

the divine sentence, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" ?

Alas! nothing of the sort. Mr. Hardy's conversion is no more authentic than Alec D'Urberville's own. Just when his noble work lacks naught but the finishing touch, he is seized by what looks like a paroxysm of blind rage against his own creation, and with one violent blow he destroys irreparably both its symmetry and its significance. There was no need to condemn the finest of his creations to an after-life of bourgeois security and prosperity as the wife of Angel Clare. That would have been at once too bad for her and too good for him. But surely a kindly, compassionate, natural death might have rescued Tess from her sharp dilemma at any one of the later turnings of her hunted way! Or, if not, she had still the last remedy in her own hand, and the daughter of the D'Urbervilles would never have lacked the courage to apply it. But from the moment when, despite the dreadful illumination

of her experience, and the painfully acquired habit of heroic resistance, Tess yields a second time to the importunities of her first and now doubly repulsive seducer, the claim put forth for her by her historian upon his title-page is stultified; and artistically, no less than morally, his work lies in ruin. To call Tess "pure," after this, is a ferocious sarcasm. The first stain had been effaced by a purgatory of suffering; the second is indelible. The ghastly incidents crowded into the last pages of the book avail nothing. The murder and the scaffold are mere vulgar horrors, gratuitously insulting to the already outraged feelings of the deeply disappointed reader. They exceed the proper limit of tragedy, exciting neither "pity" nor "terror," but simply repugnance. No writer of our own gloomy time — I say it regretfully, and even resentfully — has grasped for one moment, only to wantonly fling away, a more sublime opportunity than Mr. Hardy in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."

*Harriet Waters Preston.*

## THE OFFICIAL DEFENSE OF RUSSIAN PERSECUTION.

### A REPLY TO "A VOICE FOR RUSSIA."



HITHERTO, except for some unauthorized exploits in Parthian archery by the notorious "O. K.," official Russia has received in dogged silence the remonstrant appeals that have been made by the whole civilized world against Russia's treatment of her Jewish subjects. Since she first entered on the retrograde movement, some twelve years ago,— and vast have been the strides toward Torquemada in the interim,— Russia has pursued her path of more than medieval intolerance, unmoved either by the plaintive cries of her Jewish victims, or by the indignant protests of her Christian neighbors. But at last she has spoken. M. Pierre Botkine, signing as "Secretary of the Russian Legation in Washington," has given, in his article "A Voice for Russia," in *THE CENTURY* for February, 1893, the official explanation why Russia has recently treated her Jews with barbarous cruelty, depriving them of all means of livelihood, hunting them like wild beasts from localities where they had previously an express or implicit right to dwell, closing all means of a liberal education or a professional career to them, and in general treating them as social pariahs without the common rights of humanity. M. Botkine's

article explains at least one thing — the wisdom of the Russian officials in hitherto refraining from defending the indefensible. Even his skill in presenting his views cannot disguise the inherent weakness, or rather the utter vacuity, of his case. If official Russia has no better defense for her treatment of her Jews than M. Botkine's, we that defend the cause of justice and the Jews cannot wish anything better than that his wish may be fulfilled and "the other side be heard." Its presentation is its own condemnation, and it will need but few words of mine to deal adequately, if summarily, with each of M. Botkine's points, to which I entirely confine myself on the present occasion.

M. Botkine prefaces his defense with a general reference to the friendly relations between Russia and the United States. The international amenities of two states separated by some thousands of miles from each other are not likely to be disturbed, and are at best Platonic, while it is difficult to see how they bear on the question whether Russia has been harsh and unjust to her subjects. But M. Botkine can scarcely be said to flatter his American readers if he thinks to influence them by the quite unfounded assertion that Russia was "the first state to extend to the United States a brotherly hand." A secretary of legation should surely know that Catherine II. refused to recognize

the independence of the United States until almost all the states of Europe had done so. It does all the more credit to the inhabitants of the States that they have forgiven and forgotten their early rebuff, or did not let it affect their philanthropic readiness last year to assist the famine-stricken inhabitants of Russia with food. They would doubtless be gratified to be assured by M. Botkine that the portion of their gift that was allowed to reach its objects by the officials was not then used as a means of religious persecution by being denied to starving Catholics, Protestants, Stundists, and Jews until orthodox cravings had been stayed. But let this pass, together with the statements that the Russian peasantry are prospering under autocratic rule, and that there are fewer anarchists in Russia than anywhere else!

