

FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

RAILWAYS AND REFORMS IN MACEDONIA.

THE Balkan tangle, is being slowly unravelled, and the war rumours have in consequence quietly died away. From the first there was nothing to fight for. By the extension of a railway line calculated to open up trade and commerce, and tap the latent resources of the Peninsula, a well-wisher of the country, as Russia is, could not feel chronically aggrieved. Her contention, therefore, was not that the railway projected by Austria would be useless or baleful, but only that the time was ill-chosen to ask the Porte for the concession. And it certainly was. By appearing in the character of a suitor, Austria, as a prosecutor, was ruled out of court, and the Sultan was emboldened to reject the demand for judicial reform in Macedonia. Austria had set her own interests above the cause of the ill-starred people of Macedonia, and had stolen a march upon her fellow-worker. That was Russia's real grievance. The Balkan States viewed the matter from a different standpoint. Russia's attitude was a puzzle to them. They were painfully conscious that since the Mürzsteg programme was framed Russia had taken no measures to cultivate the friendship or promote the well-being of the Balkan Slavs. She had cast a spell over the Balkans, and kept things there in a state of immobility. And this inactivity was avowedly a concession to Austria-Hungary. Then all at once the discovery was made that the other party to the compact had construed her obligations less rigorously, and had improperly gained an advantage over Russia. Moreover, it was manifest to everyone that one political effect of the projected railway would be to weaken Russia's influence among Southern Slavs, not merely for a decade or during a reign, but permanently. For it connoted as complete a loss by the Tsardom of the protectorate over the Balkan Slavs as was the loss by France of the protectorate over Oriental Catholics. Moved by this

perspective, the Russian Press took alarm, and patriotic politicians thought they could descry the spectre of war looming in the distance. But it was only a mirage.

Much that was written on the subject by the Press of Russia and Austria belonged to the category of things that had better be left unsaid. For example, the likelihood of war with Turkey in the near future became one of the most popular themes of telegrams and leading articles. The circumstances that neither Power could afford to go to war, and that, even if it could, the question at issue could not be solved by the sword, were overlooked. One remarkably interesting thesis, however, was put forward by an esteemed friend of mine, who for years had been juris-consult in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and is one of the most competent authorities in Europe on the Near Eastern problem in all its changing forms. A. A. Bashmakoff analysed carefully article 25 of the Berlin Treaty on the strength of which the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baron von Aehrenthal, obtained the Sandjak Railway concession, and he maintained and proved that the right which the article is believed to have conferred upon Austria-Hungary was not bestowed by that clause,—was never even contemplated by it. The clause in question states that "Austria-Hungary reserves to itself the right of having military and commercial routes" ("*des routes militaires et commerciales.*") Now the French word *route* does not mean a railway branch line, but only a carriage road. This contention is amply confirmed by referring to article 29 of the same Treaty, where it is laid down that in the new Montenegrin territory Austria-Hungary has the right to construct *une route et un chemin de fer*. From this it would follow that a "route" is different from a "railway," which latter is termed in article 29 a *chemin de fer*, and in article 38 *une ligne ferrée*. This contention cannot be gainsaid.

In the second place there is a serious geographical confusion in the Austrian line of argument. In article 25 it is a question of the Novibazar Sandjak "of the former Vilayet of Bosnia." Now the boundaries of the former Vilayet of Bosnia do not by any means coincide with the frontiers of the present Bosnia through which Austria-Hungary is about to extend the line. Consequently here, too, the basis of Baron von Aehrenthal's contention is swept away. Lastly, the words *au de la de Mitrovitsa* have been wrongly translated by "in the direction beyond Mitrovitsa," which gives to Austria a much wider field of action than is really warranted by the phrase, which in French means only the urban line of the city of Mitrovitsa. In a word, according to the thesis of my friend, A. A. Bashmakoff, which is now accepted by experienced diplomatists, the entire action of Baron von Aehrenthal was based on three misunderstandings, not one of which would appear to have been noticed by the Porte. But the Russian Foreign Office, declining to avail itself of mere formal

pleas, took the common-sense view of the matter. If a railway built with Austrian money will benefit the Slavs of the Balkans, it behoves the natural protector of those Slavs to welcome it, to support it, if possible, to outdo it. And that is the line which M. Izvolsky has taken in the Circular Note forwarded to the Tsar's diplomatic representatives abroad. Russia, he explained, will welcome every new undertaking from which real progress may be expected for the Balkan Slavs, irrespective of its origin. Austria has inaugurated the economic movement by setting to work on the Mitrovitsa line. Now let other States follow her example. Italy has already begun, Servia is making ready—and all three Powers can reckon on Russia's support. There can be little doubt that this is the proper way to play the difficult diplomatic game.

THE MURZSTEG PROGRAMME.

But if Baron von Aehrenthal's separate action will not lead to war, it does not follow that it has had little or no influence upon the Near Eastern question. On the contrary, it is hardly too much to affirm that it marks an epoch. One of its results will be the definite abandonment of the Murzsteg Programme, which the Foreign Secretary, however he may desire to uphold it, cannot now cling to for long. This plan of campaign was agreed upon by the two States in 1903, for the purpose of obliging the Porte to grant certain reforms to the people of Macedonia. In exerting this pressure, Russia and Austria-Hungary were the delegates of Europe. To many it seemed an unnatural partnership at the time; to almost everybody it appears a hopeless arrangement to-day. Although nearly five years have elapsed since it was signed, only two points of the programme have been realised—a gendarmerie officered by Europeans and a Finance Commission, consisting of representatives of the great Powers. And to the population of Macedonia these two reforms have brought no surcease of sorrow. Lord Lansdowne's criticism of the Programme in 1905 was sagacious and correct; the work of the Finance Commission would be bootless, he argued, unless it were invested with administrative and executive powers, and unless the number of Ottoman troops in Macedonia and its surroundings were reduced to what was absolutely required for the maintenance of internal order. He would also have had the supreme command of the military there conferred upon the Inspector-General, with whom the Finance Commission would co-operate.

