

Outside Finland and the Baltic Provinces, where Russification has not yet ruined the schools, at least three Russians out of four are illiterate, and even those who have passed through the schools of the Orthodox Church have often been turned out with but a smattering of the three R's to compensate for precious time wasted over deadening superstition. The schools of the local councils are frowned upon by hierarchy and bureaucracy alike. The universities, instead of being asylums for freedom of thought and teaching, are increasingly spied upon and worried by meddlesome officialism. Since that lamentable blunder and crime, the assassination of the present Czar's grandfather, the policy of the great Ministers who have had the ear of the Emperor has been to combine industrial development and prosperity with steady political repression. But to make an ignorant, enslaved, and, therefore, discontented, people prosperous is one of the hardest of tasks. Russia has to compete in the markets of the world with free, educated, and civilised nations. Her rigorous Protectionism may stimulate manufactures for her vast home markets, but even this is sometimes achieved at the cost of making her consumers pay double prices. Her one gigantic industry remains agriculture, and her agriculture is still too often carried on by drunken and semi-barbarous boors almost as rudely as before the days of railways. The local councils and the intelligence of Russia cry out for good technical instruction, but so far with very little result. Yet the peasantry and landowners have to bear the burden of high prices and heavy taxes. Widely corrupt, brutal in its methods, not kept clean and wholesome by proper criticism, the Russian bureaucracy, itself unsound, cannot make the nation efficient. So, despite a patriotism which is a religion and a religion which is a patriotism, despite the unity of purpose in its policy and the goodheartedness of its sovereign, the most enormous Power on earth is at this moment an object of world-wide pity and a source of grave anxiety to those who wish it well.