

Annotations.

THE CZAR'S MANIFESTO.

Never since the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 has such enthusiasm been aroused in Russia as by the recent proclamation of the Czar. The Great White Czar has, since he ascended the throne, shown himself solicitous of the welfare of the people whom he governs, and his present manifesto aims at (a) religious toleration, and (b) improved conditions of life and administration in the villages. While recognising the Orthodox Church as the ruling one, the Czar grants to all his subjects of other religions freedom of creed and worship. Any other attitude seems indeed inconceivable. Compulsory adherence to the tenets of any Church is not only absolutely valueless, but also imperils the vitality of the organisation which enforces its creed in so arbitrary a manner. Conformity in this case does not mean mental assent, and no form of religion which is not accepted from conviction will ever be a force in a man's life. Therefore, although we may desire that others should share with us the benefits of orthodoxy (in the sense defined by the witty bishop who said "Orthodoxy is my doxy, and heterodoxy is another man's doxy"), we know it is worse than useless to attempt to force this upon others in advance of their convictions. In regard to life in the villages there is to be no more forced labour, and rural Russia is to have local self-government. Thus, if the manifesto is carried into effect, civilisation in Russia will leap with a bound from that of the middle ages into line with present-day attainment.

THE WORK OF THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD.

The London School Board is taking into consideration the classification of the children in the schools for the mentally defective. As the result of its deliberations on the conclusions of the Special Schools Sub-Committee it has been decided that it is desirable to make separate provision for mentally defective boys and girls over twelve years of age. The recommendations of the sub-committee to re-arrange the schools for mentally defective children in the Fulham district has been adopted.

The School Board has also adopted the report and recommendations of its medical officer on the work of eight temporary oculists. This report states, amongst other things, that from 10,000 to 20,000 children annually in

London ought to have detailed medical examination and treatment of their eyes if the best educational results are to be obtained and their future efficiency secured, and that, therefore, it is desirable that a certain number of oculists should be appointed. It is interesting to learn that the percentages of defects vary more with the social and nutritive conditions of the children than with racial peculiarities and school conditions.

JUVENILE SMOKERS.

It is proposed to introduce into Parliament a Bill which will check the supply of cigarettes and tobacco to boys. In many of the United States the selling of cigarettes and cigarette papers to any minor is a misdemeanour, and legislation against juvenile smoking is also in force in Tasmania, Bermuda, and Prince Edward Island. In this connection it is interesting to note that the *Lancet*, which does not believe that smoking tobacco in a rational way is productive of harm, disapproves of cigarette smoking, and says:—

"The fact that the smoke of a cigarette may be un-irritating does not minimise the evil effect of drawing the smoke into the lungs, for by this method the absorption of the poisonous constituents of tobacco smoke (and all tobacco smoke is more or less poisonous) is very rapid, these entering quickly into the circulatory system by way of the pulmonary capillaries. . . . The practice of inhaling tobacco smoke is therefore strongly to be discountenanced."

We shall watch with interest the progress of this Bill, for, whatever may be said for the habit of smoking by adults, there can be no two opinions of its harmfulness to the young.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

A Bill to Regulate the Employment of School Children has been introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Akers-Douglas, and read for the first time. The Bill, if it becomes law, will empower County and Borough Councils to make by-laws prescribing the age below which the employment of children would be subject to regulation, and the age below which it would be illegal. It will define specified occupations which are prohibited, amongst which is street trading for children under eleven.

Sir John Gorst, in congratulating Mr. Akers-Douglas on introducing the Bill, which he hoped would become law this Session, said that credit should be given to whom credit was due, and that was to the late Mrs. Hogg, who he regretted had not lived to reap the fruit of her labours.

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