And time has borne out Lord Lansdowne's forecast. The forty-seven gendarmerie officers, who are the backbone of that service, can accomplish little, because they have no right to give orders to the gendarmes or to have the troops called out when necessary. Hence murderous gangs may, and do, move about the country unmolested

by the gendarmes, whose officers are compelled to be mere onlookers. All they can do is to draw up veracious reports, take tell-tale photographs, and send them to their respective Governments. But the net result is *nil*. Order is as far off to-day as it was in 1903. Since the reforms have been introduced no less than 10,000 persons have been murdered in Macedonia. There is no justice, no retribution, no deterrent. Before the tribunals Christians and Mohammedans are treated very differently, the latter being highly privileged, the former being denied elementary rights. This acceptance of persons is upheld by the Sultan, who, therefore, never will grant the judicial reforms demanded unless he be compelled. Voluntarily, Abdul Hamid will not allow the testimony of a Christian witness against a Mohammedan to weigh as much as the evidence of a Moslem given against a Christian. *Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi*. Now so long as the gendarmes are not authorised to check the advance of gangs of murderers and incendiaries, who spread terror among the peaceful population, and so long as the courts are not encouraged to punish evil-doers to whom heinous crimes are brought home, no reform can possibly better the lot of the wretched people whose cause is being ostentatiously taken up by so many representatives of humanity and apostles of liberty.

INFLUENCE OF AUSTRIA'S ACTION ON ITALIAN POLICY.

Austria's eagerness to build the Sandjak Railway had a proximate cause and a favourable occasion. Russia's weakness was her opportunity, and her motive was the necessity of reaching the sea. It seemed indispensable to get to the sea because of the possibility of the Adriatic becoming a *mare clausum*. Suppose, for instance, Italy managed to bar the Straits of Otranto, Austria's outlet by water would be completely shut off and her dependence upon Germany's routes and railways would be abject and galling. To be dependent upon your rival in trade and industry for the conveyance of your wares and products to the very markets for which both of you are competing is assuredly humiliating, and might become ruinous. It is the case of Servia and Bulgaria, who therefore look to Austria's goodwill for the maintenance of their commerce, and have to pay for it heavily. In order to guarantee herself against a similar fate, Austria felt compelled to push forward south and south-eastwards. And the earnestness with which she has gone about it makes it clear that she regards the exclusion of Italy from the eastern shore of the Adriatic as a vital issue, a question of life and death.

To Austria's Balkan policy, which is carefully adjusted to this end, that of Italy runs directly counter. And naturally. For the Government of King Victor Emmanuel III. cherishes the hope, nay, the

firm conviction, that Montenegro-Albania will one day become a semi-independent State under Italy's Protectorate, or else the Albanian seaboard will in some other way come under the sway of the House of Savoy. Italy sets so much store by this acquisition that her Albanian interests have come to be looked upon as vital. Albania is the third selected and last possible colony for Italy. Owing to the dilatoriness or hesitancy of her statesmen, she allowed the opportunity of annexing Tunis to slip by unutilised, and then she proved too weak to hold Abyssinia. King Victor Emmanuel's marriage with Princess Helena of Montenegro brought a Slav element into Italian foreign policy, and was taken to confer upon Italy a cultural mission in the Balkans like that of Russia. Hence the important part occupied since then by Albania in the cares and preoccupations of Italian statesmen. Albania is treated almost like Sicily, in some respects much better. Schools have been opened at Italy's expense in Skutari, the Albanian tongue has been studied and cultivated, Albanian books printed in Italian, and, above all else, a truly national Albanian spirit, in lieu of the narrow clannishness, degenerating into tribal strife, which hitherto prevailed among Albanians, has been preached by Italian agents everywhere. To many Albanians even at present their tribe is the State and the Church combined, while vendetta and hospitality are the alpha and omega of their moral and religious code. Italian influence, however, is gradually changing all that, and striving, not without success, to make the Albanians capable and desirous of that autonomy which Italy regards as the best solution of this part of the Balkan problem.

Writing on this subject in the year 1903,* I ventured to express regret that the Italian Government lacked the courage of its opinions and the energy demanded by the magnitude of its interests, allowing excellent schools in Prevesa, Vallona and Durazzo to be suppressed, and refusing encouragement to the project of a railway from Durazzo to Monastir. Since then, however, much has changed, and Albania is now universally regarded in the Peninsula as well within Italy's sphere of interests. Hence an Italian railway has been begun from the little port of Antivari—an hour's distance from the Adriatic—to Virbazar, on the northern Montenegrin side of Lake Skutari, whence it is to be extended to Cettinje. Now the real value to Italy of this line will be its utility as a means of tapping the resources of Albania. In virtue of the Treaty of Berlin, Austria, many hold, might have vetoed this line on Montenegrin territory, but forwent this right. Personally, I question this interpretation of §29. But that she will ever permit the extension of this railway through Albania is incredible. And this is the point where, despite Signor Tittoni's recent speech, the vital interests of Austria and Italy clash. Austria will not suffer the eastern shore of the Adriatic to come under

* "Contemporary Review," April, 1903.

Italy's real or virtual sway. Indeed, Turkey is the only Power that can possess it without serious detriment to the Habsburg Monarchy. And when Turkey's possessions come to be distributed among her heirs, Austria is prepared to lay claim to the eastern shore and, if needs be, to enforce that claim at all hazards. Italy, on the other hand, regards herself as heir to the possession of the further shore of the Adriatic, and bases her claim on more solid historic grounds than Austria. Moreover, Albania commands the entrance to the Adriatic, which has often been described as one of the lungs through which Italy breathes and lives. A military Power like Austria, once in possession of the gulfs and ports of the coast, would be mistress of the Adriatic, and could checkmate Italy for ever.

These two sets of interests are seemingly irreconcilable. So far as one can now see, neither party can give way. Hitherto the Austro-Russian understanding and the respect for the *status quo* which it inspired kept the antagonism of the two States in abeyance. But Baron von Aehrenthal's move in the Sandjak of Novibazar has ushered in a new period of sharp competition, the violent culmination of which may be far off or near at hand. It is possible that the contingencies which can be reckoned with at present will be discussed and perhaps even provided for soon after the meeting of Kings Edward and Victor Emmanuel at Venice. In any case, I am disposed to regard the fate of Albania and the command of the east coast of the Adriatic as one of the most difficult and dangerous of all the questions which constitute the New Eastern Problem.

