

## RUSSIA.

(The Correspondent of the London 'Tablet.')

ST. PETERSBURG, December 13—25, 1872.

*Panorama of Petersburg*—I should like to make your readers acquainted with our capital, so that they may recognise it, in case any of them have occasion to visit it. They would find there countrymen to the number of 2,099, of whom 1,118 are of the female sex. The present population of the metropolis is 667,963, which figures denote an increase of 128,085 souls since the census of 1864. Our first statistics date from the death of Peter the First, in 1725, at which period there were no more than 75,000 persons living on this morass, and they were exiles. In 377,380 men there are only 100,000 above the age of 30; and the half of the heads of families live in separation from them. These two facts must cast a dark shadow over our estimate of public morals. It is calculated that there are in Petersburg 21,305 foreigners—ten years ago there were but 11,777—and 20,882 Catholics, who possess three churches. It has been said that the Russians are great travellers, but the official report only shows 4,672 passports to have been granted during last year—not an excessive number. What is more to be lamented is, that during the same period 125,337 persons were committed to prison, which gives an average of 343 per diem. It may be charitably presumed that, at least the half of these committals were merely cases of drunkenness. In 1871, the deaths from intoxication were 1,663; this year they have amounted to 2,640. There is one remark to be made on this subject; the Russians are a people who habitually drink the least of any, and yet it is amongst them that intoxication makes the greatest ravages. The reason is that when they once take to drinking they will drink hard for several days together without eating anything. It is believed, and with reason, that the multitude of holidays increases inebriety more than it stimulates devotion. Besides the "Imperial" fête-days, village gatherings and family meetings, there are 126 days in the year on which the Popes forbid work. To some saints, such as St. Nicholas, several days are dedicated, and even in the midst of harvest a whole holiday is kept in honor of the foundation of Constantinople! Each one of these supererogatory solemnities costs millions to the country. The result of this abuse is, that the people sit idle in the public-houses literally one-half of the year. Emancipation has also materially increased drunkenness. The peasants are now no longer stopped by their masters, who consider that they have not now any business to trouble themselves about the morals of their late serfs, and who, moreover, would not listen to them—and, by way of augmenting their diminished revenues, they open as many public houses as possible on their estates. From these depots of poison for both body and soul revolution will one day spring: already they have produced an enormous increase of crime and disease. Formerly suicide was unknown amongst the lower classes; but, in 1871, the cases amounted to 143, and the papers record several every morning. The cholera has become endemic here, just as it is in India. The reason is, that alongside of our magnificence in theatres and opera-houses, the most elementary sanitary laws are neglected. There was formerly in all the towns a regular service for the removal of filth from the houses, to the great benefit of tillage. But now sewage of all descriptions is thrown into our splendid canals, which, in consequence are turned into offensive drains. Thus it must be admitted with grief that the boasted progress of this metropolis is artificial and dependent only on the presence of the Court, which every year attracts more and more people, the real population of Petersburg diminishing year by year, as the number of deaths is always in excess of the births. Thus, in 1871, there were but 20,810 births against 26,881 deaths—excess, 6,571! What then was Peter I. but a wholesale executioner of his subjects? The true benefactor of Russia will be the statesman who retransfers its centre to Moscow, and restores its ancient bond of union with that integral Christianity which has its centre in the authority which Christ bequeathed to Saint Peter and his successors.

*Reunion of the American Church with the Church of Russia.*—Under this pompous title the Count Dimitri Tolstoy, Procurator of the Synod of Petersburg, has addressed a report to the Emperor. Here it is:—"In the year 1871, the American Episcopalians continued their manifestation expressive of their ardent desire to arrive at union with the Orthodox Russian Church. Thus, after the Congress of American Bishops, which took place at Baltimore, the Bishops of Florida and Tennessee attended at the Russian Church in New York, assisted at divine service, and subsequently informed the chaplain of that Church, the Rev. Father Nicholas Bjoering, that the object of their visit was to express, on behalf of the Congress, the joy which that Assembly had felt at the establishment of an Orthodox Church in New York, and the hope that this event (the fitting up of two rooms!) may contribute to the successful solution of the question of the union of the Russian Church with the Anglican Church. Identical notifications were made to the Rev. Father Bjoering by the Bishops of New Orleans and Nebraska. Several laymen of the Episcopalian communion occurred in these manifestations. One of their number, Mr. Francis Parkes of Boston, sent a very remarkable letter raising the question of the establishment in America of a National Church, on the basis of pure orthodoxy, but possessing the rites and ceremonies of the Episcopal Church. The author of this letter added that he believed his countrymen to be very well disposed towards the dogmas of the Russian Church, but that he was not so certain as to their adhesion to rites and ceremonies hitherto unknown to them. In view of the importance (!) of this notification, it has been transmitted to the Most Holy Synod, by whom it has been forwarded to the Commission established in 1869 for the examination of the petition of those Anglicans who desire to unite with our Church. Father Bjoering also informs us that our little chapel at New York is constantly full of Anglicans who desire to assist at the Orthodox service. It is therefore becoming of more and more urgent necessity to build a temple worthy of our religion in that city and sufficiently spacious to accommodate all who may wish to attend. The collections already

