invest with a singular vividness and poignancy the last act of that conspicuous tragedy of circumstance and of character. To read them is like witnessing a wonderfully powerful performance of a tragedy which one has only known before through more commonplace interpretations. The tragedy of circumstance was that of two persons evidently linked to each other by a tender affection, and both involved, by a fate which they could not control, in the inevitable downfall of a political structure which had outlived its function in the world. The Tsardom was rotten-ripe before the war began; the shock of its failure in the war could not but shake it down from the tree. But that was only one of the two tragic strains. The other was moral. A man's character, it was said long ago, is his destiny. So is a woman's. And in marriage, especially in a marriage of strong affection, the character of either husband or wife is sometimes the fate, and may be the terrible fate, of them both. And now the TSARITSA's letters show that, even if the Tsardom had not been, anyhow, tottering to its fall, she was a woman whose blind, intrepid self-will and insensate superstition might well have thrown away her husband's throne and life as well as her own.

For purposes of government the Tsardom was a corrupt and lazy bureaucracy sheltering under the prestige of a sovereign whose traditional divinity could always be invoked as a ground for treating any opposition to that corrupt misrule as an offence against

God. The last TSAR himself was, to all appearances, a weak, kindly man who might, if left to himself, have shuffled through his part in life, giving way a little wherever he was pressed particularly hard, either by the bureaucrats who exercised his power for him or by the slowly mounting resentment of the country. But the TSARITSA was different. She was what Lady Macbeth would have been if Macbeth had been Tsar. To the composite character occupying the throne of Russia she contributed those elements which, in our own CHARLES I., made his reign end tragically, as you might say, from its very beginning. To add to this lamentable equipment she was as primitively superstitious as LOUIS XI. of France. Her theories of heavenly authority and guidance, exercised through the dissolute rogue RASPUTIN, whom she took for an inspired mentor, must be read to be believed. No Irish landlord of the worst period, no Anglo-Indian colonel of the prime had such obstinate faith in the universal efficacy of "firmness" in rulers. The TSAR makes a slight approach towards the only safe policy—that of reconstructing the Tsardom as a constitutional monarchy—and the TSARITSA can endure to think of nothing but dismissing the Duma as soon as possible and for as long as possible. Moderate reformers rise up as well as extreme ones, but she sees no difference of shade between the two groups; both are abominable—"two snakes which, as I hope, will gnaw each other's heads off—that would save the situation." She hears that the TSAR is being urged to "sign some sort of paper, a Constitution or some other horror of that kind," but she feels that this need not matter, because, in the exercise of his divine commission, he can always break his word; "such a promise will have no sort of force when power is again in your hands." Everybody who seeks, however loyally and constitutionally, to liberalise the

Wendell

government of the country must be punished as a criminal: "Quietly and with a clear conscience before all Russia, I would exile Lyov to Siberia (it has been done for much less serious crimes), take away his rank from SAMARIN, MILIUKOV, GUTCHKOV, and POLIVANOV—also to Siberia." The suspicion of Liberal tendencies in a Grand Duke throws her into a fury: "Be Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible—smash them all," she writes to the TSAR.

Perhaps one of the motives of the present Russian Government's publication of these letters is a desire to palliate in some sense the murder of these two unhappy persons and all their children. Nothing can do that: its bestiality is irredeemable. But such letters as these of the TSARITSA's and such episodes as that of the sensual peasant RASPUTIN's ascendancy over the Russian monarchy make you share the despair which must fill every sane and humane person in presence of a mind debauched with a sense of autocratic power. Some individuals may stand that demoralising experience, but you can never rely upon a succession of hereditary autocrats and their consorts to stand it, and when one mind or character in the dynasty breaks down into insane absolutism like the poor TSARITSA's it may mean a bloody revolution or series of revolutions for a nation. Constitutional monarchy is a function in which a kind of dynastic competence may be acquired and handed on, as efficiency in some of the arts and professions is amassed and handed down in many families of lawyers, soldiers, and actors. But autocratic power is strong drink, and alcoholised tissues cannot be handed on from father to son to the public advantage. The moral of the Russian tragedy is not one that is obsolete now, just because the last of the old autocratic monarchies have vanished from Europe. Since their disappearance absolute monarchy—so far non-hereditary—has begun to show its head again, with a face slightly changed. Every dictator is, when you get away from mere verbal forms, an absolute monarch, and already the welfare of three countries in Europe rests on the off-chance that a man, or two or three men, ruling without the aid and restraint of a liberal Constitution, may continue indefinitely to keep their heads and their consciences.

The Manchester Guardian

Nr. 24174

The Late Empress of Russia.