AUSTRIA'S COMMERCIAL PREPONDERANCE IN THE BALKANS.

In the brilliant discourse on Russia's foreign policy delivered by M. Izvolsky in the Duma on the 11th March, the Foreign Secretary explained the line of action taken by his predecessors as the result of great historic events. They bowed to necessity, having no choice. What that plea, if extended to Russia's policy in the Near East, probably means is that the Mürzsteg Programme was necessary at the time. Perhaps it was a necessity. But if so, the fate that made it inevitable was unpropitious. For it has deprived Russia not only of the prestige which she once enjoyed in the Balkan Peninsula, but also of the start over Austria which she had there until 1903. Whether she will ever recover the advantageous position which she then occupied may well be doubted. Certainly it can only be, if at all, as the outcome of a series of brilliant diplomatic moves, favoured by such propitious circumstances as army reform and financial betterment. To begin with, Austria-Hungary has already won economic preponderance in the markets of Servia and Bulgaria; and political friendship often goes hand in hand with close commercial relations.

Austrian business men are characterised by push and perseverance, whereas Russians lack both those qualities, and some others more elementary still. During the last twenty years Austria's exports to Bulgaria have increased by nearly 300 per cent. Many of the wares thus bought by the Bulgarians could also be obtained from Russia, such, for example, as cotton and woollen stuffs, metal manufactured goods, petroleum, etc. Yet, strange to say, Russia occupies almost the lowest position among all the States that supply the Bulgarian markets with goods. Of the Servian nation, too, Austria-Hungary is the purveyor in chief, whereas Russia's share of the trade is hardly worth mention; the former country takes 86 per cent. of Servian produce, and sells in return 72 per cent. of the needs of King Peter's subjects. Russia, on the other hand, stands eighth in order among the purveyors of Servia, and the last of all among the purchasers of Servia's produce.

This commercial closeness of Austria to the Balkan Slavs is the cardinal fact of the situation. It cannot be reasoned away; Sentiment is as powerless against it as would be the sounding of trumpets against the strongholds of Posen. In all probability one of its practical corollaries will be an Austro-Servian Zollverein.

ARMY REFORM IN RUSSIA.

When Russia actually possesses the two conditions indispensable to a great Power—well-trained men and ready money—she may be able, if still willing, to unravel some of the international tissues which are now being woven without her help and against her will. Until then she must brook much that she would gladly withstand, and do it with a good grace. Since the Treaty of Berlin she has lived and thriven largely on prestige. Nations took her at her own valuation, and accepted her ruling even when it was gall and wormwood to them. But now that is past. The battle of Tsushima, the revolt of the fleet and the disaffection of a part of the army broke the spell, and at present the tendency abroad is rather to underrate Russia's might than to magnify it unduly. Nor is it only Germany or Austria who thinks slightly of Russia's military strength; even Sweden and Turkey show from time to time that the mention of the Tsardom in any and every connection calls forth their critical rather than their admiring faculty.

And, unhappily, there are plausible grounds for this disparaging attitude. It is no secret that the army is still waiting for real reform. Every foreign State is aware that the Russian officer of the line is miserably paid, wretchedly looked after, badly educated, and needlessly exposed to powerful temptation on the part of revolutionary and other anti-monarchical organisations. Patriotic officers occupying responsible posts assure me that in many important military districts

—in Siberia, for instance—the material condition of the troops is deplorable. One of them told me that when speaking with the Tsar recently he longed for a chance of uttering a few words about the all-important topic that concerned alike the monarch and the nation. But his opinion not being asked, he lacked the courage to broach the subject. “I am sure,” he said, “the Emperor would have the evils which are notorious remedied. For he is eager to ascertain the facts, and quick to take action whenever the efficiency of the army is at stake. And this is a case in point.” “Yes, but even the Tsar cannot create money,” I objected, “and money is the alpha and omega of all such reform as you have in mind.” “Not so,” he answered. “Money would certainly be helpful, and is desirable, but not indispensable. Besides, if large sums were needed for the purpose, and could not be raised, the practical conclusion to draw would be that for the moment at least an army less numerous and more efficient would be best suited to the needs of the Empire. Suppose, for argument’s sake, that this were so. Well, would it not be better for us to possess a well-trained, well-fed, well-clad, patriotic army, consisting of only two-thirds of the troops we have to-day? How much easier it would then be to add to its numbers, with the certitude that the new recruits would soon be quite assimilated by the efficient troops already under arms. But for that we need, as the first condition, unity of will, singleness of purpose, coherence of system. And it is useless to look for these qualities until the Tsar himself has taken the matter in hand. And this will not be until his eyes are opened on the subject. How I wish he had questioned me!”

EDUCATION OF THE RUSSIAN OFFICER.

The army intelligence department—the only service that can be used as a test in peace time—is very badly off for information in consequence of the conditions that prevail. Take Manchuria as an illustration. The Russians are wholly ignorant of what goes on in those districts of that province which are under Japanese influence. Their consuls, who are supposed to keep a watchful look out there, recently hired a few Chinamen as spies at salaries of thirty pounds sterling a year! The Chinese succumbed—almost without an attempt at resistance—to the temptation of secretly accepting higher wages from the Japanese on condition that they would communicate to the Russians information of a kind calculated to mislead them. Truth compels one to say that some of the Chinese officials may be loyal enough to their Russian employers; but, even so, they are practically useless because of their crass ignorance of military matters. For what is urgently wanted is information about military movements.

