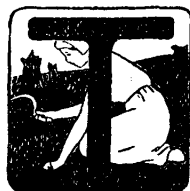


## THE DOUKHOBORS OF CANADA—A COMMUNITY OF SIBERIAN EXILES WHICH IS BEING BROUGHT TO GREAT FINANCIAL PROSPERITY BY A RUSSIAN CAPTAIN OF INDUSTRY: BY KATHERINE LOUISE SMITH



THE Doukhobors in Canada, or Universal Community of Christian Brotherhood—as their leader, Peter Verigin, while still in Siberia, suggested that they be called—have now forty-four separate villages, with one to two hundred people in a village, and represent a prosperous form of community life. When they came to America they had nothing. To-day, they have land, horses, food laid up for emergencies, twenty threshing outfits, six flour mills and five lumber mills. They also have a blacksmith and carpenter shop in every village, and run a large brick yard. Fifteen steam plows break up the land quickly. The possession of these labor saving devices is said by those who know Peter Verigin, to be an example of his adroitness. One of the tenets of the Doukhobors is to care for animals, and when they suggested it was wrong to work horses in this way, their leader instantly improved the opportunity by advising the use of steam plows. These people are natural tillers of the soil. They like village life, have been for centuries accustomed to agricultural pursuits, and are indefatigable workers. Their only holidays are the Sabbath and Christmas. Easter Day is not observed, “for Christ is ever resurrected in every man’s heart.”

The growth of the Canadian Doukhobors is amazing to any one who has known their history from the start. Five years ago six thousand of these people came to this country with nothing but strong hearts and willing hands. They were poor, not one in five hundred could speak English; they knew nothing of Canadian customs, and for two centuries had been oppressed; their property had been repeatedly confiscated, their women ill-treated and their leaders condemned to Siberian mines. To-day they are one of the most interesting communities existing in the world. They do business on modern and approved methods, they issue financial statements, have co-operative stores, buy necessities at wholesale, and are rapidly taking advantage of those usages and customs of civilization which do not conflict with their religious belief.



THE OLD WOMEN AMONG THE DOUKHOBORS  
SPIN THE YARN FOR THEIR OWN LOOMS.



LOOKING DOWN A PEACEFUL  
DOUKHOBOR VILLAGE STREET.

SIFTING GRAIN IN THE OLD-FASH-  
IONED WAY: WOMEN, THE WORKERS.



DOUKHOBOR WEAVING IS DONE ON A HAND  
LOOM OF MOST PRIMITIVE CONSTRUCTION.



IN HARVEST TIME THE WOMEN GLEANERS  
TAKE THEIR NOONDAY MEAL IN A  
FRIENDLY GROUP IN THE FIELDS.

A DOUKHOBOR GARDEN, WITH THEIR  
FAVORITE THATCHED GATEWAY.



THE MEN PLOUGH AND SOW:  
BUT THE WOMEN REAP.



BEATING FLAX BY HAND  
AT THE HARVEST SEASON.

BREAKFAST TIME IN A DOUKHOBOR HOME. THE  
RUSSIAN COSTUME LENDS A PICTURESQUE NOTE.



THEY WORK ALWAYS—THESE PEASANT WOMEN,  
EVEN WHEN VILLAGE GOSSIP LURES THEM.





THESE EXILED RUSSIAN PEASANTS DO BEAUTIFUL EMBROIDERY. IT IS A RECREATION TO THEM AFTER A MORNING AT WORK IN THE FIELDS.

## PROSPEROUS SIBERIAN EXILES

Without doubt this change of attitude is largely due to Verigin, who is a veritable captain of industry, well calculated to be a leader, and tactful in persuading his people to adopt new labor saving devices and progressive measures. No one can see Verigin without being impressed by the man's capabilities and the conviction that he is a remarkable character. He is an active manager, a worker as well as director, and though it is impossible outside the sect to discover his tribal or hereditary right to lead, or to understand their belief in his divine origin—which many of his followers affirm—every one who sees Verigin is convinced of his power and his influence among the Doukhobors.

