

RUSSIA.

The institutions, genius, and character of the Government and populations of Western Europe are pretty well understood by the intelligent classes of our country. Of the character and condition of the several races which constitute the vast empire of the North, its feet resting on both hemispheres and belting three-quarters of the globe—just emerged from almost universal barbarism, our people have yet had the means of acquiring but a very imperfect knowledge.

The fierce war which has sprung up between the Sovereigns of that great empire and the two most powerful nations of Western Europe has attracted the attention of our countrymen more strongly than ever before to the political and social, the intellectual, social, and political state of the people of that vast Arctic empire, swayed by the sole will of the Imperial Autocrat, and destined to exert, through an influence in definite period of time, so great an influence on the affairs of Europe, if not of America.

We therefore submit to our readers the result of some reflection, some inquiry, and some reading touching the state of the empire of Nicholas, and especially of

PUBLIC OPINION IN RUSSIA.

The direct, constant, and powerful influence of public opinion upon Governments is perhaps the most remarkable and hopeful characteristic of the politics and civilization of the nineteenth century. Where freedom exists public opinion breathes into Government its very life, of life; and no one of the actual rulers of Europe, however despotic in form the tenure of his power and apparently ample his means of enforcing arbitrary will, feels strong enough in his daily administration to omit taking into account this capital element of modern society.

Does there really exist in Russia a public opinion in the sense of that phrase as used in Western Europe and in the United States? This may well be questioned. Political parties do not divide the Russian population. These are the marks and the means of a more advanced civilization than yet obtains in Russia. The habits of a past age still exist there. That movement of the popular mind by which individuals, when society is emerging into a higher civilization, extend their thoughts from merely personal concerns and the cares of animal existence to the consideration of the common interests and national affairs, is to commence in Russia; and perhaps a century will yet elapse before the first stirring of the waters will announce that the vast masses of Russia population are waking up to the political life which now moves to their lowest depths other populations of Europe.

Of the sixty million souls composing, in round numbers, the total population of the Russian Empire, the order of the hierarchy may be held to form the one hundredth part, or about six hundred thousand. This includes their wives and children, numbering more than two thirds of the whole. The old hereditary aristocracy (the nobles) composed of another hundredth part of the whole population, or six hundred thousand souls. The modern nobility created by Peter the Great and his successors, as a counterbalance to the powerful, wealthy, and dangerous aristocracy of the boyards, and consisting of civil and military orders of all grades, is of equal extent, and consists of about six hundred thousand souls. There is no middle or higher class for the policy of the Czar raises the comparatively few individuals who would gradually form this class if left to themselves to be absorbed in the ranks of the lower nobility. Immediately, therefore, on leaving the class of nobles we encounter the vast dense masses of Russian population, almost as ignorant and rude as were their fathers a thousand years ago. Some fifty five millions of them are serfs, attached to the soil with which they are sold, transferred from master to master, together with all their implements of husbandry. These are distinguished by a very limited extent of intellect, and culture and of those characteristics which raise man above the brute. Their ideas most necessarily are circumscribed by the bounds of the estate which they are bound to cultivate.

