

MARCH, 1878.

The Sinaitic Manuscript.

THE Presbyterian community at large will be pleased to learn that the Presbyterian College of Montreal has recently received from Alexander II., the Emperor of Russia, a beautiful *fac simile* copy of this most interesting and valuable Sacred Manuscript, commonly known as the *Codex Sinaiticus*. The Imperial gift seems to have been obtained through the influence of Rev. A. B. MacKay, of Brighton, England, who arrived in Montreal a few weeks ago, for the purpose of supplying the pulpit of the Coté Street Church, or rather the New Crescent Street Church, which is about to take the place of the old "Free Church."

The following extracts from Professor Porter's account of the discovery of this treasure, published at the time, will be read with no less interest now,—and may be new to some of our readers:—

Those who love their Bible cannot fail to feel a deep interest in everything that concerns this precious relic of antiquity; and especially so when informed that it contains, in all probability, the oldest, and certainly the most perfect, copy of the New Testament in the original Greek, which has come down to us from an early age. We take it for granted that a brief sketch of its history, a description of its general appearance, and an account of its contents, will be acceptable to our readers.

Professor Tischendorf, having spent four years among the libraries of Europe, searching for and collating old manuscripts, went to the East on a similar errand in 1844. In the month of May he visited the Convent of Mount Sinai. There he happened by chance upon a basket into which loose and torn fragments of paper and parchment had been thrown by the monks, to be used in heating the oven. Among these he discovered portions of a copy of the Septuagint in *uncial* (capital) letters. The shape of the letters, the quality of the

parchment, and the form of the page, all showed it to be of the highest antiquity. He asked it of the monks, and they at once gave it to him as a thing of no value. He afterwards, on further search, found much larger fragments of the same manuscript. These he saved from the fire; but the good fathers had now some faint ideas of their importance, and refused either to give or sell them. Tischendorf left the convent with mingled feelings—glad at having rescued from destruction such precious fragments, but sorry at not having succeeded in getting possession of them all. After an interval of nine years the ardent scholar again found himself within the walls of the convent. In vain he searched the whole building, from the church to the kitchen; he could find no trace of the manuscript he had previously seen. In vain he questioned the reverend fathers, from the abbot to the cook; he could learn nothing of its fate. We can imagine how sad and how bitter was his disappointment. He felt convinced some more fortunate antiquary had gained the treasure he had fondly hoped should be his own, and with a sorrowful heart he returned to Europe.

A few years later, Tischendorf received letters of recommendation to the Russian court, and in September, 1858, he was commissioned by the Emperor Alexander to make another journey to the East in search of ancient manuscripts. On the last day of January 1859, he entered for the third time the Convent of St. Catherine at Sinai. The good fathers welcomed him with even more than their ordinary hospitality, prompted, no doubt, by the fact that he carried the commission of their liberal patron and powerful protector, the Emperor of Russia.

Tischendorf consequently received every assistance in his labours and researches. The church, the library,—the whole convent, in fact, was open to him. For four days he searched, examining every nook and corner, opening and re-opening every musty parchment, in the hope of finding the valued manuscript. It was in vain.

On the 4th February he sent his servant for the camels that had been turned out to pasture, intending on the seventh to bid a final adieu to the old convent, and the wild