Whatever his life may have been in youth, or however he obtained his present position as head of this sect, to-day he is physically and mentally well equipped to be a leader of men. He is fully six feet in height, broad shouldered, deep chested, well built. He has a swarthy complexion, a strong but kind face, wears a moustache and his hair is growing thin. His personal appearance is pleasing, but it is his mentality and ability to guide the ignorant Doukhobors that arouses admiration. He came to Canada when they were in the midst of confusion, with their new life hardly started, their settlements scarcely formed, and disintegration imminent. With triumphant bugle call he rallied his army and led it to victory. Verigin reveals in his conversation a bright, keen, active mind, fully competent to deal with the problems of his people. Though he talks frankly, one is conscious that he speaks with discretion, and keeps in reserve what he may think it unwise to impart. He is well read, masterful without being arrogant, and, most important of all, tactful. After meeting him one does not wonder at his power and influence, nor at its lasting through the years that he was in captivity.

In fact, many of the Doukhobor doctrines are the result of the influence of this young man, who managed to keep in touch with his people while in Siberia. Possessing some education when he was banished, he met followers of Tolstoi early in his prison life, and from them, from reading the philosopher's works, and from direct communication with the Russian sage, he became imbued with Tolstoi's ideas and the doctrine of non-resistance. As a result he sent messages by Doukhobors who managed to keep in communication with him, and advised his followers not to carry arms, to give up meat,

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not to use intoxicants or tobacco, and to live a community life. As most of these precepts were in accord with the former teachings of the sect, his suggestions were readily accepted by his devoted people.

**V**ERIGIN reached Canada, after his release from Siberia, at a critical time. It was just after "The Pilgrimage," when the Doukhobors had left home, stock, and all belongings behind and started toward Winnipeg. The results of this, to others, crazy movement are well known. The Canadian government was obliged to interfere, the mounted police saved the horses and cattle from starvation, and by persuasion and force the deluded people were sent back to their villages. At the time, they accounted for the hejira by saying they took the Bible literally, and "did not Christ say to take no thought for the morrow and that material things were of no account?" Whatever the cause of this peculiar psychic-religious mania, whether it was sincere, or, as some affirm, an effort to meet Verigin, who they had heard would reach them about that time, the fact remains that since the advent of their leader these Russian peasants have made only one similar attempt at a pilgrimage, and that was promptly stopped by Verigin.

On reaching Canada, Verigin organized the disrupted communities, put them on a paying basis, acting with promptness and decision. The Doukhobors, perhaps from long persecution, are a silent people and reluctant to tell how they are governed; but it is well known that Verigin has an immense power over them, that they expect to do as he suggests, and that they recognize that it is to their interest to follow his advice. There is no doubt but his task in Canada has been a hard one, and it is fortunate that he has approached it tactfully. Canadian lands are rich, well adapted to agriculture, and the Doukhobors own fine tracts. Since their leader has succeeded in centralizing their labor and holding the men together, their lands have become some of the most productive in the Northwest. That he is capable of handling the six thousand peasants, many of whom do not read or write, is shown by the fact that, in spite of the confusion and waste that greeted him on his arrival in the face of discouragements, such as neglected cattle and the destruction of food and clothing, in one year after assuming the helm he was able to present a report far from discouraging, and systematic in every detail.

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When Verigin reached his fanatical countrymen, he persuaded them to choose capable men for a community council, to continue their self-government, and to select a certain number of men besides himself to be head of affairs. In this way he obtained the advice of those familiar with conditions, and was able to appoint a competent corps of assistants. Each man does his share toward the property getting, and even the children earn money by digging roots and herbs, and turn it into the exchequer. Verigin is custodian of the public trust, and by his practical methods, high ideals and understanding of his people's peculiarities, has so far proven himself more than worthy. As there are so many Doukhobors, it is evident they can provide largely for themselves without outside help. They buy at wholesale, grind their own flour, and in every possible way conduct business so that financial returns will come back to them instead of to other parties. In this way, and with a committee attending to the community funds, they have developed the largest experiment in pure communism that has ever been attempted.