In these districts a thorough knowledge of Japanese would prove

most helpful, and as Russians do not possess it, it was resolved that a class of interpreters should be formed capable of reading and speaking that tongue thoroughly. But how was it done? In Kwan-chentzi an ensign on the retired list was charged with the training of twenty-seven Cossacks of the consular guard. For this purpose, he received ten pounds sterling a month for three months. He began by securing the services of a Japanese teacher, who asked and was promised six pounds a month. At the end of eight weeks, however, the teacher disappeared; it is believed because he had not received the promised pay, and also because he had learned from the Russians all that he wanted to ascertain. That the bulk of the officers are inadequately educated is, unfortunately, too well known to need proof. How lacking they are in those branches of knowledge which in other countries are deemed to be elementary, has only recently been published to the world at large. The discovery was made in this way. A new rule was issued a short time ago prescribing written as well as oral examinations for all those officers who came forward as candidates for the Military Academy. It was meant as a rough test. To answer questions *viuà voce* is easy to the man with a retentive memory, even though he be a person of no judgment. But to write a readable essay is a feat which calls into play certain mental gifts, the want of which would, in most cases, argue incapacity for the work which students of the Military Academy are expected to perform. Hence the new regulation—one of the very few symptoms manifested since the war of a desire to do something for the army. In March, 1907, then, these written examinations were held for the first time. But the results were deplorable, according to the military organ, *Razvedchik*, which states that: 1. The officers examined possess but slender notions of any of the subjects in which they are supposed to be well versed. 2. Their general intellectual equipment is slight. 3. They are distinguished by inability to think and to judge. 4. They are further characterised by incapacity to set forth their ideas in writing, briefly, clearly, and intelligibly. 5. They are distinguished by ignorance of grammar in the proper sense of the word.

Such is the verdict of the General Staff. It may be correct or the reverse, but it ought never to have been published *urbi et orbi*, were it only because it casts a slur on the Russian army. These illustrations are instructive because they are typical. Other tales more interesting still might, if narrated, defeat my main object, which is to draw the careful attention of the Russian Government to the pressing needs of the army upon which the Empire rests. Therefore they shall be withheld. Foreign States are thoroughly well informed about almost everything that goes on in the Russian army. And in particular they are acquainted with its weak points. But in at least one respect, I am glad to say, several of them are mistaken.

they believe that a much larger section of the officers and the men are disaffected than is really the case. What happened to the navy is not likely to take place in the army. True, revolutionary propaganda is untiring, ingenious and suasive. But the results it has scored are very much less than is commonly believed; and at the present moment they are dwindling perceptibly away, in face of the determined resistance made by the orderly elements in the army and in the country. This, therefore, is the most favourable moment for army reform, which ought to be tackled with thoroughness, and carried out with all the energy and perseverance of which a patriotic cabinet is capable. Russia sorely needs peace abroad and peace at home, and for this reason she requires a powerful and trustworthy army. The immediate need of a formidable navy is less evident.

DOES RUSSIA NEED A FORMIDABLE NAVY?

The rock on which the Duma was expected to split was the credit demanded by the Government for the reconstruction of the navy. According to the Marine Ministry, Russia needs a sea force worthy of her vast army, and equal to the arduous tasks which a war with Japan or Germany would certainly impose upon it. In case of hostilities between Germany and Russia, for example, the German North Sea Squadron would speedily arrive in the Baltic through the Kiel Canal, and unless Russia were ready with a very efficient squadron, well handled by its commander, would render that sea a *mare clausum*. On the other hand, in a war with Japan, the most telling method of defence—attack—would have to be wholly eliminated from Russia's plan of campaign for lack of a formidable fleet, formidable by the number and quality of the battleships and by the discipline of the men. And this defect would render the most brilliant land campaign indecisive. For these reasons the Crown is anxious to give the Empire an adequate number of powerful battleships with the least delay possible. The bulk of the deputies, on the other hand, look askance on the scheme. Some of them refuse to countenance the expenditure of a large sum by a department which is said to be one of the least trustworthy in all Russia. Others feel and express their mistrust not only of the Admiralty and Marine Ministry, but also of Russian shipbuilding works, which, they contend, are not in a condition to give good value for the money or to do any kind of first-class work. Others, again, draw their objection to the scheme from the nation's impecuniosity. There is not money enough available. If the necessary sum could be raised, they would willingly spend it in ships. But it is not to be had. Another and influential section of the deputies refuse to allot hundreds of millions of roubles to the construction of battleships before the naval schools have been reformed, the Ministry

and Admiralty have been purged, and the army has been reorganised and rendered fit for latter-day warfare.

To an outsider, viewing things Russian in perspective, it will seem clear that a powerful navy is indispensable to a first-class Power like Russia. If Germany, with an insignificant strip of seaboard to defend, aims at possessing a navy as powerful as that of Great Britain, Russia, whose seaboard is 28,500 miles long, cannot well remain satisfied with the remnants of a navy that once was strong in numbers and in prestige. She must become once more as powerful on sea as is Germany or Japan if she is to hold her own with her present rivals and her future foes. And no Marine Minister worth his salt could do otherwise than impress upon the Duma the need of supplying this pressing want.

On the other hand, however, the fact cannot be blinked that this is but one of many requirements, all of which are at least equally pressing. Among the others is the reorganisation of the army, which is now in a deplorable state. And this cannot be postponed as a matter of less account than the rebuilding of the navy. In truth it is much more urgent. Then there is the construction of the proposed Amoor Railway—a scheme the realisation of which, strategists affirm, cannot be delayed without grave disadvantages, which may in war-time become calamities. And these are but two of many pressing wants. Now it behoves the Cabinet to approach the study of all these isolated questions from the standpoint of the statesman and the Finance Minister, and to ask what sums can be disposed of without weakening Russia's credit, and in what order provision had best be made for the various needs of the Empire.

From this point of view the first question to suggest itself would be this: is the strength, which a number of Dreadnought battleships would undoubtedly confer, worth having if its corollary be national bankruptcy? As money is the nerve of war, would not the loss of credit render the Empire as weak as the want of a powerful navy? And as it would also put a spoke in the wheel of the reform movement, and stay the work of progress, the net loss to the nation would be much greater than any partial gain. To this objection it is no answer to say that Russia's resources are inexhaustible. One may admit that her potential wealth is enormous without weakening the force of the argument for economy. As yet the riches lie buried in the ground, whereas what impatient creditors clamour for is current coin, and the amount needed will exceed Russia's capacity of paying if the Amoor Railway, the rebuilding of the navy and the reorganisation of the army be undertaken simultaneously. For it would not be enough to possess a squadron in the Baltic which should also do duty in the Pacific. If Russia is to be a sea power able to cope with Germany or Japan, she must possess one squadron in the Baltic, another in the Pacific and a third in the Black Sea. And the cost of

the battleships necessary to make up these squadrons would, were there no other objection to the scheme, be prohibitive.

On these grounds the Duma may decline to sanction the vote demanded by the Minister without exposing itself to the slightest risk of dissolution, seeing that so little has as yet been done for education.

