

Arthur  
Toulmin Smith  
A British Engineer  
in 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
—❖— Russia —❖—



BESSIE WHITE

This collection of letters tells the story of Arthur Toulmin Smith, a British engineer who spent his working life in Russia in the years leading up to the First World War. After installing the telegraph in the Caucasus and a spell managing the Moscow gas works, he sets up Ludwig and Smith with a Russo-German colleague, manufacturing weighing equipment and pipework for fire brigades as well as components for the Moscow sewerage system.

His first wife dies young in childbirth. Daughter Alice survives and is happily brought up by second wife Minna. Through Arthur's letters home to his scholar sister Lucy, we watch Alice grow up. Staying with Aunt Lucy in Oxford she meets a young trainee church minister.

Will Arthur allow his only daughter to marry on only £200 a year?

As a proud Englishman, Arthur sees the difference between British society and the limitations and constraints of Tsarist Russia. Yet with a German wife and business obligations he never makes it back to live in his homeland.

The letters throw light on a lesser known British community abroad, their comfortable life as ex-pats among, but separate from Russian society. Arthur's great grand-daughter Bessie White provides a fascinating broader context to his life abroad.

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