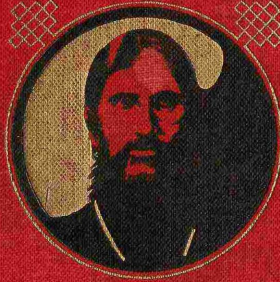


**RASPUTIN  
AND THE RUSSIAN  
REVOLUTION**

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**PRINCESS  
CATHERINE RADZIWILL**

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**RASPUTIN**  
AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

BY  
PRINCESS CATHERINE RADZIWILL

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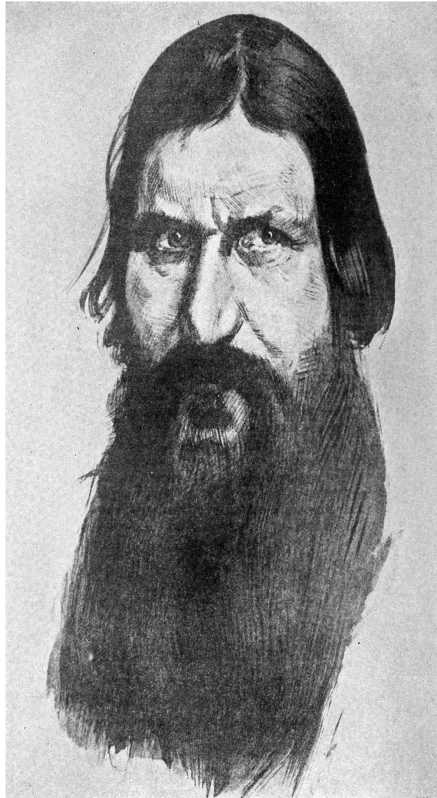
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# RASPUTIN AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION



*Photo by Paul Thompson*  
GREGORY RASPUTIN  
“The Black Monk of Russia”

TO  
MONSIEUR JEAN FINOT  
Editor of the "Revue"

*My dear Mr. Finot:—*

*Allow me to offer you this little book, which may remind you of the many conversations we have had together, and of the many letters which we have exchanged. In doing so, I am fulfilling one of the pleasantest of duties and trying to express to you all the gratitude which I feel towards you. Without your kind help, and without your advice, I would never have had the courage to take a pen in my hand, and all the small success I may have had in my literary career is entirely due to you, and to the constant encouragement which you have always given to me, and which I shall never forget, just as I shall always remember that it was in the "Revue" that the first article I ever published appeared. Permit me to-day to thank you from the bottom of my heart, and believe me to be,*

*Always yours most affectionately,  
Catherine Radziwill  
(Catherine Kolb-Danvin)*

## **PUBLISHERS FOREWORD**

When the book called "Behind the Veil at the Russian Court" was published the Romanoff's were reigning and, considering the fact that she was living in Russia at the time, the author of it, had her identity become known, would have risked being subjected to grave annoyances, and even being sent to that distant Siberia where Nicholas II is at present exiled. It was therefore deemed advisable to produce that work as a posthumous one, and "Count Paul Vassili" was represented as having died before the publication of "his" Memoirs. This however was not the case, because on the contrary "he" went on collecting information as to all that was taking place at the Russian Court as well as in the whole of Russia, and, consigning this information to a diary, "he" went on writing. If one remembers, "Count Vassili" distinctly foresaw and prophesied in "his" book most of the things that have occurred since it was published. This fact will perhaps give added interest to the present account of the Russian Revolution which now sees the light of day for the first time. Though devoid of everything sensational or scandalous it will prove interesting to those who have cared for the other books of "Count Vassili," for it contains nothing but the truth, and has been compiled chiefly out of the narrations of the principal personages connected in some way or other with the Russian Revolution. The facts concerning Rasputin, and the details of this man's extraordinary career, are, we believe, given out now for the first time to the American public, which, up to the present moment, has been fed on more or less untrue and improbable stories or, rather, "fairy tales," in regard to this famous

adventurer. The truth is far simpler, but far more human, though humanity does not shine in the best colours in its description.

**PART I**  
**RASPUTIN**



# INTRODUCTION

THIS exposé, based on facts which have come to my knowledge, though probably far from being complete, aims at depicting the recent state of things in Russia, and thus to explain how the great changes which have taken place in my country have been rendered possible. A lot of exaggerated tales have been put into circulation concerning the Empress Alexandra, the part she has played in the perturbations that have shaken Russia from one end to another and the extraordinary influence which, thanks to her and to her efforts in his behalf, the sinister personage called Rasputin came to acquire over public affairs in the vast empire reigned over by Nicholas II. for twenty-two years. A good many of these tales repose on nothing but imagination, but nevertheless it is unfortunately too true that it is to the conduct of the Empress, and to the part she attempted to play in the politics of the world, that the Romanoffs owe the loss of their throne.