**N**OTHING can be more convincing of the present success of this community life than a glance at one of the reports handed in at the general meeting. Two men and one woman delegate are always sent from each village, as well as the men who hold offices in the settlement. The meeting is opened with the Lord's Prayer, and ends with the singing of psalms, but the business questions are discussed thoroughly, and all items of expenditure, from small incidentals up, are accounted for. The reports of these meetings, which are in quaint, archaic English, would make a modern bookkeeper wonder at their accuracy. For instance, at the last meeting, held in February, 1906, at the village of Nadeshda, the account shows that the Doukhobors purchased over six hundred thousand dollars worth of goods, but by buying at wholesale effected a saving of two hundred thousand dollars. The report then goes on to state that sauce pans that retailed for one dollar were obtained for sixty cents, twelve cent prints were bought for eight cents, etc. The cash account is interesting as showing a satisfactory statement, for the income of the community for the past year amounted to one hundred and ninety thousand dollars, and their expenditures to half a million. The sundries account shows modern up-to-date methods, and among other

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things, the repayment of a loan by the Bank of British North America, amounting to fifty thousand dollars.

The meeting ended with an appeal to the women present to tell the women in the villages, "to be imbued with the sentiment of high duties as mothers of manhood; to commence in future to ennoble man, as by nature itself women in character are much softer than men. They, men, in daily life are moving amid rougher surroundings, doing hard work, hauling timber, and suffering from winter cold, and there is no wonder that the character of men is much ruder than that of women. It is very desirable that when men will return from their outdoor work, women should give them solace and good comfort in their homes." This, after the meaning of community life had been expressed as first, "spiritual fellowship and meekness between men, in which people are understanding great gentleness," and second, "material profit."

Truly an odd business meeting in the year of grace, 1906. And held by a body of people who only a few years ago conducted a "nudity parade," and abandoned all they possessed in a fit of religious frenzy. Nothing shows more plainly the power Verigin has over them. The working day of the Doukhobors is from five in the morning until eight in the evening, but this is divided into three shifts of five hours each. One set of men and horses go to work at five, stopping at ten for five hours rest, while another shift continues the work. At three in the afternoon the first shift resumes work and continues until eight in the evening. This makes one shift do ten hours' work, while the other does five hours, but the heavy and light shares are taken alternatively every other day.

Many Doukhobors are employed in building railroads, and the recent impetus in railroad construction throughout Canada has afforded favorable opportunities. Every summer they take large railroad contracts and the executive committee provides scrapers, wheel-barrows, shovels, and other equipment for the purpose. In working on railroads the men live in camps, and are accompanied by enough women to do the sewing and washing. The camps are pitched in a convenient spot and are well equipped with sleeping tents, store tents, kitchens, blacksmith shops and stables. All cooking is done by men in primitive brick ovens after the fire has been removed. Coke is largely used and is made by burning Balm of Gilead poles in holes dug in the ground.

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As a matter of fact, the Doukhobor's domestic methods are crude, but they serve the purpose as well as more modern appliances. Their method of community life makes work on the railroads comparatively easy. This was especially true when they first arrived in Canada. They were without means, and it was necessary that the men should leave their land and earn enough money to purchase the necessities of life. It was difficult for one man to go any distance and leave an unprotected family in an unsettled country. In a large community, a division could be made whereby a thousand men or so could be away on railroad construction and as large a number stay at home to work the land, put in the crops, and build houses. Those who were away earned money for communal supplies and eatables, and the work and profits were thus about equally divided.

**T**HE Doukhobors built their own mud or log houses, and the communal stables, of which there are one or more in each village for the horses, cattle, and hens. Early in their Canadian life, they were joined by the wives and children of two hundred men who had been exiled in Siberia. These were taken care of by the community until the men were liberated, when they at once came to Canada. If individualism had been practised, it is difficult to say what might have become of these fugitives. So far, this religious sect has not made much advance in education. Verigin gives as a reason that "the first duty of the Doukhobors when they arrived was not to teach their children to read, but to get food for them." Money has been offered them to assist in this work, and the Quakers of Pennsylvania, who have been attracted toward them by many similarities in their beliefs, have several times suggested sending teachers. Such proffers have been refused on the ground that, "It is against our principles to accept charity, and we do not wish to accept a sum for the purpose of building schools without seeing our way clear to repay it." Quaker nurses have been among these people for some time, and recently Verigin has announced that he thought they were in a financial condition where it would be best to start buildings which could be used either for school or church, and to engage teachers.