made for this purpose have realised 60,024 roubles; out of which, after purchasing a piece of land, there remains a balance in hand of 27,403 roubles. In reference to this matter, the Government of the United States has consented to make a most unusual exception to its laws. The conveyance of the land had originally been executed in the name of Father Bjoering as an American citizen, but has now been transferred to that of Your Imperial Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary." The Rev. Father Bjoering here spoken of is an adventurer from Denmark, who became a Catholic, and obtained ordination as a Catholic priest. He subsequently returned to Protestantism; after which he saw that there was money to be made in the service of Russian "Orthodoxy." He has sent to Count Tolstoy flaming accounts of the progress the Russian religion was making in America; but his reports always concluded with this formula:—"Have the goodness to increase my salary." Whenever the latter comes to an end, I promise you that there will be no trace whatever of the Russian Church in New York.

*The illness of the Hereditary Grand Duke.*—The Grand-Duke was taken ill on the 19th, and not until the 25th was it made known that he had been smitten with typhus. It is hoped that the strength of his constitution will carry him through it. If he die, it will be a warning from Heaven and a great trial for Russia. The heir-apparent would be only four years old, and the regency would cause a division in the Imperial family as well as in the country. The Emperor is much affected at the blow with which he is threatened; and there is great emotion in society and also amongst the people; for, as I have already informed you, the anti-German feelings commonly attributed to the Grand-Duke have gained him much popularity.

## THE CATHOLIC HIERARCHY.

We continue our publication of the pastoral letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland, assembled in Dublin on the 21st and 22nd of January, 1873, to their flocks, which was read on February 3rd of this year in the different Churches and Chapels of that Archdiocese:—

"If to all that has been done against the Church in Germany we add the laws enacted in the Spanish Cortes, to complete the impoverishment and enslavement of the illustrious clergy of Spain; if, furthermore, we observe the acts of the civil Government in several of the Helvetic Cantons, in which the State presumes to issue decisions upon Catholic dogmas, to usurp the episcopal jurisdiction over parishes, to expel religious bodies, to provoke to schism; if we consider how in Belgium the bishops are forced to refuse Christian burial to the departed children of the Church, in consequence of the desecration of Catholic cemeteries by the action of civil authorities, we have one vast picture of persecution, in which the brutal tyranny of Pagan Rome is combined with the malicious cunning of Julian the Apostate, and the petty meanness of the Low Empire, in one grand assault against the liberties of the Catholic priesthood, in the hope of putting an end, if it were possible, to the very existence of the Church of God upon earth.

"A third phase of persecution remains, which, while it invariably accompanies the open assaults upon the Christian faith, and the violent usurpation of ecclesiastical authority, of which we have hitherto spoken, presents itself also in countries where either of the former methods might be held to be impossible or inexpedient. The leading principle of this species of persecution is to weaken as much as possible the influence of the Catholic Church upon men, by narrowing in every way her field of operation, and by restricting her especially in her action upon the family and in the school, which are the two chief elements of society. To this principle we may trace as to its source the entire system of legislation on marriage and on education.

"Modern legislation on marriage is, in several countries, a strictly practical rendering of the 65th Proposition condemned in the Syllabus, which says: 'The doctrine that Christ has raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament cannot at all be tolerated.' It is intolerant in the highest degree: it will not allow that the marriage contract between Christians is a sacrament, and hence it will not admit that the Church has any Divinely given rights with respect to it. The institution of the Divorce Court is the natural consequence of the introduction of the so-called civil marriage, and the natural result of both is, not only the profanation of the great sacrament, typifying the union of Christ and His Church, but the loss to society of all that purity of feeling with which the graces of nineteen centuries of Christian faith had sanctified the nuptial state. Besides, once the maintenance of the unity and indissolubility of marriage has been made dependent on the caprice of human legislators, liable, as they are, to be swayed by the worst passions of corrupt human nature, who can say that the hideous doctrines of the Communists, more foul than those of Mahomet, may not yet be legalized even in countries once the centre of Christian civilization? And under a system through which the very springs of individual, domestic, and civil life have been poisoned, what place will be left, in a degraded and brutalized society, for the Spouse of Christ, the Holy Church of God?

"But the supreme effort to weaken the Church's influence is made on the educational field, by banishing religion from the schools, whether of higher, middle, or primary instruction. In a pastoral letter which we addressed to you a few months ago, we endeavoured to set before you at some length, dearly beloved brethren, the dangers which threaten your faith from pernicious systems of education. The experience of every day that has since passed has but strengthened the convictions we then expressed, sanctioned the warnings we then gave, and rendered us more determined than ever to struggle to the last, with all the energy of our hearts, helped by the grace of God, against every system of un-Catholic education, no matter from what source it may come, or by what patrons it may be recommended. It is chiefly for the consideration of difficulties arising on this all-important subject of education that we are now assembled; but we reserve for a future occasion the resolutions we have adopted, confining ourselves at present to express our deep regret that the generous grants lately