

The Unification of Christendom.

II.

In no country can we find simplicity and gorgeous ceremonial so intermingled and on such good terms with one another as in Russia. There is no Ritualistic contention. The real and the symbolic unite in peace; the latter the outward expression of the former. Within the pale there is a mighty brotherhood of peer and peasant. I have often seen a soldier take off his cap and stand bareheaded till his officer, clapping him on the shoulder, and replacing his cap, says: "Brat m' nushno," "No need of that, brother!" There is no widespread hatred between poor and rich—are we not all brethren? God and the Tzar unite them in a political and religious unity. The churches are remarkable for their bare white walls, while their furniture, especially of what we should call the chancel, is extremely rich. There can be no doubt to those acquainted with both, that while the orthodox church, through its conservatism and its formularies has maintained the essentials of the true Christian faith, the separatists have broken out into many strange and unscriptural errors, as is generally the case where "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Was it not so in England when the Bible was first opened to the people, and "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon," rather than the sword of the Spirit, was laid hold of and covered the land with fratricidal strife and bloodshed, and mutual oppression as each party held power?

Further enquiry has reduced the strife to one of interpretation, a sure sign of advance, a better spirit of proving all things and holding fast that which is good. But while this conservative spirit has its good side, it has also, where knowledge and enquiry have not as yet much advanced, its bad side, old customs and traditions of the people still hold sway, and as they cannot all at once be eradicated without further knowledge, which is of gradual growth, the Spirit guiding and leading into all truth, so we find that meanwhile the authorities in Russia wink at these things to a great extent, waiting for time to eradicate them. I suppose that the enlightened foreigner, if he were to be present at Lady Godiva's show in Coventry, or the symbolic procession of the Lord Mayor's show in London, or the burning of Fawkes on the 5th November, might leave the country with some strange conceptions of the traditions of the people. In some parts of England the custom of Baal teine, or leaping through the bonfires on Shrove Tuesday, is still maintained, without much perception of its origin in the worship of Baal, the Sun or Fire God. This is still kept up as a purification by fire on Shrove Tuesday in Russia. It has its usefulness at times when and where water is scarce. In Georgia the peasant bakes his bread in huge earthenware jars let into the ground; after removing the loaves he holds his garments over the embers and gets rid, for a time at least, of his tormentors, if not of his sins. The Russian peasant, however, believes in the purgatorial effect of the fire, and then of the