EDUCATION IS A PRESSING NEED OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE.

Elementary instruction is one of the most pressing needs of the Russian people, especially since they have been allowed to have a voice in the government of their country. The bulk of the nation is truly benighted. The story told by statistics on the subject is most depressing. The official data for the year 1903—the most recent available—have been studied by members of the leading political party in the Duma. In that year the exact number of the population—so far as exactitude in such a matter can be attained—was 144,184,000, and among these there were only 26,558,000 who could read or write. Out of every thousand individuals the average number who could read or write differed largely according to the provinces, as the following table will show:—

	Males.	Females.
Baltic Provinces	775	779
Finland	700	650
Vistula basin	342	268
European Russia	300	130
Siberia	192	51
Caucasus	182	60
Central Asia	79	22

The yearly outlay of the State for popular instruction was but 11 copecks, or 2¾d. a head! If we add to this mite the sums furnished by cities, zemstvos and communities for educational purposes, the amount increases to 41 copecks, or 10¼d. How insignificant even this expenditure really is may be gathered from a comparison with the educational budget of other countries, thus:—

	s.	d.
Japan spends annually	1	1½
Sweden and Norway	2	9¼
France	3	5
Great Britain	4	11
Switzerland	5	0¾
Germany	5	1¼
United States	10	1
New Zealand	11	11½

Consequently Russia is behind the whole cultured world. Even China is much better off in that respect, because it has no inhabitants.

who are wholly illiterate. It has been calculated that there are in Russia 13,250,000 children between the ages of eight and twelve who would need 265,042 schools if the average school accommodated 50 children. Taking that as a basis, and putting the salary of the teacher at 360 roubles, or £37 10s., and £6 5s. for religious instruction, the amount payable in salaries alone would amount to 103,366,000 roubles, and the upkeep of the schools ought to cost about 182,021,000 roubles, so that altogether 300,000,000 roubles is a moderate estimate of what should be expended annually on elementary education. Now, as a matter of fact, the Ministry of Public Instruction disposes of no more than 9,114,000 roubles, all told.

One great difficulty which the Government will have to surmount is the finding of qualified masters and mistresses, pedagogues who will not make instruction a channel for social and political theories of a subversive character. And that is one of the most arduous tasks that any Government could set itself, because the number of such teachers is very limited. That, however, is another question. What I have wished to point out is the urgent need of educating the people and the extreme difficulty of finding money for elementary schools as well as for other cultural requirements.

THE BALTIC UNDERSTANDING AT A STANDSTILL.

The negotiations into which Russia, Germany, Sweden and Denmark, as Baltic States, entered some time ago with a view to maintaining the present territorial integrity of each of them, have made little headway. Although they have not been actually broken off, they are almost at a standstill. It has been surmised that the idea was first suggested by Germany, who was desirous of creating a pendant to the declaration of the Mediterranean Powers, in which she had had no part. It seemed so easy to arrange a soothing parallel. But the two cases are not in all respects alike. The Mediterranean States were really content to keep their territorial relations to each other unchanged; consequently the declarations were drafted readily and promulgated willingly. With the political communities of the Baltic it was different. They are not all satisfied with things as they are; hence the *status* must first be changed before it can be declared unchangeable. And as there is a conflict of views among the Powers respecting the proposed modifications, the negotiations have come to a deadlock.

The subject matter of dispute is the Aland Archipelago, a group of granite islands situated at the mouth of the Gulf of Bothnia, between Sweden and Finland. Strategically they are most valuable; but in other respects they are almost worthless. Between them and the Swedish coast the Strait is but twenty-three and a half miles across so that a fast cruiser could reach Stockholm from the nearest part of the Archipelago in a little over two hours. The islands belong to Russia, and she exercised full sovereign rights over them down to the

close of the Crimean War. Thus in 1829 she fortified her position there, and later on built forts at Bomarsund, which were captured and razed by the allied English and French squadrons in November, 1854. In March, 1856, a convention was signed by Russia, England and France, by which the Tsar declared "that the Aland Islands shall not be fortified, and that no naval or military establishment shall be erected there." The reason of this stipulation was the fear entertained by the allied Powers that Russia would expand territorially unless a barrier of this nature were raised against her advance. For the Aland Archipelago is the key to the Gulfs of Bothnia and Finland, and if Russia had a naval base there she would virtually command Sweden's five hundred miles of coast on the Gulf of Bothnia, would keep Stockholm in fear and trembling, and would dominate two-thirds of the Baltic. That is the chief reason why Sweden is so anxious that the Aland Islands shall continue as they are. Another consideration is this: If Germany or England were at war with Russia, and Russia possessed a naval base in the Archipelago, the enemy would need a base in the Baltic, and, finding none anywhere except on the west coast, in one of the Swedish ports, would trespass on Swedish territory, and make use of this. Sweden, therefore, in order to hinder this violation of her neutrality in war time, would be obliged at present to set about fortifying all the weak points along her coast line, and to spend large sums in this unproductive work. If, on the other hand, things remained as they now are, and Russia were at war with Germany, the German squadron would proceed to capture the Aland Islands, in order to threaten the Russian army in Finland, as well as Cronstadt, Petersburg, Riga and the Baltic Provinces. Thus the Swedish coast would be left inviolate. These are telling arguments, and Sweden's fears are certain to be understood by all who shared by many.

RUSSIA'S VIEW OF THE BALTIC PROBLEM.

Russia, however, has also a case, and this is how her spokesmen put it. For generations the two countries, Sweden and Russia, have lived on good neighbourly terms, and nothing has occurred to trouble their friendship. Consequently there is a strong presumption that in the future, as in the past, they will continue to live in amity, especially as their interests do not clash anywhere. But if Sweden fears to acquiesce in Russia's resumption of full sovereign rights over the islands, Russia fears to waive any of those rights, and not only for dignity's sake but also for the very reason that Sweden alleges. If Russia be at war with Britain or with Germany, her enemy will naturally make for the Aland Archipelago and there endeavour to establish a temporary base of operations, because the islands at the neck of the Gulf of Bothnia are on the line of least resistance, and will be easily captured.

