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EDITORIAL

A THUNDER CLOUD.

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THE gathering of the Zemstvos' representatives at St. Petersburg; the nature of their demands; the tone of the language used—all these circumstances look portentous. They would be portentous enough even if not the obvious result of a foreign war in which Russia is worsted, and her ruling class shown to be unfit even to protect the nation. With this additional aggravation, the Zemstvos' manifestation is big with the biggest possibilities.

Prophecies are usually risky. No one can be in possession of all the facts necessary to form an accurate opinion in matters of such magnitude. Nevertheless, within certain general lines a guess may not hit far from the bull's eye.

There are several possibilities:

First, the Czar's nearest governmental circle may catch a ray of the state-craft that guided Richard II. of England in his attitude toward Wat Tyler. The Czar may come forward and accept the proposed reforms—lead them and their leaders: the former into the ground, the latter to the scaffold. Whether the ripeness of the times is such as to cause such a policy to drive the Russians to a frantic explosion, and, accordingly, become a boomerang, is a calculation on which much may be said on both sides of the question.

The second possibility is that the Czar's immediate circle may be seized with the sense of demoralization that seized the Duke de Broglie and Louis XVI.'s nobility generally. In that event, all depends upon the momentum which the Revolution—whether bourgeois or otherwise—has attained in Russia. If it has, then vacillation will mark the Czar's councils. One day there will be concessions that may tend to pacify the people, the next day acts that will irritate them; and the explosion will follow. The throne will be overthrown; the Czar will flee; and Russia will start a new life. On the other hand, if the revolutionary momentum in Russia is

below a certain necessary minimum, then we may be prepared to see in Russia a repetition of the scenes that took place in France in the fourteenth century under the reign of Charles V. Readers of *The People*, who have followed in these columns during the last months the translation of Eugene Sue's brilliant historic novel entitled *The Iron Trevet; or Jocelyn the Champion*, are familiar with what did take place. The crown yielded only to gain time, and the immature revolution had for its only immediate effect the drenching of France in the blood of the oppressed.

There is a third possibility—the remotest of all. The Czar may follow the example of the Mikado. As his people are learning from the Mikado's troops, so may he learn from the Mikado himself. An infinitely older dynasty than the Czar's, the Mikado took the tip of Western civilization; itself granted a constitutional government to its people, and is now the envy of many a European monarchy, whose popular affection is not as deeply and widely rooted as the Mikado's. Should that happen the thunder cloud now rising above the horizon, not of Russia only but of all Europe, may roll by and not gather head again until the Socialist Revolution is ready to explode.

Besides these three typical possibilities, many a combination between them is possible. Mean time the thunder cloud grows ever more surcharged with electricity.

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