

FATHER GAPON.

From a Photograph.

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THE STORY OF MY LIFE.

By FATHER GAPON.

WE here begin a series of articles which may, without exaggeration, be described as of unrivalled interest—of interest not only to those who would gain an insight otherwise quite unobtainable into the secrets of the Russian Revolutionary movement, but to those who care only to follow, in the story of the poor peasant's son who rose to be the Robespierre of Russia, a romance of real life more strange and more absorbing than the invention of any novelist. The story, beginning with his earliest years, and increasing in interest as it proceeds, tells how he rose from the peasant rank; how, as a priest, he joined the Revolution; how he became the leader of the great strike which culminated in the tragic events which thrilled the world with horror; how he escaped from Russia under the very eyes of the police; and, finally, what he anticipates will be the future of the Russian Revolution, in which he has been, and will again be, one of the most conspicuous figures in the history of man's fight for liberty.

Such will be the unique narrative which, fully illustrated with photographs, will appear in our pages during the following months.

CHAPTER I.

THE STRICKEN GIANT: AN ALLEGORY.



IHAD a dream. A pack of ravenous hounds, of various breeds and sizes, was mercilessly attacking a giant form that lay prone and insensible in the mud, while their keeper stood by eagerly watching and directing the attack. The hounds were burying their teeth in the giant's flesh. His miserable garb was torn to shreds. Every moment they beset him more closely. They were already beginning to lick his warm blood. A flight of crows circled above, hovering lower and lower toward the expected prey.

And now a wonderful thing happened. From the drops of blood trickling from the great frame of the giant, on which the warm sunlight played, I saw strong-winged eagles and keen-eyed falcons spring up and soar into the air, and these birds at once sought to protect the giant, to arouse him by their cries to resistance, and to encourage him to rise with all his strength against his enemies.

For a long time the giant lay in a stupor. At length he uttered a groan, half opened his eyes, listening, not yet quite awake, not realizing what was going on, and annoyed by the shrieks of the birds that would not let him sleep longer and that were now engaged in a deadly fight with the dogs and crows. It was a bloody, merciless, and unequal struggle. The giant still could not fully

realize which were his friends and which his enemies.

At length he became fully conscious, stretched his limbs, and stood erect in the immensity of his stature. Then, empty-handed and in rags as he was, he turned upon the pack of bloodhounds and their cruel keeper.

The keeper uttered a shrill whistle, and in answer a new figure appeared upon the scene. A soldier, well armed and drilled to obey such a command, fired at the giant's broad and defenceless figure. At a further command he rushed forward with his bayonet. The giant, grievously hurt, staggered, but seized the weapon with his powerful hand and flung it far away. The next moment, however, looking at his assailant, his lips quivered, his gaze became dim. Overpowered for a moment by grief, he covered his face with his hand and stood, the very picture of anguish. In the soldier he had recognised his own son, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, deceived, fooled, and now hypnotized into parricide.

The pause was not a long one. The giant remembered that he had another son, a humble but faithful tiller of the soil. He would not abuse his father. No; but where was he? Why did he not come to the rescue? The giant looked round and saw in the distance his other child, a burly, powerful, good-natured figure, handsome in his simplicity, but fettered and chained to the

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plough, dirty and ragged like his father, working as a slave for the benefit of others, his eyes blindfolded, his noble frame underfed. He could not help—not yet.

And the giant's lips quivered once more ; hot tears, shining like diamonds, rolled down the large, pathetic face.

I looked at that face, at the frame of the giant—a frame that spoke at once of immense power and of helplessness, of beauty buried under a layer of dirt, limbs that might do great things, but were unnerved by shameful treatment and neglect. I looked at the pool of crimson blood at his feet and the hungry pack standing around showing their sharp, white teeth. I looked at the cowardly keeper ; and, as I saw all this, my heart bled.

For in the giant I recognised my own country, my dearly-loved country, and its people.

And the pang of an intolerable outrage crept slowly, like a cold serpent, to my soul, and wound itself round it and tightened its steel coils till I could bear it no longer—and I awoke.

Alas ! It was but a momentary relief ! My dream was no mere nightmare ; it was only too true to reality. Indeed, has not my country, the land of majestic rivers, of unbroken, dreamy forests, of verdant plains, as fair in spring as the smile of a child, and as vast as the soul of its people, of immense wealth and boundless possibilities—has not this land been plundered for centuries by the greedy pack of officials, great and small ? Has not my people, the people of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, of Verestchagin and Antokolsky, of great scientists and philosophers, and idealists who have known how to sacrifice everything for the weal of humanity or for an idea—has it not been abused, ill-treated, and humiliated by selfish and cruel rulers ? Has not my nation—a nation that could give birth to so rich a language and develop so humane a national character—been deprived of light by an ignorant and greedy clergy, as the sun is hidden by a flight of crows ? Have not its own sons been turned lately against it to shoot down by the thousand unarmed men, women, and children, who, in their naïve trust in the goodwill of the Czar, went to implore him to come to their aid ?

