

### The First Russian Parliament.

At St Petersburg on the 10th the first session of the lower house of the Russian parliament, or Douma, convened. The delegates first assembled in the white marble hall of St. George at the Winter Palace, where they were addressed by the Czar. There was a dazzling display of royal and military grandeur. The Czar's speech was in royal form and devoid of substance appropriate to so revolutionary an occasion. He said:

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The Supreme Providence which gave me the care of our fatherland moved me to call to my assistance in legislative work elected representatives of the people. In the expectation of a brilliant future for Russia I greet in your persons the best men from the Empire, whom I ordered my beloved subjects to choose from among themselves. A difficult work lies before you. I trust that love for your fatherland and your earnest desire to serve it will inspire and unite you. I shall keep inviolate the institutions which I have granted, with the firm assurance that you will devote all your strength to the service of your country and especially to the needs of the peasantry, which are so close to my heart, and to the education of the people and their economic welfare, remembering that to the dignity and prosperity of the state not only freedom but order founded upon justice is necessary. I desire from my heart to see my people happy and hand down to my son an empire secure, well organized and enlightened. May God bless the work that lies before me in unity with the Council of the Empire and the Imperial Douma. May this day be the day of the moral revival of Russia and the day for the renewal of its highest forces. Approach with solemnity the labors for which I call you and be worthy of the responsibilities put upon you by the emperor and people. May God assist us.

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After the Czar's speech the delegates proceeded to their own chamber in the Tauride palace. The body was called to order by Baron Frisch, who had been officially designated for the purpose. Nearly every member was present. The multiplicity of races, classes and costumes is described as the most striking external feature of the assembly. There were noblemen beside simple peasants or workmen clothed in the costume of the shops or the villages, turbaned Mussulmans and Buddhists from Bokhara, idolators from the Kirghiz steppes, orthodox priests in black cassocks, Catholic bishops in purple cassocks, Circassians, Armenians, and Tartars from the Caucasus; Jews from the Pale; Buriants from Central Asia, and Lithuanians and Esthonians from the Baltic provinces. Most of these wore their national dress, but there is reported to have been a spirit of earnestness about all which augured well for the future. The members took places regardless of political affiliations, except for a small group of reactionaries who gathered at the extreme right. After a lame speech by Baron Frisch, the delegates took the oath of office and signed the membership roll. They then elected as their president Prof. Andrele Mourontseff, the senior member for Moscow. There were but seven dissenting votes.

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Before making his acceptance speech President Mourontseff ordered all persons not members of the lower house of the Douma to leave the floor, an order which included a large number of government officials and clerks. His speech was brief. It was im-

mediately followed by one from Ivan Petrunkevitch, who made an appeal for those who had suffered in the cause of liberty. This was the first subject on which the Douma took official action. It was sent on the 12th to the committee to draft the reply to the Czar. The resolution referring the subject to that committee asked of the Czar full amnesty for political, agrarian and military crimes, and recommended the immediate abandonment of the death penalty for all offenses, criminal as well as political.

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The reply to the speech of the Czar was adopted by the lower house of the Douma on the 15th. Its demands are as follows:

- 1—General amnesty.
- 2—The abolition of the death penalty.
- 3—The suppression of martial law and all exceptional laws.
- 4—Full civil liberty.
- 5—The abolition of the Council of the Empire.
- 6—The revision of the fundamental law.
- 7—The establishment of the responsibility of ministers.
- 8—The right of interpellation.
- 9—Forced expropriation of land.
- 10—Guarantees of rights of trades unions.

On the question of amnesty, the reply reads:

On the threshold of our labors one question agitates the soul of the whole Russian people and prevents us, as their representatives, from calmly entering upon our legislative work. The first word pronounced in Parliament was amnesty. It was met with cries of sympathy. The country is thirsting for it. It is a demand of the people's conscience which it is impossible to refuse or delay. Sire, the Parliament awaits full political amnesty as the first pledge of a mutual understanding in the future and concord between the Emperor and the people.

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The Council of the Empire, or upper house of the Douma, met on the 11th in the hall of the nobles in the Winter Palace. It was opened by Count Solsky, the president.

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### The British in Egypt.

Considerable newspaper agitation has been recently made regarding the possibility of an outbreak between Great Britain and Turkey over the Egyptian-Turkish boundary line. Great Britain occupies Egypt in the capacity of an international guardian (vol. 1, No. 20, p. 3; vol. vii, p. 25), and is brought into hostile relations with Turkey in consequence of Turkish claims to that part of Egypt which is known as the Sinal Peninsula. The Gulf of Akabah is on the boundary line, as the British claim, but south of it, as the Sultan of Turkey claims; and the City of Tabah is at the head of this gulf on what the British regard as Egyptian territory. The Turks having occupied Tabah with troops, Great Britain objected, and on the 4th gave Turkey an ultimatum requiring the evacuation of Tabah and all other places on the Sinal Peninsula, and until the delimitation of the frontier by a commission. To this demand Turkey acceded on the 12th and on the 13th Tabah was evacuated. The boundary question depends upon whether the Egyptian-Turkish line across the Sinal Peninsula runs from the Suez on the Gulf of Suez to El Arish on the Mediterranean, as the Sultan claims, or from the Gulf of Suez to the Gulf of Akabah, as Great Britain claims.