

SOME NOTES ON RUSSIA : THE RUSSIAN CHURCH AND A RUSSIAN MONASTERY.

EARLY in the winter of last year I was called upon to reside for a lengthened period in the two great capitals of the Russian empire. From the nature of the business in which I was engaged I had the opportunity of catching a fleeting glance of many sides of Russian life and character, but it was chiefly to that view of civilisation in which the riches of the mighty empire have been gathered together for centuries, to the history of that civilisation stored up in her palaces, museums, and churches, and exemplified in the records of the progress of the arts from the most remote times down to the present that my attention was directed.

In these days, when everyone travels, to have circumnavigated the globe, to have sojourned in all its principal cities and to have "surveyed mankind from China to Peru" is almost a common achievement. It gives no right to the ordinary traveller to inflict his crude observations on a reading public surfeited with books of travel. It is almost certain that he can have nothing to tell us, and from the indisputable and hackneyed facts which he is enabled to put before us, we are inclined to turn for relief to the more exciting, if somewhat less truthful, accounts of the wonder-journeys accomplished by a Jules Verne. Still, if there *is* a country which, in its great cities at least, is on a level with the highest civilization of the world, but is perhaps less known and less visited than any other so easily within our reach, it is assuredly Russia.

To one who like myself has made it his resting-place for the greater part of a year, and who looks back after the lapse of a few months, the impressions which still remain on his mind are (to use a hackneyed expression) as various and ever-changing as the figures in a kaleidoscope, as full of colour and of movement. Yet he feels how incapable he is fairly to grasp and retain the quickly vanishing pattern or to give to others any faithful idea of a race and country which invite careful and minute study.

Such indeed would not be my intention, and if on my road to the famous monastery of the Russian church which formed the turning point homewards of my journey, I sometimes step out of my path for a moment to note a striking scene on the way, I hope

I may be pardoned if my observations have little of novelty to some, should they happily present a fresh feature to others.

Nor would I presume to offer here a study of the Eastern Church, be it Greek or Russian, Yet so little is known to most people on the subject that a few impressions of personal observation, and some necessary statements of facts gathered here and there may be of interest. Beyond these I would not travel, nor attempt anything more ambitious than "Some notes on Russia: the Russian Church, and a Russian monastery."

Desolate and melancholy in the extreme to the traveller journeying eastward by the usual route from the German frontier is the long approach to the great political capital of Russia. And indeed, so it is from whatever quarter he approaches it by land. In my own case, coming from Berlin at the beginning of a rigorous winter, the journey for forty-eight hours across hundreds of miles of barren plain, of stunted forest and morass, clothed in their early winter garb, was as striking as its continued monotony could permit it to be. I scarcely remember where it began, but it seemed to be from the first dawn after leaving Germany and from that time never varied.

As far as the eye can reach on either side extends the cold drapery of snow; no roads, no paths, no streams, scarcely a human habitation, no towns, no villages break the dead monotony. Here and there a withered bush pushes up its head in the desolate solitude, bereft of its warm summer garb, and seems to shiver and to wish to cower again, if it could, beneath the icy sheet. Here and there, like a strange sail in the midst of the ocean, one welcomes even the miserable hut which breaks for a moment the eternal sameness, the smoke from its chimney curling lazily upwards in the clear cold air. Everything seems Death, covered by this white pall! And the train rolls on, mile after mile, hour after hour, in a dead straight line on a dead level (for the line is seldom even raised on an embankment) and the monotonous *thump thump* of the waggon alone breaks the stillness of the outer world. There is no sign of life, no man, no animal, except perhaps when one nears the solitary stations and sees for the first time the rude country carriages or carts, the *tarantass*, the national sledges, with their sheepskin clad drivers stupidly gazing at us as we pass.

Such is the desolate weary scene till at length—suddenly as the oasis in the desert greets the eye of the eastern traveller—out of this howling wilderness breaks forth the magnificent city of the Tzars, the most astounding artificial creation perhaps that has ever

entered into the mind of man to produce as it were out of nothing!