Yes, all this was true—all this was reality itself. But my awakening showed me that that was not the full truth.

There was another side to this picture. The St. Petersburg strike and the events of

January last have been a flash of lightning that has rent the darkness of Russian life. The long misery of the Russian nation has not been in vain. It had accumulated, as it were, a store of electric force in the moral atmosphere of the nation, so that, when the St. Petersburg strike came about, only a flash was needed to ignite the mass of inflammable material. And, just as after a thunderstorm there comes rain which revives the earth, so the horrible events of which I shall speak have had a beneficial effect. Blood has been spilt, and this lamentable blood has fallen like warm rain upon the frozen soil of Russian life.

Providence has put me as a necessary instrument in the midst of these events. But, to make such an instrument, certain characteristics and certain experiences were necessary ; and how I came to have these characteristics and experiences I can best explain by reference to my youthful life. I am but one of many. It might have been another, as easily as myself, who appeared at the necessary point in this critical moment ; but, since it has happened to be me and no other personality, it is natural that people should feel interested ; and this is the reason why I have agreed to tell my story.

CHAPTER II.

MY EARLY HOME.

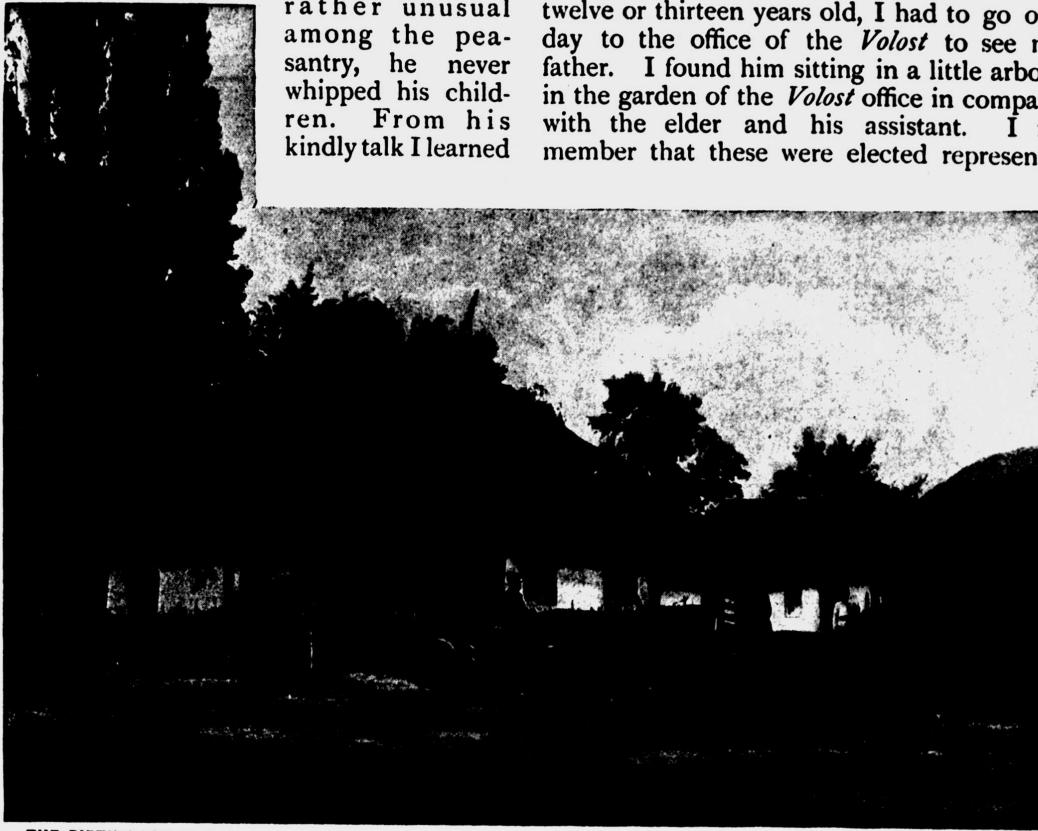
LET me at the outset recall some characteristics of my father and mother, to whom I owe so much. Ours was a humble peasant family, living in the large village of Biliki, in the province of Poltava, South Russia. My father is now about seventy years old, my mother about sixty. All the education my father has he got from a village sexton, a man whose knowledge and ideas were very primitive indeed. My father has, however, an immense amount of knowledge of everything concerned with peasant life, and a simple and concrete way of looking at things. He is a man not only of exceptional but of pedantic honesty. Extremely even in his temper, and, unlike his brothers, friendly and hearty toward everyone, he always seemed unable to kill a fly. He is honoured and beloved by the whole locality and—an unusual thing in Ukrainian life—is hardly ever mentioned by his surname, but is always alluded to as Appollon Feodorovitch, the use of the patronymic among peasants marking particular deference, while the dropping of the surname marks an affectionate familiarity.