Another of the pleas of irresponsible Russian advocates seems to me wholly untenable. It is this. The Convention respecting the Aland Islands, which was signed by Tsar Alexander II. in 1856, has, they say, lapsed, in consequence of the dissolution of the Swedo-Norwegian Union. Now this contention seems to assume that the undertaking not to fortify the islands was given to the Union, and therefore Sweden alone cannot insist upon its observance. Historical facts, however, do not bear out this assumption. The text of the Convention runs thus: "His Majesty, the Russian Emperor, deferring to a desire expressed to him by her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and the Emperor of the French, declares that the Aland Islands shall not be fortified, and that no naval or military establishment shall be created there." Consequently Russia's obligation is to Great Britain and France, not to the Swedo-Norwegian Union. The Convention was not signed by Sweden, and if it be abrogated, as Russians hope it will, Sweden's consent need not be asked to the change.

Russia's responsible representatives speak a different language. They maintain that the question has been wrongly stated. The Swedish Press writes of "Russia's claim to create a naval base in the Aland Archipelago," whereas no such claim has been advanced, no such intention expressed or entertained. Russia merely shrinks from confirming a stipulation which is antiquated and humiliating, and which also hinders her from putting an end to the illegal importation of arms and ammunition for the use of revolutionists and terrorists in the Empire. She has never raised the question of fortifying the islands; nay, she has not yet raised the question of abrogating the Convention of 1856; still less has she declared that the Convention lapsed with the dissolution of the Swedo-Norwegian Union. All that she has done is this: to consent conditionally to a project for maintaining the *status quo* in the Baltic, which would be more welcome to Sweden than such a guarantee for her neutrality as Norway has received. She is willing to make the necessary declaration, and to give Sweden assurances which would relieve her of anxiety. But she is not prepared to pay for permission to do this favour to Sweden; she is not ready to enter into any new obligation. At present Russia is bound by the Convention of 1856 to Great Britain and to France, but not to Sweden. The two former States may agree to release her to-day or to-morrow on the ground that the restriction is not in harmony with the present international situation. Why should she now bind herself to Sweden, who would never loose her from the promise, because Sweden will always be afraid of seeing her capital city and her coast menaced by a Russian naval base in the Aland Archipelago? Is it reasonable to expect Russia voluntarily to impose upon herself a fresh and lasting obligation to Sweden for the purpose of rendering her a service? Russia has merely given a negative answer to this question, without raising, still less trenching on, any other.

All that Russia now says is this: "I am minded to guarantee Sweden's territorial integrity, but not to perpetuate the curtailment of my own; I am bound to France and England not to exercise full rights of sovereignty over the Aland Islands. I recognise the fact, and respect the treaty, although I made it after those two Powers had worsted me in war. It was a humiliating stipulation, and I think of it unwillingly. But I cannot brook the idea that Sweden should summon me to do the hateful transaction over again, binding myself this time to her, and solely because I am ready to help her."

Such is the language used by the more responsible representatives of Russia's interests, the more authorised interpreters of her aims. They affirm that nobody harbours the design of fortifying the Aland Islands, but they add that it is undignified to have France and England play the part of Russia's keepers there. Russia, they go on to say, will give the most categorical oral assurances to the effect that the Archipelago will remain as it is. "Why not give us written assurances?" ask the Swedes. "Because neither you nor Germany were parties to the Aland Islands Convention, and I cannot acknowledge your claim to become parties to it *post factum*. I am here to guarantee your territorial integrity, nor to forego rights which, so far as you are concerned, I still possess." And here the matter rests. On the one hand, Russia, it may be assumed, will not give way on the question thus formulated; and, on the other hand, Sweden may ultimately break off the negotiations for a joint declaration of the Baltic Powers, and conclude a special treaty on the subject with Germany.

THE IMPERIAL EPISTLE TO THE LAODICEANS.

Germany has, as usual, been in the foreground of contemporary history this month, but probably with less justification than heretofore. It certainly seems a pity that the Kaiser's private letter to Lord Tweedmouth was ever made the subject of public discussion. A policy of pinpricks is always mischievous, and the very worst that was ever said or believed of the Kaiser's epistle would not have warranted the excitement which it caused in Great Britain, or the short-lived indignation against Wilhelm II. which it aroused in the breasts of some patriotic and estimable political writers. Let us imagine the worst. Suppose the letter was written for the sole purpose of influencing Lord Tweedmouth; what then? So long as there was no undue influence, there is nothing that a great nation can reasonably object to. Questions of good taste and personal dignity have nothing in common with international politics. Any and every personal friend of the First Lord of the Admiralty may send him private letters combating his political opinions, and if he can dislodge him from his position, and make a convert of him, well and good. In constitutional monarchies the King may not influence his Ministers unduly. But he may discuss matters with them as fully

as possible, and if he succeeds in convincing or persuading them to abandon their convictions and espouse his views, neither he nor they have done anything reprehensible. For Ministers, like less exalted people, must draw their notions of public policy from the sources that are accessible to them, and whether one of these is the book of a professor, the article of a leader writer, or the private letter, or the brilliant conversation of a clever monarch, is immaterial. Once the public official has adopted the opinion, it is his own, and he alone is responsible for it to the State whose servant he is. If public opinion were to forbid monarchs to correspond with those statesmen of foreign countries with whom they happen to be on terms of friendship, there is no adequate reason why it should not go further, and prohibit them from lunching, or dining, or holding any intercourse with them except in the presence of witnesses. Some years ago one of our most eminent statesmen had a conversation with the Kaiser, which led to his delivering a very telling speech in favour of close friendship with Germany. The result of that speech was a public snub administered to Great Britain by Prince von Bülow in the Reichstag. But all the blame was very properly laid upon the shoulders of the British statesman, despite the very extenuating circumstances which he might have alleged.

POLES VERSUS SLAVS IN PRUSSIA.

The Polish Expropriation Bill and the lurid light that radiates from that upon various domains of home and foreign politics have with much greater reason kept Germany in evidence of late. For the anti-Polish legislation means that in the kingdom ruled by Wilhelm II. Slavs and Germans can no longer live together in peace. One of the two must disappear by assimilation or emigration; and the Prussian Houses of Parliament are resolved that it shall be the Poles. In those parts of Prussia which originally belonged to the Slavs the population is increasing more rapidly than is that of Germany proper. Directly to forbid this by legislation would be a new, startling, and undesirable departure; therefore the lawgiver is going to work circuitously. And this is how he reasons. The population would not grow so fast if large families had not the land to fall back upon. The soil supports large numbers of people who, were they in cities, would be forced to emigrate. If the land were in German hands the Polish population might be successfully weeded out. Now all that is needed in order to attain this object is to pass the Polish Expropriation Bill.

