

NOVEL RELIGIOUS SERVICE

Celebration of the Liturgy of the Orthodox Oriental Church at Trinity Chapel.

Anniversary of the Accession of the Emperor Alexander II. to the Throne of Russia.

A REMARKABLE EVENT IN HISTORY.

Inauguration of the Russo-Greek Church in America.

The Liturgy of the Orthodox Oriental Church was celebrated yesterday in Trinity Chapel by Rev. AGAPIUS HONCHARENKO. The service is perhaps more popularly known as that of the Russo-Greek Church. In itself this event may be regarded as historic, it being the first public celebration of the Russian (or Greek) Church, not only in this city, but on the American Continent. But throughout Christendom, and especially in Europe, it cannot fail to be regarded as an event of great religious and political significance. It is well known that the leading minds of the Episcopal Church both here and in England have for some years been earnestly engaged in an effort to establish intercommunion with the Russo-Greek Church, and there are two committees of churchmen here and in England working conjointly with vigorous activity and very great zeal for this object. The ecclesiastical importance of establishing cordial fraternal relations, if not unrestricted intercommunion, between the Russo-Greek Church and the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, which most resemble each other in structure and historical antecedents, was distinctly recognized by the latter body in its last general convention, held in the City of New-York in October, 1862. A motion made by Rev. Dr. THRALL, clerical delegate from California, was earnestly seconded by Mr. SAM'L B. RUGGLES, lay delegate from New-York, for a committee to inquire into the expediency of opening intercourse between the two churches. A committee of eight members, embracing three of the American Bishops, three other clerical members and two lay delegates, was accordingly appointed. Two of its members—Rev. Dr. Young and Mr. S. B. RUGGLES—since their appointment have visited Russia, for the purpose of fully possessing themselves of the information, ecclesiastical and secular, necessary for their report to the coming convention in October next, embracing not merely matters of doctrine and ritual, but the more practical and secular questions, such as burial of the dead, visitation of the sick, &c., necessarily growing out of the rapidly increasing intercourse between the two great nations, in their respective territories on the Pacific. The Bishop of Oxford, in presenting a petition to the Upper House of Convocation from the Lower, in England, in July, 1863, on this subject, said: "If there is one matter upon earth which it would be a blessed thing to help forward, it would surely be the interchange of the visible acts of communion between our own branch of the church at home and in America with the orthodox branches of the Eastern Church."

* * Those who have studied the controversy with Rome, know that there is nothing more important in maintaining our position against the usurpations of Rome than the independent position of the Eastern Church; and if we can strengthen the bonds of intercourse between that church and ourselves, it would be one of the greatest blessings that can be conceived." And now it might be said that if the great point in view is not attained by this service in one of the great Episcopal edifices of this city, it is easy to see how far the members of the Oriental Church are influenced by the efforts made in this direction on both sides of the Atlantic.

The ostensible occasion of the service was no less happy, namely, the anniversary of the accession of the Emperor ALEXANDER II, to the throne of Russia, for the celebration of which the Rev. Dr. DIX, the pastor of Trinity Church, cordially sanctioned by the Bishop of the Diocese, extended the hospitality of Trinity Chapel as a token of international as well as religious sympathy.

THE RUSSO-GREEK CLERGYMAN.

The Rev. AGAPIUS HONCHARENKO is an amiable and dignified-looking clergyman, of some 50 years of age. He is a Russian by birth, and a graduate of the Ecclesiastical Academy of St. Petersburg. The ship *Alexander Nevsky*, that some twelve months ago left this city for Athens, brought word to the Grecian capital that there was a large number of the Orthodox Church in this country without a pastor, and he came on, volunteering his services, accredited by the Metropolitan of Athens and the Holy Synod of the Kingdom of Greece.

THE RUSSO-GREEK FAITH.

The Greek church holds the doctrine of seven sacraments or mysteries of which Baptism and the Eucharist are reckoned the chief; of the consecration of the Eucharist, though they do not acknowledge "transubstantiation," so-called; of veneration, though not worship, of the Virgin, the saints, the meritoriousness of fasting and other works, and the hierarchical orders, and monasticism. It disowns the authority of the Pope, and lays no claim to infallibility. It performs baptism by trine immersion. It administers the Lord's Supper in both kinds, and gives the sacraments of confirmation and communion to children immediately after baptism. It disowns the existence of purgatory, but prays for the faithful departed that God would have mercy on them at the General Judgment. The principal act of worship is the celebration of the Liturgy or communion office; only one celebration is allowed at the same altar (which they call table). The Litany used is that of St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM which is an abbreviation of that of St. BASIL, which was an amplification of the Liturgy of St. JAMES of Jerusalem. It admits of no images in relief or embossed work, but uses pictures as sacred representations to promote religious remembrance. It approves of the marriage of priests, provided they marry previously to entering into holy orders. It condemns second marriages of priests and fourth marriages of laymen. It keeps four fasts in the year more solemnly than the rest. The churches are mostly built in the form of a cross; the altar stands toward the east, under a dome, which is higher than the nave, and separated from it by a partition board containing three doors, the middle one being called the sacred door, which, opened, permits the altar to be seen. At the beginning of the sacred liturgy the doors are closed and opened several times during the service, but closed at the most solemn part of the liturgy. Benches are not used, and during the service the people do not sit but stand, and occasionally kneel.

THE CELEBRATION OF YESTERDAY.

The Russian clergyman was dressed in the phelonion or white robe, covering the whole person, underneath which was a scarlet stole or epitrachelion. The white robe was open in front, and the red stole could be seen in the opening. The appearance of the vestments was really picturesque. The altar was that ordinarily used at Trinity Chapel, and was lighted at both ends with gas, and the chandelier, which overhangs the chancel, was also lit. The clergyman stood at the middle of the altar the greater part of the time, and around it stood Bishop SOUTHGATE, Drs. DIX and McVICKAR, (the oldest presbyter of the diocese of New-York,) and Rev. Dr. THRALL, member of the Russo-Greek Committee.