For thirty-five consecutive years he was elected either as elder or clerk of the *Volost*

(group of communes), the latter appointment being the more significant, as the fact that the clerk writes and holds all the documents and accounts, while the elder is often illiterate, makes the position of the former the more influential. They are relatively lucrative positions, both officials often receiving presents from the peasantry in money or in kind; but my father always refused such gifts, and after a generation in office remained rather poorer than before. He loved the soil, and, what is rather unusual among the peasantry, he never whipped his children. From his kindly talk I learned

coach and all he has comes from our labour." And I, less amiable, would furtively throw a stone after the cavalcade.

From my father, too, I learned how humiliating is the position of the village delegates to the *Zemstvo* (local council) under the existing Government. Practically they have no voice in settling its business, because if they made themselves inconvenient a plausible pretext would easily be found for giving them seven days in the *Volost* gaol. I remember, when I was twelve or thirteen years old, I had to go one day to the office of the *Volost* to see my father. I found him sitting in a little arbour in the garden of the *Volost* office in company with the elder and his assistant. I remember that these were elected representa-



THE BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER GAPON—HIS FATHER AND YOUNGEST BROTHER ARE SEEN STANDING IN THE GATEWAY.
From a Photo. by Joseph Ohmielewski, Poltava.

much of the iniquities perpetrated by officials on the labouring people, and much of how every inch of the Ukrainian soil, which had since been given to idlers by the Government, was in past times wet with the heroic blood of those Cossacks who fought for the liberty and welfare of the people, and stood as defenders of Western Christianity against the Turks and Tartars in the East.

Sometimes, while we were all sitting on the *prisba* (an earthen bench running round the wall of the cottage), some grand landlord would pass by in his coach. My father would laughingly point to him and say: "See how proud he looks; and yet his

tives of a population of ten thousand souls. They were talking of the difference between the old times and the new.

"In the olden times," one of them was saying, "the power of the Government officers was such that, in order to show that they could do anything they liked with the representatives of the peasantry, they would call the elder before them and compel him to go down on all fours and bark like a dog before the villagers." While my father's friend was saying this and congratulating himself that things were now so different a harness-bell was heard, and, imagining that an official visitor was about to catch them, the

elder and his assistant seemed suddenly stricken with fear. The elder, a corpulent fellow, waddled away to the office, and his assistant followed, sneaking behind the bushes. With an air of innocence I asked my father why he did not go also. The old man replied with a twinkle of the eyes and his usual kindly smile.

I remember, on another occasion, hearing from my father that a peasant in our village had been publicly birched. All Russians consider this punishment so humiliating and inhuman that they do not ask what pretext exists before condemning it; and young peasants have been known to commit suicide rather than submit to it. To me, who had never been flogged, even at home, the news was peculiarly horrifying; and although my father assured me that elective officials were exempt from this punishment, I lay awake tortured by the idea that he might some day be stripped and chastised.

You see, he had always treated me as a friend, notwithstanding the difference of age, and never with the severity or even condescension of a senior. That is one reason why, through the lengthening years of labour and sorrow, I have always cherished my memories of him. How is it with him now? I do not know. Perhaps—it is only too likely—the Russian police are troubling him, perhaps he is suffering in other ways, on my account. As I think of him, thousands of miles away amid the woods and meadows of my childhood's home, I see the old man again, with weakening gait and dim eyes; I recall his hope that I, his eldest son, should some day be his staff and support—that, as he put it, "you will bury my body"; and, as the vision passes before my mind's eye, I am not ashamed to confess to feeling an overwhelming emotion.

Such was my father's influence. It is to my mother, in the first place, that I owe the direction of my religious life. She was herself illiterate, but her father, who lived near us, could read and, being an extremely devout man, spent a good deal of time in reading the lives of the saints. My grandfather often repeated these stories to me, and they so worked upon my imagination that, being then only seven or eight years old, I would stand for hours before the holy images, praying and shedding tears over my supposed sins.