Alexandra Feodorovna has been the evil genius of the dynasty whose head she married. Without her it is probable that most of the disasters that have overtaken the Russian armies would not have happened, and it is certain that the crown which had been worn by Peter the Great and by Catherine II. would not have been disgraced. She was totally unfit for the position to which chance had raised her, and she never was able to understand the character or the needs of the people over which she ruled.

Monstrously selfish, she never looked beyond matters purely personal to her or to her son, whom she idolized in an absurd manner. She, who had been reared in principles of true liberalism,

who had had in her grandmother, the late Queen Victoria, a perfect example of a constitutional sovereign, became from the very first day of her arrival in Russia the enemy of every progress, of every attempt to civilise the nation which owned her for its Empress. She gave her confidence to the most ferocious reactionaries the country possessed. She tried, and in a certain degree succeeded, in inspiring in her husband the disdain of his people and the determination to uphold an autocratic system of government that ought to have been overturned and replaced by an enlightened one. Haughty by nature and by temperament, she had an unlimited confidence in her own abilities, and especially after she had become the mother of the son she had longed for during so many years, she came to believe that everything she wished or wanted to do had to be done and that her subjects were but her slaves. She had a strong will and much imperiousness in her character, and understood admirably the weak points in her husband, who became but a puppet in her hands.

\* \* \* \* \*

She herself was but a plaything in the game of a few unscrupulous adventurers who used her for the furtherance of their own ambitious, money-grubbing schemes, and who, but for the unexpected events that led to the overthrow of the house of Romanoff, would in time have betrayed Russia into sullyng her fair fame as well as her reputation in history.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rasputin, about whom so much has been said, was but an incident in the course of a whole series of facts, all of them more or less

disgraceful, and none of which had a single extenuating circumstance to put forward as an excuse for their perpetration.

\* \* \* \* \*

He himself was far from being the remarkable individual he has been represented by some people, and had he been left alone it is likely that even if one had heard about him it would not have been for any length of time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Those who hated him did so chiefly because they had not been able to obtain from him what they had wanted, and they applied themselves to paint him as much more dangerous than he really was. They did not know that he was but the mouthpiece of other people far cleverer and far more unscrupulous even than himself, who hid themselves behind him and who moved him as they would have done pawns in a game of chess according to their personal aims and wants. These people it was who nearly brought Russia to the verge of absolute ruin, and they would never have been able to rise to the power which they wielded had not the Empress lent herself to their schemes. Her absolute belief in the merits of the wandering preacher, thanks to his undoubted magnetic influence, contrived to get hold of her mind and to persuade her that so long as he was at her side nothing evil could befall her or her family.

It is not generally known outside of Russia that Alexandra Feodorovna despised her husband, and that she made no secret of the fact. She considered him as a weak individual, unable to give himself an account of what was going on around him, who had to be guided and never left to himself. Her flatterers, of whom she had many at a time, had persuaded her that she possessed all the

genius and most of the qualities of Catherine II., and that she ought to follow the example of the latter by rallying around her a sufficient number of friends to effect a palace revolution which would transform her into the reigning sovereign of that Russia which she did not know and whose character she was unable to understand. Love for Nicholas II. she had never had, nor esteem for him, and from the very first moment of her marriage she had affected to treat him as a negligible quantity. But influence over him she had taken good care to acquire. She had jealously kept away from him all the people from whom he could have heard the truth or who could have signalled to him the dangers which his dynasty was running by the furtherance of a policy which had become loathsome to the country and on account of which the war with Germany had taken such an unexpected and dangerous course.

The Empress, like all stupid people, and her stupidity has not been denied, even by her best friends, believed that one could rule a nation by terror. She, therefore, always interposed herself whenever Nicholas II. was induced to adopt a more liberal system of government and urged him to subdue by force aspirations it would have been far better for him to have encouraged. She had listened to all the representatives of that detestable old bureaucratic system which gave to the police the sole right to dispose of people's lives and which relied on Siberia and the knout to keep in order an aggrieved country eager to be admitted to the circle of civilised European nations.

Without her and without her absurd fears, it is likely that the first Duma would not have been dissolved. Without her entreaties, it is probable that the troops composing the garrison at St. Petersburg would not have been commanded to fire at the peaceful population of the capital on that January day when, headed by the priest

Gapone, it had repaired to the Winter Palace to lay its wrongs before the Czar, whom it still worshipped at that time. She was at the bottom of every tyrannical action which took place during the reign of Nicholas II. And lately she was the moving spirit in the campaign, engineered by the friends of Rasputin, to conclude a separate peace with Germany.

In the long intrigue which came to an end by the publication of the Manifesto of Pskov, Rasputin undoubtedly played a considerable part, but all unconsciously. Those who used him, together with his influence, were very careful not to initiate him into their different schemes. But they paid him, they fed him, they gave him champagne to drink and pretty women to make love to in order to induce him to represent them to the Empress as being the only men capable of saving Russia, about which she did not care, and her crown, to which she was so attached. With Rasputin she never discussed politics, nor did the Emperor. But with his friends she talked over every political subject of importance to the welfare of the nation, and being convinced that they were the men best capable of upholding her interests, she forced them upon her husband and compelled him to follow the advice which they gave. She could not bear contradiction, and she loved flattery. She was convinced that no one was more clever than herself, and she wished to impose her views everywhere and upon every occasion.