All, however, in this dreary journey need not be looked at through such dispiriting glasses. We may let the frost without coat our carriage windows with an impenetrable curtain of lace-like texture, and refuse to occupy ourselves with the wearisome landscape. Within, we may ensconce ourselves comfortably, as comfortably almost as in a first class hotel. In no other country can one travel so luxuriously as in Russia. The carriages are roomy, well-fitted, and excellently warmed by stoves in which huge logs of wood burn. In one of the neat little cabins of a sleeping car not inconveniently crowded, with a few pleasant companions the time passes quickly enough. At breakfast, lunch, and dinner time, and again at *night-cap* time we halt for half an hour at least, perhaps an hour or more. (The *French* proverb "*Times is money*" has no meaning to a Russian). At these welcome halts we find the most excellent of meals awaiting us. No Swindon junction hurry and scalding soup. Plenty of time, and lighting our cigars we return, wrapped in our furs, through a moment's icy atmosphere to the warm shelter of our sleeping compartment which "thus contrives a double debt to pay: by night a bed, a *drawing-room* by day." These carriages are connected, and if we please (*pace* the guard by means of a silver key) we may stand out on the platform ends as we rush along, and get frozen through as one only can in these climes, till our breath forms icicles on our large fur collars, our moustaches and beards freeze hard as boards, and our cigars, glowing hot at one end, have an icy holder newly formed at the other. For a few moments the sensation is enjoyable in its freshness, the air seems so pure to breathe! As the night wears on, our beds are made and the chat grows more and more intermittent, until at last the greatest talker gives in and forgets frost, train, and country, till the conductor wakes him to an early breakfast.

And so another day wears on and at length we are nearing the capital. It is time to pack and leave the dwelling to which we have become accustomed so long that there is almost a little regret to part with our home. But we have arrived now, and a new scene far removed from monotony awaits us, a scene strange even to one who has travelled much and in many lands—the meeting-place where the east and west shake hands, a mixture of barbarism and civilisation—for here is the narrow boundary between the Russian and the Tartar.

Of the lions of St. Petersburg (and it has many), of its broad regular streets and open spaces, modern built and not disposed by chance after the manner of the labyrinths of a mediæval city, of its churches, its palaces, its museums, and picture-galleries, (and oh wondrous Hermitage what treasures dost thou not hold !) of the Nevski in full swing, with its intense and vivacious movement, numberless sledges swiftly darting along, skimming like birds on the wing, crossing, starting, stopping, never jostling ; of public and private life, of the broad hard-frozen Neva, of national cooks and national dishes, national drinks, and national fishes, ice-hills, theatres, operas, and gaieties, of much and many more and much again, reluctantly for the present at least I can do no more than thus refer to. As to the churches, what may be said of them may equally well be said and, more appropriately, of the more venerable ones in the ancient city of Moscow.

And so, *en route*, and again for fifteen hours, in a straighter line than ever (straight as the crow flies for four hundred miles) the rail carries us once more thorough plain and desert and far spreading desolation, and over all is spread again the glistening whiteness of the snow.¹

At last the ancient city is reached and we have ample leisure to survey its strange half-eastern aspect. Very different is it from rigid mathematically laid out St. Petersburg. The ground is accentuated in all directions : the streets narrow and tortuous and for the most part unevenly paved (in the Asiatic style) except when in their winter dress of smooth, hard-frozen snow. Here a palace elbows a wretched one-storied wooden structure, and side by side, and built up against the grandest churches, miserable hovels assert their right to existence, and strive to hold up their unblushing heads in contempt of the influence of modern regularity. If I were asked what other town resembled Moscow I should say unhesitatingly (in my experience) "Pera, which standeth over against Stamboul!" If only Pera could carpet itself in the winter months with the soft yielding covering which at Moscow atones for so many imperfections.

At Moscow there is no stately Neva with its broad quays lined

¹ The only town within view of the line is Tver, and this from the accident of its situation on the straight line. It is said that when the railway plans were submitted to the Emperor Nicholas, in order that he might approve of the proposed route, he desired to be shown the positions on the map of St. Petersburg and Moscow. This being done, he took a ruler and connected the capitals by a straight line remarking, "You will construct the line thus." This closed the discussion, and the autocrat was obeyed.