Growing out of the religious tenet that they must not eat flesh, is the desire to care well for animals. The horses used in connection with railroad construction are kept in the best of condition. Their

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coats are glossy, and one man is constantly employed to chop and prepare their food. One of the topics discussed at a recent business meeting was the care of animals, and it was unanimously decided that as they did not kill animals for food, they should treat them as well as possible. Cows should have light, dry quarters; work horses should not draw heavy loads, and should not be taken out of the stables in winter if it was colder than thirteen degrees Fahrenheit.

Altogether, these Doukhobors are a strange people; a sect dating from the early part of the eighteenth century, and holding religious views which at one time set them in a frenzy, and at another tend to set them apart and to make them appear as the most Christ-like people in the world. It is difficult for an outsider to define their religious belief, for they are illiterate peasants, have no creed or writings, and their unwritten belief is handed down much like the Sagas. Orest Novitsky, who made a careful study of their religion, divides it into twelve essential tenets, the purport of which is that they are "led by the Spirit," and "that the kingdom of God is within you." It can be said that without priests they have a religion, with no police they have little crime, without lawyers they settle disputes, and without "frenzied financiers" they have thriven as regards this world's goods.

As the Doukhobors wait until the spirit moves them before they speak in church, the service is usually long, and frequently lasts from four A. M. to eight A. M. The ceremony is very interesting to strangers, and consists largely of recitations given by the men, who are prompted by the women. Before they close, the men bow to the women, kiss each other, and then turn around and bow to the women again. Then the women do the same to each other and bow to the men. It seems an interminable process, this round of kissing and bowing, but that they look upon a kiss as a bond of amity is shown by their kissing each other before meals instead of saying grace. The opinion of the old men in the community is much valued, and after church it is their custom to congregate to discuss affairs and to read aloud letters from relatives who are exiled in Siberia. The life of the Doukhobors is of the simplest. When they work on the railroad they have no "boss" or section man, and they work so incessantly that they resemble a hive of bees. They show great capacity for road building, bridge making, and handling large cuts and grades so that their railroad work is accurate and lasting. This, with the wonder-

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ful fertility of Canadian soil, has enabled them to pay off loans and to get a good start. Some of the sect are separated from the main colony and are living in Prince Albert district, but Verigin hopes to obtain land so that all the Doukhobors in Canada will be in one section.

One thing is obvious, and that is that they look to a leader, and according to whether that leader is capable or incapable, good or bad, they will flourish. They are fortunate in possessing a head who has so far been able to cope with the problems presented by these erratic people in a strange land. There are those who assert that the Doukhobors are clannish, that years of persecution have made them deceitful, and that they frequently do what they affirm they will not do. Whether this is so or not, it will be interesting to watch the changes that years in a new country will make. Verigin, during the time he spent in Siberia, where he was thrown in with men of liberal views and education, developed remarkably; yet it is apparent that many of his Tolstoi views have proved impracticable since he has taken the reins of the community. Again, he shows an inclination to like and accept modern ideas, many of which would conflict with the preconceived notions of his people; but it is an open question if he will allow any changes which will affect his position as leader, and whether he will not insist that they shall always be a people apart. In a recent interview he stated that though a Doukhobor might marry an outsider, he would, in doing so, be virtually giving up his religion, for, according to fundamental principles of the sect, a Doukhobor might not destroy life, and no true Doukhobor could live in a home where meat was cooked or tobacco used.

There is no question but that Verigin has a hard task before him, for in many ways the community religion does not conform to the laws and customs of a country. Take, for instance, the question of marriage and divorce. There is almost no prostitution among them, yet they feel reluctant about registering marriages. When they first came to Canada, they objected to making entry for their homesteads, in accordance with Canadian laws, and protested against registering births and deaths. They are sincere, but ignorant. They have faced complex problems, and are liable to come in contact with others, from their peculiar views and attempt at community life.