

to recommend on the score of poetical merit — be favourably received, other pieces from the same manuscript may later find a fitting place in the pages of the “Downside Review.”

Who was the author? we may ask. Materials at present fail for giving a definite answer. The MS. itself tells us this much: the writer was evidently an Englishman, interested in French affairs and having no sympathy with Spain; a partisan of the Guises; a priest apparently, and though not a monk, one who had a reverence and affection for the monastic state; finally, though he was unacquainted with the affairs of the English College whilst yet at Rheims (1578-93), he mentions the assassination of Henry IV. (1610).

If we found record that Dr. William Gifford, (afterwards Father Gabriel of St. Mary and first President of the English Congregation of the Order of St. Benedict), had the weakness of verse-making, there might be a temptation to ask the question: —Can the author of the pieces collected in Harl. MS. 3258 be Dr. William Gifford?

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

(Continued from page 380.)

THE monks of the Russian Church are all of the same order and entirely distinct from secular ecclesiastics. The rule which they follow, and from which in principle they have never deviated, is the rule of St. Basil, a rule of asceticism, prayer, and contemplation. Amongst them we must not look for learning, or preaching, or teaching, or the arts to a high degree. The monks of the East have never shown the spirit, the vigour and life so remarkable in the West. Dean Stanley, in his “Lectures on the Eastern Church,” says:—“As a general rule there has arisen in the East no society like the Benedictines, held in honour wherever literature or civilization has spread; no charitable orders like the sisters of mercy, carrying light and peace into the darkest haunts of suffering humanity. Active life is, on the strict Eastern theory, an abuse of the system.” As a class the monks represent the

highest grade in the hierarchy of the church. In them is centred whatever there is of learning, and socially their status is beyond comparison of higher consideration than that of the parish priests. The secular clergy are of a different class: coarse, dirty, and in social distinction little above the peasants from whom their ranks are recruited. They must be married before being ordained, but are not allowed to marry a second time. On becoming widowers, unless they are able to enter the monastic state, they are prohibited from fulfilling any priestly functions. The ordinary profession of a priest is to some extent a hereditary one. A priest is usually the son of a priest, and he marries the daughter of a priest; and in this manner, or directly from the peasant class, the ranks of the clergy are recruited. Nobles seldom or rarely enter the religious state. Instances there are, but of extreme rarity.

If we compare the Russian priesthood with that of other countries, we shall find that they have done little or nothing towards the moral elevation of their flocks. Their duties seem almost exclusively confined to the performance of the elaborate ceremonial of the Greek ritual. When they are so engaged, and in their priestly character solely, they receive from all the highest outward honour and respect. The greatest noble in the land, or even the Tzar will humbly prostrate himself and implore the blessing of the meanest priest. Yet the very persons who would thus load them with honour, treat them on other occasions with scant courtesy. Socially they enjoy little personal consideration. They are beneath the notice of the higher classes, and to the vulgar a bye-word and a reproach. No one of position would dream of asking a priest to his table. Moral influence they have none. They are seldom consulted on spiritual matters, and their interference would be considered an impertinence. They are ordered about by their civil superiors and treated with disdain. If a priest is wanted to fulfil some function, he is sent for; while engaged in it treated with the highest outward reverence, paid, and dismissed.

It is impossible for one to remain long in Russian society without perceiving that the lives of the Russian priests are a common scandal and reproach; a topic of contemptuous conversation. It seems to be taken for granted that they should be coarse, drunken, dissolute, and depraved. Even a devout Russian, and I have met and conversed with several who appeared to me to be such, seems to consider the existence of such a state of things a matter of course. To him there is nothing shocking or incon-

gruous in this dual aspect with which he regards his spiritual pastor. He is to him an officer or a servant appointed to fulfil for him certain functions, to serve for him, as it were, certain goods, for which he is willing to pay, as for other commodities, and from him he expects no more.