with palatial residences. A sluggish stream, the Moskwa, rolls lazily along and does its little best to complete the picture so admirably displayed from the terraced heights of the Kremlin. If there is one feature more striking than another in this picture it is the enormous number of churches which in every direction raise their gilded domes, rivalling in number the three hundred and sixty-five churches of Rome, the uncounted minarets of the city on the Golden Horn, or the four hundred mosques of Cairo. As we look around from the heights of the Kremlin or the walls of the Chinese city (Kitai Gorod), we see on every side the innumerable turrets of the churches and monasteries, the domes gleaming in their coats of purest gold, the tall belfries and the bright green or many-coloured roofs. Here is the tower of Ivan Veliki, beneath which rests idle and broken the renowned great bell of Moscow; there, crowded together are the many churches and monasteries within the Kremlin, their bulbous domes gleaming in great variety, some completely covered with plates of gold, others painted blue and powdered with golden stars.

There, gleaming white by the banks of the river is the new cathedral, begun thirty years ago and not yet completed; farther on the famous Simonoff and the vast fortress monastery of Domscoi, lying out beyond the walls at the commencement of the gently undulating country of the environs, near to the Sparrow hills, from which Napoleon gazed for the first time at the city which he coveted.

Now that my subject will lead me into such close connection with the religious aspect of the empire, as much of it at least as is outwardly displayed to the eye of the stranger, it may be as well that I should first make some general reference to the history and condition of the Greco-Russian Church.

The early history of the Russian people carries us back to one of three great families of the human race who, migrating westwards, peopled, as they gradually extended themselves, the continent of Europe; to that family, the latest to establish itself, which we know under the term of Slavonians or Scythians. Of the Scythians proper, a people of pastoral and nomadic habit, history has left us little record. Hippocrates, "the father of physic" speaks of them, but it is to Herodotus, the great traveller and observer, that we owe a more striking narration. To him we are indebted for vivid details of the manners and customs, wars, arts and sciences of the early Russians, or Scythians, who, in his time, about four hundred years before Christ, had established themselves on the Don and on

the confines of the Cimmerian Bosphorus which we know to-day as the Crimea.

But a still more faithful, if silent, record has, within very recent years, been brought to light by the unearthing, on these shores, of a vast extent of tombs in which, as in a city of the dead, have been discovered, not only the mouldering remains of the ancient inhabitants, but these, surrounded as Herodotus tells us was their custom, by immense quantities of treasures in the precious metals, of garments and accoutrements, of household goods and belongings. And, to-day, one of the glories of modern Russia is the collection, in the magnificent halls of the Hermitage at St. Petersburg, of this dumb history of its primitive ancestors.

Four centuries before Christ the Scythians appear to have been, if not at their highest, at least at a very high condition of stability and development, yet it is not until four centuries after Christ, (nearly a thousand years later), that we can trace the foundation of any great settlements. Then arose Novgorod the Great, and Kief on the Dnieper, the "Jerusalem of Russia." Very fragmentary and legendary does the history of these people for centuries continue to be, till at length we trace the advent of the redoubtable Scandinavian Norseman Rurik, pillager and scourge of more western lands, and invader even of our own country, who about the year 864 established himself at Novgorod and founded that Russian monarchy held by his descendants for upwards of seven hundred years.

Those distant lands in great part were still Pagan, for nearly a thousand years went by before Christianity was fully accepted. Late in the tenth century Vladimir, the tenth in descent from Rurik, embraced the religion of the Eastern Church which at that time had already severed its communion with the Church of the West.

The actual history of the introduction and progress of christianity in Russia is involved in obscurity, and overlaid with fabulous and legendary stories. Novgorod, the cradle of the empire and the capital until its removal to Kief, was naturally the metropolitan see, and the first cathedral is said to have been built there as early as A.D. 989, the present existing cathedral dating from 1045. The great schism of the Greek from the Latin Church took place in the middle of the ninth century, when the patriarch of the East was Photius, elected by the Emperor Michael in the place of St. Ignatius who was driven into exile. The usurper was excommunicated by Pope Nicholas I. He, in his

turn, assembled a council at Constantinople and excommunicated the Pope, and the schism was complete.

