

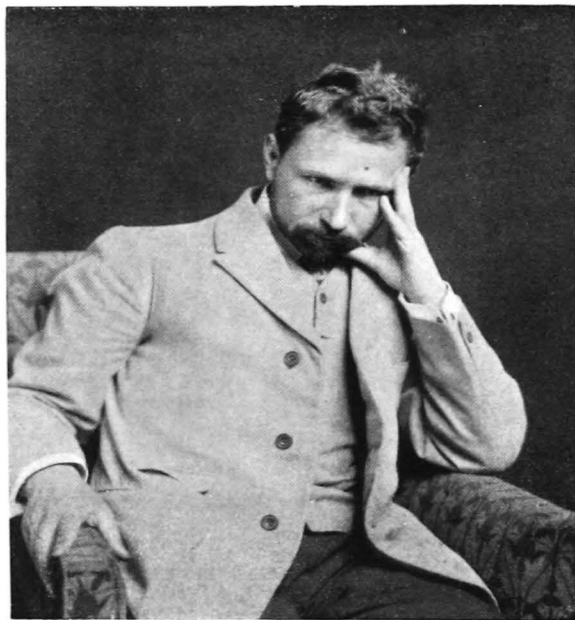
The Story of  
My Life

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Father Gapon

THE STORY OF MY LIFE

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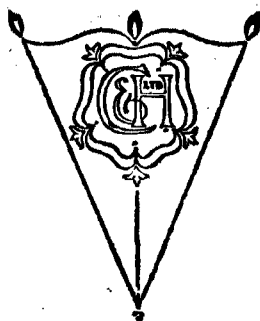
GAPON IN LONDON, 1905.

*(Photo: N. Luboshez.)*

*[Frontispiece.]*

THE  
STORY OF MY LIFE

BY  
FATHER GEORGE GAPON.



LONDON  
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GEORGEY GAPON, WITH AUTOGRAPH.

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## APPENDIX

### THE ST. PETERSBURG WORKMEN'S PETITION TO THE TSAR, JANUARY 22, 1905.

SIRE,—

We working men of St. Petersburg, our wives and children, and our parents, helpless, aged men and women, have come to you, O Tsar, in quest of justice and protection. We have been beggared, oppressed, over-burdened with excessive toil, treated with contumely. We are not recognized as normal human beings, but are dealt with as slaves who have to bear their bitter lot in silence. Patiently we endured this; but now we are being thrust deeper into the slough of rightlessness and ignorance, are being suffocated by despotism and arbitrary whims, and now, O Tsar, we have no strength left. The awful moment has come when death is better than the prolongation of our unendurable tortures. Therefore, we have left work, and informed our employers that we shall not resume it until they have fulfilled our demands. What we have asked is little, consisting solely of that without which our life is not life, but hell and eternal torture.

Our first petition was that our employers should investigate our needs together with ourselves, and even that has been refused. The very right of

discussing our wants has been withheld from us on the ground that the law does not recognize any such right, and our demand for an eight-hours day has been dismissed as illegal. To fix the prices of our labour in concert with ourselves, to adjudge upon misunderstandings between us and the lower administration of the factories, to raise the wages of unskilled work men and women up to a rouble a day, to abolish overtime, to take better care of the sick, to instruct without insulting us, to arrange the workshops so that we might work there without encountering death through draughts, rain, and snow: all these requests have been condemned by our employers as unlawful, and our very petition treated as a crime, while the wish to better our condition is regarded as a piece of insolence towards the employers.

O Emperor, there are more than three hundred thousand of us here, yet we are all of us human beings only in appearance and outwardly, while in reality we are deemed devoid of a single human right, even that of speaking, thinking, and meeting to talk over our needs, and of taking measures to better our condition. Any one of us who should dare lift his voice in defence of the working class is thrown into prison or banished. The possession of a kindly heart, of a sensitive soul, is punished in us as a crime. Fellow-feeling for a forlorn, maltreated human being who is bereft of his rights is consequently a heinous crime. O Tsar, is this in accordance with God's commandments, in virtue of which you are now reigning? Is life under such laws worth living? Would it not be better for all of us working people in Russia to die,

leaving capitalists and officials to live and enjoy existence?

Such is the future which confronts us, Sire, and therefore we are gathered together before your palace walls. Here we await the last available means of rescue. Refuse not to help your people out of the gulf of rightlessness, misery, and ignorance. Give them a chance of accomplishing their destiny. Deliver them from the intolerable oppression of the bureaucracy. Demolish the wall between yourself and the people, and let them govern the country in conjunction with yourself. You have been sent to lead the people to happiness; but happiness is snatched from us by the officials, who leave us only sorrow and humiliation. Consider our demands attentively and without anger. They have been uttered not for evil, but for good; for our good, Sire, and yours. It is not insolence that speaks in us, but the consciousness of the general necessity of escaping from the present intolerable state of things. Russia is too vast, her wants too manifold, to admit of bureaucrats alone governing her. It is absolutely necessary that the people should assist, because only they know their own hardships.

Refuse not to succour your people; give orders without delay to representatives of all classes in the land to meet together. Let capitalists and workmen be present; let officials, priests, physicians, and teachers all come and choose their own delegates. Let all be free to elect whom they will, and for this purpose let the elections to the Constituent Assembly be organized on the principle of universal suffrage. This is our principal

request, on which everything else depends. It is the best and only plaster for our open wounds, without which they will ever remain open and hurry us on to death. There is no one panacea for all our ills; many are needed, and we now proceed to enumerate them, speaking plainly and candidly to you, Sire, as to a father. The following measures are indispensable.

In the first section are those which are directed against the ignorance and disfranchisement of the Russian people. They include—

(1) Freedom and inviolability of the person, liberty of speech, of the press, of association, of conscience in matters of religion, and separation of Church and State.

(2) General and obligatory education by the State.

(3) The responsibility of Ministers to the nation, and guarantees for the legality of administrative methods.

(4) Equality of all persons, without exception, before the law.

(5) The immediate recall of all who have suffered for their convictions.

In the second section are measures against the poverty of the nation.

(1) The repeal of indirect taxation, and the substitution of a direct progressive income-tax.

(2) Repeal of the land redemption tax. Cheap credit, and a gradual transfer of the land to the people.

The third section comprises measures against the crushing of labour by capital.

(1) Protection of labour by the law.

(2) Freedom of working men's associations for co-operative and professional purposes.

(3) An eight-hours working day and the limitation of overtime.

(4) The freedom of the struggle between labour and capital.

(5) The participation of representatives of the working classes in the elaboration of a bill dealing with the State insurance of workmen.

(6) A normal working wage.

Those, Sire, constitute our principal needs, which we come to lay before you. Give orders and swear that they shall be fulfilled, and you will render Russia happy and glorious, and will impress your name on our hearts and on the hearts of our children, and our children's children for all time. But if you withhold the word, if you are not responsive to our petition, we will die here on this square before your palace, for we have nowhere else to go to and no reason to repair elsewhere. For us there are but two roads, one leading to liberty and happiness, the other to the tomb. Point, Sire, to either of them; we will take it, even though it lead to death. Should our lives serve as a holocaust of agonizing Russia, we will not grudge these sacrifices; we gladly offer them up.

Signed by GEORGE GAPON and about 135,000 workmen.

THE END