

THE LAST OF THE ROMANOVES

BY
CHARLES RIVET

Illustrated by the Author

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RASPUTIN WITH SOME OF HIS ADEPTS
(Rasputin in the centre)

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BY CHARLES RIVET

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TRANSLATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

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INTRODUCTION

M. CHARLES RIVET, the author of this book, is the Petrograd correspondent of the Paris *Temps*. His knowledge of Russia is quite exceptional. He has been in that country since 1901, and speaks Russian. He went out first as a Professor and remained as a journalist and in both capacities he had special opportunities of mixing with the three great sections of Russian society: the aristocracy, the *bourgeoisie*, and the peasant class. His sympathies were always with the advanced thinkers, he had many friends among them, especially among the Cadets, and he was the avowed enemy of the old *régime*. In his letters to the *Temps* and the *Illustration* he attempted to awaken the French people to a sense of realities, to bring before them the truth about the Dual Alliance and to warn them of the dangers of secret diplomacy. His newspaper campaigns, somewhat shorn of their full value by the timidity of French statesmen in Russian matters and, later, by the Censorship, made him extremely unpopular with those who ruled the destinies of Russia. This was particularly the case in his attacks on the Minister Maklakof, in his sounding of the alarm when Krupp was about to become a

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large shareholder in the Putilof Munition Works, and in his denunciation of the weak diplomacy which enabled Berlin to send to Constantinople the Liman von Sanders Military Commission. "This man," said M. Sazonof, "is constantly putting his spoke in our wheels." And M. Rivet was arrested, in Petrograd, in the very thick of the war, as a first step to expulsion. But the Russian bureaucrats were afraid to carry out their intention and he was released.

His book consists of four parts, to which the three divisions roughly correspond. He has desired to put before the French public—in the first instance—the immediate causes of the Revolution, with a sketch of personalities and powers, to give a clear account of that Revolution and its effects, to describe the political elements composing the last Duma of the old era and the political groupings of post-Revolutionary days, and, lastly, to tell the French how and why they were misled about the Dual Alliance.

It will seem to British and American readers, friends of France before the war, and, since the war and Verdun, not only her friends but also her steadfast admirers, that M. Rivet has used towards his country a merciless severity. It was indeed suggested that in the translation this section—the last in the book—should be omitted, but there is in it so much fruitful unveiling of the crooked ways of diplomatists, of the timidity of Governments and the secrecy of agreements affecting, in their repercussions, the whole world, that the translator using his discretion retained practically all that M. Rivet had set down. This was not done in order that the private affairs of France should be held up to the ironical inspection of

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foreigners, but in order that certainly the British should ask themselves whether they have much to boast about in their attitude towards true Russia both before and during the war. Was Russia known in English-speaking countries as well as she should have been? Did we not also believe in the fiction of a Russian Colossus? Did not educated men vouch for the accuracy of a report that vast numbers of Russian soldiers were passing through England on their way to help France, when the truth was that Russia was hard put to it to transport enough troops to fight on her own frontiers—to say nothing of a railway system which at that time was altogether incapable of carrying any troops to the Northern port? And have there not been democratic Englishmen who have reviled the Revolution because of its effect on military operations?

The truth is that, apart from a small number of men such as Mr. Stephen Graham and the Hon. Maurice Baring, Englishmen knew nothing of Russian internal affairs, and even those who did know were apt to put upon Russian things not a "realistic" but a personal interpretation.

It is M. Rivet's contention that the Russian Revolution has at least freed us from the dead weight of Tsarist incompetence and the duplicity of irresponsible favourites. We were, before, never certain of what might happen on the Russian front, now—grimly—we are ready for the worst and rely upon other fronts for a decision in this war. M. Rivet further contends that the Revolution, in itself, and without any military victories by Russian Armies, in spite of the bitter disappointments of recent months, is the

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greatest blow struck at Prussianism in the whole war. His book should prove that to sceptical readers.

However, the purpose of this introduction, which takes the place of the original French introduction addressed exclusively to the French, is not to lecture English readers on their ignorance of foreign affairs. The translator himself, though cosmopolitan by education and inclination, confesses that he was shamefully ignorant of the movements which have shaken Russia to its foundations. M. Rivet's book is one of several that have served to correct deficiencies in his outlook. It is hoped that this English translation will help others not only to form a just appreciation of Russia risen from the dead, but also to determine that secret diplomacy shall be banished from our dealings with foreign countries, and that the new democracies shall be free to decide their own fates without the oblique because timid perversion of party politicians working in the dark.

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