From the acceptance of Christianity by Russia until about the middle of the thirteenth century, that is for nearly two centuries, the Russian Church formed part of the patriarchate of Constantinople, whose patriarchs appointed bishops of Greek birth and education. By degrees, as difficulties of communication resulting from the disturbed state of the countries increased, and when the newly established church became more independent, this control ceased. The princes insisted upon choosing their own metropolitan, and merely sent their nominees to Constantinople for consecration. After a while, even this formality was dispensed with, and in 1589 the Tzar succeeded in procuring the consecration of a Russian patriarch, equal in dignity to the patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch.

For some two hundred years more this system lasted, until Peter the Great thought fit to make a further change, and, according to his autocratic fashion, abolished the patriarchate, and erected in its stead the "Holy Synod" of which he himself was in reality the mainspring and restraining power. And to this day the synod fulfills, by favour of the Tzar, the former functions of the patriarchate. As to the emperor—the theory and practice of the Russian Church are rather difficult to reconcile. To put it shortly, the emperor *governs* through the Synod (which obeys him of course) but with dogma he has nothing to do. That is fixed and immovable.

The religion of Russia is then primitively that of the Eastern or Greek Church, and may now be called the church of the empire by law established. It is not itself strictly speaking schismatical, for it has never departed from its only communion, and although modifications have been made in its form of administration, in spirit it has remained unchanged. Yet, though it is the established church of the land, a multitude of sects exist and are, to a certain extent, tolerated, and this chiefly perhaps from a peculiar feature which strikes one at every turn.

The ceremonies of the Greek Church are excessively complex and the symbolical meanings by which they represent the dogmas of religion are everywhere made the subjects of minute observance. It cannot be denied that the Russian Church pays immense importance to ritual and ceremonies, to the great neglect of doctrinal truths and moral obligations. A Russian who strictly observes the outward forms is pardoned if he cares little for their spiritual significance. To this pervading feeling is due the

toleration of the existence of the numberless sects and dissenters which abound throughout Russia. The most trivial differences, not of doctrine but of ritual minutiae, have sufficed to bring into being schisms which have grown out of such differences being made of great moment by ecclesiastical councils. It is curious to observe also that these schisms are not so much brought about by the invention of a new doctrine or the denial of an old, as that each has been rather an arrogation of being more strictly orthodox than the orthodox, and of being the only conservators of the true faith as against the body of the Church at large. Hence we have the Molokani, the Raskolniks, the Stundisti, the old Ritualists, the Priestless People, the Wanderers and numerous other dissenters and nonconformists sprung originally from differences of apparently little moment; not to mention the inevitable existence of such fantastic sects as the Skoptsi, the Khlysti and Jumpers—all *jumpers* in fact, or resembling dervishes, or the fakirs of the Hindoos. The Molokani appear to be the Methodists of Russia, the Stundisti are the Evangelical Protestants, Raskolniks look for a second Advent, the Priestless people represent a multitude of independent sects, the old Ritualists are ecclesiastical Conservatives. And if such definitions are not strictly correct, they will suffice perhaps as a brief statement where there is no occasion for a lengthened historical argument. Thus is the divided house divided against itself!

As regards their toleration, it must be admitted that if there has been persecution, it has been, on the whole, of a very mild description. As I have said, the Russian Church is contented with the observance of external forms. It accepts as orthodox those who are content to conform for peace sake to certain annual obligations, and the consciences of these sectarians have generally allowed them to do so. This tolerance, this indifference to inward opinion or moral practice, is a feature in the Russian Church which one cannot help remarking. It is impossible here to do more than allude to this feature, and it is alluded to mainly on account of its connection with sectarianism. As to the number and extent of the sectarians, the Old Ritualists who are the nearest to the orthodox, and the Priestless People who seem to be very far removed, number, it is said, no less than seven millions: other fantastical sects probably three millions more. In all, about an eighth of the whole population of the empire, including the wealthiest among the merchants, the majority of the Cossacks of the Don and all the Cossacks of the Ural.

We must presently visit briefly one at least of the churches of Moscow, and at Troitsa we shall be surrounded by them. But I do not propose to enter at length into the subject of the history or ceremonial practice of the schismatical Greek Church or its errors. For those who would do so there is ample written matter.¹ Dogmatic differences, apart from the supremacy, are few of great moment. They acknowledge the first seven (Ecumenical Councils, they receive the seven sacraments, and the Catholic Church acknowledges their orders as valid. The great doctrinal difference is, it is well known, on the subject of the "Filioque."