In thus sketching what appears to be a deplorable state of things, I follow (it must be observed) mainly the observations universally made in notices and works on Russia and the Russian character, supplemented by the experience gained by the few conversations I have had with Russians on the subject. But in order that it may not appear that such remarks are superficial or exaggerated, I will quote here an extract which Mr. Wallace gives in his work on Russia, from an unpublished semi-official report which states in plain language the condition of the parish clergy. This report says (the translation is as literal as possible):—“The people do not respect the clergy, but persecute them with derision and reproaches, and feel them to be a burden. In nearly all the popular comic stories the priest, his wife, or his labourer is held up to ridicule, and in all the proverbs and popular sayings where the clergy are mentioned it is always with derision. The people shun the clergy, and have recourse to them not from the inner impulse of conscience, but from necessity. . . . And why do the people not respect the clergy? Because it forms a class apart; because, having received a false kind of education, it does not introduce into the life of the people the teaching of the Spirit, but remains in the mere dead forms of outward ceremonial, at the same time despising these forms even to blasphemy; because the clergy itself continually presents examples of want of respect to religion, and transforms the service of God into a profitable trade. Can the people respect the clergy when they hear how one priest stole money from below the pillow of a dying man at the moment of confession; how another was publicly dragged out of a house of ill-fame; how a third christened a dog; how a fourth, while officiating at the Easter service, was dragged by the hair from the altar by the deacon? Is it possible for the people to respect priests who spend their time in the gin-shop with fraudulent petitions, fight with the cross in their hands, and abuse each other in bad language at the altar? One might fill several pages with examples of this kind, without overstepping the boundaries of the province of Nizhni-Novgorod. Is it possible for the people to respect the clergy when they see that truth has disappeared from it, and that the consistories, guided in their

decisions not by rules, but by personal friendship and bribery, destroy in it the last remains of truthfulness? If we add to all this the false certificates which the clergy give to those who do not wish to partake of the Eucharist, the dues illegally extracted from the Old Ritualists, the conversion of the altar into a source of revenue, the giving of churches to priests' daughters as a dowry, and similar phenomena, the question as to whether the people can respect the clergy requires no answer."¹

Mr. Wallace adds, however, to the above, that it must not be imagined that all Russian priests are of the kind referred to. Many of them are honest, respectable, well-intentioned men, who conscientiously fulfil their humble duties and strive hard to procure a good education for their children. Both the good and the bad qualities of the Russian priesthood at the present time can be easily explained by its past history and by certain peculiarities of the national character.

My own personal observations have been confined to the black or regular clergy, and these too have been but cursory, owing to the scanty opportunities I have had. They have been made also under considerable difficulties, and can scarcely presume to be worth much. I shall confine myself, therefore, to a description of the outward appearance of the greatest of Russian monasteries, and of the outward aspect which strikes the eye of any stranger.

The black clergy, or the monks, as distinguished from the white clergy, or the ordinary parish priests, form a large and influential class, in whose hands are the entire ecclesiastical administration, and all the rank and honours of the church, to which an ordinary priest cannot aspire. Between these two classes considerable hostility exists. The lower classes cannot avoid feeling the hardship of their position in that they should have all the hard work to perform, and none of the honours. On the other hand the monks look down upon the parish priest with contempt, regarding him as a kind of pariah or half-caste.

In Russia, as at times in the West, the history of the monastic orders has passed through several phases. At first the early monks were earnest, devout men, who fulfilled to the letter the practice of poverty, obedience, and the subjection of the flesh. After a time, however, wealth brought with it its train of consequences, and the ideal of monastic life gave way. The accumulation of property was accompanied by a relaxation of the strict rules of

¹ Mr. Melnikoff, in a "Secret" Report to the Grand Duke Constantine.

the early founders. From the large donations and bequests of the Tzars and private individuals, the monasteries became rich in lands, in treasures, and in serfs. Troitsa alone at one time, it is said, possessed 120,000 serfs, and it has been computed that in the early part of the last century nearly a fourth of the whole population of the empire was under the jurisdiction of the church. Then came the secularization of their property and their decline. Their wealth and splendour are not now as of old. Some, as for instance the great monastery of Troitsa, still retain a considerable amount of property and distinction. For the most part they are not now rich, although sufficiently endowed for all purposes of an ascetic life.

The monastery, or *laura*, as it is called, of Troitsa is the great place of pilgrimage of Russia, which every good Russian, if he is able, thinks it incumbent upon him to visit once at least in his lifetime, and once a year if he can do so, and is within reasonable distance. It is situated about sixty miles to the S.E. of Moscow, in a wild, little cultivated region, but in the midst of woods and forests, which at one time were immense. Probably the best time of year to see it is, as was my good fortune, in the winter time, when the country wears its cleanest, brightest aspect, and the routes in the environs on which one journeys to neighbouring places of interest are passable, and being covered with their winter garb in a perfect condition for travelling. For at any other season roads in Russia, as we understand a road, appear scarcely to exist, except near the large towns. They are simple tracks, abounding in obstacles and pitfalls, over which the navigation of the immense Noah's arks which do duty for sledges and carriages is conducted, so to speak, with extreme difficulty in the steering, and with almost as much rolling and pitching, and consequent contusions and risk of shipwreck to the unfortunate traveller, as a lightly-laden tub of a vessel in a gale of wind.

