

General Intelligence.

PERSECUTION IN RUSSIA.

The narrative of Makrena Mieczyslawka, Basilian Abbess of Minsk, or the History of a Seven Years' Persecution, suffered by her and her Nuns; written from her own words, and under the orders of our Most Holy Father the Pope, Gregory XVI., by the Rev. Father Maximilian Rylto, Rector of the Propaganda in Rome; the Abbe Alexander Jelowski, Rector of St. Claudius, in Rome; the Abbe Aloys Leitner, Theologian of the Propaganda, in Rome. Beginning on the 6th of November and ending on the 6th of December, 1845, at Rome.

I.

Expulsion from Minsk, Imprisonment and Persecution at Witebsk.
(1838—1840.)

Continued.

Nepomucena Grotkowska died of a dreadful blow with which the Tgumena, or Abbess of the Czernice, broke her head by striking her with a log of wood, because the poor nun had presumed to use a knife in order to scratch out a spot of tar on the floor, and that she had endeavoured uselessly to do away otherwise.

Soon after, these whippings ended the martyrdom of two other nuns, Susan Sypinski, and Coletto Sielawa: the latter died on the very day of the torture, in consequence of an incident I shall now relate.

We were tormented by hunger; but from time to time, God fed us by inspiring some poor people to throw over to us the remains of their bread. Sister Coletti having perceived it on that day, advanced to receive the alms; but a Czernice having seen her, struck her with a stick which the Czernice always wore at their side, like a sabre, and that they ever now and then used to beat us with. After beating the nun, she slapped her face, tore her cheeks, and dragged her along by the hair, and at last threw her with such violence against a piece of wood that Coletta had a rib broken. The poor martyr opposed no sort of resistance, as we never did, but on that same night she expired on my knees.

We had been a few months at Witebsk (1839), enduring trials and tortures of all kinds from Michalewicz, when Siemaszko reprimanded him with not being able to overcome our constancy nor to force us to apostasy. Michalewicz, frightened at these menaces, wrote back to Siemaszko that we were ready to go over to the schism, and that, under his hands, we had become like soft wax. In the meantime, and before his principal arrived, he doubled our tortures, in order to obtain

in reality what he had so falsely announced to Siemaszko. The better to succeed in his plan, he divided us and shut us up in four different dungeons. The one I occupied with four of my sisters was a cold, dark, damp cellar, filled with grubs and worms that ran all over us, got into our eyes, our nostrils, and even our mouths.

Without having concerted about it, we all began on that day a *neuvaine* for each other, to obtain the grace of mutual perseverance. The three divisions we were separated from, received for food during the two first days, a pound of bran bread and a pint of water; and this ratio was afterwards reduced by one half. As for ourselves, we had neither bread nor water; but we ate the remains of rotten vegetables left in the cellar, and which the worms had not completely eaten up.

In this new prison we passed some happy, nay, even some cheerful moments. We were constantly at prayer, and we composed an extempore hymn, that became for us both a distraction and a consolation.

"My God! we wear these chains by thy will, accept our sufferings, and never cease to support us.

"Expelled from that dwelling where our labour was so delightful, to whom shall we offer our complaints against the crimes of those traitors?

"Let us suffer on, oh! servants of the Lord! If we fight out this battle, he will one day dry our tears by granting victory to Faith.

"Then shall we break our chains assunder, then shall we surmount all barriers. Let thy divine will be done! Thou wilt crown us in heaven!"

Michalewicz went every day from prison to prison, bearing in hand a paper destined to receive our act of apostasy. "What is the use of resisting?" said he; "all your sisters have already abjured the Roman Church; here is the act they have subscribed; they are now free and happy, *taking their coffee*. Come now, children, subscribe; *the coffee stands waiting*." And then, addressing himself to me: "Well, Mrs. Abbess, is it not better to become once more an abbess, than to be thus eaten up alive by worms? Come now, do sign; your other children have done that already."

It was by such means he endeavoured to deceive us. We trembled for each other. At last I heard within me a voice which cried out: *Snatch the paper*. I snatched it out of the apostate's hand, and opened it . . . I found a blank sheet of paper!

"Ah! you villain, Judas, liar, the very agent of Lucifer! . . . return to your good master!"

Michalewicz had no stick with him, so he con-