Now let us enter the great cathedral of Moscow, the *Uspenski Sobor* (cathedral church of the Assumption). Reconstructed in 1475 after the model of the cathedral at Vladimir, it has no slight claim to a venerable antiquity. Round the walls lie buried the primates of the Russian church; and on the platform, beneath the central dome, all the Tzars, from Ivan the Terrible downwards to this day, have been crowned. A short description of this church will be to a very great extent descriptive of almost any other in Russia, so little does the type vary in essentials. They are nearly all in the shape of a cross with short arms, always with one large centre dome flanked by four or more smaller domes. These, which are of bulbous or pointed cupola form, are usually covered with plates of gold, but sometimes painted a deep blue, powdered with gold stars. The effect of the hundreds of gold cupolas, gleaming in the clear winter air of Moscow, is intensely striking; the gold is so thick and pure, and there is so little dirt floating in the air, that they retain their brilliant, almost new appearance for very many years.

In superficial area the church is rather a chapel than a cathedral, according to our ideas, but this is customary. Within, the light is obscure and dim, for it shines not through acres of painted glass. The simple disposition of the edifice (nearly square) the enormous plain-shafted pillars which support the domes, the mass of gilding on the walls, the multitude of lamps produce an undoubtedly grand effect. All the interior is covered with fresco pictures in the Byzantine style: even the pillars themselves have painted upon them gigantic figures of the saints and doctors of the church. The effect is strange in its picturesqueness. These thousands of figures seeming to walk in endless procession, yet immovable, rising in the clouds to the tops of the domes, glittering in

¹ Dean Stanley in his "Lectures on the Eastern Church" gives a useful list of works of reference.

their garments of precious metal from the altar screen, twirling as it were in a whirlwind round the simple yet solidly massive pillars: a strange weird effect enhanced by the semi-darkness! They are not beautiful to our eyes, many of these saints. How wild and even savage are the faces of some of them, how stiff and uncompromising their attitudes, how rigid the folds of their garments! Ever the same repeated archaic Byzantine lean-ness of visage, the same small thin-cut eyes, the same bistre-coloured complexions, long lank hair and scanty beard: the emaciated limbs, the abnormally rounded skull, the ever recurring upraised bony hand, with fingers symbolically divided.¹

From the high roof hang immense brass chandeliers, of a peculiar form, with many branches, capable of holding hundreds of candles.

Facing us, in the dim distance, seemingly a wall of gold, sparkling with precious stones, like the façade of a golden palace is the *iconostas*, the solid screen extending from side to side, from floor to roof which bars off effectually the sanctuary of every Greek Church. The *iconostas* is in all cases decorated with a large number of holy pictures or *icons*, and on the one in this church are

¹ The influence that Byzantine art has had upon our own has been a subject of numerous dissertations. When the seat of the old Roman empire was transferred from Rome to Constantinople, it naturally took with it what it still retained of its ancient splendour and art, transplanting the latter under new conditions and with an altered treatment of tradition. The art of the new empire—of the seven centuries that elapsed between the fourth and eleventh centuries—is that to which has been given the name (for want of better term) of Byzantine. The whole world throughout that period was in a state of perpetual disturbance. The Byzantine empire, suffering least, preserved its treasures and it is natural to suppose that much of them from time to time found their way westwards, to supply there, both by themselves and by their teaching, the want of that artistic talent which could then have been with difficulty cultivated. Thus was sustained among the nations of the west during that long period of time, those conventional traditions which could scarcely fail to leave a permanent mark, until the revival of the arts, co-incident with the rise and progress of the power of the great European nations, caused their influence insensibly to decline, till they were absorbed into the newly formed schools. Yet their latent identity now and again peeps out, and to this day as we have noticed, so far as regards religious art, in Russia and in Greece at least, these traditions are scrupulously maintained.