M. Botkine strikes the key-note of the official defense of Russian persecution with the statement that "the Hebrew question in Russia is neither religious nor political; it is purely an economical and administrative question." Political it certainly is not, though the fact that the Jews in Russia came to it as a "heritage from Poland" has not been without effect on their disabilities. But how can M. Botkine deny that these disabilities are religious ones, when by the mere process of conversion to the Orthodox Church they are each and every one of them removed? Is the law that allows a Jewish convert to desert his Jewish wife and marry again<sup>1</sup> economic or administrative? Are the special taxes on religious ceremonies merely economic? The Moscow Synagogue, one of the handsomest buildings in the city, has been closed by order of the governor, and its gates sealed and barred. Can it be contended by M. Botkine that this intolerant act has any esoteric economic motive? If the restrictive enactments against the Jews were against their economic pursuits, why are they not directly applied to all who pursue them in an undesirable manner? Even if the restrictions were for purely "economical and administrative" purposes, the mere fact that they are directed against Jews alone would constitute a gross violation of religious toleration.

At the end of his article M. Botkine repeats the astounding assertion that Russia offers complete religious toleration to all creeds except dissenters from the Orthodox Church; it would have been too barefaced to deny the persecution of the Stundists, which has thrilled Europe with horror. He points as proof to various synagogues and churches allowed to exist in St. Petersburg. He has, however, nothing to say of the way in which the Koran has been mutilated by the censors, and the

<sup>1</sup> Code of Civil Laws of the Russian Empire (ed. 1887), Part I, § 81.

protests of the Mohammedans against the indignity. He discreetly omits reference to the man-hunts of the Buddhists in Siberia, who are literally hounded into becoming Orthodox Christians. Why have Lutheran families been expelled from Kiev by hundreds on refusing to join the state religion, and German Protestants expelled in a similar manner from the Baltic provinces? Why have Roman Catholic convents been arbitrarily closed, and Roman Catholic priests prevented from preaching, if not for the purposes of a religious propagandism in favor of the Orthodox Church? The persecution of the Jews in Russia is only part of a general attack on all religions outside the state one, and is only more severe because the Jews are the most unprotected by public opinion or external allies. It is a matter of historical fact that the treatment of the Jews in the Czar's dominions varies directly with the degree of religious fanaticism prevalent among the ruling classes.

The persecution of the Jews by Russia—he grants the persecution—is not a religious one, says M. Botkine; it is directed against "Hebrew tendencies." The Jew, according to him, is "without a faculty for adapting himself to sympathy with people of the other race which surrounds him." "Que MM. les assassins commencent," as the wit replied to the plea for the abolition of capital punishment. Let Russia show some sympathy with her Jews, and she can count upon their loyalty and devotion as much as England and the United States can count upon the loyalty of English and American Jews. Russia cannot expect complete assimilation from men whom she treats with exceptional rigor, to whom she has devoted a whole code of restrictive laws, which fills a volume of 291 pages. Where the Jews are treated on equal terms, they soon show themselves ready to become in everything similar to the races that surround them, except only in the way in which they worship their Maker. Only two generations have elapsed since the rest of Europe removed from Jews similar restrictions, and there are nowadays thousands and thousands of Jews who are indistinguishable from the rest of their fellow-citizens in culture, in ideals, in devotion to the national welfare—in all except the fact that they attend synagogues on Saturdays instead of churches or chapels on Sundays.

