

compelled to beg his bread, and the believer who sees himself cheated without mercy; an enmity suppressed only on festival days, when pastor and parishioners together drown in drunkenness their mutual grievances.

Such is the picture generally presented by the villages of Russia. Of course, to this melancholy rule there are exceptions; but these are very rare; and even when a priest may have succeeded in living on good terms with the members of his flock, and in acquiring over them a real and religious influence, a terrible contingency ever impends over the whole of his career; it is enough that he should have the misfortune to lose his wife to be immediately compelled to resign his functions. He may then either re-enter into secular life or become a monk.

The Russian Church has but one religious order, that of St. Basil, and the number of its members is limited enough. It is said that, taking the whole empire, not more than 300 yearly enter the convents: this is partly the result of the poverty of these institutions. Possessed in former times of great property, they were despoiled of it by Catherine II.; a certain number of them receive from government a very small indemnity, the rest subsist on alms. Certain privileges, however, are secured to monks by law; they are exempted from corporeal punishment, and from military service,—in this respect, the Russian monks are more happy than the priests; neither are subject to the knout or the baton; but the priests may, in certain cases, be degraded and sent to the army.

In the monasteries the vows cannot be taken under the age of thirty, nor without the consent of parents and of the Holy Synod; thanks perhaps, to these precautions, the Russian monks are, in general, better instructed and more pious than the priests; they alone have preserved some thoughtful habits and some degree of religious life in the Russian Church. Moreover, it is from the convents exclusively that the ranks of the higher clergy are recruited—the bishops, the professors in colleges, &c.—who, better informed than the nobility, have not their narrow prejudices, and enjoy a merited consideration. In olden times the superior clergy played an important part in Russia. The Patriarch of Moscow, placed at the head of the whole church, and independent, or nearly so, of the see of Constantinople, was one of the most powerful personages in the empire. But since the abolition of the patriarchate,—since the period when Peter the Great and his successors made all authority centre in the Czar,—the influence of the higher clergy has diminished; their power is now a nullity; and they are the docile and obedient instruments of the government. The Holy Synod, composed of their chiefs, and which holds its sittings at St. Petersburg, has no power of its own, and contents itself with servilely registering the decisions which the emperor communicates to it by a lay procurator, who at the present time is no other than Protasoff, the general of cavalry. There remain now, to the higher clergy, in place of their lost influence, only great honours and much consideration.

This glance at the condition of the Russian Church sufficiently explains why religious life is entirely wanting in its pale. All controversy with the Church of Rome has ceased; and were it to be renewed, the points in dispute would not be of sufficient importance to awaken any movement whatever; all intercourse with the other branches of the Greek Church is as good as prohibited; shut up in its own exclusive sphere, the Russian Church has no theology sufficiently characteristic and defined to maintain an independent vitality, doctrine is scarcely ever taught in the colleg-

es; the only point really insisted on is the *divine authority of the Czars*: and the immense majority both of clergy and people are thus given over to a frivolous and totally barren formalism. The temporal position of the clergy, as we have already stated, obtains for them neither influence nor consideration; neither does the worship—which consists only in ceremonies, genuflections, and crossings without number, performed with scrupulous exactness, but to which no moral value belongs, and no religious meaning is attached. The *employé*, the soldier, the peasant, when they have satisfied these requirements of the ceremonial law, depart, in perfect tranquillity of conscience, to rob the state or their proprietor. And how can it be otherwise? All public religious instruction (the fact, though hardly credible, is nevertheless certain) is entirely unknown in Russia. All other branches of the Christian church require before receiving a member to communion, that he should have been instructed in the principles and duties of religion. The Russian Church is easier of access, knows no *catechuminate*, and children participate in the communion from the cradle. When they arrive at the age of reason, and, for the first time, are confessed before communicating, a kind of *fête* and religious ceremony takes place, but this is not preceded by any species of instruction. The people, therefore, know nothing of religion, but what they can learn from its outward rites, which is scarcely any thing. Preaching is very rare—so much so, that a few sermons suffice to gain for their author, usually a monk, a reputation for oratory, and an episcopal see. In the country districts the priest never preaches, and is content with now and then reading to his flock a sermon printed by some orator of renown, which, having been composed for an educated audience, is naturally almost incomprehensible to peasants. There remain the liturgies and sacred books. But in this empire, where of more than sixty millions of inhabitants, forty millions speak the same language, without even any marked difference of dialect, worship is performed in a foreign language, the Slavonic. When, in the course of the ninth century, the Greek missionaries preached Christianity to the Slavonians, that people had no written language, and they were obliged to compose for them an alphabet. Cyril and Methodius, whose names are still held in honour, adopted as a basis the Greek alphabet, with the addition of some Hebrew and Armenian letters, and thus succeeded in effecting a rude translation of the sacred books. Hence it follows that the Bible and religious books used by the Russian Church are unintelligible to all but the clergy, who study Slavonic in the colleges. Englishmen have translated the Bible into Russian, but the Czar has formally prohibited the circulation of this version of the Scriptures in his empire.

We thus see the amount of religious provision made by the Russian Church for its disciples. The clergy, with the exception of the Bishops, have no standing in society; preaching is almost a nullity; religious instruction has no existence, the people then, must not be held responsible, if the most elementary notions of morality and religion are found wanting, and their place supplied by formalism and superstition. The most melancholy proofs have been cited. The Greek Church forbids *images*; but *pictures*, the painted representation of saints, abound everywhere; there is not a house, even amongst the most infamous, where these *paintings*, called *logs*, are not found. It is related that a merchant warmly expressed to a foreign dealer his indignation that he had no *log* in his apartment; on a subsequent day he perceived on the bolster of the bed a sacred image, and crossed