Byzantine art seems to exist under quite exceptional circumstances, and scarcely merits strictly the name, as we understand it in the West. It is an art wholly governed by religious, sacerdotal, immovable laws. Nothing seems left to the fancy or invention of the artist. The formula under which he works are as precise as dogmas. There is but one school and one epoch. Thus it is that a painting, a carving, or a piece of metal-work or an embroidery executed fifty or two hundred years ago has about it such an appearance of archaic

placed the most highly venerated in Russia. *Icons* are pictorial representations painted in the archaic byzantine style, usually on a gold ground, and of very various dimensions from a few inches to life-size or greater. The Greek Church rejects all massive images as contrary to the commandment, but what is represented on a flat surface is not held to be inconsistent with the Divine law. Hence, as a rule, *icons*, with the exception of the faces, hands and feet, which appear through apertures, are covered with an embossed and chased plaque in gold or silver gilt, representing the form and garments, and often profusely studded with precious gems.

The Russians are intensely attached to their holy pictures, In the churches each and all are the subjects of visits and pilgrimages. Besides these, in public and in private they are everywhere to be seen. At the corners of the streets, in the little chapels or oratories which abound, over gateways, in railway carriages and steamers, in every shop, and in the lowest tavern even, there is the holy picture with the lamp ever burning before it. So, in entering a shop or other public place, one always removes one's hat, not on account of the usual politeness, but in deference to the picture. This is invariably placed high up in the angle of the walls, in one corner.¹

character that it is scarcely to be distinguished from one hundreds of years older. As in the fifth, as in the tenth centuries, so now. It is ever the same—immovable, fixed, austere; borrowing nothing, owing its inspirations to no school but itself, incapable of any further improvement. The artist is the slave of tradition: he is an executor only, not a creator. As has been well said by the translator of the work I shall presently refer to—he works by a kind of instinct, as the swallow builds her nest, the bee the honeycomb.

At the monastery of Mt. Athos exists a Byzantine manuscript, the work of a certain monk named Dionysius. It is a veritable manual of christian iconography and according to the tradition of the monastery dates from the tenth century. It is however probably not earlier than the fifteenth. Whether it is or no, however, matters little. What is interesting to us is to possess a complete treatise on the subject, unquestionably of strict technical authority. It is in four parts. The first treats of the materials, colours, tools &c., to be employed: the second, with great precision of detail, gives the subjects of the symbolism and the historical occurrences that should be represented: the third determines the proper places for and positions of certain subjects or holy personages: the fourth fixes the symbolisms peculiar to our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, and treats of inscriptions.

To the excellent translation of this work by the discoverer, M. Didron, and to his learned and interesting works on christian iconography I refer my readers, feeling sure that the subject will prove to many of them one of high interest, and trusting that it may justify the digressions which I have here made.

¹ The corner—the place of honour as in eastern countries. In the churches the corners are occupied by the most illustrious tombs. At the coronation banquet the emperor dines in solitary state in one of the angles of the room.

Many are the little oratories in the streets of Moscow, for ever occupied by a crowd, never passed without uncovering and innumerable crossings. Not only are they visited by the common people: the carriages of the rich are there as well, and to the chapel where is preserved a picture of Our Lady said to have been painted by St. Luke, the emperor himself drives immediately from the railway-station, on his arrival in Moscow.¹

These pictures are the chief source of religious instruction amongst the Russian peasantry. They are his illuminated catechism. He reads them and understands them as the hieroglyphics of Egypt were read. To him, the preservation of the old archaic form is a matter of immense importance, and I have been told that the learning on this subject amongst the peasantry is really astonishingly great, and forms the subject of disquisition through the long winter evenings. There is an immense pictorial literature reproduced from ancient manuscripts, and of a kind analogous to the coloured *block-books* of the early days of printing.

Over one of the gateways leading into the Kremlin is a famous *icon*, respect to which is exacted from all—be he Turk, Pagan, or Christian. The archway is long, perhaps some twenty yards or more; but it would be a risky thing for any independent Englishman even, to pass through it otherwise than with bare head, and fur cap in hand. It is scarcely necessary to say that with the thermometer at twenty-five degrees below zero of Fahrenheit this is somewhat of a penance.

In all churches the great screen is covered with *icons* arranged in formal rows one above the other. Lamps pendent from chains hang before them. Besides these, other smaller *icons*, held in greater veneration, are set apart in various parts of the church. Again they are covered with their gorgeous metallic robes, and the brown ascetic faces and hands peer dimly out from the openings. Glories or nimbuses in high-relief, set thick with gems, surround their faces, and sparkling as they reflect the light from the multitude of candles burnt in their honour, seem a real glory indeed. Some are covered to overloading with jewels, necklets, and bracelets; pearls, diamonds, and rubies of large size and value adorning them in profusion.