Experience has thus shown the falsity of M. Botkine's contention of the want of assimilation in the Jewish character. Curiously enough, he himself affords us a further example of the same. In defending his country from the charge of cruelty in connection with the Siberian prisons, he uses the quaint argument that an English traveler found there, along with the

political prisoners of both sexes, ruffians who would not have been suffered to exist in any other country of the world. I am not concerned with the argument, but with the English traveler, Mr. Julius M. Price, whose testimony M. Botkine quotes, obviously without being aware that Mr. Price is an English Jew of much distinction as a journalist and traveler. It is clear that Mr. Price has very successfully assimilated the English character, a possibility which M. Botkine denies while he quotes an English Jew as a typical Englishman. And so it is with thousands of other English and American Jews, descendants very often of Jews from Russia who found it impossible to endure the combined tyranny and intolerance of the Russian régime. If the Czar and his advisers followed the example of the rest of Europe, the next generation would see hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews as fully in sympathy with Russian ideals as Mr. Price is with English ones. I have shown elsewhere ("Studies in Jewish Statistics," 1890) that if Russia had been as tolerant to her Jewish subjects as the rest of Europe, she might have had some two hundred Jewish celebrities during the past century, including three or four of the caliber of Heinrich Heine or Lord Beaconsfield.

But what are the Hebrew qualities which the Russians find so unalterable and so objectionable that they have to take measures to prevent their becoming prominent in the empire? The only qualities he refers to are those of being "better educated and more thrifty" than the peasantry, and he can scarcely complain of these. He vaguely refers to "the Jewish influence becoming everywhere oppressive" to the peasantry, and he implies that the restrictive measures have been taken to prevent this state of things. Now, as a matter of fact, the vast majority of Russian Jews are hard-working artisans who do not come into contact with the peasantry at all. The oppression of the peasantry comes from the excessive taxation of the Government rather than from the village usurers, whether Jewish or Christian; and the Russian peasant, who is not so simple as he seems, prefers the Jew to the Christian money-lender. And statistics have amply proved that there is less drunkenness, crime, and misery generally in the provinces of Russia where Jews are forced to reside than in those where they are not allowed to contaminate the peasant by their presence. The recent famine, for example, was in districts far remote from the pale of Jewish settlement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jews are allowed to reside in only about one tenth of Russia—the fifteen governments that have been taken from Poland and Turkey. This is called the "pale of Jewish settlement."

<sup>2</sup> See W. N. Nikitin's "Jews as Agriculturists" (in Russian). St. Petersburg, 1887.

It is indeed only an attempt to throw dust into the eyes of the American public to suggest that the recent expulsions were due to the benevolent desire of the Russian government to protect the peasantry from the oppression of the Jews. That could not have been the reason why they were heartlessly driven forth from Moscow in the bitter cold of the winter of 1891-92, when even soldiers were not allowed to drill in the open air. Nor could that have been the reason why the permission granted them by ex-Ministers Markoff and Tolstoy was withdrawn, and they were driven from the towns outside the pale of Jewish settlement to towns within it: peasants do not dwell in towns. Nor could the protection of the peasant be the reason why Jews are not allowed to become shareholders in commercial companies. The recent restrictions on Jewish education cannot be of much avail to protect the peasantry.

If it had been the purpose of the Czar and his advisers to assimilate the Jew and the peasant, they would not recently have put obstacles in the way of the Jews becoming agriculturists in separate colonies, where they could not interfere with the peasantry. Many thousands of these Jewish agriculturists exist in southern Russia, and have prospered and shown aptitude for agricultural pursuits for three generations.<sup>2</sup> It might have been thought that their rulers, who complain of their sole addiction to commercial pursuits, would have encouraged and promoted these colonies. Instead of any such encouragement, the following enactments show that the Russian government is determined to prevent the Jews from following any other pursuit than commerce:

All laws which encourage Jews to follow agriculture are abolished, and special facilities have been given them for leaving the agricultural classes and entering others. The deduction of money from the Meat Tax for the emigration of agricultural Jews is stopped. The Jewish Agricultural Fund, which was deposited at the Chief Treasury by the Minister of Imperial Domains, and in the Odessa Treasury by the Kherson and Bessarabian Office of Imperial Domains, has been transferred to the Imperial Treasury. Settlement in Siberia for agriculture is prohibited to Jews.<sup>3</sup>

It is further suggested by the secretary of the Russian legation that the recent restrictive measures were taken as much in the interests of the Jews themselves as of the peasantry. The peasantry hunger for the blood of their oppressors, and the benevolent Government

