Russia in 1870

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RUSSIA IN 1870.
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BY

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IN THE GOVERNMENTS OF VLADIMIR, TAMBOV, AND
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Replying Dec 20,
1888

Sir,

Jerome B. Landfield
Mr. W. Hepworth Dixon unquestionably deserves the thanks of everyone interested in the well-being of Russia for drawing attention to that Empire, and I had hoped that the perusal of "Free Russia" would have given the reader a fair insight into that country, and that from the pen of its distinguished author the world would have learned what Russia is, and what the Russians really are.

Upon reading Mr. Dixon's work, however, I come to a very different conclusion, and am strongly reminded of the statement of
Prince Dolgorouky, quoted by Mr. Sutherland Edwards in his interesting book, "The Russians at Home," "That Russians alone ought to write on the subject of Russia" (the Prince of course meaning that only those, from long residence, well acquainted with Russia ought to take the subject in hand), and also that of Dr. Eckhardt, "Still worse is it with the statements of those who have come to Russia as strangers, and who endeavour to convey the impressions they have received without being acquainted with the premises or even knowing of their existence."

It is evident that Mr. Dixon has depended greatly upon second-hand information for much of the material of his book, otherwise he could not have been led into the errors which overrun his work.

The chapters upon subjects that have been studied are not only interesting, but as might
have been expected, coming from a source of observance so acute as Mr. Dixon's, are graphic and powerful; how unfortunate therefore is it that Mr. Dixon's exceedingly limited sphere of travel in Russia should have resulted in such erroneous conclusions and inferences on those questions where he has necessarily had to depend upon the information of others.

Had Mr. Dixon contented himself with giving us the first volume only of his work, then, in his interesting account of the monasteries, a subject which he has evidently well studied, there would have been found an entertaining and instructive work, to which no student of Russian life and manners could have objected; but when a writer as powerful as Mr. Dixon enters into a statement of so-called facts, and from them of deductions which are equally incorrect the one as the other, it becomes necessary for all
who have studied the question, to help to place the correct side of it before the readers.

Russia is a country which, young as it is in the path of reform and improvement, cannot afford to be misunderstood; and at this time, above all others, when the reactionary party are striving to overcome that of progress, it is more than ever necessary that those interested in the subject should have placed before them none but well considered facts.

Many visits to Russia during the last twelve years, together with a continued residence in the interior for the latter four years of that period, combined with the experience afforded me as the head of one of the largest industrial enterprises in the Empire, have given me many opportunities of studying the institutions of Russia and the character of the Russian people.