A drive of two or three miles (during which, owing to a late thaw, we have some experience of what a Russian road is like out of the winter season), brings us to the town or village of Troitsa. On our way we pass several little groups of houses of the everlasting type of Russian villages—a long straggling street, the houses picturesquely built of long round pine logs with the bark on, the chinks stopped with moss, the gable-ends and barge-boards fantastically carved and openworked, and painted sometimes in brilliant colours. The whole of the town adjoining is the property of the monastery. At the hotel the landlord who receives us and

conducts us to our rooms is a monk; and the rooms themselves should perhaps rather be described as cells. Very bare they are, and the beds, as befitting, suggest anything but Sybaritic luxury. I have had some experience of camping out, and have more than once slept on bare boards. Of the two I prefer the former: the latter would be a fitting preparation for these monastic couches. Still the surroundings were clean, and even the various bedfellows with which one expects to be tormented in these countries appeared to be absent. Possibly even they are not sufficiently innured to such simplicity of lodging.

Before visiting the monastery, as we see it to-day, it will be perhaps as well to give here some history of its founder and of the vicissitudes which it has undergone.

Bartholomew, the Saint Sergius, or Serghé, of the Russian church, was born at Rostoff in the year 1314. His parents were noble and possessed of considerable wealth until the time when, under the oppression of the Tartars, they found themselves reduced to abject poverty, and were forced to leave their native town and to establish themselves at Radonegus. At the death of his parents Sergius entered the monastery of Hatkoff. This he quitted a little while after, and with his brother Stephen established himself in a hermitage in a remote spot near Troitsa, which was at that time a wild and desolate region. Here they built a church, and some time after, Stephen, unable to endure longer the privations and solitude of a hermit's life, left his brother and founded a monastery of his own. Many are the legends of these early days, and of the sanctity and miraculous works of Sergius, but we have no space to describe them. Little by little the retreat was joined by other monks, and a monastery was raised, which continued to increase in extent and riches.

In 1380, Mannai invaded Russia at the head of his Tartar hordes, destroyed Moscow, and laying siege to the monastery of Troitsa forced the inhabitants to leave it. From time to time subsequently, in those distracted times, this famous monastery underwent many more sieges: its walls bear witness to them to this day, and in its treasury are to be seen many of the arms employed in its defence, the rude firelocks, the stone cannon-balls, the home-made ammunition, and amongst other things hundreds of implements called in the middle ages "crows'-feet"—small three-spurred pieces of iron with which the ground was strewn to prevent the easy approach of the enemy.

Sergius died on the 25th September, 1382. Thirty years after-

wards his body, said to be incorrupt, was solemnly transported to the cathedral church of the monastery, where in the shrine or coffin, which is always open, it may be seen to this day, visited with profound veneration by thousands of pilgrims.

After his death the monastery continued to increase in extent and importance, at one time containing three hundred monks. From time to time it suffered again from invasions, and was several times besieged, which its vast strength enabled it to support. The fortifications with which it is surrounded were completed in the middle of the fourteenth century in the reign of John the Terrible, one of its great patrons and benefactors. The walls, divided by four fortified gates, are no less than 4,500 feet in length, their height being from 30 to 50 feet, with a thickness of 20 feet. At the angles are eight towers, some square, some hexagonal, each of a different architecture. The walls form a solid rampart, on the thickness of which is a covered gallery, paved with red brick arranged in a herring-bone pattern, and forming a magnificent promenade corresponding to the cloisters of a western monastic building. Within the monastery are eleven churches, of which the principal one is the cathedral church of the Trinity, which contains the shrine of the founder.

Within the walls this famous monastery presents rather the aspect of a fortified town, with its blocks of detached houses, its churches, shrines, workshops—even a palace for the accommodation of the Tzars—its paved alleys and courts, its clumps of trees and masses of foliage. In the centre rises an immense tower or belfry, 290 feet in height, which was built in 1741 by the Empress Anna. This splendid campanile contains forty bells hung in several tiers, one of which, named the Tzar, is one of the largest in the world, weighing no less than sixty-five tons, or nearly five times as much as Great Paul.