But all this time we have been standing without the gorgeous

¹ This famous picture is carried out in great state in a carriage and six to the residences of those who wish for it, on great domestic occasions and cases of affliction and sickness, and it is said that the income of the shrine is £30,000 a year.

iconostas of the great cathedral church of Moscow. Let us enter (if we are of the stronger sex, for no woman is permitted to do so), and through a side door; for none but the consecrating priest or the emperor, and the last once only at the time of his coronation, may pass through the central gates, the "royal doors," as they are called. The whole of the space behind the screen (what we should call the sanctuary) is known as the altar. The altar itself is square, or rather a double cube. Above it, four small columns with a canopy form a *baldachino*; behind, in the apse, facing the altar, is the *thronos*, the seat of the archbishop, with seats for priests on either side.

Of the ceremonies of the Greco-Russian Church, and especially of the greatest of them all, the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, I am unable to speak much. I have been present during the service several times; but having nothing to guide me, and in the midst of a surging crowd (there are no seats in a Russian church, every one stands where he will or can), usually at some distance from the sanctuary, my impressions have been vague indeed.

During the greater part of the mass the Royal doors are closed: the deacons remain for the most part without, now and again entering for a short time. I have never seen the communion administered. This is given, under both kinds, at the Royal doors. From time to time a pope or popes pass throughout the church amongst the crowds, incensing all the holy pictures in turn; the voice of the officiating priest is raised within, and is answered in deep tones by the deacons without. Now, from one corner comes a chant of many voices, now from another a single one intones, it may be, the epistle or gospel of the day. Now the doors fly open and a fleeting glimpse is gained of the celebrant through the thick rolling clouds of incense. Then they are closed again suddenly. But through it all I feel as an utter stranger, with a vague longing to catch something of the meaning, with an indescribable sense of melancholy, and of ignorance that, for the moment, seems to be almost reprehensible.

But with one part of the ritual I am able to allow myself to be fascinated, and that is the accompanying chant. I had already witnessed the service of the Greek church in Constantinople and in Greece. There I may have been unfortunate but I would willingly have stopped my ears to the barbarous sounds. But here there is I know not what of sweetness and attractiveness in the unaccompanied chanting of the choir, in the deep, so deep bass tones of the men, mingling with the plaintive *tinkle-tinkle* of younger voices. I

know no music so indescribable, so incomprehensible even. It is unlike any other; *sui generis*, yet there underlies the original tinge of Orientalism, the wailing semi-tones of all barbaric music. No accompaniment, no instrumental music of any kind is permitted. What is most striven for are bass voices of extraordinary depth and power. These form as it were the groundwork or accompaniment, and mingling with them in a tonality which I am unable scientifically to describe, ringing clearly—sometimes with a strange half discord and yet accordant—keeping one fancies a quicker time, are the less solemn voices of the tenors and trebles. The ringing of the Moscow bells has often recalled to me this strange harmony. There is ever the grand heavy bell tolling solemnly, and the ringer at the same time sets in motion several other small tinkling bells with a quicker movement. One response there is, repeated very quickly in succession over and over again by these deep bass voices, which one never forgets and which runs in one's head like a familiar tune: "*Gospodi pomilui, Gospodi pomilui,*" Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy!¹

The church service is said in the old Slavonic tongue, which is scarcely known at all to the common people, and not easily understood by the well-educated.

I cannot leave Moscow without a word or two on the great Easter ceremonies, the greatest festival of the year, but I must confine myself to that which takes place on Easter night. I had peculiar facilities afforded me for witnessing them in three separate churches, first at the metropolitan cathedral, next at the university church and finally with the cream of society in the chapel of the palace.

The great six weeks fast is rapidly drawing to a close, and as midnight approaches thousands throng the immense court-yard surrounding the cathedral, and I remain here a little to watch the impatient crowd, all feverishly awaiting, in the clear frosty night till first a rocket sent up from the belfry, then one deep stroke on the hugest bell (that will ring) in the world, followed by an explosion of all the myriad bells in Moscow shall proclaim to the city that "*Christos voskrès*—Christ is risen!" Shortly before the time I watch the arrival of the metropolitan in his equipage. He is received and robed at the door, and I follow him in. The cathedral, still in gloom, is densely packed (and no room is taken

¹ It is said that the tones now used in the Russian Church are comparatively modern. They have long been written in the modern style with five lines in the treble clef, not as in the Gregorian, on four lines in the tenor or bass clef.

up by seats, it will be remembered) by an orderly crowd, and luckily for my nerves, and all my senses, I am able to stand amongst the high civil dignitaries quite close to the *iconostas*.