Some of these tales had a rather different effect. I remember how much I was struck by the story of one St. John, originally Bishop of Novgorod, of whom it was

narrated that once, while he was fervently praying, the Evil One played all manner of tricks to divert him from his devotions. At last the devil got into the water-jug that stood in the corner of the cell, whereupon the holy man quickly made the sign of the cross over it and so imprisoned his infernal enemy. The devil begged to be released, promising to do anything that was demanded of him. The bishop asked to be at once taken to Jerusalem, and that night they journeyed there and back, after which the devil was released. This greatly impressed me, and I shed innocent tears, but I could not, at the same time, help wishing that I could catch the devil to such good purpose.

With all the fantastic forms in which the religious spirit manifested itself to me, it had a hold both sincere and strong. I was deeply impressed by the holiness of all these saints and anchorites, and dreamed of a day when I should become one of them. My mother worked the more earnestly upon such feelings because she believed that her own salvation from the fires of hell depended upon her first saving us little ones. So, however hungry I might be when I came home, I would not touch food without permission, because, though there was no one in the room, up in the corner there stood the holy image of Christ, whose eyes seemed to follow one from place to place. I would never take a mouthful of milk on Friday lest a horn should spring out of my forehead. My mother was a masterful woman. However cold the weather and scanty our clothing, we must go to church and, in our corner of the aisle, we must sing even if our teeth were chattering in our heads.

But as time went on I began to revolt against the maternal despotism. One day, when the floods were out, I intentionally fell into the water so as to evade the duty of going to church. No doubt my mother's religion was sincere, but I noticed that even her being engaged in family prayers did not prevent her from watching everything that was going on out of the corner of her eye; if, for instance, one of the pigs got into the vegetable garden, she would jump up from her devotions and rush after it. Sometimes she would get hold of the biography of one of the saints and, since I alone could read it, I was imprisoned through the sunny hours reading aloud from the precious and sacred book. Once I forgot that it was Friday and was caught in the shed illicitly devouring bread and milk; but, after my mother had satisfied herself by the

administration of summary justice, the contrast between the forms of religion and its essence forced itself more urgently upon my boyish mind. No doubt the church choir sang energetically and effectively, and no doubt that was necessary to salvation—and yet, and yet, they could not help filling up the intervals with jests and chatter. Did the great God really wish that I should be whipped?

Yet I knew that my mother was really kind-hearted. Though only a poor peasant woman, she would often give away to others who were yet poorer—and in our district there were many who not only had no land of their own, but who had to depend upon their neighbours for food and shelter—more than our little store could afford. She seemed to me to be a good soul struggling like a captured bird in the mesh of religious formalism.

These opposite influences of my father and mother were blended and assumed a poetical quality from my impressions of the

natural surroundings which give Ukraina the name of "the Italy of Russia." In the long autumn evenings, when we children had been sent to bed and were lying on the floor in a row under one home-made felt coverlet, the women of the family would sit spinning and at the same time singing or telling stories. My mother knew many folk-songs and sang them well; and I often lay awake listening to the sad, exquisite melody and the simple words describing the

fate of a girl left behind when her Cossack lover went to the wars, or the historical exploits of some national hero of the olden time, or the traditional story of my ancestor Gapon-Bydak. The village of Biliki lies on both banks of the historic river Vorskla, and is known as the place of many battles with the Tartars in the far-away days when the expansion of Russia to the south and east

was only just beginning. The hills around it were capped with woods of poplar and oak and other trees, and after I had been listening to some tale of Cossack exploits it seemed to my boyish imagination that the woods were still full of the clamour of contending hosts. These romantic ideas were aided by the beauty of the deep blue vault of the South Russian sky and its brilliant incrustation of stars.

CHAPTER III.

I BECAME A PRIEST.

TURNING to the prosaic side of our everyday life I see myself again a lad, bare-footed and often capless, in peasant dress,

making myself, or rather being made, useful by my hardworking family, as guardian of a few sheep or pigs, and occasionally being entrusted with a whole herd of cattle on pasture. I was particularly fond of my flock of geese, not only because it was good to watch the growth of the little yellow goslings into white-feathered birds, but because I was proud of training a gander which would beat any in the village.

From my seventh year I attended the



GAPON'S FATHER AND MOTHER AND YOUNGEST BROTHER.
From a Photo. by Joseph Chmielewski, Pollava.

primary school, and made such progress that the clergy told my parents that I ought to continue my studies. But how, and for what end? What career should be chosen for me? Two motives decided this question. The first is expressed in the Ukrainian proverb: "A priest is a golden sheaf"; the second was that, if I should become a priest, I should not only myself get easy access to Heaven, but I should be able to help all my people thither.

