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## Editorial.

### THE BLIND SPIRIT OF REACTION.

No one possessed by the spirit of humanity can have read the petition of the Russian workmen to their Czar without a thrill of admiration. Never since the Declaration of American Independence has anything so fine been written as this splendid human document.

No one, on the other hand, who is a student of the signs of the times will be surprised at the reception which the petitioners met with. Posterity will realise that the Czar on Sunday last had such an opportunity as can scarcely occur again to one human being, of wielding his immense power for the benefit of humanity; but the poor, weak, unstable creature who occupies the throne of the Romanoffs was unable either to grasp the significance of the situation, or to rise to the heights of wisdom required by it; for the Czar is essentially a despot, inspired by the blind spirit of reaction, a spirit which ever goes blindfold, and hurls those animated by it over the precipice of progress. So, in the twentieth century we are appalled by the reception accorded to an orderly procession of Russian workmen approaching their sovereign with a moderate and legitimate petition, confident that if they can but pour their wrongs into the ear of the "Little Father" all will be remedied; it is not he, but the officials who surround him, and who keep the truth from him, who are to blame. And surely, never was a more sublime picture presented to the world, than that of the procession of the thousands of workmen, oppressed beyond the limits of human endurance, advancing towards their ruler, preceded by the symbol of the Christian Faith, unarmed, and confident in the justice of their cause.

What was their petition? In brief: "We workmen, inhabitants of St. Petersburg, of all classes, and our wives and children and indigent parents, come to you, our Sovereign, asking for truth and for protection. We are insulted and treated not as men, but as slaves,

are uneducated and stifled by despotism and injustice. Our first request is that our masters should investigate our case. They have refused. . . . Any one of us who dared to raise his voice in the interests of the people and the working classes has been thrown into prison or transported. Kindness and good feeling have been treated as a crime. The bureaucracy has brought the country to the verge of ruin, and by a shameful war is bringing it to its downfall.

"We have no voice in the heavy burdens imposed on us. We do not even know for whom or why this money is wrung from the impoverished people; we do not know how it is expended.

"Assembled before your Palace we plead for our salvation. Refuse not your aid. Throw down the wall that separates you from your people. Russia is too great and too diverse and manifold for officials alone to rule. National representation is indispensable, for the people alone know its real needs. Do not reject its assistance.

"Direct, therefore, that the elections for the Constitutional Assembly be made by general secret ballot. That is our chief demand. Everything is contained therein. It is the sole balm for our wounds which will otherwise bring us promptly to our death. Order and swear that these demands shall be satisfied, and you will make Russia happy and glorious, and your name will be engraved for all eternity in our hearts and those of posterity, while if you do not order this, and if you do not reply to our prayer we will die in this square before your Palace. We have nowhere else to go. Only two paths are open to us—either towards liberty and happiness or towards the grave. Should our lives serve as the holocaust of suffering Russia we will not regret this sacrifice, but will bear it willingly."

And what was the reply of the Czar to the pathetic and anguished cry of the oppressed people who, unarmed, trusting in his honour, came to him for help? The knout, the bayonet,

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