It would be impossible within the limits of these notes to give more than a general idea of the monastery and its dependencies, but a visit such as a tourist would make will enable us perhaps to form some picture of its varied aspects.

As I first saw it, from a slight elevation, at a little distance, on a clear moonlight night in the depth of winter, the general effect was exceedingly striking. The cold was intense, the air clear and invigorating, the sky black as it is in these latitudes, the moon and stars clearer and brighter than one sees them in England. One could take in at a glance, as with a bird's-eye view, the whole extent of the vast walled-in enclosure, every

line distinctly drawn against the dark background, and set off and thrown into greater distinctness by the pure white snow which covered the roofs and more prominent parts, sparkling as the rays of the moon fell upon it and rendered it of more dazzling brilliancy.

Here and there the various colours of the uncovered parts, the cupolas of the churches, some of pure gold, others of deep blue powdered with golden stars, or of vivid green, or the red or otherwise tinted tiles of the roofs of the detached buildings; the masses of the principal buildings themselves, here purely white, there less distinguishable or more deeply thrown into shade; the soaring belfry, with its tall Russian cross with gilded chains, standing out clearly against the sky, the highest point of all; the various backgrounds of clumps of trees, some intensely dark in shade, some more openly dispersed—all this in the dead stillness and tranquillity of the night formed a picture on which the eye could scarcely rest quiet, but upon which it wandered from point to point without effort and without weariness, not distracted, but unwilling to confine itself to any single portion; for none would satisfy without the effect that each single part contributed to the general tone and colour of the whole.

Perhaps it was the effect of the clearness of the atmosphere, and the brilliant illumination from the moon and the myriad constellations, that seemed to reduce the scene to the proportions of a miniature—each part so clearly defined and prominent—a miniature such as one sees with the effect of a brilliant sunshine, in the pages of a mediæval illuminated MS. And as in those, so here, the appearance of venerable antiquity is absent. To compare Troitsa with Glastonbury or Tintern would be to institute a comparison where none is possible; but ancient as is this monastery also—in part perhaps but a hundred years later than our own Westminster Abbey—still even with any other well-preserved pile of ancient buildings there is no similarity of aspect which is in anyway apparent. As we see Troitsa to-day, so it was to be seen perhaps four hundred years ago. It appears almost as new now, as its various parts have been at the different epochs of their construction. In Russia nothing appears to grow old; all is at a standstill, or at least it seems that what time is not disposed to spare is renovated in exact conformity, according to Byzantine teaching, with the ancient type. Probably there is no other country that has been so much written about by travellers for centuries, and there is certainly no other country, the accounts of

which, whether of to-day or of centuries back, may be taken up and read almost indifferently without finding any appreciable difference.

Of the interior aspect of the monastery, of its various institutions, and of so much of the daily life and occupation of the monks as fell under my notice, there remains still much for me to say. But I am compelled for the present to halt here, and to reserve my description for another chapter.

(To be concluded in our next.)

SUCCISA VIRESKIT.

A STUDY OF THE BENEDICTINE HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS.

VI.

*(Continued from page 364.)*¹

THE history of the American Benedictine Congregation may be said to date from the 16th of September, 1846, when Father Boniface Wimmer landed in New York. On the 24th of the following month he was put in possession² of the mission property of St. Vincent's in Pennsylvania, and there began to build up the flourishing monastic family which at the present day has spread into almost every state of the American Union. The little missionary party, which had received so cordial a welcome, consisted of one priest, Fr. Wimmer, one theological student, and three other youths who had accompanied him from Bavaria for the purpose of engaging in the monastic state in America, and fifteen craftsmen and labourers who had offered their services to the new Benedictine colony in the quality of lay brethren. If any one of the party had supposed that the establishment of a monastery in the half-cleared forests of Pennsylvania was likely

¹ By an error in our last number Fr. Michael Pembridge, O.S.B., was said to have been the author of a book entitled "The Whole Duty of Man," an anonymous work, concerning the authorship of which there has been considerable discussion. Fr. Pembridge's work was "The Whole Duty of a Christian."

² The formal transfer of the property, however, did not take place till the 15th of February, 1847.