

THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

A correspondent of the *Times*, who was present at the grand ceremonial of the Greek Church at Jerusalem, gives the following graphic account of what occurred:—

"Sir,—I was a witness, on Friday night, of the great ceremonial of the Greek Church at Jerusalem, and, on Saturday morning, of the still greater ceremonial of the combined Greek, Armenian, and Coptic Churches with respect to the 'Holy Fire.' . . . The Greek, the Armenian, the Latin, and the Coptic churches possess the large pile of buildings which, under one roof, enclose the prison of our Lord, the Rock of Calvary, all the circumjacent ground, the cave containing the sepulchre in which our Lord was laid, together with the garden where He appeared after His resurrection to His mother and Mary Magdalene, and the spot where the Cross was found by the Empress Helena. The Georgian Church (another secession from the Greek) originally possessed a part of the ground and buildings. Being in want of funds, they sold their shares to the Armenians; but, having retained the right to rebuy it, they still claim an interest in the Holy Places, and make no little noise and disturbance on the strength of that right, and probably the more noise because it is merely a right. Places were most kindly offered to us by the Greek Consul, and, together with those of the Russian dignitaries in the corresponding balcony, they were the best places in the church. They were between the rotunda, in which the sepulchre itself stands, (the door of which faced us,) and the main portion of the church, in which the centre of the earth is; so that by turning round you saw the entire mass of buildings both ways, a thing which nobody but the eight persons in each of these two balconies could do. At a quarter past eight on Friday evening we went. Preceded by two tall cawasses in red and white dresses, with silver-topped halberds, which they now clinked on the ground in regular cadence, and now used to knock the head of any innocent person who, from not having heard the clink or from the pressure of the crowd, still stood in the way, we entered the church of God among blows ruthlessly given and cringingly received. The sight that met the eye was twofold,—first, the walls and roof enveloped in a blaze of unequalled light, and secondly, the floors covered by families, made up for the night. The families covered the floor far more wondrously than the light covered the walls. Some shady spot on the latter you might have found, but not an inch of the former was untenanted. The galleries were equally occupied, and many were the crates and large square planks projecting from niches in the wall, all full and covered with devotees. We made our way, our bodies sleeping and disposed for sleep, to our places, and then looked around over the vast circumference. Every variety of form was there, every variety of dress, every variety of nation, every variety of 'get up' for the night. Here a Greek family, composed of father, mother, grown-up children, and babies, doing their best to retain an enclosure of great privacy and seclusion by the maintenance of bolsters round a square of some five or six feet, and struggling in vain against the pressure, which reduced their square to the actual amount of space covered by their own persons piled one above another. Here a tall Copt, with naked legs and breast and shoulders, lying upon his back, his mantle over him, fast asleep; there half-a-dozen swarthy Russians huddled up, with their heads on each other's shoulders and knees, unable to find space to lie down; many with no appliances, many with beds and blankets most carefully spread, but all packed so close together that not another child could be introduced, and all determined to bear and suffer for twenty-four hours—ay, and many for forty-eight, rather than sacrifice one inch of the ground which would enable them to partake in the great Fire-worship of the morrow. Alas for human expectations! How was the ceremonial to march over recumbent bodies? A bustle was heard, and in single files there came forth 100 Turkish soldiers, with bayonets fixed, officers, and a colonel. This last is in command of all the troops in Jerusalem. The Turks, disbelieving in the whole thing, have the pleasant duty of keeping the peace among the quarrelling Christians, and for this purpose have a guard