

In the Torrent of the Revolution

By MAXIM GORKI.*

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Christmas! We are living in a storm of the darkest passions. The past has opened wide its gaping jaws and reveals mankind in all its horrible disfigurement. Greed, hatred and revenge reign everywhere, the beast in the human breast, goaded to madness by years of imprisonment, martyred by centuries of untold suffering has torn wide its vengeful jaws, is roaring triumphantly, viciously, seeking whom it may devour. But all that is sordid and hideous on earth is the work of man. Beauty and reason toward which we are striving live within us.

Even the slave will learn to know the joy of life. Life is not worth living to him who has no faith in the brotherhood of mankind; there is no meaning in life to him who is not convinced of the victory of love.

Though we be buried in blood and filth up to our necks, though thick clouds of vile and disgusting vapors envelope our heads and blind our eyes, though it seems, at times, as if vulgarity had killed the beautiful dream we bore in agony and suffering, though all the torches that we once lit on the path that was to lead us to a new and better world seems to have been extinguished, humanity will win. For that is the great meaning of life in this world. Life has no other meaning.

But perhaps, after all, we are doomed to destruction! Were it not better then to be burned up in the fierce fire of the revolution than to rot slowly on the dungheap of monarchy, as we have been rotting till the revolution came?

Clearly, the time has come when we Russians must shake

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the thralldom of the past from our souls, when we must cleanse the filth of centuries from our lives, must kill our slavish laziness, must review our habits and opinions, our lives and our ideals. Let us gird our loins and go forth, like self-confident and capable workmen, to meet the great human task of reconstructing our planet.

Our lot today is tragic. Aye but in tragedy man is at his best and highest!

It is not easy to live. So much mean hatred has come to the surface of life, that the holy wrath that could kill all these small meannesses was drowned beneath them.

Sinesius, the Bishop of Ptolemy once said:

The philosopher must have peace and quiet, but the clever helmsman is trained in storms.

Let us believe that those who do not go down in the storm and chaos of our times will become strong and sure, that they will be hardened to an invincible resistance against the ancient bestial principles of life.

Today is the day when Christ was born. His birth has been to suffering humanity one of the two great symbols that man has created in his age-long striving for right and beauty.

Christ is the eternal ideal of mercy and humanity; Prometheus is the enemy of the Gods, the first rebel against fate. Humanity has nowhere created anything more sublime than these two embodiments of its own desires.

The day will come when these two symbols of mercy and goodness, of high faith and mad courage will merge in the soul of man into one great wonderful sentiment, when mankind will recognize its own worth, the beauty of its aspirations and the bonds of blood that bind men to each other.

In these days that are filled with horror for so many of us, in these days that are so terribly filled with rebellion and blood and hatred we must never forget that we are striking upon a journey of great travail and well-nigh unbearable trials to achieve the liberation of life from the heavy, rusty chains of the past.