<sup>3</sup> Article 833, Part 2, Vol. 2, "Laws relating to Foreigners," published in 1886; Note 2 to Article 1, Appendix to Article 281, "Laws relating to Taxes"; Article 553, No. 62, "Law Code," published in 1887; and Article 978, Vol. 9, "Laws relating to Property."

has therefore thought it right, in the interests of both parties, to separate them by driving young Jewish maidens and little children through the snow and away from the towns where they had dwelt all their lives. So at least seems to run M. Botkine's argument. Now it is a fact that the peasants live on very good terms with the Jews, and do not need to be prevented from flying at their throats. There have recently been very few riots against the Jews, and when they occurred at Balta, Saratoff, and Starodub last year the authorities, far from repressing them, encouraged the rioters, if they did not actually initiate the riots. Thus at Balta the police urged on the people by telling them the Government had handed over the Jews' property to them, while the soldiery shared in the plunder. If the protection of the Jews were the object of the recent expulsions, why were they not resorted to twelve years ago, in 1881, when, owing to the culpable laxity of the Russian authorities, no fewer than 167 towns and villages of southern Russia were the scenes of violent attacks on Jewish life and property, and worse still, on the honor of Jewish women. The Government did nothing then to stop these outrages, till a meeting at the Mansion House in London drew the attention of all Europe to the criminal apathy of the Russian government.

M. Botkine quotes a recent law (December 9, 1891) by which a violent assault on a Jew is punished by exile to Siberia. It may be presumed that a violent attack on any one else is punished with equal severity, so that all the law proves is that previous to eighteen months ago such an attack on a Jew was not punished by Siberia. This accounts for the impunity with which the rioters of 1881 went about their work. It also confirms the apathy of the Russian officials, who let ten years pass before remedying the law. Thus the very example M. Botkine adduces to prove the paternal interest of the Russian government in its Jewish subjects proves quite the contrary. The whole attitude of his Government toward the Jews is enough to arouse ill-will against them. By making them out a separate class, the way is prepared for popular contempt and hatred—passions that are responsible for all the attacks made upon the unfortunate Israelites.

The official defender finally throws up the defense by declaring in so many words, "If

<sup>1</sup> "Report of the Commissioners of Immigration upon the Causes which incite Immigration to the United States." Washington, 1892, Government Printing Office.

we choose to treat our Jews so, it is no business of yours." It is "an interference with the internal affairs of another country." It is surely no breach of the comity of nations to point out cases of injustice which come under the notice of the other country, as they do by thousands in the United States. When one country treats some portion of its subjects so vilely that they are obliged to flee for refuge to another country, the latter has surely the right of inquiry, if not of protest. That the United States claims and exercises this right is proved by the harrowing report issued by the United States Commissioners on the causes which incite immigration to the United States, the chief cause being the intolerance of the Russian government.<sup>1</sup>

M. Botkine must indeed have little respect for the intelligence or knowledge of the American people if he thinks by arguments such as these to induce them to believe that the Russian persecution of the Jews is anything different from the stereotyped form of medieval religious intolerance. It is the brutal logic of such intolerance to degrade men by isolating them, by shutting to them the *carrière ouverte*, by marking them out for all men's scorn, and then to complain of the degradation they have themselves produced. It is the aim of such intolerance to produce a monotonous uniformity of belief and practice instead of the free development of individuality. All such attempts to cramp the human soul are foredoomed to failure. Unless the whole of the civilized world is at fault, unless all the lessons history has given of religious persecution and religious wars are at fault, Russia will never succeed in making her Jews Orthodox Christians, and can only inflict countless misery for no purpose, and with a prescience of its inutility.

In her attempts to crush the independence of the Hebrew, in her attempts to prevent the Russian Jew from worshiping his God after the dictates of his reason, Russia can find no sympathy in the United States. The germ of that mighty realm which now spreads peace and plenty from the Atlantic to the Pacific was formed by men who left their native country in order to preserve their liberty of conscience. Their sons have always preserved the right of religious freedom for those settled in the midst of them. They can have no sympathy for a government which places all manner of restrictions on the life of a Jew while he worships God as his forefathers have done for three thousand years, and removes them if he will but consent to join the Orthodox Church.

Joseph Jacobs,

Secretary of the Russo-Jewish Committee, London.