The church, both aisles and galleries, was crowded with ladies and gentlemen to its utmost extent, although there had been no advertisement in the papers regarding the celebration. There were present upward of fifty clergymen of the city and neighborhood. The music, (only vocal,) was very fine. The ceremonies were impressive, solemn, and, to almost every one present, novel, but exceedingly interesting, and, it might be said, beautiful. We ought to say that there were some sixty Greeks and about twenty Slavonians or Russians present, who occupied seats in front of the altar.

The service was the usual liturgy of the Greek Church. It began with the benediction, "Blessed be the Kingdom of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, now and forever unto ages of ages," the choir responding, Amen.

The *ectene* or litany of twelve petitions was next chanted by the priest; the choir singing *Hospode Domelue* (Lord have mercy and hear us.) At the conclusion of that, the choir sang the beatitudes in English. The choir then sang the Trisagion "Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy upon us."

Priest—Wisdom, stand up: let us hear the Holy Gospel. Peace to all.

The Gospel is next announced, and the choir sings, *Slavatebye Hospodo, Slavatebye*; or "Glory be to Thee, O Lord, Glory be to Thee."

Another *ectene* longer than the first is said, and contains the petition for the Imperial family of Russia. Then comes the *Ege Charuvenge*, which is thus rendered into English verse by Mrs. ELIZABETH ARBETT BROWNING.

"See the glorious Cherubim
Thronging round the Eternal's throne—
Hark! they sing their holy hymns
To the unknown Three in One.
All supporting Deity,
Living spirit, praise to Thee!

Rest, ye worldly tumults, rest;
Here let all be peace and joy."

Grief no more shall rend our breast,
Tears no more shall dew our eye,

Heaven directed spirits rise
To the temple of the skies!
Join the ranks of angels bright
Near the Eternal's dazzling light.
Hallelujah!

Another *ectene* follows this hymn, and then comes the Nicene creed in English, with the omission (a striking one to all our readers) of the clause, "and the Son," (in speaking of the procession of the Holy Ghost.)

[This interpolation of the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, was introduced into the creed by NICHOLAS I., Bishop of Rome of the Ninth Century, without the sanction of the Œcumenical Council.]

Next comes:
Priest—Stand we well; stand we with fear. Let us attend to offer the holy obligation in peace.

Choir—The anointing of peace, the sacrifice of peace.

THE CANON OR SOLEMN PART OF THE SACRIFICE.

Priest—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Choir—And with thy spirit.

Priest—Let us lift up our hearts.

Choir—We lift them up unto the Lord.

Priest—Let us give thanks unto the Lord.

Choir—It is meet and right to worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the consubstantial and undivided Trinity.

Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabbaoth, Heaven and earth are filled with thy glory. Hosannah in the Highest. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the Highest!

The priest next recites the words of the Institute in secret, and then exclaiming aloud, "In behalf and for all, we offer Thee thine own of thine own."

Choir—Thee we hymn; Thee we praise; to Thee we give thanks, Lord, and pray to Thee, our God.

At the conclusion of the Liturgy, the Priest chants a short *ectene* with a prayer, said secretly, at which the Priest exclaims—"And make us worthy O! Lord, with boldness and without condemnation to call upon Thee, our God and Father which art in Heaven, and to say:"

Choir—Our Father which art in Heaven, &c. (sung in English.)

The consecration being completed the Priest receives, and during his communion is sung the Cherubic hymn.

Priest—Let us go in peace.

And then follows a prayer said aloud, which is regarded by all churchmen as very beautiful and impressive:

"Lord, who blestest them that bless Thee, and savest them that put their trust in Thee, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance. Guard with care the fullness of Thy Church. Hallow those who love the beauty of Thine house. Give Thy peace to the world, to Thy churches, to our priests and kings, to the army, and to all Thy people; because every good gift and every perfect gift is from Thee, and cometh down from the Father of Light. And to Thee we ascribe all glory, worship and honor, as is most due Thee, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen."

The priest, making mention of the Imperial family of Russia says: *Mnohahyah lyate*, (many days or long life.)

This ended the liturgy.

Next came the prayer for the Imperial family of Russia, being the special service ordered to be used in Russia for the Emperor and Empress.

It begins with a long *ectene* of fifteen petitions, to which the choir makes the customary responses, to each, *Slava tebye Hospodo, Slava tebye*.

The priest and congregation then kneel, (the former at a distance from the altar, in the outer chancel,) and all join secretly in prayer. Then all rise and sing *Gloria in Excelsis*, in English.

At the conclusion the choir sing *Mnohahyah lyate*, which is the hymn at which the congregation take their departure.

THE MUSIC AND ARRANGEMENTS.

The success of this celebration, yesterday, in Trinity Chapel, was chiefly, if not altogether, owing to the exertions of Rev. J. F. YOUNG, who, for the last three weeks, has been at work night and day in getting up the arrangements, both in connection with the altar and the choral services. The music was that of the Russian Church, brought from St. Petersburg by Dr. Young, who made it available for the present occasion, by putting the Slavonian sounds into the English characters or letters, and arranging it in four parts. The choir, although not numerous, was highly effective, the chords frequently produced swelling with liquid sweetness, and filling the church with harmony that well suited the occasion. Messrs. AIKEN, FROST, ROCKWOOD, DAVIES, THATCHER and LUGGET deserve well, not only for their choral effectiveness, but for their kindness in volunteering their services for the celebration.