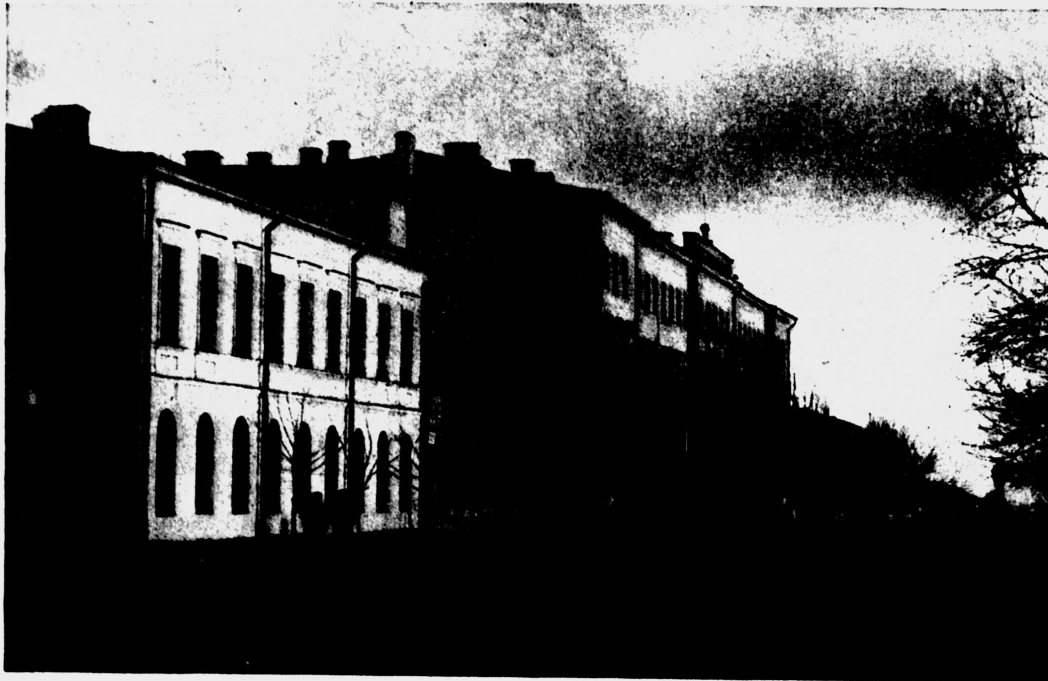
So it was decided to send me to the lower Ecclesiastical School in Poltava. This meant a four years' course of studies after the preliminary year was concluded. But, as I did well in the preliminary examinations, I was allowed to begin at the second year's classes. I was then twelve years old. At first I felt myself altogether an outsider. In my peasant dress, with my peasant manners, all the other students, who were sons of priests or deacons, looked down on me as a social inferior. They showed their pride in the usual boyish fashion, and at first I was too timid to reply in kind. Indeed, as I made rapid progress, their jealousy became more marked. At last I had an occasion to repay them in their own coin and so established a tolerable position, though throughout these years I was to some extent isolated.

When I was fifteen years old, and in my last year at the school, one of the tutors

named Treguboff* put in my hands some of Tolstoy's writings, which had a lasting effect upon my mind. For the first time I saw clearly that the essence of religion lay, not in its outward forms, but in its inner spirit—not in any ceremonies, but in love for one's neighbour. I took every opportunity of expressing these new ideas, especially in our village during my holidays.

But I fear I showed my unruly spirit in less serious ways than that of theological discussion. It happened that the courtyard of the school was only divided from the bishop's garden by a board fence. More than once a band of us students made a hole in the fence, and raided the episcopal garden in the small hours when the household was deep in sleep. Sometimes we were caught by the gardeners, and we had to fight our way back; but we always contrived to get off unidentified. I look back at this period of my youth with little satisfaction. But soon I stood face to face with the serious facts of life. The death of my youngest sister marked the point between boyhood and manhood. I was sixteen and she was only ten, but the little girl, with her

* Mr. Treguboff was in later years one of the three signatories of the appeal for the Dukhobors, the others being Tolstoy and Mr. Vladimir Tchertkoff, and he was then first exiled and afterwards allowed to leave Russia for ever. Mr. Vladimir Tchertkoff, who was also banished, settled in England and established the *Free Age Press* for the publication of Tolstoyan literature.



THE LOWER ECCLESIASTICAL SCHOOL, POLTAVA, WHERE FATHER GAPON WAS EDUCATED AS A BOY.
From a Photo. by Joseph Chmielewski, Poltava.

sunny hair, was my favourite, and I had played with her in the fields for hours together.

