

be more meet and proper, than your all uniting in prayer, lifting up your souls in thanksgiving and praise to your heavenly Father, for the mercies bestowed on you throughout the day,—in supplicating pardon for whatsoever you may have done amiss,—and beseeching Him, for Christ's sake, to preserve you from sin unpotted in His ways, and preserve you through this night? Then need you fear no evil; for He who slumbers not nor sleeps, will keep you in perfect safety. I think I hear some say, We know not how to pray,—we have not learning. But, my friends, it is impossible that any creature, sensible of his lost and perishing state by nature, and his unspeakable need of Christ to be his Saviour,—believing all He has done, taught, and suffered for the redemption of mankind, and His promise of free and full remission of the sins of all those who come unto God, with deep repentance and godly sorrow for their past sins and shortcomings, and sincere purpose of serving Him in newness of life,—trusting alone in the merits of Jesus for acceptance at a throne of grace,—that if you feel all this, will you not find simple earnest language to express it? You long for reconciliation with God,—you feel yourself a sinner. Jesus came to save sinners; then He came to save you. You think yourself unworthy; but tell me, who is worthy? Even the most righteous are saved by grace. "There is none righteous, no not one." By nature we are all children of wrath till we are born again of the Spirit. Till we are created anew unto righteousness in Christ Jesus, we continue separated from God. Come, then, with humble, lowly, and penitent hearts, to a throne of grace. Plead the promises. Think what an invaluable privilege it is, for sinful creatures to be invited to address their heavenly Father—to offer up their earnest supplications through their blessed Mediator and Redeemer, who sits at the right hand of God to plead the cause of sinners, and says, "Whoever ye shall ask, I will do for him, and shall receive." Your requests should be chiefly for spiritual things,—these we should never cease to pray for till we obtain; and should press earnestly for continuance and increase of grace. We are desirous to seek first for the kingdom of heaven, and all other things shall be added unto us. As to temporal blessings we seek for, or the removal of trials the Almighty lays upon us, we may pray for them; but it ought always to be, only if it seemeth good in His sight. Ever remember the example of your blessed Saviour. Knowing the dreadful agony He was to endure,—knowing the hour was drawing nigh when He was to bear the punishment of our sins in His own body on the cross,—His meek prayer was, "O my God, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done." Sinner, this cup He drank for you. He drank it that the bitter cup of everlasting death might pass away from you, if, with believing hearts, you come unto Him for life. He is the door by which you must enter in. No man cometh to the Father but by Him. Prayer is the key which unlocks the door of mercy. Pray the Almighty, for Christ's sake, to send down the Holy Spirit to enlighten your soul, and to guide and lead you to Jesus. Prayer is not expressing coldly wishes for things we feel no great desire for. It is actual communion with the Father of spirits,—it is a lifting up of the soul to that Almighty Being who has appointed prayer, if offered up in spirit and in truth, as the medium of converse with Him. Never be satisfied with the degree of spiritual light and grace you have received, but earnestly seek

to obtain more and more. As to our earthly wants, if we diligently and lawfully endeavour to obtain things honest in the sight of all men, never doing anything to forward our plans that is not in accordance with the word and commandments of God, if He sees it is for our good, our endeavours will succeed. If they fail, He for some useful purpose withholds it; for He knows best what is good for His creatures.

Religion of the Russian Peasant.