Few sovereigns have been hated as she has been. In every class of society her name was mentioned with execration, and following the introduction of Rasputin into her household this aversion which she inspired grew to a phenomenal extent. She was openly accused of degrading the position which she held and the crown which she wore. In every town and village of the empire her conduct came to be discussed and her person to be cursed. She was held responsible

for all the mistakes that were made, for all the blunders which were committed, for all the omissions which had been deplored. And when the plot against Rasputin came to be engineered it was as much directed against the person of Alexandra Feodorovna as against that of her favourite, and it was she whom the people aimed to strike through him.

Had she shown some common sense after the murder of a man whom she well knew was considered the most dangerous enemy of the Romanoff dynasty things might have taken a different course. Though every one was agreed as to the necessity of a change in the system of government of Russia, though a revolution was considered inevitable, yet no one wished it to happen at the moment when it did, and all political parties were agreed as to the necessity of postponing it until after the war. But the exasperation of the Empress against those who had removed her favourite led her to trust even more in those whom he had introduced and recommended to her attention. She threw herself with a renewed vigour into their schemes, urging her husband to dishonour himself, together with his signature, by turning traitor to his allies and to his promises. She wanted him to conclude a peace with Germany that would have allowed her a free hand in her desires to punish all the people who had conspired against her and against the man upon whom she had looked as a saviour and a saint. Once this fact was recognised the revolution became inevitable. It is to the credit of Russia that it took place with the dignity that has marked its development and success.

This, in broad lines, is the summary of the causes that have brought about the fall of the Romanoff dynasty, and they must never be lost sight of when one is trying to describe it. It is, however, far too early to judge the Russian revolution in its effects because, for one

thing, it is far from being at an end, and may yet take quite an unexpected turn. For another, the events connected with it are still too fresh to be considered from an objective point of view. I have, therefore, refrained from expressing an opinion in this narrative. My aim has been to present to my readers a description of the personality of Rasputin, together with the part, such as I know it, that he has played in the development of Russian history during the last five years or so, and afterward to describe the course of the revolution and the reasons that have led to its explosion in such an unexpected manner.

# CHAPTER I

WE live in strange times, when strange things happen which at first sight seem unintelligible and the reason for which we fail to grasp. Even in Russia, where Rasputin had become the most talked-of person in the whole empire, few people fully realised what he was and what had been the part which he had played in Russia's modern history. Yet during the last ten years his name had become a familiar one in the palaces of the great nobles whose names were written down in the Golden Book of the aristocracy of the country, as well as in the huts of the poorest peasants in the land. At a time when incredulity was attacking the heart and the intelligence of the Russian nation the appearance of this vagrant preacher and adept of one of the most persecuted sects in the empire was almost as great an event as was that of Cagliostro during the years which preceded the fall of the old French monarchy.

There was, however, a great difference between the two personages. One was a courtier and a refined man of the world, while the other was only an uncouth peasant, with a crude cunning which made him discover soon in what direction his bread could be buttered and what advantages he might reap out of the extraordinary positions to which events, together with the ambitions of a few, had carried him. He was a perfect impersonation of the kind of individual known in the annals of Russian history as "Wremienschtchik," literally "the Man of the Day," an appellation which since the times of Peter the Great had clung to all the different favourites of Russian sovereigns. There was one difference, however, and this a most essential one. He had



never been the favourite of the present Czar, who perhaps did not feel as sorry as might have been expected by his sudden disappearance from the scene of the world.

I shall say a thing which perhaps will surprise my readers. Personally, Rasputin was never the omnipotent man he was believed to be, and more than once most of the things which were attributed to him were not at all his own work. But he liked the public to think that he had a finger in every pie that was being baked. And he contrived to imbue Russian society at large with such a profound conviction that he could do absolutely everything he chose in regard to the placing or displacing of people in high places, obtaining money grants and government contracts for his various "protégés," that very often the persons upon whom certain things depended hastened to grant them to those who asked in the name of Rasputin, out of sheer fright of finding this terrible being in their way. They feared to refuse compliance with any request preferred to them either by himself or by one who could recommend himself on the strength of his good offices on their behalf. But Rasputin was the tool of a man far more clever than himself, Count Witte. It was partly due to the latter's influence and directions that he tried to mix himself up in affairs of state and to give advice to people whom he thought to be in need of it. He was an illiterate brute, but he had all the instincts of a domineering mind which circumstances and the station of life in which he had been born had prevented from developing. He had also something else—an undoubted magnetic force, which allowed him to add auto-suggestion to all his words and which made even unbelieving people succumb sometimes to the hypnotic practices which he most undoubtedly exercised to a considerable extent during the last years of his adventurous existence.

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