I now passed on to the Ecclesiastical Seminary, and while there, partly through the influence of another Tolstoyan, one Feyerman, I could not help becoming a still more outspoken critic of the falsity I saw around me, so that at last one of the local clergy denounced me to the seminary authorities, and at the same time one of the tutors reported that I was demoralizing the school by sowing seeds of heresy. The result was a threat that the stipend which the Government allows to the most successful of the theological students would be withdrawn. I replied that henceforth I should not accept this stipend. That meant having to support myself and pay the fees as well. This I did by giving lessons in some of the wealthier families of the neighbourhood and teaching the children of the clergy. Sometimes I had to spend the vacation with my pupils, and during these visits I had opportunities of seeing the inner side of the life of Russian priests. I saw them celebrate the Eucharist in a state of intoxication, and many other things convinced me that there was much Phariseeism among them. Not only did they not sacrifice their own comfort for the weal of the people, but they were often positive leeches, and this although a hundred opportunities called to them every day. All around me I saw misery, overwork, poverty, and sickness. In a territory of twenty miles radius there was but one physician; and our large village had to manage with a single junior medical assistant. On the other hand, I saw more and more clearly the contrast between the Gospel itself and the forms and doctrines of the Church, the ignorance and hypocrisy of the clergy. And as I pondered these things my mind was filled with an overwhelming disgust. A year passed in this state of agitation, to which I owed it that an attack of typhoid was followed by brain fever. For a long time I lay ill, and when my father came to the hospital he did not at first recognise me.

As health began gradually to return I concluded that I was unfit for the priesthood. I therefore attended the lectures at the seminary less regularly, spending most of my time in teaching, meeting the outcasts and other humble labouring folk of the district, doing what little I could to help them, and hearing their life-stories. The authorities of the seminary did not seek to interfere with this independent life, but, as it turned out, they were

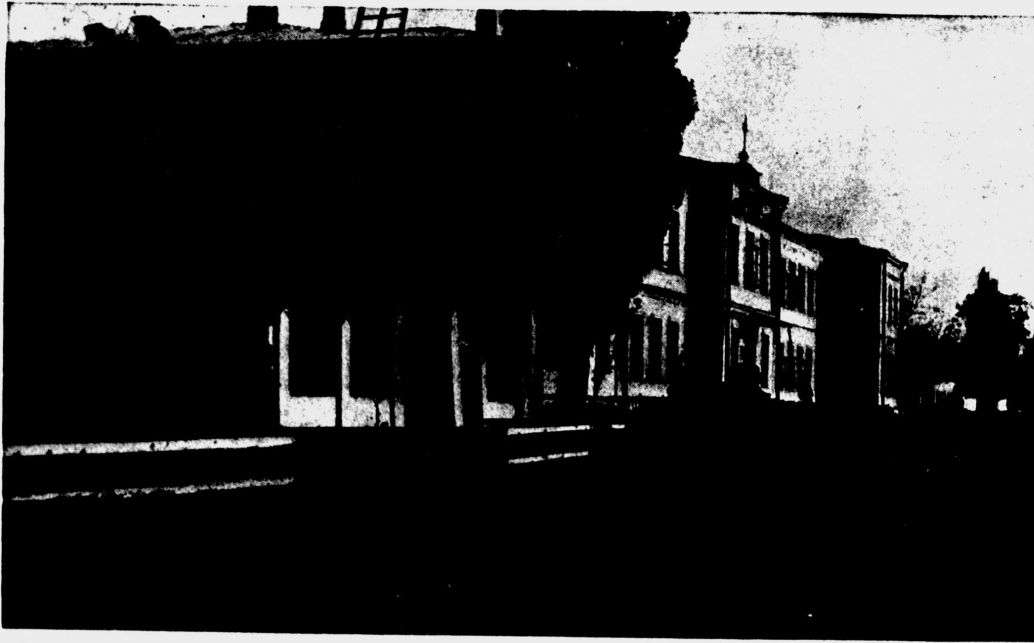
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preparing to punish me. When, on the conclusion of the seminary course, the question arose of my going on to the Ecclesiastical Academy, I replied that I preferred to go to a University to conclude my studies. On leaving, however, I found that my behaviour was so badly attested in my certificate that no University would admit me. That is one way they have in Russia of marking down "black sheep" at the beginning, of extinguishing at the outset the independent spirit which might afterwards show itself in what are called "University disturbances" and in other inconvenient ways.

But for me this meant the destruction of my career—of all that seemed most promising in life. Staggering under the blow, and brooding over all that had gone before, wild ideas of vengeance for a moment passed through my mind; but fortunately my father came to town, and the sight of the kind old man, who had himself suffered enough, softened my heart. For some time I lived by giving lessons and as statistician in the office of the local *Zemstvo*. This work gave me new evidence of the miserable life of the peasantry. Here I saw it, as it were, in cipher, in a summary drawn from a larger area than one man could know intimately, and once more there arose in me the desire to give my life wholly to the service of the working classes—in the first place, of the peasantry.