existence. But this is rather a personal than a political hostility, and affords no ground for division into political parties, as the term is usually understood. But the aristocracy is divided into two political parties properly so called. The one is called the Old Russia, or Muscovite, or Panoslav party, and the other composed principally of the German nobility of the Baltic provinces, the St. Petersburg or the German party. The dominant idea of the first is the development of the Slavonic element of Russian power; its aggrandizement within and enlargement by indomitable territorial conquests without. It is this party which has been urging the Czar from the time of Peter the Great to the subversion of the Turkish empire, and the conquest of Constantinople, and the occupation of the Danubian delta. It is this party which effected the partition of Poland, and which more recently sent Prince Menschikoff upon his famous mission to the Sultan, and immediately afterwards dictated the occupation of the Principalities, which induced the actual war. This party will not be satisfied till it shall have united beneath the scepter of the Czar all the people of Slavonic origin yet within the pale of the Russian empire—Poles, Hungarians, Servians, Bulgarians, Croats, and Moldavians, who now form portions of Austrian or Prussian or Turkish subjects. The Muscovite or Old Russia party believe that this absorption of the whole Slavonic race by Russia, the extension westward of the bounds of the empire, and the possession of Constantinople are all their "manifest destiny." This party comprises the immense majority of the aristocracy, and includes many of the actual highest functionaries. A son of the Czar, the Grand Duke Constantine, is its acknowledged chief; the princes Menschikoff, Gortschakoff, Wolkonski, &c., are leading members. There is, however, a very small portion of the Pan Slavonic party which would attain its end—the effective union of the Slavonic race—not by military conquest and annexation to the actual dominions of the Czar, but by the pacific execution, with consent of parties, of separate independent kingdoms, under Romanoff princes, with a sort of acknowledged supremacy, conferred in all of them, of the Czar of Russia. The party of Old Russia, in the eastern continent, bears, we say, a striking resemblance to the party of Young America in the western. The German or St. Petersburg party in Russia is more conservative and less belligerent, and "progressive." It would maintain the status quo in Government; foreign conquest and territorial extension are not its essential principles; but it would present Russia to Europe as the great and potent representative and upholder of legitimacy on the thrones of Europe. It sympathizes with the emperors Polos and Carlos and Henri V. of Europe; and, if the opportunity offered, would willingly lend them aid to restore the era of restoration. Of his party in Russia the sagacious Count, Nesselrode, the actual Chancellor of the empire, is known to be the chief. It is believed also to possess the sympathy of the Grand Duke Alexander, the heir to the throne. This party is understood to be opposed to the actual war; but, now that it is commenced, is unwilling to see peace concluded upon the humiliating terms which the Allies say it is their intention to enforce.

Thus we see that if public opinion can be said to exist at all in Russia, it is with the Czar. It was with him for the declaration of war, and supports him in its vigorous prosecution; and it may be confidently anticipated that the Allies will have to abate their pretensions, or the war, which has already lasted nearly a year, will be prolonged for many more before the full triumph of the Allies will conquer their peace.

We have intimated above that though the immense masses of the Russian population possess no common political opinions of national settlements which may be justly appealed to and produce a common, powerful, and heroic action, there is a motive, and a most powerful one—the religious motive—of which they are peculiarly susceptible, and which, if ably worked, may make them capable of almost irresistible common action. More than fifty millions of the subjects of Russia profess the orthodox Greek, or, in other words, the Greco-Russian religion. They are extremely ignorant, superstitious, fanatical, and given to mysticism. Their submission to the Greek clergy is of the most absolute, unquestioning character. The clergy, on their part, are represented to be the docile, submissive instruments of the Czar, who, to his political character as Chief of the State, adds the still more sacred one of Supreme Head of the Church. He nominates to all church dignities, establishes the rules of discipline, and no act of the Holy Synod is self valid till it is clothed with the sanction of the Czar. This double character of Absolute Emperor and Supreme Pontiff invests its subject with a sanctity which makes him in the estimation of his subjects a venerated being, far superior to any other earthly potentate. The clergy universally obey him for the acquiescence, whether of religious or political ends, as the masses themselves obey the clergy. These are represented to be the facts by historians and other writers. The Emperor is said to find in the clergy more faithful, submissive, and efficient agents than in the civil and military functionaries of the nobility. It may well be questioned whether the Czar will not find in this regard his sentiment of his people, of which he has such complete control, sustaining and supporting power, capable of opposing effectively the wanted superiority of the English and English soldiers.

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Carolina Watchman

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Another dreadful ship wreck and loss of life. The large emigrant ship New Era, from Bremen, with about 400 passengers on board, ran ashore on the night of the 12th inst., on the Jersey coast, and not less than 250 persons perished. It was a foggy, tempestuous and dark night, so that although the vessel was wrecked within 200 yards of the shore, it was attended with such deplorable loss of life.