IN another column Lord ESHER upbraids us with harshness in judging the late EMPRESS of RUSSIA in a recent article on the letters of hers which we were enabled to print a few days ago. We attach weight to his opinion, as it rests on first hand knowledge. And yet is it possible, on the documentary evidence, to form any other conclusion than ours—that hers was a temperament tragically blended of noble elements and of terrible defects? That, as Lord ESHER says, she was moved by the deepest and most constant affection for her husband and children, and that she had great courage, is beyond question. The newly published correspondence proves it once more, and these great qualities were emphatically recognised in our article. But that this unfortunate lady was obsessed with crude superstition and with absolutist political delusions to an extent calamitous for her family, for Russia, and for herself seems to us also to be rendered unquestionable by the letters referred to. With much of what Lord ESHER says, to show that her failure was not unprecedented and that she was involved in an almost hopeless situation from the first, we fully agree. She is a proper object for profound compassion. But nothing merits more profound compassion than personal unfitness to struggle against overwhelming difficulty, and what is most poignant, to our thinking, in the EMPRESS's career is the dark obstinacy with which, at every opening of two alternatives, she embraced the fatal one which converted difficulty into impossibility.

The Manchester Guardian 24174

THE LATE EMPRESS OF
RUSSIA.

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.

Sir,—I read the article in the "Manchester Guardian" upon the correspondence of the ill-fated Empress of Russia with pain and surprise—pain that a very noble lady should be so misunderstood, surprise at the harsh judgment of a journal whose broad and fair-minded opinion commands the assent of unprejudiced minds.

Everyone who was at any time brought into contact with the Empress was invariably struck by her dignity and aloofness. She appeared to be, what she was, a woman incapable of low thoughts or actions, a woman consumed with one passion—love for her husband and children. Perhaps this may be considered a fault in one of her station, but it was certainly not a crime. It may be difficult to apportion degrees of praise or blame in the marital and motherly instinct in brave women. She was brave in the sense that for herself she had no fears, yet she lived in lifelong terror for the happiness and lives of her husband and children. If such fears as these lured her into exaggerated beliefs in supernatural guidance similar in substance though different in degree from those of most religious persons, her credulity amounted to this: that she believed that an all-powerful Deity could work miracles in favour of the elect, and could bestow special safeguarding powers upon selected human agents even though humble and unworthy.

In the same issue of the "Manchester Guardian" which contains the article to which I have referred the Bishop of Durham alludes to the millions of European men and women who believe, with the head of their Church, that special powers are bestowed upon selected persons to perform a daily miracle and to confer upon sinners absolution for their sins, while these powers are denied to men like himself, of saintly lives but outside the pale of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy. The Empress of Russia's belief in the supernatural powers of a peasant monk differed only in degree from the belief to which the Bishop of Durham refers. Who can fairly apportion condonation or blame? The Empress was not endowed with the intellectual gifts of a George Eliot or an Empress Catherine. She was, however, a great lady of spotless life. She was not more cruel or more ruthless in her judgments than our own Queen Elizabeth. She was, like the whole nation over which her gentle consort ruled, a century or so behind her epoch, and, together with her husband, was emmeshed in a social and political system which very few Englishmen can comprehend. Her life was lived at a time of internecine conflict between a corrupt bureaucracy glutted with power and a vast population just awakening to the educational and scientific pressure of the modern world. If there is a God of mercy and justice, which many in face of such tragedies may have been inclined to

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ESHER.

February 8

[This letter is referred to in our leader columns.—ED. "GUARD."]

00327-0017-000

Signatur

Datum

2. Jan. 1929₁₉₂

The Manchester Guardian

No 25691

THE TSARINA.

THE LIFE AND TRAGEDY OF ALEXANDRA FEODOROVNA. By Baroness Sophie Buxhoeveden. London: Longmans and Co. Pp. xxii. 360. 25s. net.

There is nothing argumentative in this book except in the preface contributed to it by Mr. J. C. Squire. He says that the Imperial family, "in the eyes of the historians and dramatists of the future, will, with their antagonist Lenin, dominate the whole frenzied Russian panorama." This is, surely, unjust to future historians. The fate of the Tsar and his family, horrible and dramatic as it was, was unimportant in comparison with a class struggle on a larger scale than the world had witnessed before. And to describe Lenin, whose interest was entirely in this struggle of classes, as merely the antagonist of the Imperial family is to show astonishing misunderstanding of the significance both of Lenin and of the Autocracy. It is hardly to be supposed that the preponderance of lazy thinkers in the world is to compel historians of the Russian Revolution to revert to a primitive folk-lore of heroes and heroines. These considerations, however, need not prevent people from reading Baroness Buxhoeveden's book. This is a portrait of the Tsarina as she appeared to a devoted friend and lady-in-waiting. It is the portrait of a good wife and mother who in disaster showed a greatness not to be denied even by those who believe that certain traits in her character led her, in diametrical opposition to her own wishes, to prepare the way of the Revolution by weakening the mutual loyalty and coherence of the members of the ruling house. It brings out to the full the pity of her personal tragedy, the climax of which was long before the dreadful scene in the Ekaterinburg cellar. It is impossible in reading it to be insensitive to the personal charm that made her beloved by those immediately about her. Such a book needed writing, and could not have been written better.

A. R.