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THE TRUTH ABOUT MOSCOW

THE TRUTH ABOUT
MOSCOW

AS SEEN BY A FRENCH VISITOR

by Henri Béraud

translated from the French by

John Peile, M.A.



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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION.

It was in no spirit of antipathy to Soviet doctrines or with a settled conviction that no intercourse with the Russian Government was possible that, some twelve months ago, Henri Béraud set out on the visit of which he here relates his experience. Himself a baker's son and working for a living since his boyhood, he is in sympathies, ideas and outlook a true son of the people, taught to look the whole world in the face and never to feel shame for his lowly origin. His intelligence inclined him to dismiss as exaggerated much of the talk of the peril of Communism, to view with optimism the future economic stability of the New Russia. The Counsellor of the Soviet Embassy in Paris, Béraud tells us, expressed strong conviction that his account on his return from Russia would be uniformly favourable. It was possibly a long time since he had dealt

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with any but 'official' reporters. Monsieur Mouthon, for whose paper, the *Journal*, Béraud was travelling as Special Correspondent and who subsequently published his articles, seems to have expected a sympathetic report. On his arrival threats and abuse were showered upon the intrepid reporter, who trusted the evidence of his own eyes and common sense rather than the sights to be seen on a pre-arranged tour and the conventional explanations. The rudeness of his hosts Béraud returned by an unruffled courtesy, their persistence in emphasizing the enviable conditions of their own working classes by the contention that, though indeed far better than in 1914, such conditions are immeasurably lower than any working man or woman in the west would tolerate, and their claim to have bestowed upon the proletariat the blessings of 'economic equality' by recording the indisputable fact that the 'people' are living in utter poverty under the heel of insolent politicians and low-born profiteers.

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The author deliberately omits from his work theories, statistics and even comments. It is a 'round, unvarnished tale' that he delivers, in all truth and sincerity, in moods grave or humorous as the incidents require. Though addressed directly to the working class from which he sprang, his message will appeal to a far wider range of readers. Its lesson will be found in the words which Béraud quotes from Lamennais' impassioned speech to his countrymen, spoken nearly a century ago :

'Whoever steals and plunders, attacks the poor as well as the rich. Do not drink from the cup of crime, for in its dregs is the bitterness of misery, anguish and death.'

J. P.

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