

The Gymnasium in Russia.



CANADIANS, especially the people of Ontario, possessing an educational system which has been often styled the best in the world, a system as comprehensive as it is liberal, under which an education may be obtained by any one at little or no cost, will find it difficult to understand how the great mass of the people in one of the first great European countries, namely, Russia, are densely ignorant and wholly illiterate; because they are either too poor or have not access to the institutions of learning. Yet notwithstanding this fact, educated Russians are considered to be among the most cultured and highly intellectual people in the world, and the system here described is that by which the latter obtain the greater part of their education. This article, therefore, will be almost entirely confined to a description of the life and work in the gymnasium of the Baltic Provinces.

The gymnasium may be called the backbone of the entire Russian educational system. There are, indeed, "City Schools" which are exclusively for the use of the poorer classes, where the elementary branches are taught, but these have no connection whatever with the gymnasium. The gymnasium is a combination of the Public and High Schools, and also does the work taken up in the general course of the first two years at the Toronto University.

There are eight classes in the gymnasium, exclusive of the preparatory class, each one of which may be passed in one year's study. But it is only the industrious and clever who are able to complete the full course within eight years. On the other hand, the longest time allowed for one class is two years, the *gymnasiast* not being permitted to continue his course if he is not qualified for promotion to the next higher grade at the end of that time. The fitness or unfitness for promotion of any pupil is decided by means of an annual examination of both an oral and a written character. It may thus be seen that the gymnasium does not offer an asylum for the idler or the sluggard. A further obstacle is that of age, no one being permitted to enter any class under the specified age, nor remain there above a certain age. The work taken up in each class is graded to suit the understanding and knowledge of the student. Regular and continuous attendance is also insisted upon during all