And the Bill was duly passed by the Lower Prussian Chamber. A Special Committee of the Upper House, however, modified it so considerably that the Government refused to accept it in that shape, and appealed to the members to adopt the measure as it had passed the Lower House. The Opposition was numerous and strong. Leading Conservatives denounced the proposal as subversive of tradition.

stability and property. It was Socialistic, they urged, and established a precedent which might be abused to-morrow by a Socialistic Chamber, to the detriment of the nation. Some speakers pointed out that a policy of this kind is mischievous instead of helpful, because it can attain its end only if it be expanded into a grandiose struggle for the annihilation of the Poles. Moreover, the hated Slavs will not become less numerous and less prolific because they are dispossessed of the land. And nobody can seriously believe that they will grow less dangerous. The Polish problem in Prussia is not a land question. In fact, it is the landowners among the Poles who are willing to make terms with the Germans and live with them in peace. The classes which are uncompromising are the peasants and the burghers.

THE GERMAN PEOPLE THINKS AND FEELS, BUT THE GOVERNMENT ACTS.

But the Government argued only for the purpose of convincing the House. Itself was deaf to all considerations, political, economical, statistical. To the axiom that there ought in a great realm to be room enough for all the racial elements of the population, the Government answered that Germany would become great only when all its ethnic elements were welded together in one nation. When the Poles reminded the Cabinet that they had many times shed their blood fighting against the enemies of their second fatherland, the Government affirmed that nations never abandon their craving for independence, and that the Poles must therefore be denationalised. In answer to the objection that landless Poles will become dangerous domestic enemies, the Ministers declared that the Poles have always been Prussia's enemies, and that deprived of their land, they will become less formidable. Many speakers pointed to the parity between the Poles in Prussia and the Germans of the Baltic Provinces in Russia or the Saxons in Transylvania, and gave timid expression to the fear that one day the Russian or the Magyar State might do unto Germany as Germany was doing to Poland. But the reply to this was that it behoved no great nation to tremble or grow disquieted at the frowning of foreign peoples. When opponents of the Bill laid stress on the failure of similar experiments which the Government has been making since 1895, as evidenced by the fact that during the eleven years ending in 1906 the Poles had acquired from Germans 2,500,000 acres more than the number bought by the Germans from the Poles, the champions of the measure replied that expropriation was not a repetition of the experiment that had failed, but a new departure, and one that could not but succeed. In a word, the members of both legislatures seem to have been summoned to pass the Bill, not to discuss it.

And they passed it by a large, an unexpectedly large, majority. All objections, fears, misgivings, doubts were suddenly waived, and the voice of the Government hearkened to. Docility was the charac-

teristic of the nation's representatives. Even the Upper House, whose Committee had attenuated the Bill until the Minister disavowed it, ended by accepting it. And the numbers were 143 votes for it and 11 against it. This is one of the most significant circumstances throughout the debates. For, according to the German Press, in particular the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the *Preussische Jahrbücher*, the great majority of the German people, the Centre, the Socialists, the Freethinkers, and by far the largest section of thinking people in Germany, are, and were, strongly opposed to the Bill. Yet the Government had but to demand that it be incorporated in the Statute Book, and the request was granted forthwith. This is an object-lesson which ought not to be overlooked by those optimistic political writers among us who hold that if we are on friendly terms with the German nation, the German Government will be powerless to make mischief between the two States, even if it would. As in the days of the great Fritz, the rulers may allow the nation to write and say what it likes so long as they do what they think best. One of the most odious and unjustifiable measures ever discussed by a chamber of highly-cultured law-givers is swiftly passed into law against the better judgment of Press, bar, gentry, political parties, and people, solely because the Government makes the demand. It is not easy to believe, without some adequate proof, that in the case of a misunderstanding between this country and Germany the nation at large would take the side of Great Britain, and refuse to be guided by its own Government. At all events, the point is perhaps worth considering. Of course, neither this nor any other supposition would justify the Press or the Government of Great Britain in neglecting any legitimate means of fostering goodwill between the two peoples. Many a time have two rival nations—Germany and Russia are examples—gone on for years preparing for war against each other without ever having struck a blow.

IS THE EVICTION OF THE POLES A MILITARY MEASURE?

The re-grouping of European Powers is still going on apace, with scarcely any conscious effort, almost spontaneously. That Baron von Aehrenthal's railway project accelerated the process is manifest. But that Prince von Bülow's Polish Expropriation Bill should have been one of the results of it is by no means so clear. And yet this view is held not only in Russia, but in Austria, and in circles, too, which are in constant touch with the Government. As opinions of this character are forces for good or for evil, it will not be amiss to unfold the theory. Considerations drawn—it is said—solely from the sphere of foreign politics moved the Berlin Government to have recourse to a measure so unjust, a precedent so dangerous. At a series of military councils, presided over by the Kaiser, the possibility was considered of a war between Russia allied with Great Britain, and Germany.

allied with Austria. The co-operation of the British fleet would, it was pointed out, render possible a military descent in the rear of Königsberg and the loss of East Prussia, which would be the loss of Germany's base for an advance against the Baltic Provinces and St. Petersburg. Now, in most of the military operations which such a war would entail, the dispositions, friendly or hostile, of the population would undoubtedly play a noteworthy part. Hence the desirability of colonising West Prussia, Posen and East Prussia with Germans, and getting rid of the hostile Poles. The expropriation of Polish landowners is, therefore, only one link in a long chain of measures contemplated for the purpose of delivering the German army from the danger which a hostile Polish population would present. Whether these considerations really weighed with the Prussian Government I am unable to say, but I know that the story is believed by numerous individuals whose influence is widespread, and whose action will be swayed by this belief.

REVOLUTIONISTS WITHOUT A REVOLUTION.

