

interest. If Great Britain and her colonies can stand together in war and peace, in prosperity and adversity, what power on earth can attack them? Supposing Canada and Australia to increase their population to twice the present number in the old land, would they not still be advantaged by union which, while giving strength in war, would not interfere with the self-government, in the most material points, of individual states, or the advancement of the special interests of each member of the Confederacy? No one can predict what a day nor an hour may bring forth, but the union of British people all over the world would be vastly beneficial to them and to the world at large, and is worthy of the patriotic efforts of every citizen of Canada. It might not endure for ever, but it would probably last long, and leave a glorious example to the world, of wise statesmanship.

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SOCIAL RUSSIA.

THE following article, compiled from one in the *Nineteenth Century*, by the Countess of Galloway, a most able writer, will supplement Sir Charles Dilke's clever political treatise, by a glimpse at the manners, habits, and customs of the Slavonic race, dealt with by him merely in the abstract.

EVEN the shortest visit to Russia disposes of many popular misconceptions; and, although it increases astonishment at the repressive rule possible in these days, it shows that generalisations are as false with regard to that Empire as in most other cases. Extraordinary stories are current in England of the private character of the Czar, the health of the Czarevitch, and the reign of terror caused by Nihilism. Many of these become incredible on examination and inquiry. The ignorance and falsity of the reports sent to London are most perplexing; where their information originates remains a mystery. Among other items the reputation of the Czar has been severely handled. As the whole history of Russia depends upon her sovereign, a few words on this subject are important. Society and entertainments do not appear particularly congenial to his disposition. His tastes all lie in the direction of simplicity; he has no luxurious habits, and prefers, to living in town, a residence in the country where he can enjoy exercise and recreation. His children are devotedly attached to him, and he is perhaps seen to most advantage when with them and leading a thoroughly domestic life. In illustration of this, it may be mentioned that he never omits to visit them at their bedtime. That he is not devoid of artistic taste is evident from certain collections made by him in the Museum of the Hermitage Palace in St. Petersburg, to which much, under his superintendence, has been recently added. A naturally vehement temper does not imply violence or brutality. He is not accustomed to be thwarted. When he discovers himself misled or deceived his indignation is great, and he never forgives a lie. It is erroneously supposed in England that he lives in constant dread of Nihilistic plots. Those who know him best repudiate this emphatically, and a study of his countenance and general behaviour in public certainly confirms the opinion of his courage and bravery. It is a mistake to imagine that he is a tool in the hands of a few officials; once determined on a course of action, motives of expediency will not turn him from his resolution.

All power proceeds from the Czar; he represents the united and concentrated force of the millions he governs. As head of the army, and as the impersonation of all the historical traditions of his people, he is a combination of the principles of democracy and aristocracy. He is not supported by an aristocracy of wealth, birth, or civilisation, but by the democratic spirit of the people, which finds its expression in a common devotion to the idea of their Czar, as their father, their leader, and one might almost say their God.

The terrible Nihilistic conspiracies, which cause a thrill of horror throughout the civilised world, emanate from the educated middle classes; the mass of the people have no sympathy with them or their ideas. Russia hardly counted as a European Power till the time of Peter the Great. Young as a consolidated empire, there is no lack of civilisation and no tinge of barbarism left to the eye of the casual observer. During the last fifteen or twenty years the upper classes have appreciated the force of national feeling, and, following the example of the present Emperor, have ceased to affect contempt for their country and their language.

In the reign of the late Czar there was a strong German party at Court, whose influence it was predicted would modify and transform the country. A reaction has set in; the German party is no longer a power; the German alliance no longer so anxiously desired and appreciated. The editor of the *Moscow Gazette*, Katkoff, who is believed to have great influence with the Czar, adds vigour to this reaction and writes for the Slav party and Russia as a great Eastern Power.

When Peter the Great transferred the seat of government from Moscow to St. Petersburg, it was with a view of bringing the country and people into closer communication with Western civilisation. St. Petersburg has the advantage of its magnificent river for shipping purposes (though it is only open for four or five months of the year). Otherwise Moscow is a commercial centre of great importance. The former has become very cosmopolitan. The latter runs the risk of being too provincial, but it is there the pulse of the nation really beats in the presence of its ancient traditions and achievements. At Moscow, too, the spirit of the Orthodox Greek Church becomes more apparent, and cathedrals, monasteries, and convents are more filled with the crystallised faith of the early Fathers. The monasteries do not pretend to be seats of learning, nor the convents homes for the spiritualised and idealised forms of religion. The monks

are not priests, and apparently their only object is to live easily and comfortably without expense or labour. The nuns occupy much of their time with beautiful embroidery, painting, and music. Some educational and refuge work is also done. There is but little effort on the part of the Church to control or cope with modern thought. Due performance of the duties required by discipline and custom appears to be sufficient, and to constitute all that is expected in discharge of religious obligations. No organ or instrumental music is admitted in the church services. The choirs in the cathedrals, composed of a large number of voices, are conducted with extraordinary precision and accuracy, and the chorus singing on the stage and at convents is quite remarkable for these qualities, and is distinguished by great delicacy of tone and expression.