It is impossible to avoid sharing in the feeling of expectancy, and one has not to wait long. Suddenly, the great bell gives out a dull prolonged *boom!* In an instant, (by means of an arrangement of threads running from wick to wick), the thousands of candles in the immense chandeliers illumine the hitherto sombre darkness. Through the royal doors issues a small procession, those leading re-iterating again and again as a joyful proclamation, *Christos voskrès!* Popes in their gorgeously jewelled crowns follow, and last the metropolitan, in his hand the patriarchal *tau*-headed staff. Three times round the exterior of the church they go, with a quick shuffling step, and without, each of the thousands of spectators holds now in his hand a lighted candle, and far and near every bell of every church in Moscow gives tongue! Meanwhile, every one embraces his friend or neighbour effusively, repeating *Christos voskrès* and answering *Voi istenny voskrès* (Christ is risen; he is risen indeed); a custom which, as I later on had reason for thinking, might, (I speak feelingly), be with advantage dispensed with.

I must confess, the procession itself disappointed me. It lacked somehow, I thought, pomp and circumstance. It was composed of few persons, and was hurried and irregular. But the recollection of our stately and orderly ceremonies of the west doubtless accounts for this.

We leave the service proceeding and visit next the university church, which I mention only because it is the only church which I have ever seen or heard of which differs from the ancient type. It is not unlike an ordinary western church. The screen is much more open, with a kind of roodloft, and even a figured representation of the crucifixion, and there are also a few chairs.

So we proceed to the royal chapel, and here we feel that we are amongst the *élite* on earth, at least in Russia. Every one must be in evening or full dress, the ladies in white ball-dresses. It is a tiny little gem of a chapel, but the invited are not many, and one can breathe at least. The music, quiet and subdued, is exceedingly good.

After the ceremonies, in every house in Moscow a feast is laid out. For mine, I am invited to that of the governor of the palace, and here, about four in the morning, tired and fagged with so long standing, I am glad to repair. Over the numerous osculations which I patiently submit to on the road through

the long corridors leading from the chapel, I prefer to draw a veil, as I wished I could have done then. If I had not committed myself by repeating the orthodox answer, *Voi istenny voskrès* perhaps I might have escaped more easily.

Of the supper and its national dishes and customs, I have no space to speak. I have already filled more than my share, and I have yet to reach the end of my journey at the monastery of Troitsa.

(To be concluded in our next.)

EARLY CONVERSIONS AT ST. GREGORY'S.

ONCE more does an old Gregorian put pen to paper to place before the readers of the "Downside Review," some early recollections of years now long since departed. In my last communication I wrote respecting the old chapel, now a parlour, on the right hand of the entrance to the old house. I propose now recording a few circumstances relating to the early converts to our holy faith.

Catholicism may be said to have been unknown in these parts in those early times. Rumour ever ready with reports, had gone abroad with the intelligence that Downside House, Stratton on the Fosse, had been taken by the papists for a college. Shortly afterwards it was known they had arrived, and many remarks were made. Their English was so different to the ordinary language that they must be foreigners. They were to tall to be French, therefore they must be Germans. The most absurd things were spread abroad, regarding their person and their conduct. They were supposed to be a sort of wild animal, destructive of children, who from fear, would show the greatest dread and horror on seeing them at a distance, while taking their walks. However, gradually the people's curiosity overcame their fears and alarms, and the labourers employed on the farm and grounds reported well of papists as masters and employers. The people were informed that on Sundays, those who chose might come to the chapel, and gradually many satisfied their curiosity by coming at times to see the sight, and hear the grand music of a piano and two bass voices, aided by the serpent, for effect. The attractions of music and the sermons brought however no converts. Two years and more had elapsed, and yet no impression had been made. In the autumn of 1816, one of the neighbours, was