In Russia it is now admitted on all hands that the revolution is quelled—at least for the time being—and that its suppression has not been followed by the abrogation of any of the concessions made by the Emperor in October, 1905. And the nation begins to breathe freely in consequence. But if the revolution is dead, revolutionists are still alive and active. The police, on the other hand, despite the reorganisation already begun, is not yet equal to the task of coping with them. Much has been accomplished in the way of improving the police service, but much more remains to be done. They scored a brilliant success a couple of weeks ago, when they got wind of a widely-spread plot against the lives of the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, the Minister of Justice, and certain other prominent public men. The point of departure for the police was the arrest of a gendarme named Bogdanoff, who had gone over to the enemy. In his possession were found tell-tale documents which led to the arrest of over sixty persons. But the chief conspirators were still at large at the hour fixed for the crime, and if either the Grand Duke or the Minister of Justice had ventured out, he would have been killed on the spot. Happily they were warned to stay indoors. One of the conspirators, a Russian revolutionary student, had palmed himself off as an Italian journalist, and had received a ticket to frequent the Council of the Empire, where he might, had he been patient, have assassinated any Minister without let or hindrance.

The fanaticism of these terrorists is unparalleled in the annals of political crime. Their endurance reminds one of that of Fenimore Cooper's Red Indians. The other day one of their number, who was confined in the Yalta prison, burned himself to death with petroleum, and underwent excruciating agonies in silence. But among the police, too, there are heroes quite as numerous, and just as dauntless,

who look death in the face and never flinch. A numerous force of such men properly organised would rescue the Empire from chaos. But the progress made is slow, and before that feat has been accomplished the nation may be startled by crimes which would differ little from national calamities. One of the principal factors in the struggle against Red Terror is public opinion. And it must be confessed that public opinion in Russia needs guidance. The ideas of justice and equity which prevail in the Tsardom are peculiar. Crime is generally confounded with misfortune, and criminals of all kinds and grades are deemed to be not more guilty, but more unlucky than their fellows. It would be almost impossible for any Russian Cabinet to get ordinary tribunals to apply the law against bombists, even if taken red-handed. The trial in Austrian Galicia of a Russian lady revolutionist, which came to an end on 17th February, is intensely interesting as an illustration of what would take place in Russia if the ordinary law courts there were allowed to take cognisance of such crimes.

NOT GUILTY!

The scene was the court house of Vadovitz. In the dock stood a pretty young lady, elegantly attired in a black velvet blouse, surmounted by a snow-white collar. Opposite to her were the judges; on one side sat the jury. It seemed a quiet, pleasant sort of gathering, everybody looking cheerful. Yet there were judges, and lawyers, and an indictment, which charged the fair prisoner at the bar with a premeditated and resolute attempt to kill General Scalon, the Governor-General of Warsaw, by throwing three bombs at him as he drove along the street in his carriage. The lady heard the indictment unmoved, and in reply to the question "guilty or not guilty," said quietly that the facts alleged were quite true, but that in the forum of her conscience they did not constitute a crime; therefore she would plead "not guilty." After the opening speech of the counsel for the Crown, the prisoner told the interesting tale of her life. Born in the Province of Minsk in 1886, she was educated in one of the best boarding schools in Warsaw. When she was just turned twenty—in January, 1906—chance threw her together with a distant relative, who was a member of the Polish Socialistic Party. Through him she came in contact with other revolutionists, and very soon she conceived a powerful sympathy with their aims and objects. In July she repaired to Warsaw, sought admission to the revolutionary society, and was received on condition that she would carry out any orders given to her by the organisation so long as they did not clash with her ethical principles.

As Governor-General, Scalon was just then extirpating the revolutionary organisation root and branch, the party deemed it desirable to assassinate him. Accordingly Miss Kraghelska and a lady friend of hers, believing the sentence to be just, thought they would like to execute it, and their offer was gratefully accepted. But it was easier

said than done, because the Governor-General seldom quitted the Belvedere Palace. How could he be enticed outside? That was the great difficulty; but the party ingeniously surmounted it. One of the members donned the regiments of a military officer, and assaulted the German Vice-Consul with his fists. The Vice-Consul complained, a diplomatic incident resulted, and the Governor-General felt it his duty to call on him and tender his apologies. All this was foreseen and provided for by the revolutionists. The party hired a suite of rooms on the Natolinska Street, almost opposite the Vice-Consul's dwelling, and instructed Miss Kraghelska to take possession of it, together with her lady friend. On the 15th August, three days before the fatal day, a member of the organisation gave Miss Kraghelska four neat packets that looked for all the world like boxes of sweets. Each one contained a bomb of enormously destructive force, two made of melanite and two of dynamite. On the 17th the lady was informed that the Governor-General would pay the visit of expiation on the morrow, and that she was expected to do her duty. And certainly she and her friend did their best. Sitting on the balcony, they patiently waited and watched for General Scalon, who did not arrive until half-past four in the afternoon. Miss Kraghelska had three bombs for the victim, while her friend held the fourth. The General drove up and entered the house. The lady conspirators suppressed their nervousness, and continued to wait during his interview with the German. At last he came out and entered his carriage. The coachman flicked his whip, and the horses started. The carriage drew near and nearer. It was level with the balcony. Miss Kraghelska threw her first bomb; the explosion was terrific; she flung the second, then the third, and looked. The carriage seemed to be still moving. Then her friend aimed her explosive. The whole street seemed to quiver, but the carriage still rolled onwards and out of sight. The fair bombist then donned a wig, changed certain articles of attire, and sallied forth into the street. The police arrested her on suspicion, but let her free a few minutes later. Her appearance was in her favour. She then took a cab, and, having said good-bye to her friend, went home. After that she spent some days in Warsaw, visited other Russian cities, and finally went to Cracow. Having later on paid a visit to Italy and Switzerland, Miss Kraghelska returned to Cracow, married an art painter there named Dobrodzitsky, and last September was arrested on the demand of the Russian authorities, and sent for trial.

Madame Dobrodzitsky having admitted all this, added that she had deliberately thrown the bombs with intent to kill, but that the act resolved upon by the revolutionary flying column was done for the purpose of winning independence for Poland and a constitution for Russia. Thereupon the jury brought in a verdict of "not guilty," and the lady returned to her home.