

## THE RUSSIAN SOUL

The mighty people who inhabit half Europe and half Asia are no longer so distant or isolated that their peculiar culture can be ignored by English and American writers, nor so familiar that it can be taken for granted. As a nation no longer ununderstandable and yet not thoroly understood, Russia has been studied from many points of view, sometimes hostile, sometimes favorable. *An Interpretation of the Russian People*, by Professor Leo Wiener of Harvard University, is a very good sample of the sympathetic appreciations of the country and people which have been especially numerous since the opening of the Great War. The author, altho pro-Russian, is distinctly fair-minded and does not deny any of the evils so glaringly evident in Russian life—the dense ignorance and superstition of the masses; the coarseness, intemperance and sodden conservatism which are their result, and, above all, the constant intermeddling of a benighted Government with every movement toward better things. But he insists that these faults are only superficial and are evidence rather of cramping conditions of life than of the spirit of the race. Even the faults of the Government and of the clergy have at least this good result, that the intelligent portion of the people are awake to revolution instead of being, as in Germany, the retainers of absolutism. Even the peasantry is becoming more and more alive to the faults of the ruling class and will soon demand, thinks Professor Wiener, that the Government be either mended or ended.

The true Russian spirit, our author insists, is to be read not in political or economic institutions but in the art and literature and philosophy which Russians of genius have produced. In every

expression of the national soul he finds two main characteristics. The first is an early Christian spirit of forgiveness and charity, a pity that knows no limits. This is incarnate in such a figure as that of the late Count Tolstoy. The other chief element is pragmatism. "Art for art's sake" is not understood in Russia; there every great thinker has also been a propagandist. A philosophy, to the Russian, is something to be lived. "Hegel, Schelling, Nietzsche have far more affected the daily conduct of Russians than they have that of Germans." Even music and painting must always have their moral in order to please the Russians. Vereschchagin, the great national painter, turning aside from academic instruction and classical subjects to depict the horrors of war, is lovingly portrayed as the truest representative of his fellow countrymen to the western world.

*An Interpretation of the Russian People, by  
Leo Wiener. New York: McBride, Nast & Co.  
\$1.25.*