

RUSSIAN AND AUSTRALIAN TRADE.

The question is repeatedly asked whether the nations which in alliance are now fighting for the liberties of the world will continue, and extend their present friendly relations when they are no longer in arms, or whether they will drift back into the old narrowness of thought and of action. In acknowledging his welcome to Tasmania, Dr. Klatchko, the Russian Trade Commissioner, laughingly referred to the traditional British notions, prevailing also in Australia, as to the conditions of life and government in Russia. He might indeed have made quite extravagant statements on this point without any actual exaggeration. As a counterpoise, it would have been quite in place for some of those present to indulge in equally good-humoured gibes at the profound ignorance of Australian conditions existing in Russia. Indeed, we might say that, before the War at any rate, while the average Australian pictured Russia as a place of dark forests and perpetual snow, where all people dressed in heavy furs, and the knout was an essential article of every gentleman's equipment, the average Russian had never heard of Australia. This mutual ignorance was due largely to the lack of direct trade between the two countries. When trade begins, the people concerned take some pains to find out the qualities, the character, and the capabilities of those with whom they have dealings. Dr. Klatchko reminded his audience yesterday that hitherto the foreign trade of Russia has been under German control, and detailed some of the methods used to ob-

tain this position of dominance. But this was only a part; and not so very large a part, of the German influence in Russian affairs. From the time of Peter the Great the tendency has been to exalt the foreigners—and particularly the German—at the expense of the Russian. In business of all kinds, in the professions, and especially in politics, the German has been supreme, and disclosures made recently indicate how that fact was used deliberately by the German Government to control the destinies of Russia. In later years a revolt against this dominance began within Russia, with the active sympathy of the present Tzar, and it is suggested by well-informed publicists that this

by well-informed publicists that this had its effect in hastening the crisis. A Russia developing on independent lines was entirely repugnant to German sentiment and German policy, and what intrigue failed to do was sought to be secured by the threat of violence and direct intervention. When the War is over, the last remaining threads which bound Russia to Germany will have been snapped, and new relations will be established and new ties created. The position of Great Britain and her Dominions will then be extraordinarily strong. The guarantees of good faith which the British nation has given to her Allies are beyond doubt. Ships, money, soldiers—all in succession have been thrown into the scale, and made possible resistance in the earlier days of the War and the present promise of victory. We have said that the average Russian before the War had probably never heard of Australia. This will no longer be the case, and it is not unnatural to assume that there will be a somewhat lively curiosity in that far off country about the people and the products of this land. Australians have learned to admire the dogged courage of the Russians, their extraordinary capacity for recovering from hard blows, and the fine spirit of patriotism and self-sacrifice which has been made evident. Because of these qualities there is already a desire to know more, which is catered for by newspapers, and to some extent by books of a popular kind. When the organisation of which Dr. Klatchko speaks is in full going, there will be a regular exchange of information about and between the two countries which, with the already existing disposition to friendly feeling, will lead to interchange of products and manufactures, as well as of kindly sentiments. The Trade Commissioner speaks of lines of steamers to Australia from Odessa and Vladivostock, subsidised by the Russian Government, so that they will be able to run freely until a sufficient trade has been built up to make them pay independently of subsidies. The German bonus system was used very cleverly to foster German trade, and although it cost millions, it returned indirectly more millions. The "peaceful penetration" policy was beginning to show real results, when it was cut down by the madness of war. It would be foolish to ignore German methods, as foolish as it was to accept them as necessarily the last word in organisation. Any system which is adapted to dispel ignorance and to bring into

tion. Any system which is adapted to dispel ignorance, and to bring into closer relationship two countries whose people have shed their blood and given their lives for a common purpose, is to be taken seriously, and earnestly encouraged. For all reasons it is possible and right to wish the fullest success to the movement formally initiated by the Russian Trade Commissioner.