With all their equipages and decorations this crowd of nobles, foreigners and soldiers in the gay Nefskof, is not so attractive as our humble friends in the sheep skins. To a stranger, the genuine new caught Russian is worth all his civilized superiors in the empire. Wherever he may be seen, he is a most interesting subject for study; but nowhere more than in church. Follow him into the beautiful temple of the Virgin of Kassan, and you find him on his knees, repeating his prayers after the priest, with a slavery which nothing can arrest, and a devotion which nothing can distract. Pass him, or jostle him as you may, he is too deeply engaged with his pious work to take the least notice of you. It is always painful to be present, an unconcerned spectator, where a religious service is going forward in which the heart cannot join. We feel as if intruding on that which we have no right to witness, and seem to scuff without wishing to do so. In Russia, however, there is no occasion for feeling thus. Let the stranger take off his hat on entering, and he is no more looked at than one of the pillars—he turbs no body. We are here surrounded by splendour. The noble simplicity of the decoration—two long pillared aisles in the form of a cross—only renders the richness of the material more conspicuous. From a floor of the most costly marble, the eye rises to a light and lofty dome, spangled with stars of gold, that twinkle from a sky of the deepest blue. There is neither gallery nor buttress to break the fine height. Even the dias, occupied by the priests, scarcely breaks the general outline; it is but a simple step or two, not far from the entrance. There they stand, in strong array, with long beards flowing over their robes of embroidered crimson, and wearing a lofty black hat, that gives yet more dignity to their stately forms. Their deep rich voices make the vaults ring as they chant the prayers, aided by a band of bearded choristers ranged beside singing-desks within a side-railing. Great care being taken in training the singers, this part of the service is always exceedingly impressive; finer voices we have never heard. But the crowd of worshippers is the most interesting sight. Every person as he enters kisses the sacred picture near the door, or tries to reach that hanging on the wall,—to which latter, as it is of more than ordinary sanctity, you may see parents raising their little infants, that they too may touch it with their lips. Of these effigies, the more sacred usually have the brow, the cheeks, and the arms covered with silver—the votive offering of the pious, whose gratitude to the saint whom he thus seeks to honour for deliverance from sickness or danger, has overcome his taste; for the appearance given to the picture by this tinsel covering is truly ludicrous. What makes them more hideous to the indifferent spectator, however, only gives them greater attraction in the eyes of the faithful. To these, accordingly, the people flock in greatest

number. His salutation over, the peasant selects a place for himself on the floor, as near the priest as possible. There is a woman in one of the aisles, with a small table or basket before her, selling long slender tapers; and from her the more devout make a purchase. And, lighting it, set their offering on one of the little triangular frames of wood, planted among the pillars and stuck all over with nails for attaching these gifts to. Though it be Sabbath, many workmen are busy polishing some steps with pumice, within a few feet of the officiating priests; but no one is distracted by the noise; the people come here to pray, not to look about them. The mutterings and prostrations of the worshippers are most singular. Some, on the outskirts of the assembly, may remain standing; but the greater part have then knelt. At certain words, however, all, both those who were standing and those who kneel, strike their very foreheads on the earth, with great vehemence, uttering, at the same time, some words from the priest, and this again and again before the service is finished. Some poor old women are always the most conspicuous in these violent manifestations, but all ages and classes, and both sexes, join with more or less ardour. At vespers, we have seen most respectably—dressed ladies going through the whole ceremony with great fury. In short, the hummery of their religion surpassed all that we had previously witnessed. There is nothing like it in Catholic countries; it can only be compared to the violence of some of the Hindus. One can scarcely describe the emotion which he feels on seeing a crowded assembly going through all these crossings, and attitudes, and genuflections, so strange and so outrageous. It is impossible not to be moved with sorrow for those who look upon such things as constituting religion. Whether this extreme attention to forms be accompanied with any real religious knowledge, is a question which few foreigners are qualified to decide. Judging, however, from what we were told by Russians themselves, we cannot hesitate to say, that with the lower orders in this country, religion is little better than superstition. Of the true nature of the Great Atonement, they are utterly ignorant; and even of the first principles of all religion, in the existence of a Supreme, they entertain the most imperfect notions. With the poor, God is only something higher than the emperor; they think not of Him as an omnipotent spiritual being, but as one residing they know not where, who will punish them for neglecting church and their prescribed forms, nearly in the same way as they would be punished for disobeying a mandate of the emperor. Of a future state, their notions are also very indefinite. In short, as has often been said before now, the Russian's religion consists in being able to make the sign of the cross." He is crossing himself all day long. When he first comes forth into the open air in the morning, if no church be in sight from his own door, he listens for the first sound of some bell, then, turning towards it, crosses himself with great fervour, to insure a blessing on the undertakings of the day. He crosses himself before and after each meal. When you make a bargain with him, he crosses himself that it may prosper. When his countryman spits upon him, (as they do by way of anathema, when in anger with each other,) he meekly crosses himself to avert the curse. When the peasant who is to drive you takes the reins in his hand, he crosses himself to keep away accidents; and every stepple he passes gets the same mark of respect. Some-