

mense population* Prior to the last century Russia exercised but little influence on European affairs. But the genius and the wonderful energy of Peter the Great, who flourished in his strength about 150 years since, evolved a signal change in the condition of his realm, and with his reign came a new era. Every school-boy is familiar with his going over to England, and working as a ship carpenter, in one of the dockyards there, with the view of commencing a fleet, and thus open and prepare the way for his country to take its place as one of the commanding nations. His genius saw what was required to make Russia a first-rate power — yes, more in Europe than any of the present first-rate powers. His territory was then hemmed in on the south by Poland and Turkey. He felt the disadvantage of his northern position, and he saw that contact with the waters of the Euxine and the Mediterranean was requisite to the consummation of his desire. He died, but his ideas of Russian greatness lived. Visions of ambition have always occupied his successors in the empire. And in these visions Constantinople was still prominent — Constantinople, key of Europe and Asia, the depot of the commercial treasures of the east, the seat of ancient empire. It was seen as the future capital of a great and over-shadowing Russia. These ideas of aggrandisement have been the animating life of every succeeding emperor.

These are the ideas which have brought the calami-

* Intellectual life [in Russia] — even physical life — can be allowed to exist only so far as they assimilate themselves to support the control exercised by Czarism. * * * Every class feels the debasement — feels that by Nicholas all vitality, all individuality, except his own, are absorbed or annihilated. Nearly seventy millions of human beings are, after all, mere chattels, living only for him and through his imperial concession. — *Gurowski : Russia as it is*, p. 66.