If the ecclesiastical art of the country remains more or less conventional and Byzantine, the modern Russian school of painting contains some striking pictures. Its scenes from Bible history have a stamp peculiarly their own, and are very slightly influenced by Italian art. Landscapes are rare—perhaps on account of the monotony of Russian scenery. The sea is a favourite and well-studied subject, and pictures of an historical character show an immense power of depicting the expression of the human countenance.

Russia is a nation of soldiers, there military rank carries all before it, though the horrors of war cannot be too much insisted upon. A society where any real or political occupation or ambition is impossible will naturally seek this outlet for its energies and desires. Owing to the Russian system of secret police, about which so much is heard, the *tchinovik*, or Russian official, is hardly as independent as the *moujik*, or peasant. All are watched, and their sayings and doings reported. The discontent which exists is chiefly among the educated and higher classes. These, being unrepresented, are more hopelessly in the hands of the officials than even the poorer classes in their communes. Why should not Russia, quite different in race and sentiment to the questioning, subjective Teutonic mind, educate herself through the ancient civilisations of the East, and have sufficient national character to work out a purer form of government on her own lines? The Russian peasant has an interest in the land, and no special grievance to lead him to rebel. The army is not likely to abandon its allegiance to the Emperor so long as it has an outlet for its energies in the East.

The Ministers of State are merely instruments of the Emperor's will. They have no responsibility towards each other, and have, therefore, no common policy. They are little more than chief clerks in a gigantic business firm, who carry out the instructions of their principal with more or less ability and honesty. There is no power of law or justice independent of the will of the officials; and it is the bureaucracy composed of them which is the source of all Russian tyranny and intrigue, for the corruption of the officials is without limit. The Russian aristocracy and plutocracy have few powers and privileges beyond that of serving their sovereign, and their position depends entirely on the will of the Emperor. Official rank is the only distinction, and all rank—or *tchin*, as it is called—is regulated according to the army grades. By this *tchin* alone is the right of being received at Court acquired. Society is, therefore, subservient to the Court, and occupies itself more with those whose position can best procure them what they desire than with any other ideas. The Court itself is very magnificent, and its entertainments display unbounded splendour, taste, and art. In the midst of winter the whole palace is decorated for balls with trees of camellias, dracenas, and palms. The suppers seem almost to be served by magic. Two thousand people sit down at the same moment. The palace is lit by electric light. The tables are placed under large palm trees, and the effect is that of a moonlight feast. At these Court balls, besides the Imperial Family of Grand Dukes and Duchesses, with gorgeous jewels, may be seen many of the great generals and governors of the provinces, who come to St. Petersburg to do homage to their sovereign. The Empress dances, but not the Emperor; he does not sit down either to supper, but walks about, after the Russian fashion of hospitality, to see that his other guests are served. Notwithstanding the great ease and luxury, the fact that so many of the guests are officers attired in their uniforms gives a business-like air, and produces a sense of discipline at these entertainments. Individually, the Russians have much sympathy with English ways and habits, and the political antagonism between the two nations does not appear to affect their social intercourse. They are exceedingly courteous, hospitable, and friendly, throwing themselves with much zest into the occupation or amusement of the moment. St. Petersburg is a very gay society, and the great troubles underlying the fabric do not come to the surface in daily life. The season there begins on the Russian New Year's Day, which is thirteen days late; it lasts till Lent, and during that time there are two Court balls a week, and dancing at private houses nearly every other night, Sundays included. Private balls begin late and end late. The dancing is most vigorous and animated. The national dance is the Mazurka, of Polish origin. The music, too, is special and spirited. The supper is always partaken of seated, and there is invariably a cotillon afterwards. The pleasantest and most sociable entertainments are the little suppers every evening, where there is no dancing, and where the *menu* is most *recherché*, and the conversation brilliant. The houses are well adapted for entertaining, and both comfortable and luxurious; the bedrooms prettily furnished, having dressing-rooms attached, provided with a tiled bath, hot and cold water, and numerous mirrors. The wives of the Court and State officials, as well as many other ladies, have one afternoon a week, on which they sit at home and receive visitors, when there is always tea and Russian bonbons, most excellent in quality. The number of men, officers of the army, and others, who attend these days, is quite remarkable. Many notabilities, such as General Kaulbars, may be seen quietly sipping tea, and talking of the last ball to the daughter of the house.

A favourite amusement, even in winter, is racing in troikas, or sleighs.