It seemed to me that, if it were possible to prepare for the matriculation which in Russia opens the door of the Universities, and to pass the examination without reference to my period at the seminary, I might then enter in the medical faculty, and, having concluded my studies, might go among the peasantry as a doctor, and in that way help in some measure to give them health and strength of mind as well as body. My horizons were being widened at that time, among other things, by what I read and heard about the Revolutionists. Some clandestine literature had fallen for the first time into my hands, and from this, as well as from narratives of the horrors that were being perpetrated in some of the prisons of the empire, I came to realize that for a long time there had been a few men and women who had not only emancipated their own minds, but had sacrificed talents and wealth, comfort, and even life itself, in the service of the people. Little as I then knew of this unselfish and enlightened minority, I already learned to feel a certain esteem for them.

While I was cherishing this dream an



THE ECCLESIASTICAL SEMINARY, POLTAVA, WHERE FATHER GAPON'S EDUCATION FOR THE PRIESTHOOD WAS FINISHED.
 From a Photo. by Joseph Chmielewski, Poltava.

event occurred which altogether changed my plans and determined all that followed. One of the daughters of a wealthy man in Poltava, at whose house I was giving lessons, had a friend, a Ukrainian girl, coming from a local family of the merchant class. She was a beautiful and lovable girl, of good education, having graduated at the local high school, and of exceptional native intelligence. At first I hardly noticed her when we met; but gradually we were drawn together by our studies and by our common hope of doing something for the common people. She had some acquaintance with the Revolutionists and their ideas, but that did not prevent her sharing the religious spirit of her family. We often spoke of these things; and, when she learned my plans for the future, she expressed her belief that the position of a priest was far more advantageous than that of a doctor for the purposes I had most at heart. A doctor, she would say, heals the body; a priest, if worthy of the name, sustains the soul, and the mass of mankind wants the latter perhaps more than the former. When I objected that my principles did not coincide with the teachings of the Orthodox Church, she replied that that was no sufficient objection; the main thing was to be true, not to the Orthodox Church, but to Christ, who was a model of sacrifice for humanity. As to the symbols and ritual of the Church, they were symbols and ritual only.

This convinced me; I determined to become a priest, and she agreed to marry me. But the way was by no means smooth. Once I asked the permission of her parents to visit the house, but her mother showed great repugnance and asked me not to come again. My sweetheart said she could not tolerate this, and told her parents they had better give their consent. At the same time I went to the Bishop Illarion, told him of my heart's secret, and my decision to become a priest and to ask for a parish, preferably in my native place. The bishop, who had always taken an interest in me, showed himself very kind on this occasion. He asked the girl's mother to visit him, and, when the old lady came, told her that she was hardly justified in objecting to the match, that he knew me and would pledge himself as to me, beside which I was to become a priest.

This settled the matter. We were married; and after about a year I took orders, having served first as sexton and then, after a single day as deacon, been ordained a priest. But the bishop refused to send me to our village; he wanted such men in town, he said. So, for the present, I remained in Poltava as a priest of the Cemetery Church.

Let me say at once that, during the whole time of my priesthood, I was exceedingly happy, not only because in my wife I had a true friend and co-worker, but also because I liked the position of a spiritual teacher. It seemed to me that these poor people, who

are so much oppressed and have often no consolation in their daily lives, received from my preaching and the contagion of my enthusiasm the only relief they had. Especially in the celebration of the Mass, when a vision of the full meaning of Christ's sacrifice came to me, did I feel delight in my work. In such a condition of elation it was, perhaps, inevitable that the more prosaic moments of the ecclesiastical routine should grate upon my nerves. The clink of money while wax candles were being bought in the vestibule to be offered before the sacred images, and while the people were dropping their humble gifts into the offertory plates—how it annoyed me! My deacon was a special scourge. Formerly a medical assistant, he had taken to the Church simply as a more lucrative calling, though he did not even profess to believe in immortality. Extremely tall and stupid-looking, with rough voice, dirty boots, and a surplice that hardly covered his knees, his appearance was well-nigh scandalous. He looked at the parishioners exclusively from the point of view of how much they could pay; and at length his greed became so open and insolent that, although I had no right to do so, I forbade his taking any part in the conduct of the service.

I preached frankly that not ritual and offerings, but a good life and kindness to one's neighbour, were the essential things. Gradually people gathered to hear me, and, though the church was not at first well attended—it was a special cemetery church, without a parish attached—there were soon so many that the building was often too small for the congregation. The bishop continued friendly, but the other priest of the church began to be jealous. I paid no attention to him, and set about forming a mutual benevolent society for the sake of the poorer people who often needed help. This, I soon found, by its very success extended the feeling of jealousy, neighbouring priests raising a clamour on the ground that I was trying to rob them of their congregation. I tried to conform in my life and conduct as a priest with what I taught in my sermons. I did not make my calling a pretext for getting money; I was satisfied with what I received; and this, to say nothing of other reasons, was sufficient to attract many people to me. But while, on the one hand, my popularity increased, on the other the jealousy of the neighbouring clergy grew also.

At last they moved the Ecclesiastical Consistory to fine me on the ground that,

having myself no parish, I had officiated instead of priests who had. This was true enough; yet I dared to repeat the offence. For what did it mean? Once an old man came to me and begged me to conduct a service in memory of his deceased wife. Having already been fined several times, I had become rather cautious. So I asked the old man to what parish he belonged, and why he did not go to his own priest. He replied that his parish priest had asked seven roubles (about fourteen shillings) for officiating, which he could not pay. Asked why so much was demanded, the old man explained that at the time of the burial of his wife he had only been able to pay three roubles, and, being displeased, the priest now said he must pay for both occasions. Moreover, he had heard my sermons, he said, and felt more drawn to me than to his own priest, and so, falling on his knees, he begged me to come with him. How could I refuse?

The service, as is the custom in Russia, was followed by a kind of memorial dinner. As I sat at the head of the table and talked to the family on religious and moral questions the door suddenly opened and the parish priest, drunk, his hair and dress in utter disorder, rushed in with several servants, and addressed to me a violent complaint, interlarded with foul language, that I was robbing him of his bread. The people were so much irritated that, but for my interference, it would have gone ill with that turbulent cleric.

Once more I was fined.

My married life lasted four years, my priesthood only two. We had two children, a girl and a boy, both of whom are living in Russia as I set down these words in the land of my temporary exile. Immediately after the birth of our boy my wife became very ill. She did not want to die. Being sincerely religious, she believed in the mercy and omnipotence of God, and, not wanting to part from her beloved ones, she prayed that she might be allowed to live. But the end came nearer and nearer, and at last she died in my arms.

I believed then, and I believe now, in the spirit of God; but since the death of my wife, and the period of stupor that followed that terrible loss, I had to live through some experiences that are responsible for an addition to the number of my earlier beliefs. One of these experiences was, indeed, the fulfilment of a dream my wife had a month before she died, when she saw, or thought she saw, herself being buried, and told me all about it immediately afterwards. She entered into all the details of who would speak and

officiate and how I would act, and so on, and all this was fulfilled to the letter.

Another experience was this. One night I had been working late, and at about one a.m. I lay down on a couch, but did not, as I believe, fall asleep. Suddenly I saw the form of my dead wife enter the room, come near to me, and bend as though to kiss me. I jumped up, throwing off a coverlet; and, as I stood, I saw through the door a kind of wraith in the corridor. I rushed out and

be unhinged. It occurred to me to change the place of my residence, and perhaps to turn over an altogether new leaf in my life. So I determined at length to take steps to procure admission to the Ecclesiastical Academy in St. Petersburg.

I communicated my plan to the bishop, and the old man, no less kind than before, approved the idea, and did everything in his power to help me. The difficulty was that, beside passing an examination, the candidate



THE CEMETERY CHURCH, POLTAVA, WHERE FATHER GAPON SERVED AS PRIEST.
From a Photo. by Joseph Chmielewski, Poltava.

found that the curtains in the adjoining room were burning. No doubt through the negligence of a servant, a lamp before the icon had burst and set fire to the drapery; and, as the house was of wood and it was summer, if I had not come in at that moment there might have been a great calamity.

A third experience that I may mention was a dream in which I saw myself hunted and seized by a figure which, as I felt, was my Fate. Since then I have believed in predestination and in some connection between the living and the dead.

After the death of my wife it seemed as if all clear meaning had gone out of my priestly life. No doubt the nearness of her burial-place, which I frequently visited, was a morbid influence; it worked on my nerves so that I began to fear lest my mind should

must have an excellent certificate of conduct. Once again the black marks on my record at the seminary stood against me! However, the bishop wrote a personal letter to the Educational Committee of the Holy Synod through M. Pobyedonostseff, praying that I might be allowed to compete without producing a certificate from the seminary, and adding that after two years' acquaintance with my work he was sure I merited their friendly notice.

With only two and a half months to prepare for the examination, I set to work and went to St. Petersburg. How I saw M. Pobyedonostseff and his assistant, Sabler; how I entered the Academy full of dreams of getting to the very source of knowledge, and what came of it all, I shall tell in the following chapters.

(To be continued.)